

The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance in Education Sector in Sulaymaniyah

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on Employee Performance (EP) within the education sector of the Qaiwan Group in Sulaymaniyah, addressing a significant gap in regional literature concerning Iraq's knowledge-intensive industries. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, the research collected 100 valid responses from educators (teaching and administrative staff) using scales adapted for WLB and EP (both demonstrating high reliability: $\alpha_{WLB} = 0.700$, $\alpha_{EP} = 0.704$). Descriptive results revealed that while self-reported Employee Performance was high ($M = 4.05$), the mean perception of Work-Life Balance was moderate ($M = 3.37$). Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between WLB and EP ($r = 0.317$, $p = 0.001$). This finding suggests that even modest improvements in WLB are associated with enhanced self-reported performance, a critical insight for managing this young, less-experienced educational workforce that is vulnerable to burnout from extensive non-instructional responsibilities. The study concludes that the organization should implement targeted WLB interventions (e.g., flexible arrangements, stress management training) to improve the perceived balance, reinforce high performance levels, and ensure sustainable career longevity.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance (WLB), Employee Performance (EP), Educators, Quantitative Study, Kurdistan Region, Sulaymaniyah, Qaiwan Group

Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) is increasingly acknowledged as a critical determinant of both employee well-being and organizational performance. Empirical evidence demonstrates that maintaining WLB enhances job satisfaction, strengthens motivation, and improves productivity (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Malau (2022) found that poor WLB could lead to decreased work motivation, emotional fatigue, and performance decline, while a positive balance can support job satisfaction, commitment, and enhanced

teaching quality. Recent literature, Hariri et al. (2024) found that employees with higher WLB reported better psychological well-being and reduced burnout, which translated into improved performance indicators such as task efficiency and organizational commitment. Similarly, Yong et al. (2024) emphasized that flexible work arrangements and workplace support enhance WLB, thereby fostering higher levels of employee engagement and productivity in the Malaysian private sector.

Employees who maintain strong WLB are consistently found to perform at higher levels because reduced stress and enhanced focus allow them to devote greater energy and attention to their tasks. WLB can be treated as a strategic well-being lever; supportive climates and family-supportive supervisor behaviors predict lower burnout and higher satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020; Hammer et al., 2011). At the organizational level, firms that institutionalize WLB practice, such as flexible scheduling, family-supportive supervisor behaviors, and workload management; benefit from lower turnover, stronger retention, and improved innovation capacity, thereby achieving superior performance outcomes (Bello et al., 2024). This dual impact highlights WLB as both an individual resource that enhances employee effectiveness and a strategic organizational lever that sustains competitiveness in knowledge-intensive and service-driven industries. In 2025, Google was listed among the Top 25 World's Best Workplaces by Great Place to Work, based on surveys of over nine million employees worldwide (CultureMonkey, 2025). This recognition highlights the link between WLB practices and high organizational performance.

WLB has become a pressing issue for employees in Iraq and the wider Middle East, where rapid economic transitions, political instability, and cultural expectations intersect with organizational demands. Empirical studies highlight that employees in the region often face extended working hours, limited flexibility, and high stress, which negatively affect job satisfaction and performance (Al-Hamadi, Budhwar & Shipton, 2007). In Iraq, the post-conflict environment has intensified workplace pressures, making WLB policies crucial for employee retention and productivity (Al-Dabbagh, 2019). Across the Middle East, cultural norms emphasizing family obligations further complicate WLB, requiring organizations to adopt context-sensitive strategies such as flexible scheduling and family-supportive practices (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2006). Evidence suggests that firms institutionalizing WLB policies in the region report improved employee engagement and reduced turnover, underscoring its importance for sustainable organizational performance (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017). Recent findings on Kavin Group Company in Duhok, Kurdistan, Iraq, show that work-life quality significantly influences job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover, underscoring the urgent need for structured WLB interventions (Agwu & Hoque, 2025).

In the broader Iraqi context, the International Labour Organization (2024) emphasized that the country's workforce faces challenges such as job insecurity, high unemployment, and economic instability. Within this environment, WLB policies are increasingly recognized as crucial for sustaining employee engagement and organizational performance (Al-Dabbagh, 2019). The literature suggests that WLB in Kurdistan acts as a strategic lever for organizational success by not only improving individual well-being but also strengthening collective performance through reduced turnover and increased productivity (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017). In the context of the Qaiwan Group's education sector, educators face unique challenges. Although Qaiwan is a well-known private enterprise with operations in real estate,

hospitality, and education, its schools still operate within the pressures of the local educational environment (Qaiwan Group, 2023). Teachers in these schools are expected to meet rigorous performance benchmarks while managing administrative duties and classroom responsibilities. The lack of structured WLB policies in these institutions creates strain on employees, leading to fatigue and reduced teaching quality (Prasad & Pasupathi, 2025). This study investigates the impact of WLB on employee performance within the education sector of Sulaymaniyah, concentrating on schools managed by the Qaiwan Group. The study addresses a significant gap in the local and regional literature and offers actionable recommendations for school leaders, human resource managers, and policymakers in the Kurdistan Region.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for identifying patterns and relationships between variables, specifically WLB and EP at a single point in time. The target population comprised educators (both teaching and administrative staff) within the education division of the Qaiwan Group in Sulaymaniyah. Qaiwan Group is a major private entity in the region operating diverse educational institutions. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, yielding 100 valid responses for the final analysis (a 66.7% response rate). The resulting sample provided varied representation across key demographic factors, including age, marital status, gender, and years of professional experience, and was deemed statistically acceptable for the intended analyses.

The survey instrument was structured into three sections. The first section collected demographic data. The second section measured WLB using a 15-item scale adapted from Muthukumar et al. (2014). The third section evaluated EP using a 12-item scale adapted from Koopmans et al. (2014). Both the WLB and employee performance scales employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to quantify respondents' agreement with the respective statements. To establish the internal consistency (reliability) of the scales, Cronbach's Alpha testing was performed. The WLB scale yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.700$, and the employee performance scale yielded $\alpha = 0.704$. Both coefficients exceed the generally acceptable threshold of 0.70 for social science research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), confirming the reliability of the instrument. Data analysis was executed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were first employed to examine the distribution of responses. Subsequently, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to determine the nature and strength of the linear relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. These statistical procedures facilitated a rigorous assessment of the study's objectives and the interpretation of underlying relational patterns within the data.

Results

The demographic analysis characterized the sample ($N = 100$) as a relatively young and developing educational workforce. A majority of respondents were male (60.2%, $n = 60$), while female participants constituted 39.8% ($n = 40$). The workforce was predominantly young, with the largest age group falling between 22 and 36 years. In terms of professional tenure, more than half of the participants reported having less than eight years of teaching/administrative experience. Regarding marital status, 55.3% ($n = 55$) were single, and 44.7% ($n = 45$) were married. Descriptive Analysis of Key Variables Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the general perceptions of participants regarding WLB and EP. The

means, highest recorded item mean, and lowest recorded item mean for the two variables are presented in Table 1. The average mean score for WLB was mean, $M = 3.37$ (on a 5-point scale), which indicates a moderate and slightly above-average perception of balance between professional and personal life among the educators. In contrast, the average mean for Employee Performance was substantially higher at mean, $M = 4.05$, suggesting that respondents generally perceived themselves as highly effective and satisfied in their roles.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance

Variable	Mean (M)	Highest Item Mean	Lowest Item Mean
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	3.37	3.95	3.11
Employee Performance (EP)	4.05	4.36	3.60

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed to test the hypothesized relationship between WLB and EP. The results, summarized in Table 2, indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.317$, $p = 0.001$).

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Analysis of Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance

Relationship	Pearson's r	p -value	Relationship Strength
Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance	0.317	0.001***	Weak-to-Moderate

*** $p < 0.01$

Although the magnitude of the correlation was weak-to-moderate ($r = 0.317$), the statistically significant positive finding suggests that enhancements in perceived WLB are associated with higher levels of self-reported EP. This positive association is consistent with prior empirical evidence (Malau, 2022) which emphasizes the beneficial impact of WLB on performance-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and motivation.

Discussion and Recommendation

The results of this study confirm a statistically significant positive association between WLB and EP among the educators surveyed ($r = 0.317$, $p = 0.001$). This finding is consistent with existing literature, reinforcing the notion that even a modest improvement in WLB can positively influence an employee's perceived effectiveness and satisfaction. Despite the weak-to-moderate strength of the correlation, the overall high self-reported EP ($M = 4.05$) alongside a moderate WLB perception ($M = 3.37$) suggests that while employees generally feel competent in their roles, there is a distinct opportunity to boost performance further by strategically addressing WLB factors. The demographic profile, characterized by a young, less-experienced workforce (predominantly 22–36 years old with less than eight years of tenure), highlights a crucial point; this cohort is often highly motivated but may require specific organizational support structures to prevent early burnout and ensure sustainable career longevity, making WLB initiatives particularly vital.

Based on the findings, the Qaiwan Group's education division is strongly encouraged to implement targeted WLB interventions aimed at improving the reported mean score of 3.37. Since a positive correlation exists, even small gains in WLB are expected to reinforce the already high levels of self-reported EP. Educators in Sulaymaniyah frequently assume extensive responsibilities beyond core classroom instruction, encompassing administrative duties, comprehensive curriculum planning, and active involvement in extracurricular activities. When combined with personal and family obligations, these demands precipitate conditions conducive to occupational stress and burnout, which subsequently adversely impact teaching effectiveness and institutional reputation. Specific recommendations include offering flexible work arrangements where feasible, providing professional development focused on time management and stress reduction, and ensuring administrative staff actively model healthy work boundaries. Given the young, majority-male demographic, future research should employ a longitudinal design to explore how WLB perceptions evolve as professional tenure and marital status change (i.e., moving from single to married status). Furthermore, future studies should utilize objective performance measures (in addition to self-reports) and explore potential moderating variables (such as job type or organizational culture) to gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of this critical relationship.

Conclusion

This study confirmed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.317$, $p = 0.001$) between WLB and EP among the Qaiwan Group educators. Although employees reported high EP ($M = 4.05$), the moderate WLB mean ($M = 3.37$) suggests an organizational opportunity to further enhance effectiveness by addressing work-life demands. The findings are particularly relevant for this young, less-experienced workforce vulnerable to burnout from extensive non-instructional duties. Consequently, the research recommends targeted WLB interventions such as flexible work and stress management training, to improve teacher retention and sustainable performance. Future research should utilize longitudinal designs and objective performance measures to fully explore the causality and moderating factors in this critical relationship.

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