

# CAREER ORIENTATION AND WORK- LIFE BALANCE: DOES GENDER MAKE DIFFERENCE?

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## ABSTRACT

*Career is a major part of human life. It determines wellbeing of people. According to the literature, career orientation of people has been changing due to the changes taking place in various macro environmental factors. This changes lead to vicissitudes in psychological contract between organization and employees from loyalty to transactional. The main aim of the study is to evaluate the effect of gender upon the relationship between career orientation and work life balance. The required data for the study were collected from 349 employees (academic and nonacademic) in higher education institutes (HEIs) functioning in North province in Sri Lanka, using convenient sampling technique. There are two hypotheses set out for the study. SPSS process version 3 was used to test the moderation effect of gender on the relationship between predictor and the outcome variable. The study concluded that gender moderate the relationship between self- directed career orientation and work life balance of employees in Higher Educational Institutes in Northern province.*

**Key words:** career orientation, work - life balance, higher education institutes

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work- life balance of the employees has been receiving greater attention among scholars in recent years as it affects performance of individuals and organizations. Work- life interface reveals variety of experience, barriers, supports and opportunities that individuals gain in performing their roles in life and work that make up their healthy work place and family environment.

Generally, personal life roles of people affect roles performed in organizations and vice versa. Nuclear family set up with dual earners in modern society leads to increased family burden among family members as mostly influence the roles performed in the organizations. 'There are many family and organizations related problems created by dual earner parents and single working parents in worldwide. They present new challenges to the organizations and familie'. (Kovalenko and Mortelmans 2016; Bayron, 2005; and Viswesvaran, 2005 ). One of the most important challenges faced by individual is how to perform work and family related roles without disturbing one and another. On the other side, organizations have to work in a smart way to face challenges due to the high intensity

of the competition. Even though performance of the employees influences the performance of the organizations and it is considered as one of the determinants of survival. Organizations in developed countries support their employees through various programme to balance their work roles and non-work roles. The support given by the organizations help employees to prosper on their present job. According to the literature on work - life balance, imbalance in work and life leads to absenteeism, turnover intention, lower job and life satisfaction, lower performance and stress.

On the other hand, careers in organizations undergo profound major change and the part of it, individuals are considered as their own destiny writers not accepters of given fate. Psychological contract between employers and employees becomes as transactional. Self-directed employees choose and make their career well suited to their ideology. They seek for better outcomes from their present work. Since the work provides opportunities to satisfy personal demands of the employees they continue in the job, otherwise, they search for new opportunities. Though Theoretically it is true but

practically the labour market condition where huge number of young people are unemployed may limit the decision regarding to quitting from the present job.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives set out for the study.

- To evaluate the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between self – directed career orientation and work life balance.
- To examine difference between men and women in relation to their career orientation and work - life balance.

## 3. RESEARCH QUESTION

Women participation in labour force has been increasing in Sri Lanka, it was 34.3% in 2011 and 36.6% in 2017 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017) but this figure deviates among skill and education related categories. This participation leads to increased number of dual earners families and increase in family burden of women and men as they have to perform extra roles whereas the degree of burden bear by women is greater than the men. On the other side, attitude of the workforce towards

their organization and the work outcomes changed and they prefer more autonomy in the job. Even though the attitudinal change is comparable to the western countries in certain extent but the employees in the HEI's in the North province prefer liner progression and willing to continue at present job until their retirement for the benefits and job security. 86% of the employees in HEIs in Northern province are dual earners and majority are in the nuclear family setup.

Further, as far as cultural dimensions are concerned, power distance in the family is little bit higher in North and it consists of male dominated societies. Majority of the domestic duties are socially assigned to the women. At the same time, Gunawardena et al., (2004) and Wickramasinghe & Jayatilaka, (2006) cited in Kailasapathy and Metz (2012) stated that the social system in Sri Lanka taught women to accept that they are responsible to household and child care works. According to Porter and Ayman (2010) women assume childbearing activities as they feel it is their responsibility.

Therefore, the present study tried to explore to what extent changing career orientation and work- life related matters affect the

respondents in HEIs in Northern province.

Does gender impact on the relationship between self- directed career orientation and work- life balance?

#### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Work - life balance of women employees in Sri Lankan is an economic issue and it affects individuals' life, organizations and the nation at large as the women participation in labour force has been increasing for last couple of decades. Dual career couple and nuclear family set up increase women work load at home. They have to satisfy demand of personal life and work because they cannot sacrifice one for another. Present study categorically analyses work-life balance of women employees in Higher Education Institutions in North Province. Previously Sri Lankan researchers analyzed work - family balance in different context and with different causes and outcomes. This study deviates from past studies as it attempted to analyze sample employees from North region and a causal relationship between Self -directed career orientation and work life balance of women. The study adds

knowledge deposit to the existing literature and supports authorities to know the present status of work life balance of their employees.

#### 5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term career originally came from French and Latin terms, such as *carrier* in French means "road, racecourse" via in Latin *cararia* (track for wheeled vehicles) which originated from the Latin word *carrus* "which means "wagon". The term career is being widely used in our day to day life considered as occupation in ordinary usage but in career management literature, it means lifelong learning of an individual that received or accumulated from different positions held by him/ her. Early literature on career holds greater ambiguity in defining the term career. It describes a *neat progression up the hierarchy but we also refer 'careering about'* (Watts, 1998). The another definition says career as 'the lifelong sequence of job related experiences of individual' (Hall 2002)

It could be defined as learning of a person by experience, knowledge and skill development from his or her sequence of jobs through linear progression or lateral

mobility or boundryless career move in relation to related or unrelated position/s held by a person in life (Shanthakumary,2018).

### **Career Orientation**

Career orientation denotes to individual's attitude towards his/her career which may influence future career related decisions. Gerber et al. (2009) defined the term as follows:

*"A career orientation is an attitude concerning a person's career [...]. It consists of cognitive, affective, and behaviour-related components and is expressed by superordinate intentions of an individual that will influence career related decisions [...]."*

According to the literature on career management, career orientation is divided as traditional career orientation and new career orientation. In traditional career, people work mostly under single organization with liner progression, organization is responsible for career development and loyalty among employer and employee are common features whereas work in several organizations, transactional relationship, individual is responsible for career development and no loyalty between employer and employee. New career orientations related studies specify

two important new concepts such as protean career orientation and boundaryless career. Both of the concepts analyzed many authors using two major dimensions to each. Self-directed career orientation and value driven orientation are the major components of protean career orientation and boundaryless mind set and mobility preferences are the dimensions of boundaryless career.

### **Self-directed career orientation**

Self-directed career orientation is one of the components of protean career orientation which motivate employees to take personal control over their career development related activities therefore they discover career opportunities and decide preferred career path to proceed in their life. Self-directed people make their career move based on personally defined goals (Volmer &Spurk,2010)

Briscoe, Hall & De Muth (2006) develop a new scale to measure new career concepts such as protean career orientation(self – directed career attitude and value driven predispositions) and boundaryless career(boundaryless mind set and organizational mobility preferences). Three different studies were carried out to validate the developed measures. Factor analysis

was performed to finalize factor structure. Finally the present 8 items model for self- directed career attitude and six items scale for value driven predisposition suggested as measure of protean career orientation and this scale is widely used by researchers though there are many criticism regarding its adequacy.

Zhang et. al (2015) investigated the effect of self-directed career attitude on career and life satisfaction with the mediation and moderation of sense of calling and job insecurity respectively. The results revealed that calling mediates the relationship between self-directed career attitude and life and career satisfaction. Job insecurity moderated the relationship between predictor and life satisfaction but not the relationship between self-directed career attitude and career satisfaction.

Volmer & Spurk (2009) found self- directed career attitude career was important predictor of career satisfaction and other referent career success. Some of the researchers like De Vos and Soens (2008); Briscoe et al., 2012; De Vos and Seger, 2013 found self-directedness to be an important antecedent of different career outcomes such as career satisfaction,

perceived employability and career success.

Jackson and Wilton (2016) analyzed components of new career management attitudes among undergraduates in U.K and Australia found that the samples are high in self- directed career orientation and boundaryless mind set. The researchers further identified there was no significant association between gender and self- directed career orientation.

### **Work -life balance**

Studies of work -life/ work-family balance started with the focus of its negative side the roles spillover from one into another. Early authors argued that many negative effects of work- family conflict and ultimately the conflict brings negative consequences on individual wellbeing (DiRenzo, 2010). Grzywacz & Carlson (2007) defined work – family balance as ‘accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains’. Further they found that work- family balance give substantial variation in outcomes such as job satisfaction, family functioning, organizational commitment and family

performance than conflict and enrichment.

Work - life balance is defined in different ways in the Human resource management literature. Clark(2001) defined it as "to what extent individuals are equally involved and satisfied with work and family roles". In simple term work life balance refers maintaining or satisfying work and life demand successfully. There is no scantiness in performing work and life roles. Work –life imbalance brings a lot of repercussion to individuals and organizations such as career success, family enrichment, job performance and job satisfaction (Rahman et al.,2017).

Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw(2003) proposed three components of work- life balance and develop a six items measurement. They found that satisfaction and involvement components of work- life balance positively related to quality of life.

Brough et al. (2014) developed a four - item unidimensional measure to measure the subjective perception of employees regarding their work and life. The measure confirmed in four different samples in New Zealand and Australia and found work- life balance negatively related with

turnover intension, work demand and psychological strain. It is positively related to family and job satisfaction.

### **Self-directed career orientation and work- life balance**

General belief of people is the protean career orientation (self-directed career orientation and value driven disposition) supports employees balance their work-life but relationship between them is not known widely (DiRenzo, Greenhaus & Weer,2015). At the same time, Hornung et al.( 2008) said that people who have more strong career management skill would negotiate for working arrangement therefore they strike balance between work and family. Likewise, Kailasapathy and Metz(2012) concluded that negotiation at home and work place would reduce conflict and stress. At the same time DiRenzo (2010) and DiRenzo, Greenhaus and Weer (2015) found positive relationship between self- directed career orientation and work- life balance.

### **Gender**

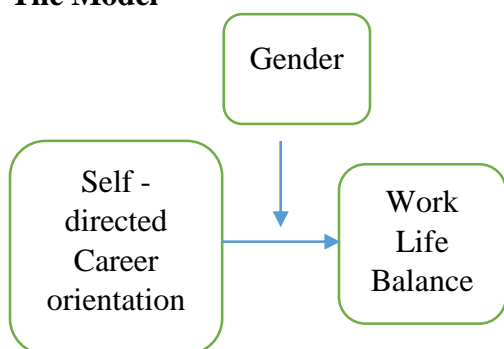
Generally, sex and gender are used interchangeably one for another. According to the literature, sex denotes biological difference between male and female, whereas



gender is defined as “*the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.*”(WHO, 2015) . Gender in work- life balance extensively studied by many authors. Men and women generally move differently in relation to work – family tasks. Men sacrifice family responsibilities for work women sacrifice work place responsibilities for family (Haworth & Lewis, 2005)

## 6. METHODOLOGY

### The Model



### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>- Gender moderator the relationship between self-directed career orientation and work life balance

H<sub>2</sub>-Self-directed women better balance their work and life than men

### Sample

349 academic and nonacademic staff who are married and living with dependent children were selected from HEIs in Northern province using convenience sampling technique. The respondents are working in University of Jaffna(in all faculties), Advanced Technical Institute, Open University of Sri Lanka(Jaffna Centre) and College of Education. Among the respondents 51% were male(n=178) and 49% were female(n=171) and 44% of sample were academic staff and 56% of them were nonacademic staff.

### The Measurement

Required data for the study were collected from interviews and likert scale questionnaire. A self-administrated questionnaires was used to collect required data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I aimed at demographic profile of the respondents, Part II consisted of eight questions to measure self-directed career orientation of the employees which was originally designed by Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth (2006) whereas Part III consisted of eight items related to work-life balance which was



adopted form Greenhaus, Allen, and Foley (2004) and DiRenzo, Greenhaus & Weer (2015). At the same time one statement in self-directed career orientation was compound statement which was separated and meaningfully translated in Tamil version whereas three dimensions of the work -life balance were measured by eight statements.

Translation of the self-directed career orientation and work-life balance scales (English to Tamil) was done using back-translation procedure and interview (face and content validity are ensured) was conducted among the selected target respondents to ensure the interpretation of statements given in the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the scale was measured. According to Malhotra (2002) and Cronbach, (1951) if the value is greater than or equal to 0.6, the reliability of the measure is satisfactory.

All the analyses were done using IBM SPSS 21 and SPSS Process version 3

Table 1: Reliability of the scale

	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self- directed career orientation	08	.775
Work-life balance	08	.817

Original scales which were developed by different authors and their reliability was evaluated but the translated Tamil version statements were applied in another context (non-English speaking Asian group). Therefore, the reliability of the scales was measured. According to the above table, the values of Cronbach's alpha were satisfactory.

## 7. THE RESULTS

### 7.1 Hypothesis Testing

#### **H<sub>1</sub>: Moderating effect of Gender on the relationship between SD and WLB**

The moderating effect of gender was examined the procedure written by Hayes(2018) under model 1.

Model : 1  
 Y : aveWLB  
 X : aveSD  
 W : Gender

Sample

Size: 349

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OUTCOME VARIABLE:

aveWLB

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1
df2	p				
	.1825	.0333	.5278	3.9614	3.0000
345.0000	.0085				

Model

	coeff	se	t	p
LLCI	ULCI			
constant	2.3099	.3128	7.3836	.0000
1.6946	2.9252			
aveSD	.2439	.0717	3.4005	.0008
.1028	.3849			
Gender	1.0581	.4251	2.4893	.0133
.2221	1.8941			
Int_1	-.2358	.0999	-2.3611	.0188
.4323	-.0394			

Product terms key:

Int\_1 : aveSD x Gender

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

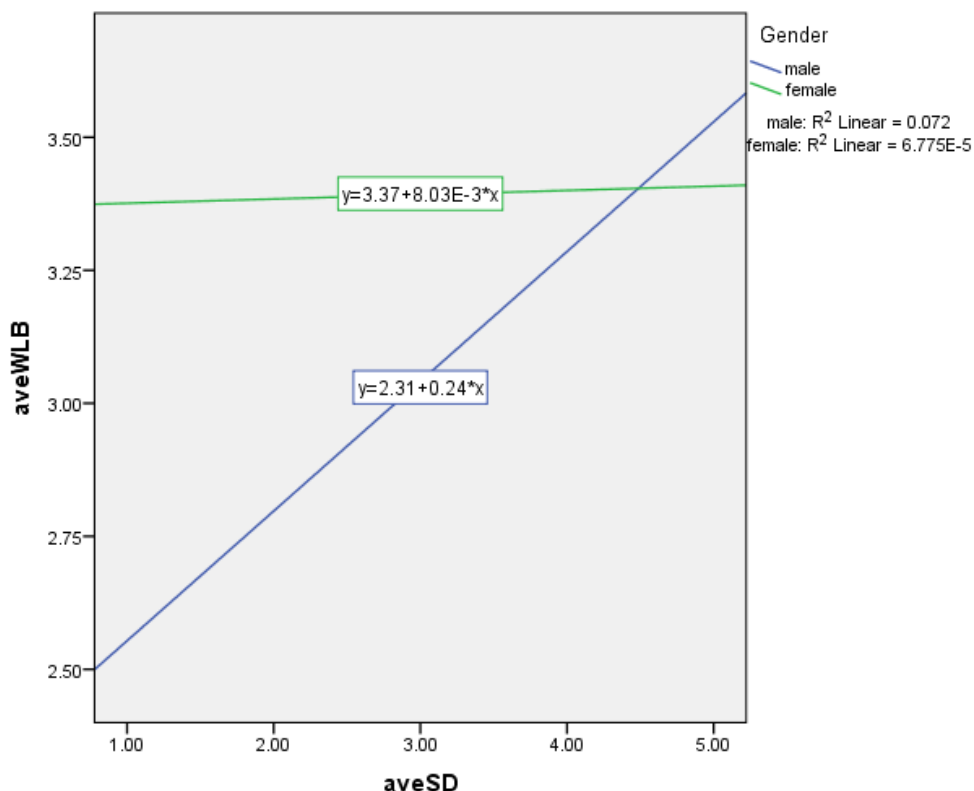
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	.0156	5.5749	1.0000	345.0000	.0188

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Focal predict: aveSD (X)

Mod var: Gender (W)

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:  
 95.0000



The above analysis clearly shows that the relationship between self – directed career orientation and work-life balance was moderated by gender. According to the model summary P value is less than 0.05 ( $P < .0085$ ) in all the cases. At the same time int\_1 confirmed interaction of ave SD X Gender ( $P < 0.188$ ) which is also significant at 95% confidence level. Therefore,  $H_1$  was accepted.

## H<sub>2</sub> : Gender difference and WLB

**Table 2 : Independent sample T- test-Gender and WLB**

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
aveWLB	Equal variances assumed	2.102	.148	-.547	347	.585	-.04314	.07886	-.19825	.11196
	Equal variances not assumed			-.546	337.810	.586	-.04314	.07906	-.19865	.11237

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
aveWLB	male	178	3.3574	.68976	.05170
	female	171	3.4006	.78214	.05981

According to the above tables, work-life balance among male and female employees is not significantly different. Mean values of both group

seemed as equal ( $P > 0.05$ ). therefore there is no evidence to reject null hypothesis. Therefore H<sub>2</sub> was rejected.

**Table 3- Independent sample T- test- Gender and SD**

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
aveSD	male	178	4.2959	.76150	.05708
	female	171	4.0614	.80153	.06129

As far as Self-directed career orientation was concerned, male and

female are possessing different degree of orientation and their

means are not equal. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows mean differences are significant therefore there is no evidence to accept null hypothesis. However, men have greater degree of self-directed career orientation than women.

## 8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- 1 The majority of the men employees in the HEIs reported that family burden and domestic responsibilities are shared by them in many cases equal responsibilities are taken.
- 2 68% of respondents are in nuclear family setup the remaining 32% are in extended family.
- 3 Employees in extended family setup reported less family burden and domestic responsibilities than those who are in nuclear family.
- 4 Academics are more self-directed than non-academics whereas non-academics better balance their work – life than academics.
- 5 There is no significant mean difference between men and women in their work- life balance whereas men self-

directedness is greater than women.

- 6 Approximately 80% (n=142) of men reported that they support their spouses in executing domestic responsibilities such as home and cloths cleaning, purchasing goods, children education as well as cooking and further stated no discrimination in their mind about categories of responsibilities. 21% of Men reported that 'their spouses are home makers only' and further stated they are supporting their partners. But unfortunately, 78% of women employees stated that they do not receive adequate support from their husbands.
- 7 Women those who reported that they receive no support from their husbands are suffering from various health problems such as hyper tension, ulcer and etc. and attitude of the husbands and working at out stations are the major reasons for no support given to them.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The present study shows that gender moderator the relationship between self- directed career orientation and work-life balance of employees and there is no significant

difference between men and women in balancing their work and life.

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