

Work Life Balance and Its Effects on Employees Performance in selected Public Institutions at Federal Government of Ethiopia

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Abstract

Work life (WL) imbalance is common in different organizations as a result of which the work place is characterized by stress, lack of employees' commitment, job dissatisfaction and over all dissatisfaction which leads to absenteeism, turnover and reduced performance coupled with lack of ownership and reluctance to serve customers. The major objective of this study is assessing work life balance (WLB) practices and its effects on employees' performance in selected public institutions of federal government of Ethiopia. To this end raised and answered basic research questions that include, to what extent does WLB is practiced in the selected public institutions? What is the effect of WLB practices on employees' performance? And what are the challenges of WLB and the possible recommendations for improvement in the selected public institution? The study used mixed research approach with descriptive and explanatory research designs. Primary data was collected from sample of 400 employees who are selected by using systematic random sampling technique from six public institutions (which are selected purposively). Proportionate stratified sampling was used to categorize the selected public institutions in to strata. Questionnaires and key informants interview and focused group discussion (FGD) were employed to collect the primary data. Accordingly the study found out that work roles interfere with other roles; lack of WLB policies and programs, employees are stressful and dissatisfied with their work and existence of gap in employees' performance though customers were responded as they are satisfied with institutions service. It is found out that, WLB has perfect and positive relationship with employees' performance. Study also revealed out that WLB practice statistically significant effect on employee performance. So, WLB is worth noting concept which has multiplier effects on human aspects of the organizations. As a result, considering WLB in human resource management system of public institution is paramount. Recognizing employees' role out of work, creating awareness about WLB, modifying contents and contexts of job, developing WLB policies and programs, making adjustment on salary scale and focusing on equal payment for equal jobs are some recommendations forwarded.

Key Word: Work Life Balance, Public Institution, Employees performance, Work life balance policies and programs

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the pace of change is more rapid than ever and puts organizations under constant pressure to provide goods and services of the right quality and quantity (Acas, 2013). On top of this, organizations and their employees face growing challenges from workplace stress as it is an increasingly common feature of modern life. Unsupportive managers, heavy workloads, and corporate cultures that promote long hours of work are the primary contributors to the prevalence of work-life conflict and thereby increase dissatisfaction and reduce performance among employees. Most managers and the working conditions created by them are mostly aimed at the wellbeing of the organization alone. As a result, the needs of employees are quite often overlooked, and employees feel that they are not supported because of an over emphasis on the organization, which can affect employees' attitudes and their satisfaction with their job, with an overall impact on their performance (<http://www.idpublications.org/wp>).

Starting a couple of years back, work-life balance (WLB) has been the top agenda for human resource practitioners, employees, and organizations as a best strategy for organizations in relation to their workforce (Mcpherson & Reed, 2007). WLB is all about balancing an individual's work life with their life outside of work (family, social, self-care, etc.). It is having the right combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions) and other aspects of life (Lakshmi & Gopinath, 2013). Work-life balance benefits employees through a greater sense of job security, workplace wellbeing, and increased job satisfaction. as a result of reduced levels of stress from work and home pressure, among others; whereas employers are advantageous from loyalty and commitment, increased levels of employee retention, thereby reduced cost of absenteeism and turn over, etc., which all results in boosting performance (Estes & Michael, 2005).

While this is the fact, in reality there is a problem in relation to WLB as it has been given little attention and resulted in poor motivation of workforce engagement, increased workplace stress and job dissatisfaction, which in turn negatively affects employees' performance and overall satisfaction of customers. Therefore, WL imbalance is observed in different public sectors of Ethiopia as there are no WLB policies and programs like flexi time, telecommuting, job sharing, leave, employee benefits, and the like. As a result, the workplace is characterized by stress, a minimum level of employee commitment, and overall job dissatisfaction, which leads to absenteeism, turnover, and reduced performance coupled with a lack of a sense of ownership and reluctance to serve customers. If these problems continue to get low attention, it has a devastating effect on individual employees as it affects their lives both at work and out of work, as well as their families and organizations.

Previously, it has been studied that WLB has brought employees' engagement (EEO, 2007; Parflaman, 2007; Yee, 2012), has reduced workplace stress (Huang, 2010; Asiedu et al., 2013), and has resulted in job satisfaction (EEO, 2007). However, almost all studies relate WLB with one of these specific aspects rather than analyzing and assessing the effects of WLB on employees' performance. In addition, the issue of WLB is little studied in the context of Africa, though many studies are conducted in developed countries and some parts of Asia (Nwagbara & Akanji, 2012; Asiedu et al., 2013). The study related to WLB is non-existence in the Ethiopian context, where the culture, social life, economic, political, technological, and working culture are totally different. In line with this, WLB is considered an issue of both sexes, all levels and all professions due to increased changes in workplace demands as opposed to early periods during which WLB was seen as an issue of female employees only. Thus, even in countries where much is done, there is a gap because most research works focus on the WLB of female employees

(Malone et al., 2013; Swatirai et al., 2013; and many others), with little attention paid to male employees.

Therefore, the major objective of this study is to examine the effect of WLB on employees' performance in selected public institutions in the federal government of Ethiopia. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Assess the existing practice of work life balance in the selected public organizations,
- Examine the effect of WLB on employee performance,
- Identify challenges of WLB and forward possible recommendations for improvement.

2. Theoretical Literature

2.1 Concepts and practices of Work Life Balance

However, there is no one best and commonly agreed definition of WLB as it is different thing for different people based on difference in background, status in the organization or society, etc. According to Sentkumaret.al (2012) Work-life balance is defined as “equilibrium” at which life on ones work and life out of work become equal. It is a situation where amounts of time and energy that individuals use between the two are equal. Parkes & Langford (2008) explained work-life balance as ability of individuals in meeting commitments of work, family and other non-work responsibilities. For Dundas (2008) WLB is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and all other activities that are important to people including family; community; voluntary work and personal development, leisure and recreation. Similarly work life balance is degree to which individuals engaged in and satisfied with both work and family roles equally (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work-life balance is based on the concept that paid work and personal life should not be seen as competing priorities but as complementary elements of a full life. The best way to achieve this is to adopt an approach that is “two way process involving consideration of the needs of employees as well as those of employers”. Generally speaking, WLB deals with balancing demands (time and effort) of work with those outside work (personal, family and community life) and reaping benefits out of the balance i.e. achieving satisfaction from both domains of life.

Therefore, Work-life balance practices are deliberate organizational changes in programs or organizational culture that are designed to reduce work-life conflict and enable employees to be more effective at work and in other roles (Hartel, Fuji, Strybosch, & Fitzpatrick, 2006). WLB practices can also be defined as “working practices that acknowledge and aim to support the needs of staff in achieving balance between their home and work” (Awan & Bangwar, 2013). Organizations can undertake a variety of work-life programs that may help workers better balance their work and home duties, increase their overall wellbeing, and have positive effects on the firm. There are many different family-friendly policies, including but not limited to: compressed work weeks, job sharing, part-time work, parental leave, telecommuting, on-site child care facility, and flexible working hours (Hartel, et. al., 2006). Employers may also offer a variety of benefits connected to workers' health and wellbeing, such as paid time off, access to services or programs that promote physical and emotional well-being, and extended health insurance for both the employee and dependents.

2.2 Employee Performance

Employee performance indicates the financial or non-financial outcome of the employee that has a direct link with the performance of the organization and its success (Anitha, 2014). Similarly,

Rivai (2004) cited in Pawirosumarto, Sarjana, & Muchtar, (2017) defined employee performance as the overall success of a person during a specific periods of duty compared to the criteria that have been determined in advance.

According to Opatha (2002), a number of factors are required in order to accurately assess an employee's job performance. According to Mathis & Jackson (2003), there are three basic sorts of information that managers might get regarding how well people are doing their duties. result-based information, information based on behavior, and information based on traits. Trait-based information identifies an employee's subjective character, such as attitude, initiative, or originality. Behavior-based evaluations of job performance place a greater emphasis on the job's specific requirements. Whereas result-based information considers employee accomplishment, hence, this study used the three criteria to measure employee performance.

2.3 Effect of WLB on employee performance

The question of how one may balance having a fulfilling personal life with producing good professional results has become more pressing in this day of technical innovation and globalization. This has motivated researchers to determine whether both objectives conflict with one another or work best together (Koubova & Buchko, 2013).

In this regard, it was shown that workers with severe workloads performed poorly on the job, had a bad worklife balance, and were less likely to be ingrained in their positions. According to the literature, there are a number of adverse effects when roles related to work and non-work is obstructed. Employees are more likely to demonstrate lower levels of loyalty to the organization and job satisfaction when there are higher levels of life-work and work-life conflict. Greenhaus et al. (1997) cited in Lula (2018) argue that the behavioral consequences of both directions of divergence are reduced performance, higher turnover, increased absenteeism, and reduced work effort. All these types of conflicts have also been related to the reduced level of energy and general health as well as increased stress and burnout cognitive problems like lower alertness and lack of concentration.

2.4 Empirical Literature

As it is discussed by different scholars WLB enable employees to better manage their work and roles out of work, thereby affect employees attitude and behaviors towards their job and the organization including their engagement, level of their stress, job satisfaction and their intention to quit. Some empirical studies (e.g. Lakshmi & Gopinath, 2013; Parkes & Langford, 2008) have showed that the experience of work life balance is positively related to employees' performance and organizational performance. More specifically, work life balance has been shown to have positive outcomes such as low turnover intention, low level of stress, job satisfaction and employees' performance improvement (e.g. Cegarra et al., 2012).

Previous studies (Bright Horizons, 2011) find out that those with work life balance support, reported lower stress levels and less likely to say that stress is related to conflicting demands between the two responsibilities. Studies show strong links between work-life balance policies and reduction in worker stress, reduced sick leave usage, greater flexibility, job satisfaction, loyalty, reduced absenteeism, improved recruitment and retention rates with associated cost savings, increased productivity, an improved corporate image.

Flexibility to balance work and life out of work i.e. WLB is important factor in boosting employee job satisfaction as it was researched by SHRM (2012). According to Rania et al.(2011) preceded by career opportunities, recognition, work/task itself, pay and good relationship; Work

life balance has positive relations with employees satisfaction. Moreover, various research findings (Virick et al., 2007; Howard et al., 2004; Kinnie et al., 2005; Noor, 2011; and many others) found that work-life balance is positively related to job satisfaction.

Generally speaking practicing work-life balance has effect on job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, level of job stress and turnover intention; all of which in turn affect employees performance, reduce costs related to absenteeism and loss and replacement of valued employees, customer satisfaction, and organizational productivity (Lazar et al., 2010).

2.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

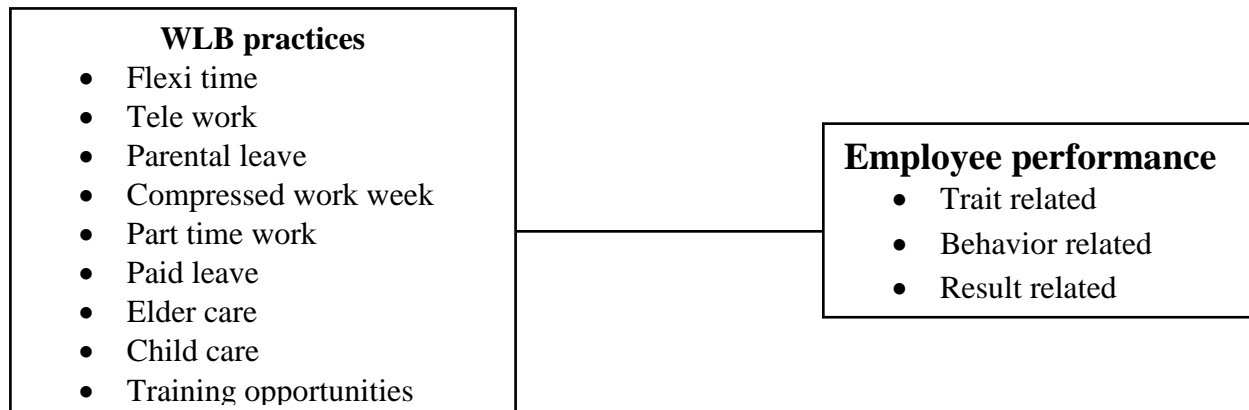


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame work of the study

Source: Researchers' own compilation

3. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed research approach, which provides a better understanding of a research problem, and descriptive and explanatory research designs were used. Furthermore, the target population of this study had 3441 employees of six purposively selected federal public sector organizations. The researcher used Cochran's (1977) formula as indicated in Bartlett and Higgins (2001) for sample size determination,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

In which n=the size of the sample, N=the size of the population=3441, e=the margin of error=5%

$$\mu = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{3441}{1 + 3441(0.05^2)} \quad n = 400$$

A systematic random sampling technique was applied to select the sample respondents from each institution. In addition, a purposive sampling technique was used to select managers for interviews and team leaders for focus group discussion.

Data collected from different primary sources was recorded, edited, organized, coded, analyzed, presented, and interpreted in relation to research questions. The current status of WLB practice among public organizations was examined using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. In addition, Pearson correlation and linear regression were used to show the effect of the work-life balance on employees' performance. On the other hand, thematic analysis was used for analyzing qualitative data. For analyzing quantitative data, SPSS version 20 was utilized.

Table 3.1: sample size for each federal public sector organization determined proportionally

No	Institutions	Population	Sample
1	Ministry of Civil Crevice	351	41
2	Ministry of Education	830	96
3	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	206	24
4	Ethiopian Custom and Revenue Authority (only head office)	1200	140
5	Document authentication and Registration Agency	474	55
6	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	380	44
Total		3441	400

Source: Researchers Compilation, 2016

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Socio Demographic Background of Respondents

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. As a result, 70% of respondents were male and 30% were female. The majority of the respondents (78.7%) belong to the age category of 20 to 40 years. This implies that the majority of the respondents are in the younger age group, which makes them more sensitive to the issue of WLB. 43.8% of the respondents have 1 to 5 years of work experience, while 23.1% of them have experience of 6 to 10 years. Regarding their educational background, the majority of the respondents (60%) were first-degree graduates.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage
Sex			
	Male	273	70
	Female	117	30
Age			
	<20	20	5.1
	20-30	161	41.3
	31-40	146	37.4
	41-50	46	11.8
	>50	17	4.4
Experience			
	<1 year	82	21
	1-5	171	43.8
	6-10	90	23.1
	11-15	22	5.6
	16 and above	25	6.4
Education			
	<12	10	2.6
	12 complete	12	3.1
	Certificate	32	8.2
	Diploma	81	20.8
	1st degree	234	60
	Masters and above	21	5.4

Source: Survey data (2016)

4.2 Descriptive Results of WLB Practices

To assess the existing practices WLB in the selected public institutions, respondents were asked to examine the availability of twelve practices in their organizations. These practices are flexi time, part time work, job sharing, compressed week, paid leave, telecommuting, health and wellbeing opportunities, financial support, child care centre, paid maternity leave, elder care and training opportunities.

Table 4.2: Descriptive result of items related to WLB practice

	N	Min.	Max,	Mean	SD
Flexitime - e.g. flexible starting and ending time, night/day shifts	379	1	5	3.43	1.525
opportunity to work part time	390	1	5	2.55	1.406
Job sharing	390	1	5	3.3	1.531
Compressed work week	390	1	5	2.66	1.481
Paid leave for family issues	387	1	5	3.55	1.412
Telecommuting / Tele work	390	1	5	3.07	1.47
Provision of health and well-being opportunities	390	1	5	2.95	1.377
Provision of financial support when needed	390	1	5	2.66	1.334
On-site child-care center	390	1	5	2.55	1.325
Paid maternity leave / paternity leave	390	1	5	3.83	1.454
Elder care	390	1	5	2.53	1.346
Provision of training	390	1	5	3.32	1.552
WLB Practices	376	1.25	5	3.0372	0.8565
Employee Performance	383	1.35	7.12	3.8665	0.763
Valid N (list wise)	369				

Source: survey data (2016)

As it is indicated in the table 4.2, the average result for all WLB practices is 3.03. This implies that the WLB practice among public sector organizations is at a lower stage. Compared to the rest, elder care and paid maternity leave are practiced at a very low (M=2.53) and very high paternity leave (M=3.83) compared to other practices. The result shows that employees are burdened with over responsibility of work and face shortage of time for other responsibilities out of work.

4.3 Result for ANOVA test (Differences in practices of WLB among selected institutions)

ANOVA test was used to compare the mean response on 'WLB practices' and 'employee performance' among respondents from the six institutions, and the result is displayed in the above table. But, before starting the test analysis, preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, homogeneity of variance, and others; hence no serious violation has been committed for all variables, except violating homogeneity of variance assumption as indicated in the table above. This violation is tolerable as per arguments of Pallant (2016).

Table 4.3 ANOVA test among Institutions

Descriptive									
Variables		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
WLB Practices	CSM	41	3.5224	.55934	.08735	3.3458	3.6989	2.50	4.25
	EM	95	3.1596	1.03240	.10592	2.9493	3.3700	1.33	5.00
	MoLSA	31	3.4758	.87565	.15727	3.1546	3.7970	1.25	4.67
	MECC	21	2.6468	.63405	.13836	2.3582	2.9354	2.00	4.42
	ERCA	136	2.7384	.72657	.06230	2.6151	2.8616	1.33	4.75
	AO	52	3.1090	.73349	.10172	2.9048	3.3132	1.33	4.08
	Total	376	3.0372	.85651	.04417	2.9504	3.1241	1.25	5.00
Emp_Perf	CSM	41	3.7432	.51125	.07984	3.5818	3.9046	3.12	4.82
	EM	92	3.6336	1.05534	.11003	3.4151	3.8522	1.35	5.00
	MoLSA	37	3.7631	.56549	.09297	3.5746	3.9517	2.88	4.76
	MECC	22	4.0027	.54595	.11640	3.7606	4.2447	2.12	4.65
	ERCA	137	4.0803	.67571	.05773	3.9661	4.1945	1.41	7.12
	AO	54	3.8301	.58206	.07921	3.6712	3.9889	2.65	5.00
	Total	383	3.8665	.76298	.03899	3.7899	3.9432	1.35	7.12

Source: survey data (2016)

Thus, the result of One-Way ANOVA test for 'WLB practices' and 'employees' performance' indicated, the mean responses differ significantly among respondents from the different institutions as $f(5, 370) = 9.966$, $p = 0.000$; and $f(5, 377) = 4.586$, $p = 0.000$ respectively. So, the difference in the mean responses among respondents from the six institutions on each of the two variables is statistically significant, rather than simple difference which happen by chance. But, the ANOVA result does not indicate between/among which institutions the difference occurred. So, conducting post hoc test is necessary to know where exactly the difference is, by looking under mean difference column of multiple comparisons table. Table below shows this result.

Table 4.4: One Way ANOVA test for equality of means among respondents by Institutions

variables	ANOVA						H/Variance test	
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Levene Stat.	Sig.
WLB Practices	Between Groups	32.652	5	6.530	9.966	.000	6.260	.000
	Within Groups	242.451	370	.655				
	Total	275.104	375					
Employees Performance	Between Groups	12.749	5	2.550	4.586	.000	12.273	.000
	Within Groups	209.629	377	.556				
	Total	222.378	382					

Source: survey data (2016)

As it is displayed in table 4.5, post-hoc comparison using Tukey HSD test indicated, there is statistically significant difference (MD=0.87553, P = 0.001) in the mean response of respondents from Civil Service Minister (M= 3.5224, SD= 0.55934) and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (M= 2.6468, SD= 0.63405), regarding WLB practices.

Table 4.5: Post hoc (Tukey HSD) Test

Multiple Comparisons							
Dependent Variable	(I) Office of Respondents	(J) Office of Respondents	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
WLB_Practices	CSM	EM	.36271	.15126	.160	-.0706	.7960
		MoLSA	.04655	.19267	1.000	-.5054	.5985
		MECC	.87553*	.21722	.001	.2532	1.4978
		ERCA	.78400*	.14422	.000	.3708	1.1972
		AO	.41338	.16907	.144	-.0709	.8977
	EM	MoLSA	-.31616	.16744	.411	-.7958	.1635
		MECC	.51282	.19520	.093	-.0464	1.0720
		ERCA	.42129*	.10824	.002	.1112	.7314
		AO	.05067	.13964	.999	-.3494	.4507
	MoLSA	MECC	.82898*	.22878	.004	.1736	1.4844
		ERCA	.73745*	.16111	.000	.2759	1.1990
		AO	.36683	.18368	.346	-.1594	.8930
	MECC	ERCA	-.09153	.18979	.997	-.6352	.4522
		AO	-.46215	.20930	.236	-1.0617	.1374
	ERCA	AO	-.37062	.13198	.058	-.7487	.0075
Emp Perf	CSM	EM	.10955	.14002	.970	-.2915	.5106
		MoLSA	-.01993	.16909	1.000	-.5043	.4644
		MECC	-.25949	.19707	.776	-.8240	.3050
		ERCA	-.33711	.13274	.115	-.7173	.0431
		AO	-.08688	.15446	.993	-.5293	.3556
	EM	MoLSA	-.12948	.14516	.948	-.5453	.2863
		MECC	-.36904	.17697	.297	-.8760	.1379
		ERCA	-.44666*	.10051	.000	-.7346	-.1587
		AO	-.19643	.12783	.641	-.5626	.1697
	MoLSA	MECC	-.23956	.20076	.840	-.8146	.3355
		ERCA	-.31718	.13816	.198	-.7129	.0786
		AO	-.06695	.15914	.998	-.5228	.3889
	MECC	ERCA	-.07762	.17127	.998	-.5682	.4130
		AO	.17261	.18861	.943	-.3676	.7129
	ERCA	AO	.25023	.11982	.296	-.0930	.5934

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: survey data (2016)

Regarding the same variable ‘WLB practices’, there is statistically significant difference (MD= 0.42129, P=0.002) in the mean response of respondents from Education Ministry (M=3.1596, SD= 1.03240) and Revenue and Customs Authority (M=2.7384, SD= 0.72657). Still the difference in the mean response of respondents from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, from Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MD= 0.82898, P= 0.004) and Revenue and Customs Authority (MD= 0.73745, P= 0.000) respectively is statistically significant. But, there is statistically insignificant difference among other groups of respondents regarding WLB practices.

Regarding employees’ performance, there is statistically significant difference (MD= - 0.44666, P= 0.000) in the mean response of respondents from Education Minister (M=3.6336, SD=1.05564) and Customs Authority (M= 4.0803, SD= 0.67571); while the difference among the other institutions is statistically insignificant.

4.4 Effect of WLB on Employee performance

4.4.1 Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 4.6: Results of Correlations among variables

		Employees Performance	Practices of WLB
Pearson Correlation	Emp_Perf	1.000	.70
	WLB_Practices	.396	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Emp_Perf	.	.001**
	WLB_Practices	.001**	.
N	Emp_Perf	369	369
	WLB_Practices	369	369

Source: survey data (2016)

As it is explained in Table 4.6 above, WLB is strongly/perfectly and positively related with employees’ performance by correlation coefficient of 0.396, which indicating that there statistically significant a positive association between work-life balance and employee performance since the significant value (0.001) is smaller than the acceptable level of significance (0.05).

4.4.2 Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression is conducted to see the effect of independent variable (WLB practices) on the dependent variable (Employees Performance), after preliminary assumptions has been checked. Normal Probability Plot (P-P) and Scatter-plot has been seen for checking normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and independence of residuals assumption; accordingly, there is no serious violation of such assumptions and as a result simple linear regression has been done and table below depicts summary of results.

Table 4.7: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.396 ^a	.157	.144	.50582

As seen on Table 4.7, the R-square value of 0.157 for employee performance implies that the WLB practices explain 15.7% of the variance in employee performance, i.e., about 15.7% of the change in employee performance is due to the WLB practices.

Table 4.8: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.047	1	3.047	11.908	.001 ^b
	Residual	16.375	367	.256		
	Total	19.421	368			
<i>a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Perf</i>						
<i>b. Predictors: (Constant), WLB_Practices</i>						

In addition, as depicted in Table 4.9 the path coefficient (Beta) of 0.396 indicates that WLB practices have a statistically significant effect on employee performance with p-value of 0.001, which is less than the expected cutoff (0.05), and the T-statistics value of 3.451, which was greater than the critical T-value (1.96). This implies that as WLB practices increase with one SD employee performance increased with 0.396 units.

Table 4.9: coefficient of employee performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.340	.406		5.764	.000
	WLB_Practices	.456	.132	.396	3.451	.001

a. Dependent variable employee performance

4.5 Challenges of WLB Practices

Implementing WLB programs is useful in reducing stress, increasing job satisfaction and general wellbeing of employees, which in turn enhances the performance of employees and the organization. However, regardless of this, there are a variety of challenges that hinder its effective implementation. It is found out that lack of top managers' support for employees to use WLB programs; fear of negative impact on professional career due to usage of WLB program benefits; consideration of being on the job for long hours and physical presence as a sign of commitment, productivity, and motivation for advancement; perception of co-workers about using WLB programs; and the belief that WLB policies are important and wanted only by women are major challenges that affect work life balance practices in all sampled public institutions.

More specifically, respondents tried to mention points which they considered as obstacles to the practice of WLB programs like lack of written and strong WLB policies (flexi time, job sharing, compressed work, tele-working, etc.), weak attention and implementation of WLB policies, unequal payment for the same job and position, shortage of employees which makes current employees overloaded, lack of flexible leadership, lack of interest and knowledge to be flexible to facilitate practice of WLB policies, and lack of modern technology are challenges from the organization side. On the other hand, weak cooperation among coworkers, misuse of

WLB benefits (like leave and working time), lack of awareness regarding WLB benefits and rights, etc. are among the major challenges that are caused by employees.

5. Conclusions

Under this particular section general conclusion are drawn from summary of major findings discussed above. Regarding the existing practices of WLB it is concluded that roles on work interfere in employees' role out of work and employees are obliged to take their work responsibilities to home. In addition to this, time employees spend on their job and roles expected from them makes difficult to fulfill their family and other responsibilities out of work. So employees miss different life events out of work such as being with family, friends and participating in different social life occasions due to burden they have on their job and little room to allocate enough time for their role out of work. On the other hand there is less possibility to miss time allocated for work due to pressure from responsibilities out of work and employees are unhappy with their overall roles even if there is a variation among institutions.

Therefore balancing their work and out of work life has been getting harder due to lack of flexi time opportunities, rare paid leave for family issues, lack of opportunity for using telecommuting, limitation in utilization of job sharing opportunity and compressed work week for employees, lack of practical health and wellbeing opportunity and as well financial support for employees and inappropriate provision of training. Moreover, Flexi time, tele-work, parental leave, compressed work week, part time work, paid leave, elder care and child care and training opportunities have an influence on employee performance. This implies a WLB practice has significant effects on employees' performance.

But, absence of opportunities for WLB policies and programs as in the current study leads to poor performance of individual employees which in turn leads to poor performance of public institutions. Therefore, WLB is worth noting concept which has multiplier effects on human aspects of the organizations. As a result, considering issues of WLB policies and programs in human resource management practices of public institution especially in least developing countries like Ethiopia where there is shortage of skillful, experienced and well equipped human resource is paramount.

There are various challenges found to be affecting practices of WLB among which lack of well-developed and concise WLB policies applicable to different working condition and even lack of clear knowledge and understanding by both managers and employees about available WLB policies and programs, lack of support from top level managers, rampant unethical behaviors in human resource practices, inefficient and powerless human resource managers, perception of employees about effect of WLB on career prospects, and perception of working long hours and physical presence as a signal for commitment and productivity are the major challenges.

6. Implications and future research directions

This study has practical and theoretical contributions. The study contributes to knowledge since the study focuses on the study of WLB in the context of developing country public sector organizations, where it has been studied a little. Practically, the study contributes to the practitioners by highlighting the importance of awareness creation and implementing various WLB practices since they have an enormous impact on the level of employee performance.

Finally, the focus of the current study is to examine the effect of work-life balance on employee performance in some selected public institutions at the federal level. Therefore, future

researchers are recommended to examine the effects of each WLB practice on employee performance in both private and other public institutions which will help to compare the practices of WLB among public and private institutions and to share experience among them.

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