



Review of Work Life Balance and Suggested Improvements

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Abstract

Many adults work in addition to being parents. Even when these roles are desired, balancing work and parenthood can cause stress. When parents are stressed out from their jobs, it can make home life extremely tense. For families with low incomes, this situation is even harder because these parents are often stuck in jobs that are really demanding and offer little control over their schedules. Low-income parents also frequently struggle with finding good child care. If they can't find quality child care, their kids might not get the attention and support they need. This can hurt their development and school performance (Heinrich, 2014). Children in these situations might face challenges that can affect their future careers and overall life success. These problems can be addressed with thoughtful strategies and solutions. This paper will review the literature to explore how parental stress and work-life balance are related to children's well-being in a cascading effect, and examine potential solutions.

Why Parents Work

Work is a necessary aspect of life, especially for parents. It provides financial stability essential for meeting the needs of their families. A stable income allows parents to cover basic necessities such as food, shelter, and education while providing a safe environment for their children. Parents who are dedicated to their jobs and work responsibly implant valuable life lessons in their children. Plus, work can be a source of personal fulfillment, enabling parents to achieve personal goals. It can enhance their self-esteem and overall happiness. Although balancing work and family life can be challenging, many parents seek flexible arrangements that allow them to be present at home while pursuing their careers. Ultimately, the multifaceted importance of work benefits not only individual families but also the broader community, fostering a cycle of growth and support that enhances the well-being of everyone involved (Kuranga, 2020).

Stress and Work Life Balance

People have different perspectives on work-life balance. Dhas and Karthikeyan (2015) define work-life balance as, "effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and other activities that are important to us - including spending time with family, taking part in sport and recreation, volunteering or undertaking further study (p.10)." Furthermore, they suggest that improving the balance between our working lives and personal lives "can bring real benefits for employers and employees. It can help build strong communities and productive businesses (p. 10)."

Work-life balance has a huge impact on the lives of parents and children because it affects well-being across domains. For parents, work-life balance can affect physical, psychological and social well-being (Vanitha, 2022). For children, parental work-life balance can affect children's own decisions about their future careers (Hoffmann et al., 2015; Lindquist, 2015). For example, children likely observe how their parents manage work-life balance, and this might influence what career they choose in the future.

People have pressure on them every day to balance their work while still supporting their families. This pressure to balance work and family life can come with a lot of stress. For example, it is hard to balance caring for a baby or child while attending work meetings. Additionally, for some working mothers, they feel as though they do not get sufficient help in taking care of their child/children from their partner (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). The consequences of focusing too hard on either employment or family can have a significant impact on working parents.

Cascading from Work to Home - Impact on Parents

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is crucial for parents, as it significantly impacts their mental and physical well-being. When things are going well, parents who successfully navigate their professional and personal responsibilities often experience reduced stress levels, allowing them to engage more fully with their families. This positive dynamic fosters stronger relationships and promotes a supportive home environment, enhancing both emotional resilience and overall life satisfaction (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020). Conversely, when work-life stress takes hold, parents may struggle to juggle their responsibilities, leading to increased anxiety, fatigue, and burnout. This strain not only affects their health but can also ripple through the family, resulting in less quality time with children and a diminished capacity to provide emotional support. Therefore, prioritizing work-life balance is essential for parents to thrive both at work and at home (Vinitha, 2022).

When parents transition from work to home, the ability to leave job-related stress behind can determine the quality of their interactions with family members. A smooth transition allows parents to be present and engaged, fostering a nurturing environment for their children. Conversely, if work stress carries over into the home, it can lead to irritability and distraction, undermining family relationships. On the flip side, the home environment also affects work performance; supportive family dynamics can provide emotional resources that help parents cope with job-related challenges. However, when home life is filled with conflict or demands, it can detract from parents' focus and productivity at work. This cyclical relationship underscores the importance of creating boundaries and strategies that promote a harmonious balance, ultimately benefiting both parents and their families.

The Effect of Home Stress on Work

Home stress is usually considered to be less important than work stress, but it can be the cause of work stress. Challenges at home can affect one's mind, crowding it with family conflicts, financial pressures, or overwhelming responsibilities. This can make it hard to concentrate, leading to decreased productivity and increased anxiety (Guest, 2002; Hilbretcht et al., 2008).

When someone lacks a strong support system at home, they can feel alone in facing their challenges. This isolation means they don't have anyone to talk to or share their burdens with,



which can make problems feel even bigger and more overwhelming. Without emotional support, feelings of stress can make it harder to handle the demands of work. Understanding the connection between home and work stress is important because it shows how one can impact the other, causing a ripple effect (Hilbretcht, et al., 2008; Vanitha, 2022).

Moreover, managing home stress can affect the workplace environment. When people feel better at home, they bring more positivity and engagement to work, boosting team dynamics. Basically, focusing on home stress not only helps individuals but also creates a healthier, more supportive workplace.

Impact on Children

Professor of Public Policy, Education, and Economics Carolyn Heinrich (2014) points out that having a job is not always great for kids. On one hand, working parents can be good role models and the extra money can make life better for their children. For example, a study in Denmark found that children with self-employed parents were more likely to be self-employed in their future careers (Hoffmann, 2015). But on the other hand, working long hours, night shifts, or stressful jobs can decrease the time parents spend with their kids and can make it hard for them to bond. Working is important for women and parents because it can give their families extra money and increase their ability to move up economically. This is especially true for low-income parents who often have to take on tough jobs with low pay and no flexibility. Heinrich suggests that to help both parents and kids, we need better solutions. For example, making work schedules more flexible, ensuring access to high quality child care, and providing paid parental leave could allow parents to spend important time with their children and make sure children are well-taken care of while their parents are working (Heinrich, 2014).

It's important to make sure that policies support both parents and children so that families can have the best chance to thrive. Understanding how a parent's job and work-life balance impact their children's future is important for making good policies. If we can find better ways to support working parents, such as offering more flexible work options or improving child care, it could make a huge difference for families. It's not just about giving parents the chance to work; it's about ensuring that their work doesn't negatively affect their kids. By focusing on these areas, we can help create a better environment for both parents and children, so kids have the best chance to do well in school and succeed in their future careers. This way, children (and their parents) can be healthier, happier, and more successful all around.

What Is Helpful for Reducing Stress and Achieving Work-Life Balance?

Reducing stress and achieving work-life balance can be supported by several strategies. First, creating a time for work and personal hours helps create a mental state that allows you to focus better in both areas. Second, prioritizing self-care through healthy eating, workouts, and enough sleep is needed for overall well-being. Staying organized with a schedule or planner makes tasks feel more manageable, while open communication with coworkers and family brings support. Taking breaks during work is crucial for recharging, and limiting distractions can improve focus. Seeking support from friends or professionals is also helpful. Flexibility in adjusting schedules when necessary can alleviate stress, and engaging in hobbies outside of



work provides a refreshing escape. Implementing these practices can lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Finally, in addition to the individual strategies described above, policies are needed to help parents achieve work life balance. While policy changes are helpful for all working parents, they are especially helpful for parents stuck in low-paying, inflexible jobs. These policy supports for working parents could include access to high quality child care, providing paid parental leave, and flexible work scheduling options for parents.

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