

The duality of the work-life and personal-life strain: which came first?

Summary of Study

Work-life balance is a source of turnover in IT-related workforce. Employers are finding it difficult to recruit and retain employees, especially women, due to this issue. Therefore, it is important to examine the sources of strain on IT workers. This paper examines the conceptual and empirical differences between strain on personal-life and strain on work-life as well as gender differences with respect to these. To determine the amount of strain on their personal life, we asked respondents to indicate how often they found themselves in the following three scenarios: (a) Things I want to do in my personal life do not get done because of the demands my school work puts on me. (b) The strain produced by my work at school affects my ability to fulfill personal responsibilities. (c) Due to school work-related duties, I have to change my plans for personal activities. Based on these, we created a composite scale that measures overall strain on personal life of respondents. Data were analyzed using a regression model.

Results

Strain on personal-life was significantly predicted by:

- how burned out students felt from their school work
- the amount of strain on their work life
- feeling of inspiration by the major to perform their best
- student's sense of belonging to their departments
- perceived similarity of the student's values to the values of their fields
- marital status

Strain on work-life was significantly predicted by:

- greater strain on students' personal life
- sense of achievement
- children
- perceived poor performance in IT classes
- higher levels of promotional and psychosocial mentoring

Gender differences in these effects exist and will be discussed.

Take Home Findings

These results imply that strain on work-life and personal-life is determined by different factors. One interesting observation is that a certain level of work-life strain is productive for performance in an IT profession and can be a motivating factor. However, the positive effects taper off as the strain increases. A second question these results raise is whether psycho-social mentoring is worth doing since it increases the strain on work-life. It is clear that if the balance between work and life is not managed, IT employees can burn-out in the long run and leave abruptly.