Work-Life Balance, Work Addiction and Job Satisfaction of Professional Social Workers in Kerala

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ABSTRACT: Social work is a profession that aims to improve people's quality of life. The discipline focuses on assisting those experiencing difficulties and troubles in finding solutions and helping themselves. The professionals' overall well-being is crucial because they care for the well-being of others. Social workers frequently deal with client's physical, emotional, intellectual, mental, and social distress; therefore, they can be vulnerable to work-life imbalances. This paper assesses the work-life balance (WLB), work addiction (WA), and job satisfaction (JS) of professional social workers in Kerala and to what extent job satisfaction and work addiction contribute to their work-life balance.

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional study, and data were collected from professional social workers (n=105) currently practicing in Kerala with a minimum of two years of experience. The tool used had three scales; WLB was measured using Work-life Balance (Hyman, 2005) scale, WA with The Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS), and JS with Wright and Copranzao 1998 scale. Correlation analysis was performed to find the relationship between the variables, and regression analysis was done to measure the extent of the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable.

The results indicate that most of the samples have medium to high levels of WLB, and their levels of WA and JS significantly contribute to it. This study's result contrasts the existing literature, which shows low WLB among social workers in other locations. Therefore, the paper also discusses possible reasons for this contradiction and recommends some interventions for reducing WA among the population.

Keywords: work-life balance, work addiction, job satisfaction, social workers, Kerala, KAPS

The workspace and personal living space are supposed to be two compartments that should go parallel. The overlapping of these compartment components will cause dysfunction or an imbalance in the effective functioning of an individual. The third Sustainable Development Goal, 'Good Health and Well-being, ' aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (WHO, 2010), and the eighth one, 'Decent Work and Economic Growth, ' focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all (UNSD, 2020).

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Work and Non-Work Domains

The work environment, organizational culture, and emotional support can be considered as the factors contributing to workers' productivity and well-being (Almaamari & Alaswad, 2021). The workplace environment is crucial for employees and affects various factors, including performance, satisfaction, social relationships, and health (Al-Omari & Okasheh, 2017). Organizational culture is highly correlated with productivity (Mahdiyeh et al., 2016). Involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission are the four characteristics of an organization's culture, which is seen as a strategic component (Almaamari & Alaswad, 2021). Colleague support, social connectedness, and proper assistance also contribute to employees' good mental and physical health, which will reflect on their well-being (Oakman et al., 2020).

Even though family remained the central focus, in the context of work-life balance, it does not limit to family but also to various personal spheres that vary from individual to individual. Employee preferences for non-work domains and related experiences changed according to gender, marital status, and child-care obligations (Prakash, 2018). The non-work part includes family, personal life/self-care, friends, society, and religion. (Joseph & Sebastian, 2019). The non-work domain is largely heterogeneous as there may be different groups like elderly workers, single parents, childless couples, and workers with long-standing health problems or disabilities (LSHPD) (Gragnano et al., 2020). As a result, the non-work domain can be highly subjective depending on one's priorities, outside job duties, individual interests, and physical, mental, and emotional capabilities.

Work-Life Balance

The work-life balance concept speaks about the magnitude of balance between work and non-work domains (non-work domains include family, personal life/self-care, friends, society, and religion. (Joseph & Sebastian, 2019). A balanced life is where we can allot our energy and efforts to different areas efficiently according to priority and sensitivity, giving a sense of satisfaction and achievement.

The lack of conceptual clarity among researchers regarding the extent and dimensions of the work-life balance idea has led to the term's ubiquity without any agreed-upon definition (Glasgow & Sang, 2016). Casper et al. (2017) concluded in their meta-analytic study of 290 research papers and 233 conceptual definitions of "work-life balance" that "many authors have involved fallacy by defining measures of conflict and enrichment as balance, and debate remains even in good journals about the meanings attached to balance (e.g., effectiveness, satisfaction)." Therefore work-life balance can be considered to an extent, a very subjective concept.

There are many causes and consequences for variations in the level of work-life balance among individuals, and many have limits in measuring them quantitatively. Work addiction and job satisfaction are two components that can contribute to work-life balance and can be measured quantitatively. The quantity of time spent at work is the most reliable and powerful predictor of work-life conflict among all occupational characteristics (Dhas, 2015). Studies indicate that work stress and work-life imbalance are connected to workaholism, irrespective of gender (Yusuf, 2018). Therefore, work addiction can be a factor in determining one's level of WLB. Better job satisfaction can cause good WLB and a consequence of proper WLB. Studies prove that job satisfaction contributes to individuals' physical and mental health and well-being, which can affect

their quality of life and work-life balance (Hashemi & Sheikhtaheri, 2014).

Work Addiction

The concepts "workaholism" and "work addiction" have been used interchangeably in numerous research. However, these structures are not identical (Kun et al., 2021). The most common definition of work addiction risk is a compulsion or an uncontrollable need to work constantly. The differentiating behaviour of work addicts from others is that they work with excessive involvement when it is not required or expected (Dutheil et al., 2020). Although work addiction is a negative term, many studies pointed out its positive and negative impacts. Lower mental health, poor physical health, and higher work-family conflict are its significant adverse impacts, whereas job satisfaction and career satisfaction as positive outcomes though in the long run (Dutheil et al., 2020).

People normally work eight hours a day, which can result in several rewards (such as pay, bonuses, health insurance, peer recognition, and compliments). Still, these reinforcements can occasionally cause overwork (Kun et al., 2021). Work addiction can also be due to individuals' personality factors (Griffiths et al., 2018). Work addiction can cause conflicts with other fields of life in individuals (Robinson, 2020). Work addiction has a negative role in work-life balance, and its intensity may depend on the work or the job engaged with (Bakker et al., 2009). Studies indicate that work stress and work-life imbalance are connected to workaholism, irrespective of gender (Yusuf, 2018).

Social workers have high work stress due to long hours, an abundance of paperwork, a shortage of employees, and poor management (Travis et al., 2016). According to the Seoul Association of Social Workers, they work with clients for 38% of their working hours on average (Wilson, 2022).

Job Satisfaction

As job satisfaction affects productivity, motivation, work performance, and life satisfaction, most people agree that it directly impacts both personal and professional performance (Dziuba et al., 2020). It is accepted that people with high job satisfaction will have better organizational commitment, job involvement, physical and mental health, and well-being (Hashemi & Sheikhtaheri, 2014). A study observed that one's job satisfaction is more strongly affected by the availability of career growth and chances for promotions than by the wage they receive (Shields & Ward, 2001). Organizations that provide flexible work schedules work from home opportunities, child care and healthcare facilities, parental leave, and support from co-workers and supervisors help people balance work and family (Aruldoss et al., 2021).

Social workers are accountable for making judgments and decisions regarding the best interests of the individual and society using their skills and resources. Social workers are responsible for the results of their decisions since the nature of social work makes these judgments risky (Wright, 2014). This makes a social worker more concerned about the job and conflicts of interest with supervisors and officials, while making these judgments and decisions can cause disturbances in their job environment. A study among social workers in South Africa has found that social workers ascribed their work-related stress to a lack of resources, including computers, transportation, and insufficient emotional support from their superiors. Therefore, they showed weaker inner strength and poorer human relations (Kheswa, 2019). Social professionals

face intolerable working conditions marked by stress (Kheswa, 2019).

Social Workers and Work-Life Balance

The Social Work profession is one with great extremities. Serving communities at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels while battling racism, socioeconomic injustice, other forms of discrimination, and human rights violations, social work is an interdisciplinary job with social justice at its core (Wilson, 2022). In the field of social work, several elements, such as one's professional self, job duties, autonomy, overload, work styles, organizational culture and environment, professional values, work-family interference and work-life balance, work satisfaction, and social interaction, can have an impact on WLB (Wilson, 2022). Due to exposure to various undesirable work events, social workers, who perform emotional labour, are one of the professions most at risk of experiencing a poor work-life balance (Jia et al., 2020). Social workers frequently work with individuals who have considerable trauma in their lives in fast-paced institutional and social care agency settings. Therefore, professionals in this sector may experience varying degrees of secondary trauma and burnout, endangering their well-being and capacity to effectively aid their clients (Senreich et al., 2020). Over some time, as the professional experience progress with frequent dealing with clients having emotional, mental, or physical distress or disturbances, there might be chances that the social workers will give in to the excessive emotional baggage that comes along with the circumstances (Barck-Holst et al., 2020a). This violates the core principles and beliefs of social work itself, thereby disturbing the professional and personal lives of social workers. Social work has the highest rates of poor physical health, low job satisfaction, and diminished well-being (Kheswa, 2019).

Since social workers usually extend their professional life to their personal lives, they are more likely to fight to find a balance between the two (Aiello & Tesi, 2017). A study among Swedish social workers reported that compared to social workers in the middle- and high-income districts, those working in low-income areas appear to be even more vulnerable, having more unfavourable attitudes toward their jobs, a higher likelihood of leaving, more health issues, and a lower level of satisfaction with their employers (Barck-Holst et al., 2020b).

Due to demanding working conditions like heavy caseloads, a sense of powerlessness in the system, and a sense that the system is unfair, social workers are well-known for having a lack of balance between work and family life (Wilson, 2022). When social worker is emotionally drained, they may start to dehumanize a client, which can influence their working relationship and, in turn, their happiness with life outside of work (Wilson, 2022). Some of the social worker's daily tasks that contribute to the imbalance between work and family life are paperwork, documentation, and numerous administrative tasks (Bartley et al., 2016). The quality of the relationship between a client and a social worker, communication effectiveness between a client and a social worker, skills in time, and stress management (Marc et al., 2019). The extent of the willingness of the client and family to follow the rules and regulations, client violence, and its consequences can contribute to the work-life balance of social workers.

On the other hand, many social workers experience "compassion satisfaction," defined as the joy helping professionals derive from doing their work effectively and including happy thoughts about helping others and contributing to society. This type of emotional fulfillment is experienced by many social workers, who feel emotionally fulfilled by their work (Senreich et al., 2020).

Despite the responsibilities and difficulties involved in the profession of social work, it has been observed that social workers find fulfillment and happiness in their work, which can improve family interactions and deepen the work-family relationship (Kalliath et al., 2020).

As this is a post-pandemic era, and social workers assist those who are already on the margins of society, suffering from a lack of resources, poor health, poverty, and other forms of injustice and inequality, they have struggled to meet the needs as a result. To fulfill new needs and reprioritize the most critical aspects of their profession, they must be flexible and creative (Banks et al., 2020). This study aims at understanding the work-life balance of professional social workers in Kerala concerning their job satisfaction and work addiction levels in tune with their qualifications and experiences.

Social Workers in Kerala and Work-Life Balance

Various studies have been conducted in numerous countries worldwide about employees' work-life balance in the corporate sector and healthcare workers. Quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted, and conclusions have been drawn based on scales of work addiction, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and life satisfaction. Also, some studies were conducted considering the work-life balance in the social work profession; however, few have discussed the work-life balance of social workers concerning work addiction.

Prior researchers have proved that national, cultural, and structural factors impact an individual's work-life experiences, as described in terms of WLB (Aruldoss et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether and how the application of WLB and WLB practices varies over time and space, within and across countries, nor how this may be evaluated in ways that consider cultural differences (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). A study by Jose & Ajith on 'Future of Social Work: Challenges & Opportunities' points out that based on goal-oriented objectives, social work may teach soft-skill training and life skill education (Jose & Ajith, 2021).

In India, social service and social work are not yet properly differentiated, and there are still limitations in professionalizing social work. The professionals can be vulnerable to poor job satisfaction, work addiction, and reduced work-life balance. Kerala is one of the states where the professional body is considerably established and maintained and has many professionals working in different settings. However, no relevant or adequate studies have been done on the population regarding self-care.

The study conducted for this paper is a quantitative one that aims to understand the levels of work-life balance of professional social workers in Kerala. The extent of their job satisfaction and work addiction, if any, and how these contribute to the Work-Life Balance is also assessed.

Methods and Materials

The paper is based on a quantitative cross-sectional study to analyze the extent of work-life balance, work addiction, and job satisfaction among social workers in Kerala. The data were collected from 105 professional social workers (n=105) currently working in Kerala, with a minimum of two years of experience. A simple random sampling method was used from the list of professional social workers registered in the Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS).

Data were collected through questionnaires sent to the respondents with prior consent. The dependent variable, Work-life balance, and the independent variables, Work Addiction and Job

Satisfaction, are measured using standardized tools.

Work-Life Balance was measured using a 15-item scale, adapted by Hyman in 2005, with Cronbach alpha 0.87, which Fisher originally developed in 2001. This scale also measures positive spread or enrichment (Hayman, 2005). Three dimensions of Work-Life Balance, Personal life interference with work (PLIW) with four items, Work interference with personnel life (WIPL) with seven items, and Work/Personnel life enhancement (WPLE) with four items, are measured. Each item is measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1= 'Strongly Disagree' and 7=' Strongly Agree'). The items of the negatively worded scale were reverse-coded to make the total scores and WLB levels directly proportional. The points of all the Items are then summed up to get the total. Higher scores indicate higher work-life balance and lower scores indicate lower work-life balance.

Work addiction with The Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS), a 10-item scale with five items each for measuring 'Working Excessively' and 'Working Compulsively,' and each item is measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "Almost Never" to 4= "Almost Always." The scores of each item were summed up to measure each participant's work addiction. Cronbach's α ranged from 0.60 to 0.883 for each item (Libano et al., 2010).

Job satisfaction was measured with Wright and Copranzao scale, developed from the Price and Muller Scale 1986, which asses the five widely recognized dimensions of satisfaction; degree of satisfaction with work itself, degree of satisfaction with co-workers, degree of satisfaction with supervision, degree of satisfaction with promotional opportunities, degree of satisfaction with pay. Each item used a 5- point scale ranging from 1 = 'very unsatisfied' to 5 = 'very satisfied .'All five items were summed to measure job satisfaction for each participant. The coefficient alpha is 0.75 (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).

The data was analyzed using JAMOVI 2.3.15 software. Correlation analysis was done to find whether there is a relationship between variables and, if any, the direction. Multiple regression was then done to analyze the extent of the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable.

Results of the study

The descriptive analysis, like mean, median, mode, standard deviation, Shapiro-Wilk p, and plots, was done for each variable by taking average scores of each from respective scales. The data were tested for normality for all three variables by histograms, Q-Q plots, Box plots, and with Shapiro- Wilk p values for WLB average = 0.256, WA average = 0.214, and JS average = 0.133. The total WLB scores for each respondent were formulated, and the final score was averaged out of 7 as per the divisions of the Likert scale used. The average score was further divided into three categories, namely, low (1-2.9), medium (3-4.9), and high (5-7). Among 105 samples, the majority have a medium-level work-life balance (n=56). For WA total score was averaged out of 4 as a 4-point Likert scale was used, and it was then divided into three categories as low (1-1.9), medium (2-2.9), and high (3-4). Most of the sample was measured with medium-level work addiction (n=63). For JS, the total score was averaged out of 5 as per the scale rating and then divided into low (1-1.66), medium (1.66- 3.32), and high (3.32-5). The majority reported a medium level of Job satisfaction (n= 54).

Correlation between the variables is tested using Pearson's correlation. The correlation matrix shows a significant correlation between WLB and WA and WLB and JS. The total score of

WLB and the total score of WA indicate a significant ($p < 0.001$) and negative correlation (Pearson's r = -0.530. The total score of WLB and the total score of JS indicate a significant ($p < 0.001$) and positive correlation (Pearson's r = 0.396).

Multiple regression is used to measure the level of the impact of the independent variables (Word Addiction, Job Satisfaction) on the dependent variable (Work-life Balance). Checks for assumption (Shapiro-Wilk p for normality, Durbin–Watson Test for Autocorrelation, collinearity statistics, Q-Q plot for standardized residuals) were done. The data shows normality with Shapiro-Wilk p = 0.385. The DW statistic value is 1.96, meaning the data is not autocorrelated among scales. The adjusted R^2 value for WA is 0.274, which implies that a one percent change in WA will cause a change of 27.4% in WLB. The adjusted R^2 value for JS is 0.394, which indicates that a one percent change in JS can bring a 39.4% change in WLB.

Discussion

The results show that there is a medium (n= 56) to high (n= 41) WLB among the majority of the sample, and the independent variables (WA and JS) contributed to this as they have a highly significant correlation with WLB. The result is in contrast to the existing literature by (Kalliath et al. (2020) and Kheswa (2019), which studied the work-life balance among social workers from different other locations. The results received can be because of several objective and subjective reasons. The samples' age, work experiences, current field of practice, organizational culture and work environment, family background and composition, income, expenditure, social relationships, activities and engagements other than work may contribute to this. However, as the study specifically focused on the territorial and cultural context of WLB among the social workers of Kerala, this would like to explore the reasons for the WA and JS (independent variables) that contributed to WLB to be so.

According to Kheswa (2019), among professional social workers in South Africa, low levels of job satisfaction were identified among the samples, but the result of the current study is contrary. The job satisfaction among the sample is palpable, with most of them in medium (n=54) to high (n=37). Only 14 of the sample have low job satisfaction. There can be many reasons for this result among the sample, professional social workers of Kerala. Kerala is one of the states with an efficient, professional body (KAPS, Kerala Association for Professional Social Workers) for social workers. KAPS is affiliated with the IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) and aims to deal with issues of professional interest, to advance Kerala's social work practices' efficacy and quality, to strengthen and unify the profession, to improve public and professional recognition and identity of social work, to represent and advocate for programs and policies to meet the needs of social work fraternity, to promote and facilitate members' professional development and life-long learning. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is a national-level association in India that aims to advance strong social policies, develop and uphold standards for the profession, and foster its members' professional growth and development. Therefore, these well-functioning bodies can create higher levels of job satisfaction and work-life balance among professional social workers in Kerala. Also, Kerala has an increased number of Social Work education institutions compared to other states in India. So, during the learning process with skill-based education and soft skill training focused (Jose & Ajith, 2021), the students are well acquainted with the working culture awaiting them to work immediately and will reduce the sudden imbalance in work-life. The

study had about 30 percent population within 2 to 5 years of experience (70.48 %), which might have contributed to their elevated work-life balance. Another fact is that Kerala has the highest number of government posts specifically for social workers. The study sample had social workers working in the government sector with good status and appreciable pay compared to other fields. This also might have contributed to their satisfaction with their job setting. All these facts might have contributed to increased job satisfaction and, therefore, elevated work-life balance.

Studies indicate that work stress and work-life imbalance are connected to workaholism, irrespective of gender (Yusuf, 2018). The quantity of time spent at work is the sturdiest and most reliable predictor of work-life conflict among all occupational characteristics (Dhas, 2015). The result of the current study is also similar in that work addiction affects the work-life balance of individuals. Work addiction has a negative role in work-life balance, and its intensity may depend on the work or the job engaged with (Bakker et al., 2009). Therefore, in terms of work addiction, within the social work profession itself, the nature of the job or the setting really matters. As the sample was heterogeneous regarding work settings within social work, the factors that contribute directly to their work addiction level and, therefore, the work-life imbalance will be different and vast. The work addiction level of the study's sample shows that most of the sample has a medium (n=63) to high (n=21) work addiction. As per the studies, though work addiction has many negative impacts, it can cause job and career satisfaction in the long run (Dutheil et al., 2020). Therefore, the sample's high levels of long-term work addiction, as per the results, also can be a reason for their high job satisfaction.

Social Work Implications

Research among the social work fraternity can significantly enhance and expand social work practice for the benefit of everybody. This paper, which examined the work-life balance, work addiction, and job satisfaction as well as the degree to which they affected the work-life balance of professional social workers in Kerala, was thus needed immediately because no similar research involving these variables has been done among this population. The study shows high levels of WLB among the sample, and the possible reasons are discussed. Therefore, this paper suggests further research in the social work education and practice models of Kerala, which can then be beneficial for professionals in other locations. Also, interventions can be planned to reduce work addiction among professionals. Although there have not been any randomized, controlled research on how to treat workaholism, some therapy options like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), Positive Psychology or Strength-Based Approach, and Anonymous Workaholics of which many social workers themselves are practitioners, can be useful (Andreassen, 2014).

Conclusion

Balancing work-life is one of the critical tasks for everyone, which need a lot of skills and focus. The concept of work-life balance is relevant to all spaces and time since it affects a person's total well-being in all aspects. Social workers should lead balanced lives if they want to contribute to the balanced functioning of others. This paper which assessed the work-life balance, work addiction, and job satisfaction as well as the extent to which they affected the work-life balance of professional social workers in Kerala, indicates that most of the samples have medium to high levels of WLB and their levels of WA and JS contribute significantly to it.

The paper is based on a quantitative study; therefore, the subjective reasons for the results obtained are unknown. Qualitative studies on the topic that can explain the population's views for the contrary result from other studies and literature are recommended in the future. Studies that include the pay scale range, setting within social work and family composition are suggested.

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