

Tristan Woodard

Old Dominion University

IDS 300w

Dr. Jeanie Kline

March 25th, 2023

Work, Life, and Communication

While the type of work and methods of performing it have always changed and adapted, in the past 200 years these factors have changed drastically. Factors such as globalization and industrialization have undoubtedly had a massive impact on work, thus human life as we know it. It seems only natural then that the balance between the two may have been affected then as well. Due to these changes then, a number of thinkers and experts have sought to dissect how work balance affects us, what factors influence it, and what should then should be done.

Joanne Ciulla once said that how people think about work and leisure affects how people think about the big picture. Such a statement can seem quite obvious, and reminiscent of a truism at first glance, but when diving deeper, it may be difficult to explain exactly what is meant by the statement itself. While a number of explanations can be made, it perhaps could be the most insightful to give two possible interpretations to what is being said, a more broad and inquisitive statement on life, and a more narrow statement relating to how work-life balance is discussed. For the broad statement, it's somewhat of an admission that labor itself is integral to the human experience. In a way, how humans perform labor (change the world around them) and how their labor changes people in return, could be considered by some to be the very thing that makes humans different from the other beasts of the world. In this line of thinking, or in a similar one, this would mean that the way people think about work and leisure would be to think about what it means to be human itself. In the more narrow interpretation, these thoughts are more literal. In those that discuss work and life balance, there are a number of models that are hypothesized to be explanations on how work-life balance works (Guest, 2002). Five of the traditional models are conflict, instrumental, compensation, spillover, and segmentation. With this in mind, Ciulla's

words could simply be a statement that whichever model is chosen to be adhered to will shape how one views wider concepts in the field, and lead to other conclusions to be taken.

As for the individual factors that shape how people think about “work, leisure and the way we live.”, likely the most important factor is economic status and personal economic condition. This should not be surprising, as the economic status of someone being so ever present is simply an admission that the material world is material, people live within it, and so it affects people in turn. In viewing how it affects people, it might be helpful to think about a model such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. In this model 5 levels of needs of humans are presented, however, one need at the bottom of the hierarchy must be met before an individual can truly seek to meet a need higher up (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Those in a disadvantaged economic state will likely struggle to meet lower needs, and thus will not even have the luxury to struggle with meeting the higher levels of needs. Work-life balance to a poorer individual struggling to make ends meet then would likely just be thinking about survival, while someone meeting the grappling with needs on the higher end will be thinking about self actualization and self-esteem. While Maslow’s theory has been discussed numerous times over the years, Taormina and Gao’s work has described it as having predictive validity and support.

There are of course a number of other factors that contribute to work-life balance as well. For instance, mental disorders, disabilities, and developmental disorders can all greatly affect how someone thinks about work, life, and work-life balance. For instance, a 2017 study reported an unemployment rate of 39% for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder, with these results even being described as “lower than previous studies” (Ohl et al, 2017). A 2021 study on ADHD found that individuals with ADHD may make up to 20% less than those without it (Jangmo et al, 2021). With figures like these in mind, it can be easy to see how factors such as these could

easily change how an individual views work, purely through an economic lens. When combined with the other impacts these factors have on mood, state of mind, and the experience of life itself, it would seem that these factors could heavily change how life work balance could be viewed.

So in terms of my personal beliefs with all these factors in mind, I do clearly think employers should wholeheartedly try to help workers balance work, family, community, life, and leisure. Unfortunately, due to the nature of work in the modern world for many countries, the arguments for the immense benefits of such a thing are often drowned out by the omnipresent and almighty profit motive. Despite the clear societal benefits, employers will likely just stick to what will add the most zeros to their bank account. Attempting to explain the long term benefits of things like lowered generational stress, sustainable employment practices, and long term family and worker health are likely to be drowned out by the rise of quarterly profits due to the unsustainable pillaging of new markets and new methods of resource extraction. In terms of what the employer could do then if they are truly invested in maintaining a healthy balance of work and leisure, the answers are innumerable, yet likely share commonality. Just as Galinsky suggests asking the children to help parents succeed with parenting, one should simply ask the workers for help in order to succeed in helping them with work-life balance (Galinsky, 1999). If a worker needs more pay to make ends meet, opportunities to help them should be opened. If a worker needs more time off, or a changed schedule in order to live a fulfilling life, then the employer should make every effort to see to it such a thing could happen. The worker then, likewise, should try their best to keep open and honest with their communications to their employer in what they seek. The worker should also keep in mind, however, that there could be uncooperative, incompetent, or even predatory employers out there, so keeping your cool and staying cautious and calm could see great benefit.

On personal grounds again, my personal perspective of work-life balance is that it is different for everyone at every point in time. Since there are seemingly an innumerable amount of important factors that affect how people view and feel on work-life balance, when these factors change, as they will do, an individual's view on work-life balance then is also likely to change. If someone's economic status or mental health improves, worsens, and simply changes, then suddenly a healthy work-life balance could become unhealthy or vice versa. Then in my personal opinion, I would view it as important to remain introspective on how you feel about your own work-life balance, and remain inquisitive and dutiful in seeing how it stacks up to your situation and how tenable and preferable it is for you. Taking an idea from Galinsky's work again, one child summed up some of the thoughts presented by exclaiming how important it is to listen to your kids sometimes because "Sometimes a kid can have a great idea, and it could even affect you" (Galinsky, 1999). This expresses the same sentiment my own personal perspective attempts to portray. Above all else communicate, include those in your life important to you, and take their perspectives and include it within your own analysis.

In conclusion, work-life balance is a diverse and sometimes complex topic, but one that has an importance to humanity so large that it becomes paramount to discuss. A great number of factors have a role in shaping how each person thinks of it, and when those factors change, so can the thinking stemming from it. In order to reach a pleasurable and sustainable balance, then, it seems important to take multiple perspectives on the topic, and to take in as much pertinent knowledge from relevant parties related to said individual as one can. In this way, the shared knowledge from multiple people (and perhaps disciplines) reaches a place that simple one person could not do so alone.

References

- Galinsky, E. (1999). *Ask the children: what America's children really think about working parents*. New York, William Morrow.
- Guest, D. E. (2002). Perspectives on the Study of Work-life Balance. *Social Science Information*, 41(2), 255–279. doi:10.1177/0539018402041002005
- Jangmo, A., Kuja-Halkola, R., Pérez-Vigil, A., Almqvist, C., Bulik, C. M., D'Onofrio, B., Lichtenstein, P., Ahnemark, E., Werner-Kiechle, T., & Larsson, H. (2021). Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and occupational outcomes: The role of educational attainment, comorbid developmental disorders, and intellectual disability. *PloS one*, 16(3), e0247724. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247724>
- Ohl, A., Grice Sheff, M., Small, S., Nguyen, J., Paskor, K., & Zanjirian, A. (2017). Predictors of employment status among adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Work* (Reading, Mass.), 56(2), 345–355. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-172492>
- Taormina, R. J., & Gao, J. H. (2013). Maslow and the Motivation Hierarchy: Measuring Satisfaction of the Needs. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 126(2), 155–177. <https://doi.org/10.5406/amerjpsyc.126.2.0155>