

# Impact of Work-Life Balance Management on Expatriates' Career

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**Abstract.** As organizations go global by trying to increase revenues or penetrate new markets for expansion, it becomes necessary to have employees who will work overseas. Working overseas as an expatriate requires a lot of effort both from the expatriate and the organization in order for the assignment to be successful. Work-life balance is vital in this regard. Employees will only succeed in the official assignment when their organizations prioritize their well-being, as this will greatly assist them in making sure they are effective and efficient in their work. The goal of this research was to see how work-life balance impacts expatriates' careers and whether there are any relationships between work-life balance and expatriates' careers. Results showed work-life balance has a significant positive effect on performance. This is to say that a healthy work-life balance will impact an expatriates' career greatly, which will also benefit the organization.

**Keywords:** *Work-life balance, expatriates' careers, employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational support.*

## Introduction

### *Relevance of the article*

The increase in the globalization of business has led to the increase in the number of people working as expatriates in different professions and moving from country to country for various work opportunities. This has resulted in organizations becoming competitive by making their staff work outside their home countries as expatriates. Therefore, expatriation has become the new normal and people now find it an easy decision to apply and work abroad in order to thrive in the labor market, even with the challenges involved.

However, managing work-life balance is becoming a prevalent concern to both employers and employees because it is generally linked with employee productivity. Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of career and personal life. Work-life balance includes a balance between work and personal life such that both bring satisfaction to the individual. When an employee is constantly attached to a job with no time to relax and rejuvenate, it leads to increased stress, work fatigue, and burnout. Their ability to do their job decreases, performance level suffers, and ultimately productivity decreases. Employers need to create a schedule that allows employees to work and have vacations. The importance of the work-life balance of employees must be a concern to the organization. It requires creating a supportive work environment, enabling job balance and personal responsibility because this will strengthen employee loyalty and increase productivity.

Work-life balance is also a challenge for expatriates and their families, as the employee has to manage time spend at work and with family. When there are disparities between work and family, either the person is spending too much time at work or too much on family matters. This can lead to stress, which can affect the person's productivity at work (Lawson et al., 2013).

### *Level of problem investigation*

Research on work-life balance has gained much ground in recent years, there is a growing trend among organizations to introduce initiatives that promote employee well-being at work. Research into the impact of work-life balance management on expatriate careers has been quite limited. Mendis, & Weerakkody (2017) in their study showed that there is a positive relationship between employee performance and Work-life balance. Salas-Vallina et al. (2017) found there to be a relationship between leadership style and positive attitudes or happiness at work. Work-life balance positively affected medical specialists' happiness at work. Research shows that employees who are engaged will possibly demonstrate positive organizational results such as decreased turnover intention, better customer satisfaction, and an increased level of productivity and profit (Joo, & Lee 2017). Also, the research of Richert-Kamierska, & Stankiewicz (2016) showed that for employees to be contented, promotion and measures must be put in place to look after the wellbeing of each employee.

**Scientific problem.** How does work-life balance management impact expatriates' careers?

**Object of the article** is the impact of work-life balance management on expatriates' careers.

**Aim of the article** is to investigate the impact of work-life balance management on expatriates' careers.

**Objectives of the article:**

1. To analyze the concept of work-life balance management and its factors.
2. To describe expatriates' careers and their challenges.
3. To examine the links between work-life balance management and expatriates' careers.
4. To analyze the empirical level of research regarding the impact of work-life balance management on expatriates' careers.

**Methods of the article:** analysis, synthesis.

## **1. Theoretical aspects of the impact of work life balance management on expatriates' career**

### **1.1. The concept of work-life balance management and its factors**

To discuss the concept of work-life balance and its factors, the history and theories of work-life balance will be explained. According to Lockwood (2003), the history of work-life balance can be seen in the 1930s when the Kellogg Company established the reduction in working hours from three daily eight hours shift to four shifts of six hours. These changes showed that there was an increase in employee optimism, production, and efficiency (Lockwood, 2003). The research on work-life balance increased from the 1960s; the research on working mothers and double-income families emerged as women's involvement in the workforce increased considerably (Lewis et al., 2007).

Work-life balance is referred to as trying to balance oneself on a seesaw in which one side is working while the other side is personal or family (Karthik, 2013). Also, Work-life balance is defined by how employees manage their time both at and away from work. Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one's career and the demands of one's personal life.

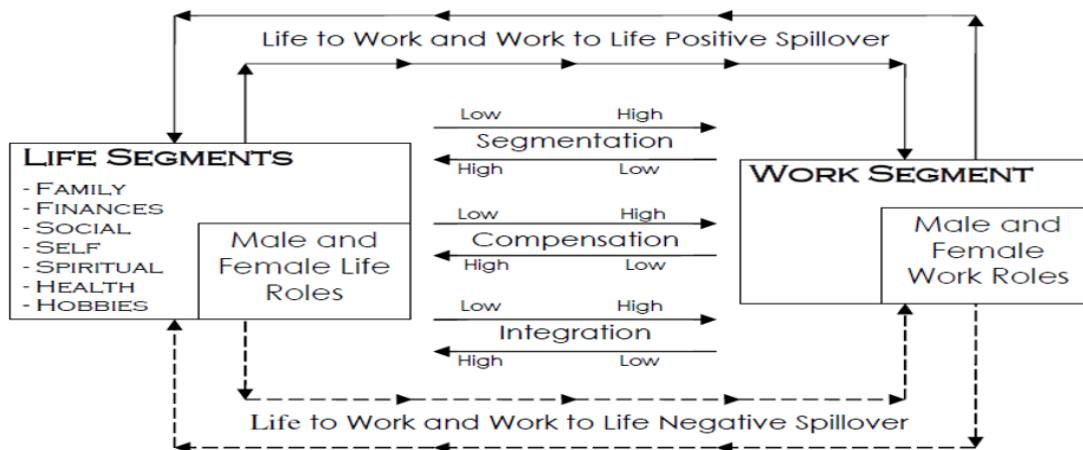
**Factors of work-life balance management:**

- **Employee Job Satisfaction:** This relates to how people really feel about their jobs and the different aspects of their job roles. Job satisfaction for an employee should be the priority of any organization in establishing their policy (Yücel, 2012). Job satisfaction plays a huge role in an expatriate having a good work-life balance.
- **Employee engagement:** This refers to the roles and responsibilities given to an employee in an organization. Studies show that employees who are engaged will possibly demonstrate positive organizational results such as decreased turnover intention, increase in the level of productivity and profit. (Joo, & Lee, 2017).
- **Contentment at work:** This relates to happiness and how people experience and evaluate their lives. Since a significant amount of time is spent at work, understanding the role played by employment and the work environment is very important. Studies reveal that being happy at work means having a meaningful work-life with positive emotions.
- **Employee Performance at work:** Performance is the product of the capacity of employees, multiplied by support and effort. Hence, the reduction or non-existence of one factor will cause a decrease in performance. A good work-life balance brings high employee performance and vice versa.
- **Expatriate adjustment/Organizational support:** This relates to how well the expatriate is managed and treated. Do they receive training for integration in a foreign land? Do they receive a good salary package/allowance? Is there room for growth? Do they receive mental and psychological help? Etc. If organizations can not answer the above questions with a resounding yes then they are failing in supporting their employees. If organizations help or pay close attention to their employees, this will go a long way in making sure they have a good work-life balance. Their life

outside of work should be important to the organization. Expatriate adjustment is more or less the degree of fit between the expatriate and the new environment in both work and non-work domains.

*These factors explained above can greatly influence the performance or work-life balance of an expatriate. All of them can affect the career of an expatriate positively or negatively. This shows that to achieve a positive work-life balance, the expatriate and organization both must play a major role. Then again if organizations take a leading role in looking after the wellbeing of its employees it makes things easier for them to achieve success in their assignment abroad.*

Fig 1. below is a model of work-life balance management.



Source: Naithani, P. (2016, as cited in Naithani, 2010a). Impact of health and recreation on work-life balance: A case study of Expatriates. *International Journal of Social Science and Business*, 1(1), p. 6.

**Fig. 1. Model of work-life balance**

The model shows that there are different parts that make up work-life balance. It shows that spillover from one segment of life into another can have both positive and negative consequences. That is to say that if an employee has a negative spillover from life (For e.g., family, health) into work then it will affect his/her output and performance.

### 1.2. Expatriates' careers and their challenges

According to Wang et al. (2008), expatriation is defined as a temporary assignment to work in another country. An expatriate can be defined as a parent company employee who is transferred for a set period (from a few months to many years) to work at a foreign branch of a multinational corporation (Banerjee et al., 2012). An expatriate career is one in which a worker/employee takes a position outside his/her home country, either independently or as a work assignment scheduled by the employer, which can be a company, university, government, or non-governmental organization. It is not easy to adapt to a new environment as culture shock can be an issue, being far away from family, adapting to new people and food, language barriers, etc. Bakker, & Demerouti (2007) mentioned that expatriates will face hurdles and problems when going on an assignment abroad, but they have to be able to manage this work experience effectively. This is why organizations need to show support as there will be challenges that the expatriate must overcome.

Expatriates' career challenges can take many forms. As described by Mäkelä, & Suutari (2011), work-family conflict is an issue that many ex-pats struggle with. Below are just a few challenges that an expatriate can experience while on assignment.

- Stress (Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure).
- Integration issues (Adapting to a new environment isn't always easy, meeting/blending with locals, understanding the language, and getting acquainted with the culture can be an issue for an expatriate).

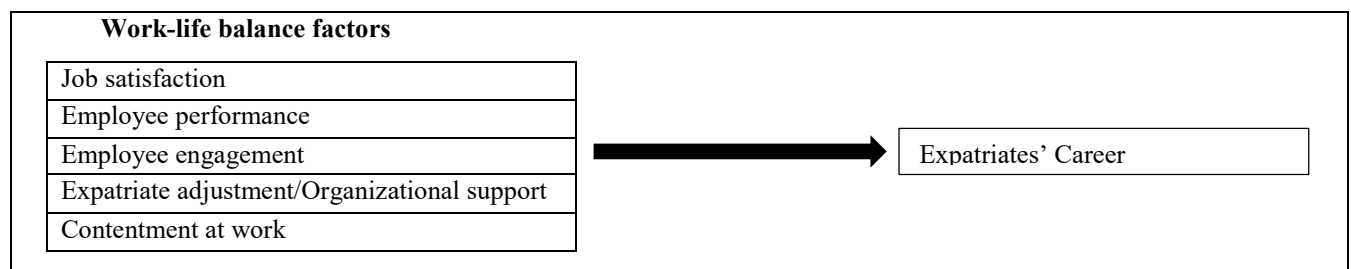
- Family problems (Expatriates will have to leave their family behind and both parties might find it difficult to cope).
- Lack of organizational support (Organizations who don't support the wellbeing of their employees is a challenge that affects the expatriates).
- Language barrier (Understanding a new language can be a challenge for anyone going to a foreign land).

Organizations should be aware of the challenges an expatriate will likely face and help in this regard for a smooth transition into their new role/assignment.

### 1.3. The links between work-life balance management and expatriates' careers

Health and recreation play a critical role in the success or failure of an expatriate assignment. Guthrie (2012) mentions that the promotion of an employee's health should be a priority to an organization. Koubova, & Buchko (2013) says that despite the limited resources available, a key question is how an individual may maintain a satisfying personal life while also achieving good outcomes at work. The question now is whether the two objectives are mutually exclusive or complementary. The inability of an expatriate to manage his personal and work life will lead to a reduced quality of life, stress, poor performance, etc. For an expatriate, work-life balance management (WLBM) is important to achieving success at work and outside work. As a result, organizations must implement new management techniques that give social and supervisory assistance. Studies have shown that an expatriate's success in his/her assignment is due to many factors, such as organizational support, job satisfaction, and engagement, but most importantly happiness at work. When an employee is exhibiting happiness at work then there is a high tendency that he/she has a good work-life balance. If an expatriate is happy at work, then it will impact his/her career positively, and when unhappy it will affect his/her career negatively.

Based on the analysis of the theoretical research, a theoretical model is introduced in Fig. 2.



Source: created by the author.

**Fig. 2. A theoretical model of the impact of Work-life Balance factors on expatriates' career.**

This theoretical model shows the five work-life balance management factors that were used in this study and how they can impact an expatriates' career. Studies have shown the impacts and relationships these factors had on an employee could either be positive or negative. Employees need some sort of balance in their work and personal life and the organization plays a key role as well. Expatriates need to understand that if these factors are taken into consideration, then their career journey will be smooth.

*In summary, work-life balance has a positive significant impact on employee performance and career. Studies show that employee engagement within the workplace assists employees to survive as well as succeed when dealing with adverse situations, and this can also stimulate creativity among these employees. Expressed in another way, with the desire to discover fresh information to explore and integrate this new information, and then develop their aptitude, employees are pushed to become creative. Also, organizations supporting the wellbeing of their employees will improve the general success of the organization and also the career of the employee.*

## 2. Empirical investigation level of impact of Work-Life Balance Management on Expatriates' career

This chapter provides a study carried out by the various researchers concerning the impact of work-life balance in organizations, expatriates' careers, and factors affecting work-life balance management on expatriates' careers. Table 1 shows the aim of the research carried out by the authors and the results that were derived.

Table 1

**Authors' findings from research**

Authors (year)	Aim of research	Research results
Salas-Vallina et al. (2017)	To investigate the relationship between transformational leadership (TFL), organizational learning capability (OLC), and happiness at work (HAW) and offers a new measure for HAW.	A relationship was found between leadership style and positive attitudes or happiness at work. It positively affected medical specialists' happiness at work.
Adnan (2019)	To investigate the relation of work-life balance, happiness, and employee performance.	Results revealed that work-life balance and happiness had a favorable and significant impact on employee performance, resulting in increased job satisfaction.
Mendis, & Weerakkody (2017)	The research was on the Sri Lankan telecommunication industry and recognize the impact of work-life balance on employee performance. And, to identify whether the work-life balance leads to higher employee performance through employee job satisfaction.	The findings of the study reveal that there is a strong relationship between work-life balance and employee performance, a strong relationship between work-life balance and employee job satisfaction, and a strong relationship between employee job satisfaction and employee performance. All these relationships are positive and have significant levels.
Shah et al. (2021)	Examines how organizational support mechanisms extended to expatriate families influence the adjustment of the expatriate, the spouse, and accompanying children.	Findings suggest that the expatriate and expatriate spouses' perceptions of organizational support for expatriate children have an impact on their adjustment in the host nation.

Source: created by the authors.

Table 1 shows the studies which were researched by different authors and their findings. In most of these findings, we can see that there is a relationship between work-life balance and an expatriate's career. Job satisfaction, family life, organizational support all play a role in the career of an expatriate. Employees who are contented at work will more likely be productive and perform at a higher level. A relationship was found between leadership style and happiness at work, as it positively affected employees' happiness at work. Also, research showed that another way for employees to be contented, promotion, and other measures must be put in place in looking after their wellbeing. Now when an employee is satisfied on the job, it automatically leads to higher performance at work. Results showed that there is a positive relationship between employee performance and work-life balance. A strong positive work-life balance helps both the employee and the organization. An employee who is less stressed and happier at work and home will perform at higher levels. Expatriate adjustment & organizational support is very important when we talk about the whole expatriate experience. An organization looking to achieve its aims and objectives has to provide support to its employees for greater results. Results showed that expatriates and their families adjust quicker in a foreign country when organizational support is present. An expatriate is more likely to fail in his assignment if there is inadequate support from the organization. This is why organizations have rewards, insurance/health benefits, promotions, counseling, emotional support, family care support, training & development, etc. in place to make sure that the employees see how their needs and wants are prioritized by the organization.

Other research, like that of Abdul et al. (2015), has shown that the most common reason for expatriate failure is inadequate or inflexible support from organizations for the expatriate and their families, the

research confirms and extends the notion that organizations benefit from addressing the well-being of not only the expatriate but also the accompanying family, and in this case the spouse specifically. Nikkhah et al. (2013) study showed that work life, family life, and organizational support have a direct link to the well-being of employees. This model identifies that positive work and family-life balance have a significant correlation with job satisfaction of employees.

*In summary, it can be said that employees who are contented at work will more likely be productive and perform at a higher level. A relationship was found between leadership style and happiness at work, as it positively affected employees' happiness at work. Also, research showed that another way for employees to be contented, promotion, and other measures must be put in place in looking after their wellbeing. Job engagement is necessary if an employee is to have a good work-life balance. More engaged employees will demonstrate positive organizational results. Job satisfaction is very important as when an employee is contented and engaged at work it equals satisfaction at work. If there is an imbalance in an employee's life, then it can lead to a lack of satisfaction at the workplace. Now when an employee is satisfied on the job, it automatically leads to higher performance at work. Results showed that there is a positive relationship between employee performance and work-life balance.*

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## Conclusions

1. The analysis of the concept of work-life balance management and its factors shows the existence of work-life balance before now and that its factors greatly impact the expatriates' career positively or negatively.
2. After analyzing expatriates' careers and their challenges, it can be stated that expatriates will face culture shock and adjustment issues when working in another country so family and country choice are important factors as far as global work is concerned because it can be a hindrance if not taken into consideration.
3. Examining the links between work-life balance management and expatriates' careers, it can be stated that work-life balance has a significant positive effect on performance. This is to say that a healthy work-life balance will impact an expatriates' career greatly, which will also benefit the organization and vice versa.
4. After analyzing the empirical level of research regarding impact of work-life balance management on expatriates' careers, it was found that job satisfaction results in higher commitment and lower turnover intention.

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