

Work-Life Integration and Resilience During the Pandemic: An Empirical Study On Working Professionals

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Abstract

To understand the interplay between socio-economic demographic variables, work-life integration (WLI), and resilience during unprecedented times. The study is an effort to investigate the present state of working professionals in relation to work-life integration under contemporary socio-economic demographic dimensions and further test the relationship between resilience and WLI. A mixed-method of research with interviews as well as the questionnaire is used. With 101 datasets of working professionals from India, five socio-economic demographic variables are identified -generation type, industry, present position in organisation, family status, and average working hours per week. The chi-square results represent a significant effect of these socio-economic demographic variables on WLI and subsequently, correlation illustrates a positive relationship between resilience and WLI. Based on regression, a conceptual model is proposed, that represents socio-economic demographic factors that affect WLI and WLI influences resilience.

Keywords: Work-life integration; Resilience; Socio-economic; Pandemic; Working Professionals; Empirical study

1. Introduction

When a disease movement is traced from one place to the other spreading to large geographical areas, it is called the pandemic, a more evolved version of an epidemic (Morens et al., 2009). It has been more than a year and a half that the coronavirus disease is in the news and conversations across the globe constantly impacting the psychological, emotional, economic, and social side of humans (Joshi, 2021). A crisis like this is challenging the existing business models, leading to several emerging phenomena at the workplace like job flexibility, work from home, idiosyncratic deals for employees, virtual meetings, etc. This crisis has resulted in large-scale behavioural change, new lifestyle patterns, and numerous survival mechanisms to deal with the pandemic which confirms the belief that human beings are capable of flexibility to respond in tough times (Khanna et al., 2020). Many researchers claim that the pandemic will bring a new socio-economic demographic standard, for example, alternate forms of work arrangements, diverse dimensions of the workforce, family, and work integration, etc (Kaushik, M et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to understand, recognise and study the 'new' socio-economic demographic variables emerging during the pandemic and how these variables bring change in the lives of working professionals.

The pandemic has hit the entire world and limited everyone's life to their homes. As a result, the binary relationship between 'work' and 'life' seems to be changed. Past studies have constantly emphasised that 'work-life balance' is a functional mechanism of better performance and reduce stress. Contrary to this, during the pandemic, the whole concept of 'work-life balance' has transitioned to 'work-life integration'. With blurred demarcation of job and family, offices moving into house and families moving into meetings, the phenomena of 'work-life integration' seem to have bargain as a more functional mechanism to cope with stress and maintain performance. Work-life integration (WLI) during pandemic has played a vital role in setting limitations by individuals themselves to stay wherever they are and still perform. WLI implies a holistic strategy among stakeholders sharing interest and benefits from work, employees can fulfil their personal, work, family, and community obligations (Morris & Hassard, 2020). Thus, while identifying the contemporary socio-economic demographic variables during the pandemic, it is significant to examine their impact on WLI.

During these tough times, few individuals can withstand adversity without any negative thoughts or feelings whereas few cannot. Fundamentally one's ability to maintain mental balance, follow positive adoption, and bounce back despite experiencing difficulties is referred to as resilience (Vinkers et al., 2020). Over the years, resilience is seen as a core strategy to cope up with stress and therefore, exercised by many during a crisis like the pandemic (Killgore et al., 2020). As a result, building resilience from the fact that the entire world is in the same predicament can help in drawing strength to be mindful with a smoother flow of thoughts in day-to-day lives (Vinkers et al., 2020). While WLI is considered as a holistic strategy to align work and life from a socio-economic demographic perspective, resilience acts as a cognitive strategy to align thoughts and actions from a socio-psychology perspective. Both WLI and resilience are individual-level variables constructed on personality and environmental factors. Many studies have shown common drivers of WLI and resilience based on different contextual settings, but very few studies highlight the affiliation between the two (Giriskan, 2021).

Therefore, the existing gap demands study to establish a relationship between WLI and resilience during the present context of the pandemic. The present research study aims to understand the interplay between socio-economic demographic variables, work-life integration, and resilience during unprecedented times. The study may suggest few rapid response mechanisms to cope up with stress and bounce back.

In subsequent sections, the study is further divided into four sections. Section 2 covers the recent literature review in a similar direction and their findings. Section 3 defines the research methodology used to answer research questions. Section 4 elaborates on hypothesis testing. Section 5 outlines the overall results and finding. Section 5 discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature review

Over a decade, many researchers and scholars have been curious to identify or establish a progressive relationship between work-life balance and work-life integration. On one side, few researchers claim that work-life integration is a subset of work-life balance whereas on contrary few define it as a phenomenon to reduce conflict (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). In certain studies, work-life integration is highlighted as an individual approach to reduce work-life conflict and enhance work-life facilitation (Michel & Clark, 2013; Moazami-Goodarzi et al., 2015; Pandey et.al., 2018). As a result, the role of individuals in a multidimensional approach to manage work-life integration is reviewed by several researchers conceptually but not empirically (Amah & Ogah, 2021). Also, few recent studies have highlighted the challenges faced by individuals or organisations to maintain work-life integration during pandemic particularly related to health workers, doctors, and women, but no study covers the changing demographic dimensions across working professionals (Valcour, & Batt, 2018; Haldane, et.al., 2021).

Resilience is identified as one of the most appropriate methods to combat the crisis and as a result, several studies have focused on studying resilience in relation to COVID-19 (Vinkers et al., 2020). Resilience is an ability or preparedness to bounce back during a stressful experience (Cooke, 2011). The classical model of resilience states that there are four stages of resilience- understand the context, level of disturbance, capability to react, and reaction to disturbance. This approach seemed to be more appropriate when the disturbance is recurring, or the historical trends support the hypothesis that there is a likelihood of the same disturbance/ shock in near future. Contrary, the modern approach to resilience belief that individual can develop their ability to understand the disturbances before they arrive. In other words, the contemporary definitions of resilience state that proactiveness may assess the adversity or disturbances well in time. However, the fourth stage of reaction largely depends upon individual differences. A mindful balanced decision making generally leads to a better response and thus WLI may act as an instrument to build resilience. Therefore, resilience is an established phenomenon in literature, but whether WLI and resilience are related or unrelated is not known.

To sum up, despite recognition of WLI as a ‘new’ work-life balance in recent studies, there exists a gap to empirically map contemporary socio-economic demographic variables with WLI among working professionals. Further, the dearth of existing literature that connects WLI and resilience, provides an opportunity to understand the strength between the two and establish a relationship. While considering the above factor, the present context of the pandemic plays a pivotal role in any empirical research. Therefore, building upon the same context, the gaps identified have raised few research questions as given below:

RQ1: What are the contemporary socio-economic demographic variables affecting WLI among working professionals who emerged during the pandemic?

RQ2: What are the potential effects of these socio-economic demographic variables on WLI among professionals during the pandemic?

RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between WLI and resilience among working professionals during the pandemic?

RQ4: Can an integrated model be proposed with socio-economic demographic variables, WLI, and resilience as a response to crisis management among working professionals?

As a result, the study is an effort to address the unattended research questions and investigate the present state of working professionals in relation to work-life integration under new socio-economic demographic dimensions, and further test the relationship between resilience and WLI.

3. Research Methodology

In continuation, to address RQ1 to RQ4, a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research design was taken. To answer RQ1, a preliminary set of interactions with HR working professionals was conducted, online or on the telephone. The basic question raised was ‘What has changed during the last one year among employees?’ and ‘What according to you are new socio-economic demographic factors affecting employees?’. The interview was recorded and lasted for 40mins. For the remaining research questions, a questionnaire was used to elicit information from 101 working professionals through a purposive sampling technique. The study was conducted in India. The working professionals comprised a wide range of workforce such as architects, self-employed, government officials, educators, creative heads, sales professionals, legal experts, etc. The questionnaire has three parts. The first part of the questionnaire had questions on the respondents’ background, the second part contained questions on social-economic factors and the third part had questions related to individual factors. The questions in the third part of the questionnaire were established on a five-point Likert scale of always to never. The data were analysed through chi-square and linear regression. The descriptive statistics were used to state the demographic profile of the respondents whereas chi-square was used to establish a significant association between socio-economic demographic variables to WLI (Bhatnagar & Jain, 2014). The effect of WLI on resilience was analysed using linear regression. The questionnaire was shared online via social

groups and emails through google forms. Total 104 responses were collected within ten days but 101 considered. Three were removed due to incomplete details.

4. Hypothesis

Based on the research objective, the following hypothesis to be analysed

Ho= There is no significant association between socio-economic demographic variables (type of generation, family status, industry, average working hours, and present position) and the work-life integration of working professionals.

H1= There is a significant association between socioeconomic demographic variables (type of generation, family status, industry, average working hours, and present position) and the work-life integration of working professionals.

Ho= There exists no relationship between work-life integration and resilience among working professionals.

H1= There exists a relationship between work-life integration and resilience among working professionals.

Ho= There is no significant influence of work-life integration on the resilience of working professionals.

H1= There is a significant influence of work-life integration on the resilience of working professionals.

5. Result analysis and findings

Based on the interview collected from five HR professionals, there were five contemporary socio-economic demographic variables - generation type, industry, present position in organisation, family status, and average working hours per week. These factors along with other basic demographic information like Gender and work settings were incorporated in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Socio-economic demographic profile of the respondents

Particulars	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	50.5
	Female	50	49.5
Present Work Settings	Working from home	65	64.4
	Partially working from home & office	29	28.7
	Working from office	7	6.9
Industry	Services	44	43.6
	IT and ITES	18	17.8
	Education & Training	15	14.9
	Banking & Finance	14	13.9
	Marketing and Advertising	6	5.9
	Manufacturing	4	4.0
Generation	Gen Z	20	19.8
	Gen Y	61	60.4
	Gen X	18	17.8
	Baby boomers	2	2.0
Present Position at work	Middle Management	51	50.5
	Senior Management/Owner	24	23.8
	Non-Managerial Employee	20	19.8
	Supervisor	6	5.9

As mentioned in Table 1, gender represents an equal proportion of response from male and female whereas the representation from service industry is highest 43.6% and lowest from

manufacturing 4%. The sample representation from different generations shows maximum participation from Gen Y (also known as millennials) as 60.4%, followed by Gen Z as 19.8%, then Gen X as 17.8%, and last Baby boomers as 2.0%. Maximum representation is at Mid-level management and minimum at supervisor, with 50.5% and 5.9%, respectively. During last year, the work settings for 64.4% of working professionals is work from home (WFH), 28.7% are partially working from home as well as office and only 6.9% are working regularly from offices.

To understand the significant association between socio-economic demographic variables (type of generation, family status, industry, average working hours, and present position) and work-life integration of working professionals, the chi-square test is used, and the results are tabulated below.

H1= There is a significant association between socioeconomic demographic variables (type of generation, family status, industry, average working hours, and present position) and the work-life integration of working professionals.

Table 2: Socio-economic demographic variables and Work-life integration

		Work-life Integration					Total
		Never	Rarely	Someti mes	Often	Always	
Generation	Baby Boomers	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Gen X	0	0	6	7	5	18
	Gen Y	0	15	13	27	6	61
	Gen Z	0	4	7	8	1	20
Family Status	Nuclear family	0	11	17	37	10	75
	Joint family	0	8	9	5	4	26
Industry	Banking & Finance	0	5	4	3	2	14
	Defence	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Education & Training	0	1	2	7	5	15
	IT and ITES	0	2	6	10	0	18
	Manufacturing	0	0	1	3	0	4
	Marketing and Advertising	0	1	1	4	0	6
	Services	0	10	12	15	5	42
	40-48 Hours	0	5	11	19	8	43

Average Working Hours	Less Than 40 Hours	0	0	0	11	2	13
	More Than 48 Hours	0	14	15	12	4	45
Present Position at work	Middle Management	0	8	14	28	1	51
	Non-Managerial Employee	0	6	7	5	2	20
	Senior Management/Owner	0	4	3	6	11	24
	Supervisor	0	1	2	3	0	6
Total		0	19	26	42	14	101
		0	19	26	42	14	101

Table 2 reflects that out of 101 respondents, only 14 respondents are always able to integrate work and life whereas 19 respondents are rarely able to integrate work and life, 26 respondents are sometimes able to integrate, and the remaining 42 respondents are often able to integrate work and life. However, none of the respondents stated 'never' in their response.

From a socio-demographic variable perspective, respondents who can 'always' integrate work-life belong to baby-boomer generation type, presently placed in nuclear families, work in education & training industry with average working hours less than 40 in a week and currently positioned at senior management in the organisation. Respondents who 'often' integrate work-life belong to Gen Z generation type, presently placed in nuclear families, work in the service industry with average working hours of 40-48 per week, and currently positioned at mid-level management in the organisation. Respondents who 'sometimes' integrate work-life belong to Gen X generation type, presently placed in joint families, work in IT&ITES industry with average working hours of 40-48 per week, and currently positioned at the non-managerial level in the organisation. Respondents who 'rarely' integrate work-life belong to Gen Y generation type, presently placed in joint families, work in banking & finance industry with average working hours of more than 48 per week, and currently positioned at mid-level management in the organisation. None of the respondents stated 'never'. Therefore, it can be understood that irrespective of any socio-demographic difference, working professionals recognise the need and importance to integrate 'work' with 'life'.

Table 3: Chi-square test results

Socio-economic demographic factors		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Outcome
Generation type	Pearson Chi-Square	22.956 ^a	9	0.006	Null hypothesis is rejected. Ho=Rejected Alternate hypothesis is accepted. H1=Accepted
Family Status	Pearson Chi-Square	7.998 ^a	3	0.046	
Industry	Pearson Chi-Square	32.028 ^a	18	0.022	
Average Working hours	Pearson Chi-Square	21.387 ^a	6	0.002	
Present Position at work	Pearson Chi-Square	33.306 ^a	9	0.000	

The above table 3 indicates that asymptotic significance (2-sided) or P-value is less than standard value 0.05 in the case of all the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Thus, it can be understood that there exists a significant association between socioeconomic variables (type of generation, family status, industry, average working hours, and present position) and work-life integration of working professionals.

H1= There exists a relationship between work-life integration and resilience among working professionals.

To understand the association between WLI and resilience, spearman's rho correlation is used. The values can range from -1 to +1 indicating the direction and strength of the relationship. -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, +1 reflects perfect positive and 0 indicates no relationship. This is used to test the hypothesis.

Table 4: Correlations Results

			Work-life Integration	Resilience
Spearman's rho	Work-life Integration	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.324**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	101	101
	Resilience	Correlation Coefficient	.324**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	101	101

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 reflects a statistically significant relationship between WLI and resilience. The positive values represent a positive relationship between the two. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it can be understood that when WLI increases, resilience also increases among working professionals.

To understand the influence of WLI on resilience and propose an integrated model later, regression is conducted.

H1= There is a significant influence of work-life integration on the resilience of working professionals.

Table 5: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change	
					R Square	F Change
1	.285 ^a	.081	.072	.85109	.081	8.765

Table 5 above provides R and R square values. The value represents a weak influence of WLI over resilience among working professionals.

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.349	1	6.349	8.765	.004 ^b
	Residual	71.710	99	.724		
	Total	78.059	100			

a. Dependent Variable: Resilience

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work-life Integration

Table 6 above, represents how well the regression equation fits the data. As the significance values are less than 0.05, it is statistically significant to run a regression model on variables. It is a good fit for data.

Table 7: Coefficients Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.937	.324		9.077	.000
	Work-life Integration	.264	.089	.285	2.961	.004

Table 7 above, shows the coefficient table that provides us the necessary information to predict resilience from work-life integration, as well as determine whether WLI contributes statistically significant to the model. As the Sig value, p is less than .05, WLI statistically contributes to resilience. Therefore, it can be understood that there is a possibility to represent a model based on significance and good to fit values, however, the present study reflects a weak impact of WLI on resilience among working professionals.

The major findings drawn from the analysis of data are:

- Around 41% of working professionals are able to integrate their ‘work’ and ‘life’, out of which, baby boomers are always able to do it followed by Gen Y and Gen Z. Gen X is rarely able to integrate work and life.
- Most of the working professionals who are presently placed in nuclear families have shown better WLI than the ones in joint families.
- Education & Training industry counts for most WLI actions, followed by services and IT&ITES industry, however, in the present scenario Banking & Finance counts least for WLI actions.
- Working professionals with average working hours less than 40 per week are able to integrate work and life properly, as compared to others.
- The senior management and mid-level management seemed to integrate work and life better than the non-managerial and supervisory levels.
- The present work setting of 64.4% of respondents is work from home.
- Long average working hours per week lead to poor work-life integration.
- Professionals working in Banking & Finance have shown weak work-life integration.
- WLI has a weak influence over resilience but a positive relationship with resilience. Higher WLI contributes to higher resilience in an individual.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The quantitative data analysis and findings support the existence of work-life integration. In a constant drive to maintain a balance between work and life, there are several initiatives taken by individuals and organisations. Many organisational policies like job flexibility, HR policies, facilities, and support, are initiated in recent times but there are very few takers possibly due to the pandemic. Today most professionals are working from home, therefore, constant family interference and support are functional (Tunji-Olayeni, et.al, 2021; Mary & Nicola, 2019). Few individuals work out a strategy and mechanise the forces around them to integrate ‘work ’and ‘life’, but few are still struggling. However, to survive during the crisis and respond against the pandemic, only WLI may not act sufficiently, additionally one needs to build resilience. Studies state resilience as an acquired knowledge and ability to recover from disturbances (Cooke, 2011). Based on the study, there exists a positive relationship between WLI and resilience. In other words, more integration in work and life will result in building more resilience. Due to a positive correlation between the two, a conceptual model is proposed as an integrated framework, to develop the ability to bounce back during the crisis. The model represents a set

of socio-economic demographic variables that affect WLI and WLI builds resilience. It is conceptualised in the present context of response to the crisis and develop coping ability.

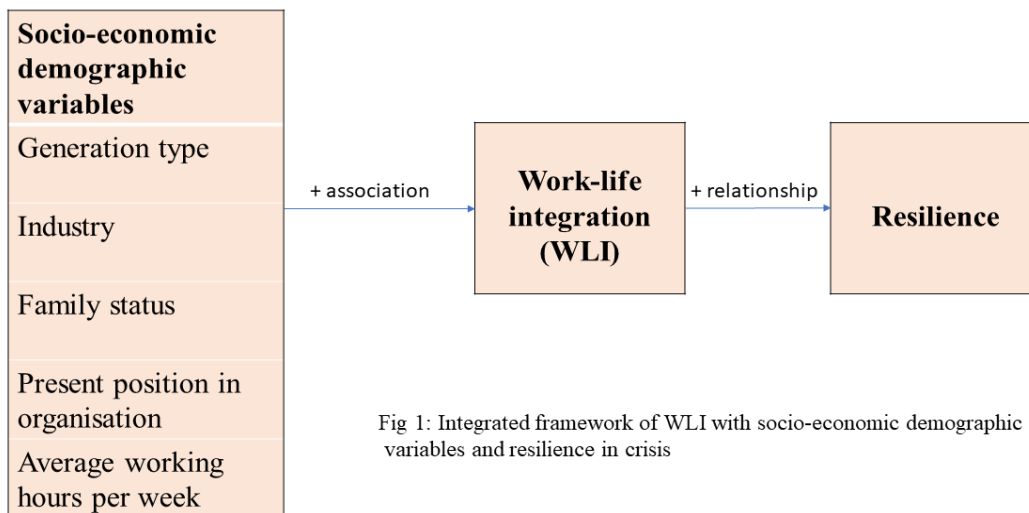


Fig 1: Integrated framework of WLI with socio-economic demographic variables and resilience in crisis

To conclude, the study was aimed to understand the interplay between socio-economic demographic variables, work-life integration, and resilience during the pandemic for working professionals. To achieve its research objective, RQ1 to RQ4 were developed. RQ1 was addressed to identify contemporary socio-economic demographic variables affecting WLI and thus based on literature review and a preliminary set of interactions with five working professionals, there were five factors identified. These were generation type, industry, position in the level of management, family status, and average working hours per week. RQ2 was addressed through an online questionnaire filled by 101 respondents, where the potential effect of these socio-economic demographic variables on WLI was determined and explained further. RQ3 was also attended with the same questionnaire but with a different set of questions, thereafter correlation was conducted, to assess their relationship. RQ4 was answered with a proposed conceptual model (as shown in fig 1) based on regression 'good to fit' statistical significance level. The study suggests WLI and resilience as rapid response mechanisms to cope up with stress and bounce back during stressful experiences.

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