

**WEAVING HARMONY: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE
ON THE WELL-BEING OF OPERATIONAL-LEVEL EMPLOYEES IN THE
APPAREL SECTOR OF KURUNEGALA DISTRICT.**

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of employee well-being for organizational success cannot be overstated. While work-life balance and well-being hold importance across various domains, limited research has been conducted on the factors influencing employee work-life balance globally. In today's fast-paced and dynamic business environment, work-life balance is a critical issue employees face worldwide. The need for work-life balance is increasingly recognized as a strategic concern for organizations and individuals. Traditionally, in the cultural context of Sri Lanka, the role of women has been limited to homemaking, and employee well-being has not been extensively regarded as significant. However, with the modern open economy, both men and women have become employees, heightening the importance of work-life balance between work and family life and giving rise to numerous challenges. Achieving work-life balance is crucial for fulfilling employee well-being (Arunashantha, 2019). Due to heavy workloads and demanding schedules, employees often need help balancing domestic and work responsibilities. They must meet workplace targets within tight timeframes to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies for career advancement. Additionally, they face challenges related to childcare, eldercare, and managing their spouse's activities. Therefore, balancing work, well-being, and professional and family life is essential for employees to experience greater job satisfaction (Kluczyk, 2013).

Employee well-being is crucial to organizational success. Nevertheless, various practical issues can hinder its achievement. This research article, supported by relevant citations, explores common challenges organizations face in maintaining employee well-being. One of the critical issues is work-life balance, which poses challenges in effectively managing personal and work responsibilities, leading to increased stress and burnout among employees. Kossek and Ozeki (1998) found that poor work-life balance is associated with higher levels of job strain and lower employee well-being. Additionally, excessive workload and high job demands negatively impact employee well-being, resulting in elevated stress levels and reduced productivity. Podsakoff, LePine, and LePine (2007) conducted a meta-analysis revealing a significant positive relationship between job demands and employee stress levels. Moreover, an unhealthy or unsafe work environment harms employee well-being, including physical and mental health issues. Kivimäki et al. (2018) demonstrated that poor physical work environments, such as exposure to noise or toxins, are associated with increased risk of adverse health outcomes and decreased well-being among employees. Insufficient social support within the workplace also contributes to decreased well-being, leading to feelings of isolation, reduced job satisfaction, and overall dissatisfaction. Eby et al. (2005) found that social support from coworkers and supervisors positively influences employee well-being and job satisfaction. Furthermore, a lack of recognition and reward for employees' contributions can result in decreased motivation, job dissatisfaction, and reduced well-being. Deery et al. (2017)

examined the positive relationship between recognition and reward programs and employee well-being, job satisfaction, and engagement. Finally, limited opportunities for skill development and career advancement lead to employee disengagement, frustration, and reduced well-being. Tims et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study demonstrating that the lack of development and growth opportunities negatively impacts employee well-being and job satisfaction. By addressing these practical issues, organizations can foster a supportive work environment that promotes employee well-being and, in turn, enhances organizational performance.

Quantitative and qualitative studies examining the impact of work-life balance on the well-being of operational-level employees in the context of operational-level employees in garment factories are limited. This research article highlights the existing research gaps and proposes potential directions for future investigations. In terms of quantitative studies, there is a need for rigorous research that explicitly explores the nature and extent of the impact of work-life balance on the well-being of operational-level employees in the garment factory setting. Building upon existing studies in different industries, such as the research conducted by Kossek et al. (2011), which examines the effects of work-life balance initiatives on employee well-being and work attitudes, can provide valuable insights. Conversely, qualitative studies can offer in-depth insights into the unique work-life balance challenges faced by operational-level employees in garment factories. These studies can shed light on the experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms related to work-life balance in this context. Drawing inspiration from qualitative research conducted by Golden. (2015) on work-life balance challenges and strategies in the low-wage service sector, jobs can be a starting point. Furthermore, contextual factors such as organizational policies, management practices, and cultural norms can influence work-life balance experiences in garment factories. Exploring how these factors shape work-life balance and impact employee well-being requires further investigation. Kalliath and Brough (2008) researched the influence of organizational factors on work-life balance and well-being in different industries, providing valuable insights into potential contextual factors relevant to garment factories. Additionally, evaluating the effectiveness of work-life balance interventions targeted explicitly at operational-level employees in garment factories is crucial. Understanding the impact of interventions, such as flexible work arrangements or support programs, on employee well-being can inform evidence-based practices. Grawitch et al. (2010) researched the outcomes of work-life balance interventions in diverse organizational settings, providing insights into potential evaluation methodologies for similar interventions in garment factories.

The literature on work-life balance in the Sri Lankan apparel sector needs to be expanded. Most studies on work-life balance have primarily focused on employees in industries such as telecommunications, education (teachers), healthcare (nurses), and other employee categories. Consequently, more research needs to examine work-life balance in the apparel sector in Sri Lanka. Opatha (2007) highlights the widely accepted notion that personal happiness, particularly in terms of family life, positively influences an individual's efficiency and effectiveness in their work life. This fact underscores the significance of discussing the topic of work-life balance, especially in a country like Sri Lanka, where it can substantially impact individuals.

Moreover, considering the lack of available literature on this topic, engaging in discussions on work-life balance in the Sri Lankan apparel sector is crucial. Addressing these gaps through empirical studies and drawing insights from related research in different industries will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of work-life balance on the well-being of

operational-level employees in garment factories. Ultimately, this research can inform evidence-based strategies to enhance employee well-being in this sector. Hence, this research explores the relationship between organizational work-life balance and the well-being of operational-level employees in selected garment factories in the Kurunegala district.

METHODOLOGY

The present study examines the correlation and multiple regression between work-life balance and the well-being of operational-level employees in selected garment factories in the Kurunegala district. It adopts a cross-sectional, applied research approach with a quantitative nature. The study utilizes an explanatory research design, focusing on individual employees as the unit of analysis. Employee well-being is the dependent variable, while the independent variables consist of policies, supportive working environment, and job characteristics.

The Kurunegala district in Sri Lanka is home to 17 registered garment factories, from which three were randomly selected to form the study's population. Consequently, all operational-level workers within these three chosen factories were included in the study's population. The target population comprises operational-level employees working in three prominent apparel companies within the Kurunegala district: JK Garments (Pvt) Ltd in Ibbagamuwa, Emjay Garment (PVT Ltd in Karadagolla, and Brandix Casual Wear Ltd in Rideegama. The total number of operational-level employees in these garment factories in the Kurunegala district is 2,305. These employees were considered as the population of the study. Of them, 331 employees were randomly selected as the sample from three different factories. The researcher selected proportionate stratified sampling using five job categories. These are machine operators, cutters, ironers, and jumpers.

Data collection was conducted using self-administered questionnaires, while the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed to analyze the gathered data. The mean and median standard deviation were employed in descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis and regression were used for inferential statistical tests to explain the relationships between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the demographic profile, most respondents were female (68.2 percent) and aged between 21 and 30. Similarly, 67.9 percent of respondents were married and had more than six years of experience.

Table 1

Reliability Analysis of the Study

Variable	No: of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Policies	6	0.940
Supportive Working Environment	5	0.922
Job Characteristics	5	0.926
Well Being	10	0.969

In the context of assessing reliability, Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure used to determine the internal consistency of a scale or questionnaire. It quantifies how closely related the items or variables within the scale are to each other. The range of Cronbach's Alpha is from 0 to 1, where higher values greater than 0.7 indicate better internal consistency. In this case, the statement mentions that the Cronbach Alpha value of the variables was more significant than 0.90, which means that the calculated value exceeded the commonly accepted

threshold of 0.70 or 0.80. Therefore, with a value above 0.90, all the variables in question exhibited an exceptionally high level of internal consistency, indicating an excellent reliability level. Researchers can have high confidence in the reliability and consistency of the measurements obtained from these variables.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables, including frequencies, mean, standard deviation, the mean values of policies, supportive working environment, job characteristics, and employee well-being were found to be 4.23, 4.14, 4.21, and 4.19, respectively. These results indicate that the levels of policies, supportive working environment, job characteristics, and employee well-being were relatively high in the study.

Table 2

Correlation Analysis of the Study

Variables	well-being	Policies	Supportive working environment	Job Characteristics
Well-being	1			
Policies	0.918**	1		
Suppo.working env.	0.932**	0.942**	1	
Job Characteristics	0.930**	0.934**	0.944**	1

N=330

The study conducted in selected garment factories in the Kurunegala district reveals significant statistical correlations at the 0.01 level between policies, supportive working environment, job characteristics, and employee well-being among operational-level employees. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these variables were +0.918, +0.932, and +0.930, respectively. These findings indicate a strong positive correlation between policies, supportive working environment, job characteristics, and employee well-being in the selected garment factories. Moreover, the research findings demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study. The model's R square value, which measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (employee well-being) explained by the independent variables, is 0.896, representing a reliable prediction of 89.6% of the variance.

These results align with studies conducted by Althammer (2021) and Abdulrahman (2019), which found significant correlations between employee work-life balance and well-being. Further, Abdulrahman (2019) identified a positive relationship between employee work-life balance and employee well-being.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis of the Study (Model Summary)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	0.947 ^a	0.896	0.895	0.241	2.274

As per the result of the above table, the R-value shows a simple correlation, and it shows 0.947. The R Square value is 0.896, which means the predictions of job characteristics, policies, and supportive working environment can explain 89.6% of the factors affecting employees' well-being.

Table 4
Coefficient of Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
(Constant)	0.106	0.078		1.351	0.178
Policies	0.201	0.058	0.201	3.460	0.001
Supportive working environment	0.393	0.064	0.382	6.105	0.000
Job Characteristics	0.380	0.059	0.382	6.455	0.000

Dependent variable: well-being

When considering the unstandardized coefficients for policies, it explained that it significantly impacted employee well-being (B Value = 201; P = 0.001). Furthermore, the coefficient for a supportive working environment significantly influences employee well-being (B value = 0.393; P = 0.000). Correspondingly, the coefficient for job characteristics is significantly influenced by employee well-being (B value = 0.380; P = 0.000).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the impact of work-life balance on the well-being of operational-level employees in selected garment factories in the Kurunegala district. Dimensions of the independent variable considered in this study were policies, supportive working environment, and job characteristics. The findings revealed a significant and robust positive relationship between policies and the well-being of operational-level employees in the selected garment factories in the Kurunegala district. Similarly, a significant positive impact was observed between the supportive working environment and the well-being of operational-level employees. Furthermore, the study found a significant positive impact between job characteristics and operational-level employee well-being. These findings support all the hypotheses formulated for this study.

This research provides valuable insights for organizations in planning and developing strategies to enhance employee work-life balance. It highlights the importance of employers prioritizing the well-being of their employees and underscores the significant positive relationship between employee work-life balance and well-being. Specifically, increasing employee work-life balance leads to higher levels of employee well-being. This study addresses the research gap by examining the impact of work-life balance policies, supportive working environments, and job characteristics on employee well-being, particularly in the context of apparel companies in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, the questionnaire utilized in this study can be helpful for other researchers seeking to investigate similar research topics. The measurement instrument has been tested and validated for this research study, ensuring its reliability. Additionally, the findings of this study contribute to the existing literature, enriching the knowledge in this research area. By addressing the identified research gap, this study enhances understanding of the impact of work-life balance attributes on employee well-being. Future researchers can benefit from this theoretical model and further explore this research area, building upon the findings presented here.

Keywords: Employee well-being, job characteristics, operational level employees, policies, work-life balance.

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