Exploring the Interrelationships between School- Work- Life Balance among College Students

Vanessa Baca

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Literature Review

In 2011 the US census reported that 72% of undergraduate students work. Not only are students working, about one million students are completing internships, conducting research, and participating in school activities to become a competing candidate for graduate school and employment (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, p. 15). Attending school full time, participating in research, and maintaining a job may negatively impact a student’s grades. In turn affecting the chances of being admitted into a graduate program or obtaining a high paying job. Similarly, as time has moved forward, the cost of an education has exponentially grown. Since 1995 private colleges have raised their tuition by 179 percent, while public universities have raised their out-of state tuition 226 percent, and the in-state-tuition by 296 percent (Mitchell, 2015).

Johnson, Rochkind, Ott and DuPont (2009) found that:

The number one reason students give for leaving school is the fact that they had to work and go to school at the same time and, despite their best efforts, the stress if trying to do both eventually took it’s toll. (p. 16)

These students are often forced into a circular situation where they need to work more hours to pay for their education, causing the need for more time to study to graduate on time. According to a New York Times article, only one in five students who enroll in a two-year institution will earn an associates degree in three years, and two of five students who enroll in a four-year institution will graduate in six years (Lewin, 2009). These results are alarming given the cost of tuition and how long it may take students to graduate.
Students are also including extra curricular activities. These activities are now "strongly suggested" to students to increase their chances of obtaining a job after graduation or acceptance into graduate school. Some of these extracurricular activities include unpaid internships.

According to Carnevale, Smith, Melton, and Price (2015), approximately one million, half of all college seniors, have participated in an internship and they stated that, The starting annual salary for college graduates who completed a paid internship was $52,000, compared to $36,000 for those who completed an unpaid internship and $37,000 for those who did not complete an internship. (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015, p. 15).

However, disadvantaged students who cannot afford to work an unpaid internship may need to work, attend class, study and complete an internship. This leaves little to no time for self care, or family time. Self care is defined as,

what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing hygiene (general and personal), nutrition (type and quality of food eaten), lifestyle (sporting activities, leisure etc), environmental factors (living conditions, social habits, etc.) socio-economic factors (income level, cultural beliefs, etc.) and self-medication (World Health Organization, 2015, p. #).

This situation may leave many feeling overwhelmed and possibly burned out. Students who do not participate in self-care have a higher burnout rate (Miner, 2010, p. 34). Work-life balance has been studied extensively among college students in the literature. However, school-life balance has only been studied recently; yet both essentially stem from the same problems and principles.
Those who have better balance in their lives will have more positive overall work-life balance, subjective wellbeing, and work/non-work life satisfaction (Grawitch, Maloney, Barber, and Mooshegian, 2013, p. 281; Gropel, Kuhl, 2009, p. 369). Achieving one’s life balance can come from their own techniques, or programs offered by their employers. Studies have shown that even when employees do not use the work-life balance services, simply being offered to them and knowing they are available helps to increase one’s work-life balance (e.g., Zheng et al. 2015, p. 369, 372).

College students who experienced high levels of stress often say they wish they had more time; but maybe time is not the answer. Perhaps, what students in college need is to learn to balance their multiple demands. Those who feel they have enough time to adequately complete their work, goals and self care are often the happiest people. Boundaries and self control are two ways to implement time management. Duckworth and Seligman (2006) define self control as ‘the ability to suppress prepotent responses in the service of a higher goal’ (p. 199; as cited in Kuhnle, Hofer, & Kilian, 2010, p. 252). Self control is needed to uphold and maintain boundaries. Conversely, Bulger, Matthews and Hoffman (2007) found that although boundaries need to be made and implemented for a well rounded life style, they also need to be flexible (p. 365).

These two ideas coincide because old values, of school and work, are not diminishing. Though emotional and physical health care are two values that are beginning to become just as important as school and work, leaving less time and resources to be focused on any one value (Kuhnle, Hofer, & Kilian, 2010). Meaning that those who are happier or wish to be happier with
their lives should develop enough self control to uphold the boundaries they make, yet be flexible enough to make the appropriate changes to their schedule or lifestyle when needed.

College students were found to focus and work around the most important goal or value at the present time. Meaning that the students would have to have the self control to prioritize according to the most demanding goal or value at the time and focus on it until they could move on to the next one (Kuhnle, Hofer, & Kilian, 2010, p. 254). Similarly it was found in a study that those who had higher work enhancement were those who had flexible work and personal schedules (Bulger, Matthews, & Hoffman, 2007, p. 371). Work enhancement is defined as when one’s job improves their mood in their personal life (Bulger, Matthews, & Hoffman, 2007, p. 369).

Although previous studies have looked into values, boundaries, goals, and flexibility, to our knowledge no published study has explored the school work life balance of college students. The following hypothesis are proposed:

H1: Students who practice school-family balance will have greater life satisfaction.

H2: Students who practice work-family balance will have greater life satisfaction.

Method

Participants

A diverse sample of 265 participants were college students recruited from a large university in Southern California. The participants were 18 years old and older. One goal of this study was to include participants from various majors, ethnic backgrounds, social class, and different employment histories. Participants were be recruited using SONA, an online website used by the joint department of Psychology and Sociology at a large commuter school located in
SCHOOL-WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Southern California. SONA is used to recruit participants for class studies, and senior projects. Students who decide to participate will be compensated by being given 0.5 point of class credit or extra credit for any class, that allows them to receive this credit.

**Instruments**

The general life satisfaction of the participants is determined with a five item, 7-point likert scale developed by Diener (1985). The scale ranged from 1: strongly disagree- 7: strongly agree. It has a 61% and above accuracy rating when compared to other life satisfaction scales (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985, p. 4). Similarly a 7-point liker scale, from 1: strongly disagree - 7: strongly agree, will be used to find one’s satisfaction with their work. It is a five item scale initiated by Vrklevski, and Franklin (2008). The validity was established while determining the satisfaction with work for criminal and noncriminal legal professionals (Vrklevski, Franklin, 2008). Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance is determined by a 5-point likert scale with questions like how satisfied are you with the way you divide your time between work and personal or family life. This scale was also modified to measure the participants satisfaction with school-family balance.

**Procedures**

Once a student has chosen to participate they were given a link to the online survey. The survey was posted on Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a website that will not only host the survey, and allow the participants to answer the questions, it will also gather the data. The data was then entered into SPSS, a software program utilized by California State Polytechnic University,
SCHOOL-WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Pomona to run statistical analysis on study the researcher wishes to enter. A regression analysis was ran on the data determining the strength of the variables in relation to their overall well being; which was overall life satisfaction.

Results

A series of correlations between the variables of interest were conducted. All the variables were significantly correlated at p < .01 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (N=265)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School- Family Balance</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work-Family Balance</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05 **p < .01

Table 2 presents the regression analysis, demonstrating that all variables are significant in predicting satisfaction with life. School-family balance being the strongest predictor, followed by academic satisfaction and work-family balance. The positive correlation found between school-life balance, satisfaction with life were found to be significant, F(3, 262)= 89.46, p < .001. The samples multiple correlation coefficient was .69, with school-life balance being the strongest predictor of satisfaction with life.
SCHOOL-WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Table 2

Results of Regression Subjective Well-Being on Predictor Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-Family Balance</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>7.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Family Balance</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1.93***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( R^2 = .48, p < .001. \)
*\( p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 \)

Discussion

This study was completed in hopes of making undergraduate college students, administrators and professors aware of the various roles students play today. It was completed with the desire to promote balance in students lives, in turn helping them earn better grades while maintaining an adequate level of overall well-being.

Both hypothesis one and two were found to be supported. Although, hypothesis one was found to be more significant than hypothesis two. It is possible school-family balance has the most profound impact on students life satisfaction because their main concern at this stage in their life is to complete their education. Their current focus is to create the basis for their career.

Work-family balance is significant due to this being the sample pools income; how they pay for tuition, and basic necessities. As previously stated students are now expected to maintain a high GPA, work while attending college and participating in extracurricular activities. Despite
this, work-family balance is not as significant in predicting the participants satisfaction with life, possibly because their employment at the time is often not their career choice.

Previous research has found that the number one reason students are not completing higher education due to the lack of financial support, not because they are incapable (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott and DuPont 2009, p. 16). The average cost of higher education has risen over 200 percent since 1995, according to Mitchell (2015). Students who are unable to balance their school life with their work life, while not practicing any self care are dropping out of college.

Those who maintain a balanced work and family life are healthier and more productive than their counterparts. Studies have also found that each person has their own meaning to what a balanced life style is. However, most of them have a few similar techniques used to help them achieve their balanced lifestyle. Prior research has found that those who maintain their boundaries, have proficient self-control, and maintain a flexible schedule.

Future studies should take a more in depth look at why undergraduate students view school-family balance as a more significant predictor of their life satisfaction. The next stage would be to run this study at various campuses. Socioeconomic background, should also be taken into account. This will help determine the students financial need, and stress of paying for tuition and basic necessities. Relationship status should also be taken into account. It is possible those who are currently in a relationship are better at balancing their time between school-work and their personal life. Gender differences should also be a variable in future studies. This study should be replicated to support the findings, in hopes that administrators at universities will work to improve the undergraduate setting. In turn allowing students to achieve greater school-family balance, improving their overall life satisfaction.
SCHOOL-WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Conclusion

The cost of higher education in the United States has risen on average over 200 percent since 1995. Rising tuition and increased rigorous requirements to obtain admittance into graduate school and receive an increased salary after being awarded a bachelors degree have caused students to work, complete internships, and various extracurricular activities while attending classes. Presenting the need for students to adequately balance their lives while completing their undergraduate career.

This study supports previous research stating that those who practice a balanced lifestyle have greater overall life satisfaction. Undergraduate students who have developed a balanced lifestyle between school and their family have greater life satisfaction. Similarly, the same is true for work and family balance. Despite having significance and being a predictor of life satisfaction, work-family balance was not as strong as school-family balance in relation to life satisfaction. It is suspected this is due to school being students main priority at this time. However, further studies should replicate this study and be qualitative in order to understand why the results are so.

Should these studies findings be implemented, students would be able to maintain better overall health. They may also earn better grades, in turn giving them better chances of being admitted into a graduate program or receiving a higher starting salary.
References


Public Agenda


*Signature*

*5/27/2016*