Work-Life Balance, Job Stress and Individual Performance: An Application

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the effects of work-life balance on job stress and individual performance. To achieve this aim we conducted a survey on postgraduate and doctoral students at a University located Ankara, Turkey. The universe of this paper is 1000 postgraduate and doctoral students. We reached 300 of them and 232 of surveys were used for analyses. We conducted factor analyses, correlation and regression analyses with SPSS 20.0 packaged program. As a result of the analyses, we found that, there were strong relations between job stress performance and work-life balance factors.

Key Words: Work-life Balance, Performance, stress

Introduction

Nowadays labor force encompasses a wide range of employees with precise needs and resources when it comes to harmonizing work and life roles (Brummelhuis and Lippe, 2010, 173). Numerous academicians tried to describe work-life balance, mainly focusing on a process of attempting to balance the various dimensions of career with other personal dimensions that include family and other relationships (Evans, Carney, Wilkinson, 2013, 436). WLB has come to the head of debate regarding improvements in working conditions and increasing the flexibility of paid work (Wheatley, 2012, 815).

Job stress is a common fact that has been found to raise adverse wellbeing and performance worries in various organizational and behavioral studies (Babatunde, 2013, 73). Utmost of the words or expressions are stated in “negative” terms – that is, “stress” is perceived as something bad. For instance, words like “depression”, “feeling out of control”, “overworked”, “time pressures”, “panic attacks”; “anxiety” are frequently used to define what stress means to us individually (Weinberg et.al., 2010, 56). Some organizations do use a stress management program. They view the problems of stress as something in-built to the person, and this allows them to blame the individual. It means that they present a program that aims to help the employee handle with the stressor situation, but do nothing to eradicate the source of the stress. Other organizations attempt to manage the stress situation without considering the needs of the individual. (Weinberg et.al., 2010, 65)

Policymakers are concerned that most of the organizations are trying to avoid making proper WLB programs due to high costs. On the other hand, academicians seems to believe all firms should be adopting better WLB programs will create positive impact on firm performance, mainly in more competitive markets (Bloom, et. al, 2009, 17).

Literature Review

1. Work-Life Balance

Work–life balance is a cause of stress that many individuals suffer. The term has been defined, as “a form of role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are equally mismatched is some respect” (Carlson et. al., 2000, 241). The research in this area was named as ‘work-family balance,’ and it was broadly reported in modern organizational behavior text. Lately, a broader term has emerged in the literature as ‘work-life balance’, which offers a more inclusive approach to the study of work/non-work conflict as compared to work-family conflict (Dash et.al. 2012, 52). Work-life balance is ways of counteracting against to circumstances to help to persons fulfill their responsibilities and aspirations to lead to mutual benefit of the individual, business and society at large (Chandra, 2012, 1041). WLB is about the relationship between paid job and free one, in families and the community and personal development (Pandu et.al. 2013, 611). Building a balance between work and life is a big issue. On the other hand, work pressures and fast changing environment have made it an issue with both the gender, all professionals working at all industries all over the world. Managing “work-life balance” is not as simple as it seems (Kartrik, 2013, 26).

Even though a lot of people look for WLB, their concern for success take them into a position, where they work for long hours and experience inadequate relationship between home and work (Chandra, 2012, 1041). Most WLB discussions have focused on the negative relations often called ‘role conflict’, which mostly comes from inaptness of activities between work and family domains and emphasizes the idea that the interface between work and family is a zero-sum game (Akanji, 2012, 250). According to the Duxbury and friends (2003), over 10% of the respondents to the Health Canada survey reported high levels of family to work interference. Personal circumstances, their family and/or their responsibilities outside of work were making it hard for them to be a good employee.

At the last decade, researchers have begun to recognize the two sides of work–family conflict (or WLB) by taking into account both directions: work interference with family and family interference with work. To understand the work–family interface, both directions of work–family conflict must be well thought-out (Carlson et. al., 2000, 250).
Work and family help each other by many significant ways. At least some of the benefits consequential from involvement in one’s job, such as income, are not derived from participation in one’s family, and vice versa. Therefore, there are likely different types of resource gains and they may or may not be comparable across domains. As a final point, enrichment can occur one way, meaning that work can offer resource gains that result in better individual performance in the family domain (work-to-family enrichment) or family can provide resource gains that lead to improved individual functioning in the work domain (family-to-work enrichment). Nevertheless, it is reasonable that the mechanisms of bidirectional enrichment may not be analogous because the function and activities of these two systems are not similar and may offer qualitatively different types of gains. Besides, adults obtain meaning from their work and family roles (Carlson et al., 2006, 135).

2. Job Stress

Today, stress is a word spoken not only by “a common man” but also by “a scientist”. The researchers conducted indicate that every person makes a different definition of stress. For instance, stress means fluctuation in a stock market for a businessman; it means the difficulty of attention and concentration for an air traffic controller in the observation room at the airport. Terms and expressions used to define stress are generally conceived as negative, bad and undesirable things. For example, the terms “depression”, “feeling like out of control”, “migraine or headache”, “time pressure”, “panic attack”, “bad temper”, “excessive working” and “insomnia” are generally used to mean what the stress is. Stress usually signifies negative experiences for individuals (Wienberg et al, 2010, 54).

Stress can also mean wrapping, bothering, pressing, binding and smothering (Tokmak et al., 2011, 50). Stress is a concept having an effect on individuals and affecting their behavior, work efficiency and relations with other people. Stress does not come out of nowhere without any signs. For stress to occur, people must be affected from the changes that occur in their environment. Every individual is affected from the changes in the environment, but while some of them are affected faster, others are affected less and later. Then stress is related to the effects of a change in the environment or individual’s changing the environment on her/him. Secondly, it means that characteristics of an affected person affect to what extent it is affected under these effects (Eren, 2001, 291).

Dr. Hans Selye studied on stress for long years and made great contribution to stress–people relation. The stress concept of H. Selye contains reaction mechanisms of the organism and it is known as “General Adaptation Syndrome”. According to this theory, the reaction of organism towards stress develops in three stages: “alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion” (Sabuncuoğlu, Tüz, 2001, 232).

Alarm stage: It is the first condition in which organism perceives external stimulus as stress. Hormones step in here. Signs of stress are observed. If stress factor disappears, relaxation occurs and body slows down in such activities as sleep and digestion. If stress continues, the stage of resistance starts.

Resistance stage: If a situation suitable for adaptation occurs despite stressful conditions, resistance happens. The symptoms of organism in case of alarm reaction disappear. At this stage, the resistance of body is above normal level. If organism resists, stress can be overcome. But otherwise, intense and continuous tension weakens the defense of organism and brings it to the stage of exhaustion.

Exhaustion stage: If stress is long-term, the capacity of body is consumed. Defense reduces, and diseases occur.

2.1. Organization and Stress

Organizational stress attempts to express a case belonging to the working environment and negative or stressful situations (Gök, 2009, 431). Stress is a condition in which personal characteristics and evaluations are highly effective. From this perspective, the question “which situations cause more stress in organizational life?” becomes more important than the question “What is organizational stress?” Therefore, stress is seen as a concept which incorporates the interaction of environment and individual (Ertekin, 1993,8). Throughout the history, people have been in an obligation to coordinate their efforts in order to realize their personal aims and to reach their targets. Within this period of coordination, people have realized that they can accomplish more than they can do on their own. And this social process of awareness has directed people towards organizing and forming an organization (Güler et al., 2001, 16). Stress is one of the most important problems in today’s businesses in which competition is heavily experienced. The most effective factor in processes of job satisfaction, job performance and efficiency, not coming to work and end-of-service is stress. A tension and disappointment is in question that may result after the interaction of many factors related to the individual, with the group s/he is attached to, the organization s/he works and general environment (Tınaz, 2005, 37). Organizational stress is caused by the overlap of resistance expected from employees and their capacity. Recent studies have put forth that the reason of not coming to work is 50-60% job stress (Milutinovic et al. 2012, 172).

2.2. Results of Stress

2.2.1. Individual and Organizational Results of Stress

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High level of stress leads to various physiological, psychological and behavioral damages on people, negatively affects the physical and mental unity of employees, reduces performance and individuals may experience difficult decision-making mechanism and behavioral instability (Yılmaz, 2006, 104). We can explain the Individual and Organizational Results of Stress as below (Sabuncuoğlu, Tüz, 2001, 242):

2.2.1.1. Individual Results of Stress

Physiological Results: Heart diseases, headaches and backaches, cancer, diabetes, cirrhosis, lung and skin diseases are observed.

Psychological Results: Family issues, irregular sleep routine, depression, psychological disorders and burn-out can be observed.

Behavioral Results: Smoking, alcohol, making accident, violence, reluctance attention deficit are observed.

2.2.1.2. Organizational Results of Stress

Stress is becoming an increasingly important concern for the companies since it can be resulted in having significant economic implications for the organizations and adverse publicity (Babatunde, 2013, 77). Stress causes a decrease in the productivity and efficiency of the employees, and as a result, increasing rate of occupational accidents, psychological and physiological problems experienced by the employees and the loss of qualified workforce result in additional cost to the companies (Okutani Tengilimoğlu, 2002, 22). Under stress, the employees get demotivated and start to experience health problems, which resulted in performance loss, employee turnover rate, absenteeism and alienations in the organization. To explain it in more detail (Sabuncuoğlu, Tüz, 2001, 244):

Performance Loss: Stress has both positive and negative impacts on the performance and efficiency. Yerkes and Damson in this regard carried out the first study in 1908 and they found a linear relation between stress and performance to a certain extent. Known as Y-D law, this study showed that after a certain point, increase in the stress caused a decrease in performance and efficiency. Overstress can have detrimental effects on the organizations especially as a result of the decrease in attention to certain activities that requires certain mental skills such as making a judgment or decision.

Employee Turnover Rate: Increased employee turnover rate may be the indicator that the employees are working under stress. Continuous work pressure prevents the employees from becoming integrated with the organization and having a job satisfaction.

Absenceism: Stress situations such as wage, organization policy, monotony, workload and unfairness may cause the employees to take advantage of absenteeism (Yılmaz, 2006, 105).

3. Performance

Performance is defined as the measurement of the results and resources to achieve the goals; achievement level of the defined goal; efficiency and quality of an activity with a purpose. It also can be defined as a complicated interrelation between certain performance indicators such as effectiveness, efficiency, quality, quality of the working life, innovation and profitability (Eliat, Ağca, 2006, 347). The literature review shows that performance is mostly examined in two categories: individual and organizational performance (Gül, 2007,324).

3.1. Individual Performance in Organizations and Individual Performance Factors

Individual performance is defined as the individual’s performance of a work appropriate to the attributes and skills defined for him/her within acceptable limits (Ergun, 2008, 50). There are basically three factors that could affect the individual performance at various levels depending on the conditions. These are administrative factors, individual-related factors and other factors (Ergun, 2008, 50).

Administrative Factors: Even though considered to be related to the employee at first glance, individual performance is a concept related to the perception of the administrative mentality and leadership style within the business climate. Among the specific administrative factors regarding the performance increase are definition of mission and vision, definition of the strategies, leadership, participation, communication, motivation, stress management and performance evaluation (Özmutaf, 2007, 44).

Individual-Related Factors: The results of the stress factors affect the individual performance adversely as overstress affects the individual’s eagerness to work negatively, thus having a negative impact on the performance (Erbaş et al., 2012, 101). Among the most important individual-related factors are socio-demographic features (age, gender, marital status, and educational background), cultural background, area of expertise and income perception (Özmutaf, 2007, 48).

Other Factors: Among the other factors resulting in a decrease in the performance are individuals’ practice of professions in specific fields, transfer of up-to-date technologies to the organization, deficiencies in social security and distance between the home and workplace (Özmutaf, 2007, 50).

3.2. Relation between Work-life balance, Organizational Stress and Performance

WLB is about adjusting work patterns to complete overall performance. A good work-life balance enables the business to succeed and at the
ensures the workers to easily combine work with other and responsibilities (Jyothi and Jyothi, 2012, 36). When we have examined the relation between the WLB and job stress, we should consider the consequences of work-family conflicts. As a result of the analyses of previous researches, the consequences of family to work conflicts has affected the job satisfaction, absences and performance. On the other hand, when we have examined the consequences of work to family conflicts has affected the general life satisfaction, marriage, turnover intentions, intention to leave (Efeoğlu, 2006).

Researches about stress in organizations are more complete when both work and non-work factors are assessed. Certainly, it is not possible to get a complete stress profile by examining only at sources of stress in the place of work. Therefore, we should think about the edge that exists between work and home. This covers the personal life events that have an effect on performance, efficiency at work (Bhagat, 1983). Family problems; life crises; financial difficulties; conflicting personal and company beliefs; and the conflict between demands are examples of potential stressors that might harm the individual’s work domain (Weinberg et. al, 2010, 85).

We could develop the H1 according to information mentioned above.

**H1: There is a relation between work-life balance and organizational stress**

Job accidents and low performance are the consequences of job stress. The results of work life conflict could generate the same results like job stress (exhaustion for WLB strategies). (Küçükusta, 2007, 247). Reports from the organizations in the United States that adopt high-performance strategies also implement flexible working and career-break practices, so giving employees more reach to adapt work demands to family aims. Therefore, the employers who are seek for high-performance, may also make every effort for practices that balance their unfavorable effects outside work (White et.al., 2003, 179).

**H2: There is a relation between work-life balance and low performance.**

It is very likely that, the decision process about leave the organization could be affected by the results of work-life conflict especially from family to work side (Efeoğlu, 2006).

**H3: There is a relation between work-life balance and intention to leave.**

**Methodology**

In this research, we aim to find the relationship between work-life balance, job stress and individual performance. To test the assumption, tree scales were conducted. The contributors in the current study comprised 232 postgraduate and doctoral students from a university in Ankara in Turkey. The university included nearly 1000 postgraduate and doctoral students and participants were selected arbitrarily. Questionnaires were spread by the researcher to every participant in different sessions in all of the university. When the returned questionnaires were examined, 3 were invalid. As a result, a total of 232 valid responses were used in the research. Data produced in this study were collected by survey. The survey consisted of three measures. In the first part questions about the work-life conflict; in the other two parts questions designed to measure job stress and performance were asked. Work-life conflict scale was taken from Carlson et. al. (2000) : The measure included 13 items, each item was answered via a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1=strongly disagree” to “5=strongly agree.” In the present study, the Cronbach's a coefficient for the scale was .. Job stress were measured by a scale taken from House and Rizzo (1972), the translation and adaptation of the scale to Turkish was made by Efeoğlu(2006). The measure included 7 items, each item was answered via a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “1=strongly disagree” to “5=strongly agree.” In the present study, the Cronbach's a coefficient for the scale was .. Performance scale was taken from questionnaire prepared by taking as example the questions used in the studies of Okutan and Tengilimoğlu (2002) and Ergun (2008) To ensure the validity and reliability of the study variables, explanatory factor analysis was conducted by using SPSS software.

The work-life balance measure produced three factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Negative Work to life” explained 23.41% of the total variance. The second factor was named “Negative Life to work”, and it explained 16.60% of the variance. “Positive life to work”, the third factor with a variance of 19.38%. The factors all together explained 59.40% of the variance. KMO Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was .847.
Table 1 Work-life balance Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NWL</th>
<th>NLW</th>
<th>PLW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>.742</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>.791</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>.780</td>
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<td>Q5</td>
<td>.757</td>
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<td>Q11</td>
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<td>.825</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
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<td>.779</td>
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</table>

NWL (Negative Work to life), NLW (Negative Life to work), PLW (Positive life to work)

The job stress measure produced one factor. The factor named “Job Stress” explained 58.38%. The factor explained 58.38% of the variance. KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was .883.

Table 2 Job Stress Factor Analyses

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>.857</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>.852</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>.828</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>.821</td>
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</table>

The individual performance measure produced two factors. The first factor named “Low Performance” explained 33.11% and the second factor named “Intention to Leave” explained 25.28%. The factors all together explained 58.39% of the variance. KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was .819.

Table 3 Performance Factor Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
<th>Intention to Leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QA7</td>
<td>.789</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA4</td>
<td>.780</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA1</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.859</td>
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<tr>
<td>QA2</td>
<td></td>
<td>.844</td>
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</table>

Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients between the variables. These results indicated statistically a positive correlation between “Job stress” and “NWL”, and “NLW” and negative correlation between “PLW”. We also found that there were a positive correlation between “LP” and “NWL”, “NLW” and “Job stress”. There were positive correlation between “ITL” and “NWL”, “NLW” and “Job stress”, and negative correlation between “PLW”.

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Table 4 Correlations

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NWL</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NLW</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PLW</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. LP</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ITL</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05  **p<0.01  ***p<0.001, NWL (Negative Work to life), NLW (Negative Life to work), PLW (Positive life to work) LP (Low Performance), ITL (Intention to Leave)

To explore whether the independent variables had a significant impact on the dependent variables, hierarchical regression analyzes were conducted. Table-5 shows the regression analysis results for each work-life balance dimension. The findings from the regression analysis using the as the dependent variable showed that there was a positive significant relationship between “Job stress” and “NWL” (β=0.679), “NLW” (β=0.207) and “PLW” (β=0.317). Moreover there was a positive significant relationship between “LP” and “NWL” (β=0.229), “NLW” (β=0.269) and “PLW” (β=0.140). Finally there was a negative and significant relation between “ITL” and “NWL” (β=–0.173) and “PLW” (β=–0.267).

Table 5 Hierarchical Regression Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JOB STRESS</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>ITL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NWL</td>
<td>.679***</td>
<td>.229***</td>
<td>-1.154***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLW</td>
<td>.207***</td>
<td>.269***</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLW</td>
<td>.317***</td>
<td>.140*</td>
<td>-2.267***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔF</td>
<td>88.47***</td>
<td>9.219***</td>
<td>18.03***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05  **p<0.01  ***p<0.001, NWL (Negative Work to life), NLW (Negative Life to work), PLW (Positive life to work) LP (Low Performance), ITL (Intention to Leave)

The result of the analyses showed that, H1 (There is a relation between work-life balance and organizational stress) and H2 (There is a relation between work-life balance and low performance) were accepted. H3 (There is a relation between work-life balance and intention to leave) was partially accepted.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between WLB, job stress and individual performance.
WLB is a phenomenon that affects nearly every individual, revealed in literature by all aspects. Although managers and supervisors commonly know the issue, there is not enough intention to manage it. The work-life conflict is nearly inevitable for the any kind of organization. The job stress has almost same aspects with the WLB. For instance, job stress is like two sided knife that could harm both individual and his or her social life and the organization itself. Managers should implement the strategies to prevent or coping with job stress. The problems concerning the employee’s non-working life had a significant effect on their performance. Especially, family issues can break the concentration of individual and causes the natural decrease in performance. Focus of this paper is to explore the relations between WLB and job stress and performance.

To achieve this goal, we conducted several analyses. After the explanatory factor analyses, we found tree factors explaining the WLB. The first factor named “Negative Work to life” explained 23.41% of the total variance. The second factor was named “Negative Life to work”; and it explained 16.60% of the variance. For job stress, we found only one factor named as it was. For Individual performance we found two factors, the first factor named “Low Performance” explained 33.11% and the second factor named “Intention to Leave” explained 25.28%.

As a result of correlation analyses we found that, there were a positive correlation between “Job stress” and “NWL”, and “NWL” and negative correlation between “PLW”. We also found that there were a positive correlation between “LP” and “NWL”, “NLW” and “Job stress”. There were positive correlation between “ITL” and “NWL”, “NLW” and “Job stress”, and negative correlation between “PLW”.

As a result of regression analyses, there was a positive significant relationship between “Job stress” and “NWL” (β=0.679), “NLW” (β=0.207) and “PLW” (β=0.317). Moreover there was a positive significant relationship between “LP” and “NWL” (β=0.229), “NLW” (β=0.269) and “PLW” (β=0.140). Finally there was a negative and significant relation between “ITL” and “NWL” (β=0.0173) and “PLW” (β=0.267).

This finding leads us to think about that WLB had a significant effect on job stress and individual performance. As explained above the paper the results had justified our ideas. WLB is a key element in everyone’s life. Managers should consider conducting and managing WLB programs not only to enhance the conditions at work environment but also for individuals’ productivity. Many approaches towards the stress management commonly ignore the sources of stress, only focused to eliminate it. But our findings showed that, family to work and work to family interactions had a significant effect on job stress.

Overstress could cause personnel and organizational problems that directly decrease the performance and productivity. For instance, if an employee overloaded by work that will most probably have negative outcomes for personnel life. On the other hand if an employee had a family problems that will also affects the routine of that individual. Family is vey important force multiplier for performance of employees. Research findings indicated that there were significant relations between ‘Low performance’, ‘Negative work to life’, ‘Negative life to work’ and WLB. Results confirm our idea about the WLB had a important element for individual performance. Another finding of this research is the relation between ‘Intention to leave’, ‘Negative work to life’ and ‘Positive work to life’. We can consider that the reason for leaving the job probably because of negative effects of personnel life to work life. Recent studies about WLB indicated that WLB is a very complicated issue than it looks like but not impossible. Various measures could be implemented by managers to harmonize the cost and effects of WLB programs such as flexible work hours, teamwork and family activities.

Limitations and Future Research

Without any doubt, the sample and the assessment instruments used in the present study limit these findings. This research conducted on university students in Ankara in Turkey; the findings might not be transferable to other organizations. The fact that the present sample is composed of only 232 personnel is another drawback of this study. We conducted this research on university students; it is recommended that further researches can be conducted on different sectors and in different countries for the generalizability of the results. Moreover,

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