

A Study on Work-Family Balance and Mental Health During COVID-19: Bangladeshi Employees Perspective

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Abstract

The study aimed to measure the impact of work pressure on family balance and the effect of work-family balance on Bangladeshi employees' mental health during COVID19 from an emerging economy perspective. Several 400 data (response rate 50.25%) were collected through simple random sampling. The exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling were run to test the proposed research framework with the help of MS Excel 2007, SPSS 22.0, and AMOS 23.0. The findings revealed that work-life has a significant positive impact on family life and that work-life and family life positively impact employees' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The novelty of this research is the Bangladeshi employees' context and the COVID-19 phenomenon.

Keywords COVID-19 · Work-Family Balance · Mental Health · Manufacturing Employees

1. Introduction

The global civilization confronted one of its most significant problems in historical remembrance at the commencement of the year 2020: a pandemic of a widely identified coronavirus. This disease, which produces a severe respiratory illness (COVID-19), expanded quickly over the planet, culminating in a worldwide catastrophe that compelled governments to take drastic steps to halt its proliferation (Liu et al., 2020). As a result, social distance (the avoidance of human contact)

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remained a primary goal, closing schools, non-essential stores, and border crossings among countries. In addition, this has already had a significant consequence on the businesses (like manufacturing and service industries) as well. The pandemic has exacerbated the global supply chain disruptions (Ranney et al., 2020). However, in Bangladesh, like the other countries, the manufacturing firms such as garments, agricultural goods, fast-moving consumer goods, and some other manufacturing industries continued their production to active the wheel of the national economy (BetterWork, 2020). In such a situation, manufacturing employees face some troubles

Such balancing pressure may be a potential source of mental health concern during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yucel, 2017).

Work-life and family life are distinct spheres that interact in good and bad ways (Molina, 2021). Furthermore, as earlier researchers have observed, work and family have a mutual relationship (Minnotte et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2018). A person's autonomy over their profession is referred to as work-life balance. To the mutual advantage of the employee, company, and civilization, a balance is established when a person's claim to a fulfilling life inside and outside the job is recognized and acknowledged as the standard (Young, 2018). Overwork leads to a terrible work-family balance, which has negative consequences such as aversion to work, a higher risk of changing employment, discord, lack of physical activity, stress, improper diet, fatigue, sleeplessness, depression, as well as health issues including cancer (Houston, 2005; Abendroth & Den Dulk, 2011). Workloads have a detrimental impact on an employee's health both directly and indirectly (Holland et al., 2019). Employee health is significantly impacted by the stress of sustaining a level of efficiency amid increasing exhaustion over time, along with the greater possibility of meeting other kinds of job stress. Hence, such extended workloads and long working hours may hamper the work-family balance and causes poor mental health (Young, 2018). Based on the discussion, two research questions can arise:

- RQ1.** How does the work-life pressure impact employees' family-life balance during the COVID19 situation?
- RQ2.** How do the work and family pressure impact employees' mental health conditions during the COVID19 situation?

Plenty of earlier research was conducted on work and family life conflict (Scherer & Steiber, 2007; Allen & Finkelstein, 2014); work-life balance on employees' job satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014; Cahill et al., 2015); job commitment (Kim, 2014; Darko-Asumadu et al., 2018); well-being (Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015; Törnquist Agosti et al., 2017); employee engagement (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010; Cahill et al., 2015; Iqbal et al., 2017); mental health (Haar et al., 2014; Kotera et al., 2020). However, the fundamental gap of the literature was the Bangladeshi context, and broadly, another research gap was no such research

was observed based on the manufacturing industry context as well as during the COVID19 phenomenon. Hence, the key objectives of the study were to measure the impact of employees' work pressure on family balance and the impact of work-family balance on Bangladeshi employees' mental health during COVID19. The following sections of the study were designed as follows. The second section outlined the theoretical anchoring of the research along with the related review of the literature. The third section contained the methodology of the study. After that, the fourth section explained the analysis and discussion of the research findings, and finally, the last section ended with a conclusion including implications and direction for future research.

2. Theoretical Anchoring and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Work and Family Balance (WFB) in COVID-19

The actual economic consequence of the prolonged COVID-19 issue is yet unknown — and might be years away. Emergency layoffs, interim locks up in the processing of income taxes and VAT, including government-guaranteed financing to businesses, are among the steps adopted to preserve the economy. In so many nations, governments continue to pay compensation. In some circumstances, such endowments are already established; in others, they were created due to wage reductions for top management (Fisher et al., 2020). With minimal resources, families have been compelled to strive to preserve a work and family balance in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak. Both the Work and family life balance has grown increasingly complex, regardless of the circumstances (Adisa et al., 2021). Parkes & Langford (2008) describe work and family as a staff's endeavour toward effectively completing the work and family life duties such that the responsibilities of one domain should not negatively influence the other part of life. WFB is also linked to work flexibility, which refers to employees' ability to choose where, when, and how they work (Cooke et al., 2009). Working hours, workplace atmosphere, workloads, reward & incentive scheme, and leave regulations are among the five pillars of WFB. Employees typically confront several tasks, expectations, and obstacles, resulting in role conflict (Uddin, 2021). The majority of researchers have anticipated a negative work to family relations. However, work may have a beneficial impact on family and can have a favourable impact on work (Aslam et al., 2011; Brauchli et al., 2011; Yucel, 2017; Calderwood et al., 2021). Hence a hypothesis can be developed as follows:

H_1 : Work-life significantly impacts employees' family lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 WFB and Mental Health in Organization

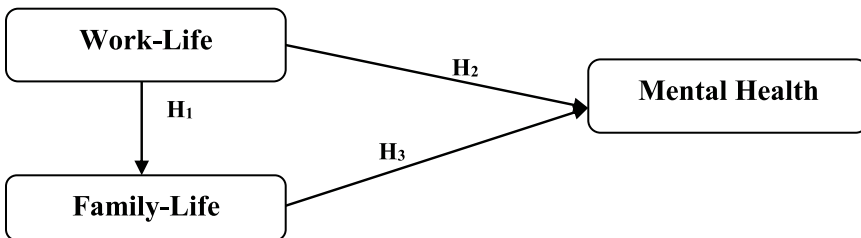
Mental health entails everyone who presents with serious issues making settlements with one another and oneself, rather than being immobilized by internal struggles and social pressures. It also denotes an individual's ability to operate effectively in a group or a society due to their emotions, ideas, and behaviours (Nadinloyi et al., 2013). WFB and mental healed theory explain that persistent external stress such as work pressure and high workloads are likely to impact family happiness by increasing internal stress directly. That might have a superior threat to employees' psychological and physical issues (Bodenmann, 2000; Yucel, 2017). A previous study has examined the impact of work and family conflict on employees' physical and mental health and well-being. Identity theory suggests that work-life and family life conflict would have different effects on employee mental health consequences. This notion is backed up by much evidence from the past (Frone et al., 1996; Casper et al., 2011; Madsen & Hammond, 2013). Based on the discussion, two different hypotheses can also be developed:

H_2 : Work-life significantly impacts employees' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H_3 : Family life significantly impacts employees' family life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following figure 1 depicts the proposed theoretical model for this particular research.

Figure 1: The proposed theoretical model



Source: Authors

3. Methodology

The study was quantitative, and data was collected from manufacturing employees during the COVID-19 period in Bangladesh. A structured questionnaire was developed based on the literature survey and divided into two parts. The initial part

contained demographic information, and the second part had measure items of the model. A five-point Likert scale was developed where 1 denoted strongly disagree and 5 denoted strongly agree (Hossain & Khan, 2021). The study picked 20 factors under three variables: work-life, family-life, and mental health (Brauchli et al., 2011; Yucel, 2017; Calderwood et al., 2021). Some 400 respondents were targeted through simple random sampling techniques with the help of social media platforms to collect the necessary data due to pandemic situations (Olken & Rotem, 1986). The sample was determined based on the Raosoft calculator (<http://www.raosoft.com/sampleize.html>). The reason behind the sample selection was unknown, and the large population size (Iacobucci, 2010). However, the study area was selected as Dhaka city due to the capital city of Bangladesh and the large gathering of the targeted population (Mottaleb et al., 2020). The structured questionnaire was designed through Google Docs and distributed via Facebook messenger, Email, WhatsApp, and IMO (Newman et al., 2021). After collecting the data, only 201 data (50.25% response rate) were found satisfactory to explore the research. The refined data were processed through the MS Excel (V, 2007), SPSS (V, 22), and SPSS AMOS (V, 23) software. An exploratory factors analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM) were tested to run and validate the proposed model (Khan et al., 2021).

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Demographic information

Table 1 depicts the summary of demographic information of the survey participants. Most respondents were male (67.6%) and female (29.4%). After that, most of the participants were found in junior and middle levels; as the literature supports, most of the technical and front-line jobs were done by those two levels (Griffin, 2021).

Table 1: Respondent's Demographic Information Summary

Variables	Category	Frequency (n = 201)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative per cent
Gender	Male	142	67.6	67.6
	Female	59	29.4	100.0
Hierarchy	Junior Level	101	50.2	50.2
	Middle Level	79	39.3	89.5
	Top Level	21	10.4	100.0
Education	Up to HSC	57	28.4	28.4
	Bachelor degree	37	18.4	46.8
	Master and above	107	53.2	100.0

Source: Author's calculation

The study calculated that 50.2% were junior or bottom level, and 39.3% were middle-level employees. Nevertheless, the study also captured little data from the top-level (10.4%) to understand the indisputable fact. Regarding education level, 53.2% of the employees had a master's level, and 18.4% had a bachelor's level. However, 28.4% of the respondents had up to higher secondary level or below education standard.

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The study initially tested the EFA to identify the construct validity to develop the proposed model. The EFA was run with varimax rotation, and only 13 items were found suitable with good factors loading of above 0.60 among the selected 20 items for the proposed model (Hair et al., 2010). Those 13 items contained three distinct factors: employees' work life, family life, and mental health (Chen & Paulraj, 2004). The EFA explained 75.859% of the variance. To confirm the model, the study tested CFA and all the factors generated from EFA were retained with a good factors loading of above 0.60.

Table 2: CFA and SEM model fit summary

χ^2	df	Sig.	χ^2/df	NFI	CFI	AGFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
82.912	59	.022	1.405	.945	.983	.879	.921	.978	.052

Source: Authors' SPSS AMOS output

The model summary (see Table 2) explained that the entire model fit indicators such as χ^2/df , NFI, CFI, AGFI, GFI, TLI, and RMSEA were passed the threshold level suggested and applied by (Hair et al., 2010; Khan et al., 2019; Rana et al., 2020). Table 3 illustrates the entire EFA and CFA analysis output summary, including the item codes, factor loading, Composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, Eigenvalue, and Variance explained (%).

Table 3: Summary of EFA and CFA Outcomes

Variables	Item Code	EFA			CFA		
		Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	α	Factor loading	CR
Work Life	A-1	.906	4.721	36.313	0.931	.990	0.956
	A-2	.862				.760	
	A-3	.923				.920	
	A-4	.870				.830	
	A-5	.840				.790	

Variables	Item Code	EFA			CFA		
		Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	α	Factor loading	CR
Family Life	A-11	.908	3.089	23.759	0.884	.870	0.906
	A-12	.872				.860	
	A-13	.838				.800	
	A-14	.789				.720	
Mental Health	B-1	.800	2.205	16.961	0.875	.760	0.923
	B-2	.917				.950	
	B-3	.872				.850	
	B-4	.812				.700	

Note: Composite reliability = CR; Cronbach’s alpha = α

Source: Authors

4.3 Model Validation through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Discussion

Table 4 summarizes the proposed model result, and Figure 2 depicts the standardized route coefficients for the SEM output by SPSS (AMOS).

Table 4: Hypotheses testing with Result (SEM)

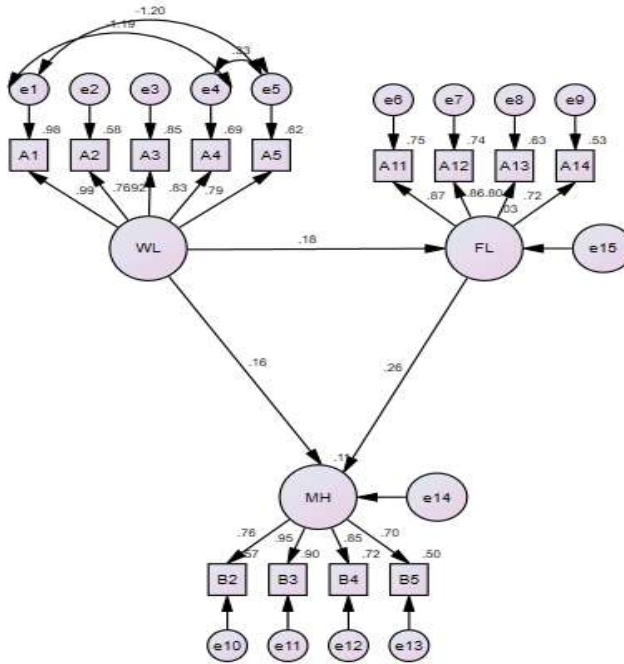
Relationship	Coefficient	p-value	Results
H ₁ : Work-life balance has a positive impact on family-life balance	0.123	.029	Supported
H ₂ : Work-life balance has a positive impact on mental health	0.151	.049	Supported
H ₃ : Family-life balance has a positive impact on mental health	0.368	.003	Supported

Note: Parameter estimation significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Author’s

In H₁, the study result demonstrated that work-life had a significant positive impact on employees’ family life during the COVID-19 pandemic. That means that during the COVID-19 period manufacturing employees believed that if they maintained a good quality of work-life, they felt mentally sound and vice-versa. The study outcomes supported the earlier study (Aslam et al., 2011; Brauchli et al., 2011; Yucel, 2017; Calderwood et al., 2021). This particular outcome strongly supported that both the employees and the organization must make some strategies to manage work and family life for mutual interest (Hilbrecht & Lero, 2014; Khan et al., 2018).

Figure 2: SEM Flowchart of the Proposed Model



Source: Authors’ SPSS AMOS output.

In H_2 the hypothesis was developed as work-life significantly impacts employees’ mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The AMOS finding also supported this relationship. The outcome revealed that employees’ work-life and mental health during COVID-19 were positively related. If the employee- led a high-quality work-life, they were enjoying sound mental health and vice-versa during the pandemic. This particular outcome also matched the earlier results (Huxley et al., 2015; Ruppner et al., 2019). Based on this outcome, the organization may craft new HR strategies for the mental well-being of its employees.

The H_3 was developed as Family-life significantly impacts employees’ family life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Once again, the study outcome revealed a significant positive relationship between these two variables. That means if the employee enjoyed high-quality family life, they had sound mental health and vice-versa during the pandemic. The earlier outcomes also supported this particular outcome (Schulz & Sherwood, 2008; Panelo, 2010). Hence, such an outcome urged the manufacturing employees to learn and adapt to family-life pressure to improve their mental well-being. Organizations have less chance to interfere with such issues.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes with limitations, implications, and future research directions. The fundamental limitations of the study were data collection challenges. During the pandemic, social distancing was a must, and many of the employees were not those much technology-oriented. Another critical issue was research funding. Due to such constraints, the study could not go for mass data collection across the country. However, owing to such limitations, the research has some implications. In the case of theoretical perspectives, the work-life, family life, and mental health can be categorized under the organizational behaviour, employee psychology, and occupational health and safety theories under the management and human resource management (HRM) domain. Hence, such research outcomes will be vivid the earlier related outcomes (Panelo, 2010; Hilbrecht & Lero, 2014; Ruppanner et al., 2019). In addition, the work-life balance theory can be connected with manufacturing employees' mental health and well-being.

On the other hand, the study's practical implications could be in developing and crafting the HR strategy and policymaking in occupational safety and health as well as employee psychology in a natural catastrophe like the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). Additionally, employees may face stress from two potential sources; organization and individual (Griffin, 2021). In case of family life pressure, the employee will be able to address and solve such issues for their betterment in family and work life. Future research can develop variables such as job satisfaction, intention to stay, and organizational commitment. The relationship between WFB and job satisfaction, intention to stay and organizational commitment will be tested with meditation and moderation of mental health conditions. Such research can be conducted on service employees apart from the manufacturing ones. Few demographic variables such as gender, age, and marital status can be applied as a mediating effect to the proposed and validated research model.

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