

# Study on the Effect of Work-life Balance on the Intention to Leave of Grassroots Employees in the Service Industry

Yunpeng Yang<sup>1</sup>, Taiyu Wang<sup>2,\*</sup>, Josefine M. De Leon<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Cordilleras, College of Business Administration, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines, 2600

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louis University, School of Advanced Studies, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines, 2600

**Abstract:** Work-life balance has been an important practice in recent years to increase employee retention and productivity, since work-life balance can affect employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. The fatigue and stress caused by the intensity of the work and the organizations lack of attention to work-life balance at the grassroots level has led to a high turnover rate of the grassroots employees. This is not only unhelpful to employee self-development, but also increases the cost of hiring of the organization. Therefore, this paper researches the effect of work-life balance on the intention to leave of grassroots employees and concludes that work-life balance has a significant negative effect on the intention to leave of employees, in order to give organizations insight on helping grassroots employees to realize work-life balance.

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, intention to leave, grassroots employees

## 1. Introduction

Work-life balance is the least conflict between work and life roles when employees reach a satisfactory state of work-life. It is a responsibility of an organization to help employees find a balance between the pressures of work and family so that they can reconcile work-life conflicts and find a balance in their multiple social identities <sup>[1]</sup>. The realization of work-life balance in an organization is usually related to organizational policies and organizational culture. A supportive organizational policy and culture can reduce employees' stress at work, increase their commitment to the organization and job satisfaction, therefore create a psychological contract between the employees and the organization that makes them more inclined to stay with the organization, resulting in a lower turnover rate <sup>[2]</sup>. In terms of life, work-life balance can help employees build a better relationship with their families for two reasons: First, with less stress at work, employees are less likely to bring back negative emotions from work to their families, which helps them create a harmonious family atmosphere. Secondly, due to the reduction of workload, employees have more time to spend with their families, which can help them have a closer relationship with their families <sup>[3]</sup>.

Furthermore, the balance between work and life can further influence each other positively: the family will be more supportive of the employee's work, and this encouragement enables the employee to perform better in the workplace and thus be recognized. In turn, this virtuous cycle increases employee satisfaction and retention, moreover, it reduces human resource costs of the organization. In the long run, both employees and the organization will achieve a win-win situation. Conversely, if employees are unable to balance work and life, it can create conflict between the two. People have a limited energy, so employees are likely to neither perform well at work nor enjoy a harmonious family environment, which can lead to further role conflict and reduce employee job satisfaction and psychological contract, resulting in intention to leave or even consequences that are more serious such mental and physical health issues <sup>[4]</sup>.

The increase in turnover rate is a result of work-life imbalance. According to the '2021 Turnover and Salary Adjustment Report' given by MileagePlus HR Research Center <sup>[5]</sup>, the service industry has the second highest turnover rate of all industries at 16.9%, and more than a quarter of employees leave because of work-life imbalance. This indicates that employers should be aware of the effect of work-life balance on employees' intention to leave and the turnover rates, therefore, taking proactive measures to help employees balance their different roles they take on. Service industry workers at the grassroots level

are under greater stress at work and in life. In the workplace, grassroots employees in service industry are not only physically demanding, but by the nature of their work they also need to deal with customers and consume emotional values. As a result, they are more likely to feel stressed and frustrated at work, which can affect their interpersonal relationships and further affect their overall quality of life and work, and ultimately lead to job burnout and turnover <sup>[6]</sup>.

In the workplace, the practice of work-life balance is often considered only for technical and managerial staffs, not for the service staffs at the grassroots level, yet the service staffs at the grassroots level is also very important for the organization, and high turnover rates of grassroots employees can cause the organization to incur additional economic and time costs. Therefore, this paper aims to find out the effect of work-life balance on the intention to leave of grassroots employees in the service industry so that organizations can pay attention to their work-life balance and improve their quality of work and life, hence reduce the turnover rate.

## 2. Methodology

This paper intends to study the effect of work-life balance on intention to leave among grassroots employees in service industry, therefore the following hypothesis is proposed.

H<sub>a</sub>: Work life balance has a significant positive effect on intention to leave of grassroots employees in service industry.

H<sub>b</sub>: Work life balance has a significant negative effect on intention to leave of grassroots employees in service industry.

The current status of work life balance and intention to leave of the grassroots employees of Company A, Company G and Company Z which are in Beijing, China was collected through the work-life balance scale <sup>[4]</sup> and the intention to leave scale <sup>[6]</sup>.

Table 1 shows the work-life scale used in this paper, which was revised by drawing on Yang's (2013) <sup>[4]</sup> measure of work-life balance of knowledge employees and incorporating the actual situation of grassroots employees in service industry. There are four dimensions, which are: work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family facilitation, and family-to-work facilitation.

*Table 1: Work-life scale for grassroots employees in service industry*

Question No.	Item
W1	Due to the excessive physical exertion at work, I reduce the amount of time and energy I devote to activities with my family
W2	I tend to lose control of my emotions at home due to the emotional drain at the workplace
W3	The pressure from my family makes me often make mistakes at work
W4	In order to take care of my family, I had to reduce my time and energy for work
W5	The communication skills I use at work help me communicate better with my family
W6	If I have a good day at work, I will get along better with my family when I get home
W7	The support from my family makes me happier to work
W8	I will work harder to make my family's life better

Table 2 shows the scale of intention to leave used in this paper, which was adopted from the scale used by Zhang (2018) <sup>[6]</sup> in her study on the measurement of intention to leave and revised with the actual situation of the grassroots employees in service industry.

*Table 2: Intention to leave scale for grassroots employees in service industry*

Question No.	Item
L1	My work pressure will not be relieved if I stay with my current organization
L2	My family relationships will not change for the better if I stay with my current organization
L3	I often have the idea of quitting my current job
L4	If possible, I would resign and look for other job opportunities

The validity and reliability of the questionnaires were pretested before the formal distribution of the questionnaires. Corrected Item-Total for all items Correlation (CITC) for all items was greater than 0.5, and Cronbach's alpha for both scales was greater than 0.7. Therefore, the questionnaire used in this study has a high validity and reliability.

### 3. Results

The respondents of this paper were all grassroots employees from three service companies A, G, and Z. Companies A, G, and Z provide food service, sales service, and education service respectively, and their grassroots employees usually have performance pressure and life pressure mainly in terms of cost of living. Therefore, the results of this study can reflect the situation of grassroots employees in the service industry in Beijing more objectively and comprehensively.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 to obtain the correlation between work-life balance and intention to leave, the results are shown in Table 3:

*Table 3: Correlation between work-life balance and intension to leave*

		Work-life balance	Intention to leave
Work-life balance	PCCs	1	-0.817
	Sig.	0.000	0.000
Intention to leave	PCCs	-0.817	1
	Sig.	0.000	0.000

The Pearson correlation coefficient between work-life balance and intention to leave is less than 0, indicating a negative relationship between the two variables, while the absolute value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8, which shows a very strong correlation between work-life balance and intention to leave. Therefore, there is a significant negative correlation between work-life balance and the intention to leave of grassroots employees in service industry. It illustrates that the higher the level of work-life balance, the lower the intention of employees to leave.

Research has proven that work-life imbalance negatively affects job satisfaction, and that a decrease in employee satisfaction leads to an increase in intention to leave. Organizations that help employees achieve work-life balance make employees feel a sense of organizational support, while satisfying their spiritual desire to be valued by the organization [7]. This is crucial for grassroots employees in service industry. For the grassroots employees in service industry, they have to give their physical energy and at the same time deal with customers, the words and actions of customers can, to a certain extent, have a negative psychological influence on the grassroots employees. Compared with other industries, service workers at the grassroots level are paid less and confront heavy pressure on their lives. This justifies the data obtained. Grassroots service workers have a lower intention to leave when they can achieve work-life balance because they are respected and valued at work, treated reasonably well at home, and have good relationships with their families to comfort them from the stress of work. The benefits to the organization of lower turnover intentions are also self-evident, as it reduces employee turnover and makes the organization's operations more stable and efficient. Therefore, the grassroots employees need to achieve work-life balance, which requires the organization to give them enough attention. If organizations want to retain their employees, in addition to paying them what the employees deserve, meanwhile, the employees need to identify with the organization in their minds, it requires the organizations to value their employees, recognize their contributions, and take action to increase their well-being. The results presented in Table 3 illustrate this point - helping grassroots employees achieve work-life balance can significantly reduce their intention to leave, thus, add value to the organization.

### 4. Recommendations

Achieving work-life balance for grassroots employees in service industry requires a joint effort by the organization and its employees.

1) Employers should pay attention to the development and refinement of work-life

Balance practices, especially for grassroot employees, to reasonably assign them working tasks and be conscious of their physical and mental health to make them feel valued to retain in the organizations.

2) The grassroots employees should actively engage in family and social activities to keep

Work-life balance. Meanwhile, grassroots employees should be heard and have the courage to express their ideas about work arrangements to their employers in work place. Open and transparent communication will enable employers to better understand the needs of their employees, which in turn will increase their satisfaction and reduce their intention of leave.

## References

- [1] Mark S. R., & MacDermid, S. M. (1996). *Multiple roles and the self: A theory of role balance [J]. Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 417-432.
- [2] Chen, Y. & Liu, Y. (2010). *A review of research on the relationship between work-life balance strategies and organizational performance [J]. Future and Development*, 7, 78-81.
- [3] Wang, T., Zhu, P. & Zhu, H. (2011). *A study on the relationship between work-family balance and organizational performance of researchers [J]. Scientific Research*, 29(1):121-126.
- [4] Yan, W. (2013). *Research on Work-Life Balance on Knowledge Workers' Performance: The Mediating Effect of Psychological Contract [D]. Central South University*.
- [5] 2021 Turnover and Salary Adjustment Report. (n. d). Retrieved 2021, August 27, from: <http://research.51job.com/insight-445.html>
- [6] Zhang, Y. (2018). *Research on the Relationship among New Generation Employees Career Plateau, Job Burnout and Turnover Intention [D]. Xi'an University of Technology*.
- [7] Liu, H. (2014). *The impact of work-life balance on organizational commitment-take bank employees as an example [D]. Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics*.