

# Challenges of Work-Life Balance Faced by Working Fathers in Kathmandu Valley: Evidence from Cross-Sectional Data

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## Abstract

Work-life balance has been considered as important component in individual life. Today in order to attract and retain their employees organizations are considering work-life balance as their prime concern. The main purpose of this study is to examine the work-life balance of working fathers in Kathmandu Valley. This study followed descriptive method of data analysis and 405 samples were collected with the help of non-probability sampling method. Further, the study revealed that satisfaction and motivation are considered to be key factors that help to maintain work-life balance. However unhelpful attitude of colleagues is found to be major reason creating work-life unbalance. 77.03% working fathers stated that they face challenge in maintaining work-life balance. This, it is recommended that by maintaining structural consistency in the workplace challenges of work-life can be mitigated up to certain extent. These findings will have implication at organizational level. The study concluded that high level stress, unsupportive relationships, unrealistic demands, unhelpful attitude and lack of control were found to be major challenges for maintaining work-life balance.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, working father, challenges, Kathmandu, Nepal

## 1. Background

Work-life balance is a global phenomenon which has always been an important issue because of its significant influence towards job satisfaction, time management, stress management and other significant aspects of day to day life of human beings (Pathak, 2015). In the present context most of the companies are becoming aware of the significance of work-life balance and hence assumed it as an important tool to attract as well as retain the talents and facilitate sustainable human resources (Hossen et al., 2018). The work and family influence each other in both positive as well as negative way like: time, attitudes, stress, tasks, emotions, and behavior spillover among work and family (Gnawali, 2017). Work-life imbalance can impair an organizational effectiveness through absenteeism and high rates of turnover which may arise as a result of family obligations that is associated with stress and mental health (Maslach et al., 2001).

Poor work-life balance has various negative impacts on the workplace viz. performance reduction, job satisfaction as well as higher level of conflict. It is necessary to keep in mind that stress related absenteeism and mental health problems in the workplace are on the rising trend (Ravalier et al., 2016). Nicklin and Mcnall (2013) considered family as well as work is the two most important domains for any individual. Achieving the harmony between work and personal life is significantly important from both the employer and employee perspective (Mušura et al., 2013). As a strong connection exists between work-family balance and overall job satisfaction, the balance between these two is critical to any working person (Rocereto et al., 2011). Competing on work as well as family commitments have a negative impact on employees which

directly results on reducing the productivity of the employees (Ajala, 2013). Nepali (2018) has mentioned that in the past there used to be fair linkage between work and home. But nowadays work is likely to invade the personal life of the people and maintaining work-life balance is not a simple task as expected. Thus, family work balance is a complex issue involving financial values, career path, time management and other factors.

Most of the Nepalese still face some problems in their workplace (Nepali, 2018) as most of them are engaged in the small business in order to maintain their household activities, providing education to their children and managing their family as well (Mcenhill & Steadman, 2015). In Nepalese context small business is fully operated by people. Whatever management they have to do it is by their own means and so those people who involved in small business mostly occupied from morning to evening for their business operations. Sometimes they include their family whereas sometime they purchase or hire some people but one person should be there for all the time. In such a situation there may arise the situation of work-life imbalance. This may result to mental stress; his/ her family may not run properly, a difficult situation may arise in this context. It may effect on the education of the children because of not providing the sufficient time by them towards their children.

Thus it has created a culture of poor work life balance and experienced a lot of work pressure. Gnawali (2017) has explained that high conflict in both work and families are related or associated with lower level of balance in work life of any individuals where some people experience good level of work-life balance between them, whereas others experience a high degree of imbalance between work and families. This study tends to contribute the further research regarding the work-life balance. Since several set of studies on the work-life balance has been conducted but till date there has not been conducted any study regarding an attitude towards the working fathers involved in small business enterprises in Kathmandu valley. Thus, the level of stress among the working fathers, work-life balance provisions and amenities provided by different organizations are some significant variables that they're still unexplored. Hence, this study covers the area of work-life balance of working fathers involved in small business enterprises and identifying the challenges/hurdles faced by working fathers associated with it in Nepalese context.

This study is further divided as: second section includes methods used in the study, third section includes results and final section concludes the study.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1 Study Area, Sample and Population*

Kathmandu is chosen as area of study. Kathmandu valley is located between 27°36" and 27°48" N, between 85°12" and 85°31" E at 13000 meters above sea level with area expanding of 899 square kilometer comprising of three districts Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur (Tandukar et al., 2021; Ishtiaque et al., 2017). Being the capital city of Nepal and one of the only regions which accumulates highest concentration of population (Adhikari et al, 2021), conducting a research on work-life balance of working fathers involved in small business enterprises in Kathmandu gives better and more factual results.

The entire population for this research would be all those frontline working fathers involved in small business enterprises in Kathmandu valley. Though they come from several geographical areas they may hold different attitudes towards the issues of work-life balance. They cover different age ranges because it is presumed that people from a diverse age range may employ

various strategies in order to deal with work-life balance problems based on their experience and knowledge in different life stages.

Following formula was used to work out the sample size for the study:  $n = z^2 pq / e^2$  (Panth, 2018; Paudel et al., 2020). Where  $n$  = sample size required for study, value of standard variant at given confidence level (for 95% confidence level the value of  $Z=1.96$ ),  $p$  = Prevalence or proportion of an event 50 % = 0.5. So,  $p = 0.5$ ,  $q = 1 - p$ , allowable error that can be tolerated ( $e$ ) = 5 %. Hence this study is based upon the 405 respondents residing in Kathmandu valley (Singh & Kale, 2007). Chabahil, Boudhha, Kirtipur and Durbar square areas in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur are considered during the study where respondents were asked about the impact of work-life balance.

## 2.2 Research Design

This study is based on descriptive research design. The purpose of this research is to study the work-life balance of working father involved in small business enterprises. Descriptive techniques are used for the qualitative analysis. In the data collection process two types of data are used namely, primary and secondary. The primary data includes observation, questionnaire and key informant interview. Similarly the secondary data includes the reports and documents. The study is based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling can be very beneficial in situation when research need to reach target sample quickly and sampling, for proportionality is not the main concern (Singh & Kale, 2007; Bhandari et al., 2021). Hence, the insights generated from a purposive sample via qualitative inquiry rely heavily upon the information richness of the individual experiences and the analytical capabilities of the researcher, rather than on the sample size. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Further, descriptive statistics are used for data analysis.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Ritvo (1971) mentioned in their study that age of the respondents plays a major role in balancing work-life and family life. This study revealed majority (32.84%) of working fathers falls in the age group of 31-40 years. Among them almost 80% are literate and majority ((29.63%) of them holds bachelor degree. In line with this, Narayana and Neelima (2017) mentioned in their study that the level of education of the respondents plays a significant role in balancing work-life and family life. As per their research, if the parents are educated they can know the techniques of balancing work-life and family life. However, talking about the working fathers it was revealed that 86.17% have not received any kind of business trainings but Albertsen et al. (2008) urged that business trainings taken by the respondents plays a vital role in balancing work-life and family life.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Title	Number	Percentage
Age		
Below 30	30	7.41
31 – 40	133	32.84
41 – 50	109	26.91

51 – 60	107	26.42
Above 60	26	6.42
<b>Education Level</b>		
Illiterate	25	6.17
Primary Level	6	1.48
Lower Secondary Level	24	5.92
Secondary Level	71	17.53
Higher Secondary Level	114	28.15
Bachelor’s Degree	120	29.63
Master’s Degree	45	11.12
<b>Business Training</b>		
Yes	345	85.19
No	60	14.81

Hence it clearly shows that business training is the most significant factor in maintaining the balance between work-life and family life and working fathers should be encouraged to take trainings related to their business. Similarly work experience can help working fathers to balance their work life as of their knowledge about the organizational experience they can response accurately and practically in home as well as in office. As our study uncovered that 48.14% working fathers holds experience of 5 to 10 years.

### 3.2 Work-Life Balance Index of Working Fathers in Kathmandu Valley

Table 2 shows the work-life balance index of working fathers in Kathmandu valley. Here the factors are classified into three sections. For instance the first section deals with the economic factors, second section deals with the environmental factors and lastly the third section deals with the social factors.

Table 2: Work-Life Balance Index

Particulars	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
<b>Economic Factors</b>				
For me, it is important to examine the living condition while looking at the housing.	352	86.91	53	13.09
Income is an important means to me to achieve the higher living standards and thus greater well-being.	364	89.88	41	10.12
Higher economic growth improves my access to the quality education, health care and	302	74.57	103	25.43

housing.				
Having a job helps me to stay connected with society.	287	70.86	118	29.14
<b>Environmental Factors</b>				
A strong social network can provide emotional support to me during both good and bad times.	355	87.66	50	12.34
An unspoiled environment is a source of satisfaction for me to perform physical activity.	339	83.70	66	16.30
Trust in government is essential to me for both social cohesion and well-being.	269	66.42	136	33.58
<b>Social Factors</b>				
A progress in health status can be achieved by putting greater emphasis on my public health and disease prevention.	341	84.20	64	15.80
Personal security is a core element to me for the well-being of individuals.	328	80.99	77	19.01

### 3.3 Level of Awareness on Work-Life Balance

In order to know the challenges faced by working fathers to balance their work-life, it is important to know their level of awareness on work-life balance. Therefore, this study tried to analyze level of awareness on work-life balance among working fathers in Kathmandu valley.

Table 3: Overall Work-Life Balance Index

	Economic Factors	Environmental Factors	Social Factors	Overall Factors
Low	5	36	7	3
Moderate	42	178	127	89
High	358	191	271	313
Total	405	405	405	405

Around 2/3 of respondents are highly aware about the economic factors, environmental factors and social factors along with the overall factors of work-life balance. Table 3 further shows that 95.06% respondents are highly aware on economic factors whereas, only 1.23% are low aware

about it. Similarly, maximum 47.16% are highly aware in environmental factors of work-life balance and 8.88% are least aware about it. Further, 66.9% working fathers are highly aware about social factors and only 1.72% are least aware about it. Thus, it was found that 77.28% working fathers are highly aware about work-life balance, 21.97% are moderately aware and 0.74% are least aware on work-life balance which concludes that majority of fathers are aware regarding work-life balance.

### 3.4 Impact of COVID-19 in Work-Life Balance

As COVID-19 have hit hard in every sector of the economy around the globe, it also greater influence in work-life balance as well. Around 297 respondents out of 405 which is nearly 2/3 of the total respondents (73.33%) were influenced by the pandemic whereas remaining 26.67% respondents were not influenced by COVID-19. Similarly this study also revealed the level of impact due to COVID-19 on work-life balance as depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1: Level of Impact

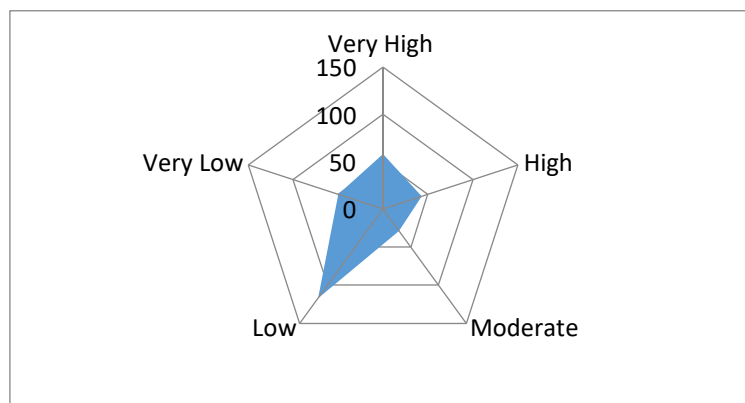
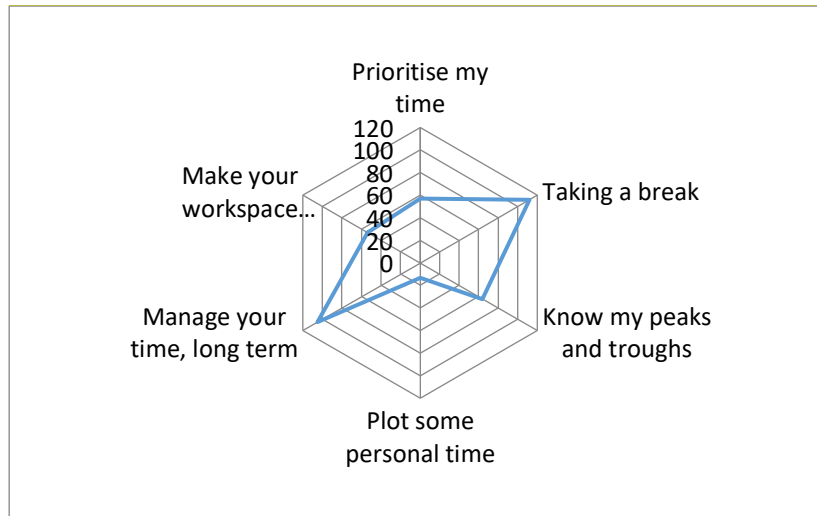


Figure 1, clearly shows the level of COVID-19 on working fathers in Kathmandu valley. This study showcased that 14.32% working fathers faced very high level of impact on work-life balance, 10.61% respondents faced high impact, 7.1% faced moderate level of impact, 28.8% respondents have suggested low level of impact and remaining 12.34% respondents have suggested very low level on work-life balance due to COVID-19.

### 3.5 Remedial Measures to Maintain Work-Life Balance Impacted from COVID-19

There are various adverse impacts in the business industry due to COVID-19 which have created impact in work-life balance as well. Hence in other to overcome such obstacles several remedial measures to maintain the work-life balance are suggested by respondents as in figure 2. Among 405 respondents 57 respondents have suggested to prioritize time, 112 respondents have suggested about taking a break. Similarly 64 respondents have shared their opinion on knowing the peaks and through. Remaining 13 respondents have suggested about plotting some personal time. Likewise 105 respondents have shown their response on managing time in a long term basis whereas rest 54 respondents have responded on making a workspace work for you.

Figure 2: Remedial Measures to Maintain Work-Life Balance



### 3.6 Challenges of Work-Life Balance Faced by Working Fathers in Kathmandu Valley

There are various challenges of work-life balance faced by working fathers in Kathmandu valley. It is difficult to maintain the balance between work-life and family life. 77.03% working fathers believed there are the challenges in maintaining the work-life balance among working fathers in Kathmandu Valley which is in line with the study conducted by Williams et al. (2016) which stated that more than 85% of the parents feel that they have to go through various sorts of challenges while maintaining the proper balance between work-life and family life. The study further revealed some of the challenges for maintaining work-life balance of working fathers in Kathmandu valley are: stress level, unsupportive relationships, unrealistic demands, unhelpful attitude and lack of control. Also, during the study it was revealed that COVID-19 has created the adverse impact in Nepalese business. 73.83% working fathers felt that their business has been impacted up to certain extent by COVID-19 negatively. Around 2/3 of the total respondents (73.33%) perceived that COVID-19 has influenced their work-life balance.

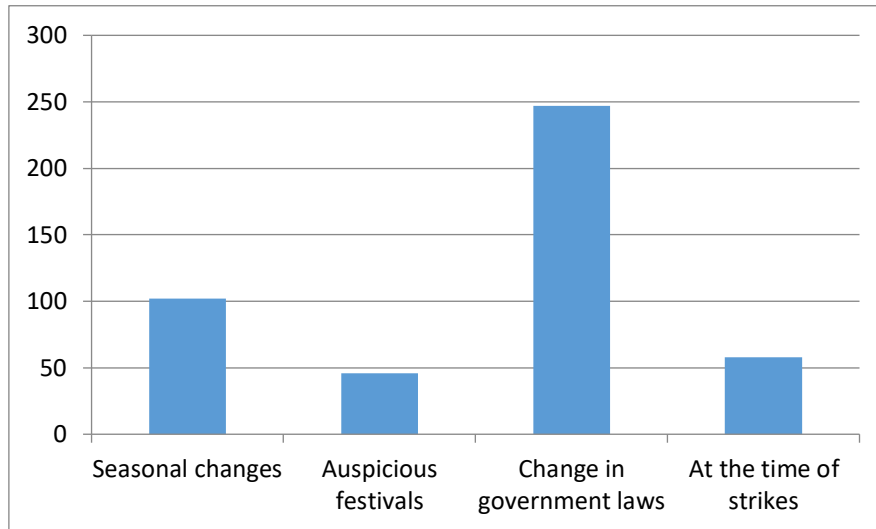
Table 4: Challenges of Work-Life Balance

S. No	Challenges of work-life balance	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	High level of stress	102	33.33
2	Unsupportive relationships	10	3.27
3	Unrealistic demands	27	8.82
4	Unhelpful attitude	149	48.69
5	Lack of control	18	5.89

### 3.7 Factors Creating the Challenges and its Management

Challenges occurs in maintaining work-life balance due to various reasons. As found from this study maximum (60.98%) working fathers stated that they faces challenge due to change in government laws. 25.18% stated that seasonal changes also creates challenges for work-life management. Strikes and similar events are also supposed to create challenges as stated by 14.32% respondents whereas, least i.e. 11.3% stated that auspicious festivals also creates challenges in work-life balance.

Figure 3: Factors Creating Challenges



The study also revealed that out of total 405 respondents 186 respondents felt that there is possibility to manage the challenge that occurs whereas remaining 219 respondents responded that there is no any way to manage challenges of work-life balance as felt by working fathers in Kathmandu valley. Table 3 shows how respondents who stated that the challenges can be managed unleashed some ways to manage those challenges. Some of the ways to manage challenges in work-life balance are effective implementation of law (50%), special attention should be given to small enterprises (29.03%) and unnecessary strikes should be eliminated (20.97%).

Table 5: Ways of Managing the Situation of Work-Life Balance

S. No	Ways of managing the situation	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Effective implementation of law	93	50
2	Special attention should be given to small enterprises	54	29.03
3	Unnecessary strikes should be eliminated	39	20.97

### 3.8 Managerial Implication for Promoting the Work-life Balance of Working Fathers

73.58% respondents responded positively that the father's work-life balance can be better enhanced. For that purpose various strategies can be adopted to enhance work-life balance of



the working fathers in Kathmandu valley which could include maintaining structural consistency, encouraging vacations, increasing transparency, allowing schedule flexibility, engaging in team building exercises and fostering a trusting environment.

Table 6: Management Strategies

S. No	Management Strategies	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Maintain structural consistency	105	25.92
2	Encourage vacations	23	5.67
3	Increase transparency	17	4.19
4	Allow schedule flexibility	58	14.32
5	Engage in team building exercises	29	7.16
6	Foster a trusting environment	65	16.05

Further other remedial measures such as prioritizing time between work and family, taking breaks in between work, sharing their work experience about peaks and through with colleagues and family, sparing some personal time for own self are suggested by working fathers in Kathmandu Valley.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper explored the challenges of work-life balance in Kathmandu valley among working fathers. The study concluded that high level stress, unsupportive relationships, unrealistic demands, unhelpful attitude and lack of control were found to be major challenges for maintaining work-life balance. Therefore, 25.92% of working fathers mentioned maintaining structural consistency in an organization would help to maintain work-life balance. Though responsibility of child, elderly person, support of colleagues and partners were found to be major factors affecting work life balance in the study by (Chiang et al., 2010; Crites, 1976; Guest 2002). This study contrasted those findings and revealed that responsibility of child, elderly person, support of colleagues and partners does not affect work-life balance of working fathers in Kathmandu valley.

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