DISCOVERING HARMONY: UNRAVELLING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN OMAN: AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF LUXURY HOTELS IN MUSCAT

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To cite this document

ABSTRACT

Purpose- The main aim of this study is to analyse the work-life balance initiatives practised in Muscat hotels. The study also aims to examine the influence of work-life balance initiatives on employee career development and retention.

Methodology- As the objective of this study was to assess and quantify several factors to provide findings, quantitative research was used. A descriptive research design was employed to collect extensive data by thoroughly detailing the topic or testing hypotheses. The sampling technique used in this study was purposeful sampling, with hotel employees in Muscat serving as the major target group. Responses from 164 individuals were gathered for the study using a questionnaire.

Findings- Flexible Working Hours (4.27) was the work-life balance practise used in hotels to assist employees in finding a balance between work and family life. Career breaks (4.35) have the highest mean rating for work-life balance practises that motivate employees to stay with their employers. The results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between work-life balance and employees' career development, with a Pearson's r value of 0.451 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.01. Further, the Pearson's r correlation shows that work-life balance and employee retention are positively and significantly correlated, with the obtained Pearson's r value of 0.634 and a p-value of 0.000< 0.01.

Conclusion- The results of this research indicate that hotels that promote work-life balance will reap benefits such as higher job satisfaction, lower turnover rates, possibilities for career advancement, better morale, and higher organisational productivity.

Keywords: Work-life balance, luxury hotels, employees, career breaks, work-life balance initiatives
JEL Codes: N30, J53, M54

1. INTRODUCTION

The hotel sector is one of the fastest growing in the world, providing customers with food and beverages, lodging, and a hygienic atmosphere (Pizam, 2009). In addition, the hotel business is one of the primary economic drivers in the country (Sadiqe, 2014). Besides, the hotel industry encompasses a wide range of entrepreneurial activities that offer different services to guests and tourists (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Likewise, the industry is a crucial component of a region's social and economic development, as it offers many job opportunities (Sadiqe, 2014). The hotel industry has experienced a wave of success over the past decade and has grown significantly with an increase in global income (Pizam, 2009). However, employees, who are an essential part of the industry, have significantly contributed to its success (Maiti, 2017). Additionally, Elmadağ & Ellinger (2018) found that hotel staff are the most crucial resource and play a significant role in building positive and positive client experiences, which leads to increased customer satisfaction. Likewise, hotel employees' importance in the hotel industry is to enhance hotel performance and service quality and achieve organizational objectives, which leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Aggarwal, 2012). Hotel employees, including front desk workers, porters, waiters, and laundry room attendants, are significant because they are the ones who perform the fundamental role of ensuring that the firm works smoothly (Maiti, 2017). Workers are vital assets in the hotel industry because they act as the backbone of business success (Aggarwal, 2012). Similarly, Chand (2016) stated that the hotel industry's success depends entirely on its workers, who are key to the hotel's success. Ghebregiorgis (2018) described hotel employees as the backbone, treasure, and power of a hotel's success. However, a significant percentage of hotel staff members are quitting their

jobs. Compared to other industries, the hotel sector has a substantially higher turnover rate (Chand, 2016). It is crucial to pay attention to employee welfare and ensure that employees continue to work for hotels in the future. The balance between work and life is important as the turnover rates in hotel industry is high.

Work-life balance initiatives are thoughtful organizational plans created to diminish the conflict between professional and personal lives and empower workers to excel in their tasks (Lazar et al., 2010). Many employers have started offering work-life balance initiatives, such as working from home, flexible work times, compressed workweeks, teleworking, part-time work, job sharing, and retirement planning (Yadav & Rani, 2015). Cushing (2004) stated that the hotel industry has customarily been known to have a culture of elongated working hours, which can result in burnout, redundant exhaustion, and pressure on hotel workers, leading to dissatisfaction at work. Moreover, according to Peshave & Gujarathi (2014), the hotel industry is characterized by working long hours, and 12–14 hours are the average working hours of hotel workers. Therefore, managers in the hotel industry must look for the interests of their employees. However, Eldeen & Shawky (2017) argued that when work-life balance is set as an organizational goal and achieved, the industry would enhance organizational performance, involving increased cost-saving, enhanced productivity, enhanced social exchange processes, and minimized turnover.

The Sultanate of Oman was ranked as one of the top ten best countries for work-life balance and scored 9th for good work-life balance; employees were happy and satisfied with their work-life balance' (Times of Oman, 2018). The current work-life balance initiatives followed in Oman include flexible working hours, health insurance, shift work, and part-time and maternity leave (Belwal & Belwal, 2014). Furthermore, many organisations concentrate on work-life balance (WLB) because of its positive impact on workers, such as retaining highly talented and qualified employees, increasing productivity, and minimising worker absenteeism and turnover (Belwal & Belwal, 2014). However, research on employees' work-life balance in the hospitality sector, particularly the hotel industry, is at a minimum level, so this study was undertaken with the main objective of attempting to fill that gap: to analyse the work-life balance initiatives practised in Muscat hotels, and to examine the influence of work-life balance initiatives on employee career development and retention. The subsequent parts of the study followed a literature review on work-life balance initiatives in the hotel industry, as well as the effect of work-life balance initiatives on employee careers and retention, as well as methodology. Furthermore, the study's findings, discussion of the findings, conclusion, recommendations, practical implications, and limitations were all provided.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anisha & Melvin (2020) stated that the concept of work-life balance (WLB) is known as the capability of individuals to balance and manage work and personal life, and the term work refers to ambition and career, while personal life is about family, pleasure, spirituality, health, and leisure. In addition, work–life balance (WLB) is crucial because it assists in preventing burnout and reducing the stress of employees in their workplace (Lazar et al., 2010; Silaban & Margaretha, 2021). Many studies claim that work-life balance is significant in the workplace, as it leads to positive results such as reduced turnover, job satisfaction, work engagement, retained workers, organizational commitment, increased firm productivity, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Others who have examined imbalance in work life noticed that it caused employee resignations, perceived job overload, employee psychological well-being, and lowered psychological capital, which led to different behavioral and emotional issues such as guilt, depression, anxiety, and elevated sickness absence, which caused more absenteeism and poor performance among workers (Sen & Hooja, 2015). In addition, researchers have claimed that work-life balance is crucial for many reasons such as increased job satisfaction, improved morale, reduced recruitment costs, low turnover intentions, and improved employee performance and productivity in the workplace (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Furthermore, many studies have claimed that there are many benefits of work-life balance, including happiness at the job, increased focus at work, employee retention, continuous improvement, increased employee retention, reduced stress, positive contribution, improved motivation, and productivity (Yadav & Rani, 2015). Furthermore, the work–life balance policies of organizations must assist employees in balancing their work and family, as well as help workers readily cope with the conflicting fields of professional and private lives (Eldeen & Shawky, 2017).

2.1. The Work-Life Balance Initiatives in the Hotel Industry

Human resource practitioners, researchers, and human capacity development organisations have focused more on work-life balance programmes in recent years (Agha et al. 2017). Garg & Yajurvedi (2016) detailed that work-life balance is about maintaining and creating positive work surroundings that allow workers to balance professional and other activities, such as family, leisure, personal development, and community, increasing workers' productivity and loyalty. However, Hobson et al., (2001) argued that a lack of work-family balance could influence turnover rate, health, satisfaction level, career longevity, and organizational loyalty, leading to dissatisfaction in both career and life. As a result, companies give utmost significance to work-family balance initiatives to get the finest out of their workers (Narayanan & Narayanan, 2012). Additionally, the hospitality industry realized the significance

of the work-life balance of its workers and started offering different initiatives, such as part-time work, teleworking, flexible schedules and job-sharing programs at the workplace (Kamran et al., 2014).

2.1.1. Flexible Working Hours

Recently, flexible working hours have attracted much interest from scholars and organizations as a family friendly policy (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Scandura & Lankau (1997) mentioned that flexible working, also known as flexitime or flexitime, involves arrangements that enable workers to manage and decide their work schedules. Hotels in Muscat have introduced flexible working hours to assist employees in achieving their professional and personal responsibilities (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Some organizations in Oman have introduced flexible working hours arrangements, including flexible scheduling and work-from-home, to promote employees' productivity and morale (Kutty, 2021). Hotels in Muscat provide flexible working hours because of the benefits of flexibility provided to employees, especially female staff (Belwal & Belwal, 2014).

2.1.2. Compressed Work Week

Employees in the hotel business can work long hours per day but fewer days per week; thus, they work fewer than five workdays and roughly 35 hours per week. For example, a permanent employee could work for four days at 10 hours rather than five 8-hour days (Wadsworth & Facer, 2016). According to Richman et al. (2008), compressed workweeks are suitable for hospitality employees because they increase workers' morale and productivity and reduce worker turnover, absenteeism, and stress. According to Alison and Hall (2017), compressed work weeks enable workers to concentrate on other tasks during downtime, such as training, enrolling in more challenging certificate programs, managing their own enterprises, and performing other crucial tasks. Moreover, Chaturvedi (2016) stated that although the hotel industry has a bad reputation for working long hours due to compressed work weeks, for some hotel employees, the workweek is now four days a week.

2.1.3. Working from Home

Working from home, telecommuting, or teleworking was one of the company's initiatives to improve employees' work-life balance (Elena, 2021). In addition, many hotels provide telecommuting jobs, including Hilton Hotel was one of them (Hilton Careers Team, 2020). According to Chaturvedi (2016), work-life balance initiatives are essential; therefore, some hotels have provided working-from-home options to their employees. However, Belwal & Belwal (2014) argued that, although some hotels provided working from home options in Muscat to their employees, others did not agree with the idea of working from home and did not think teleworking would be suitable for the hotel industry.

2.1.4. Health Insurance

According to Anita (2015), almost all hospitality organizations provide health insurance to their employees. In addition, hospitality employers' benefit from offering health insurance to their employees, which helps them retain and recruit high-quality employees (Prata & Silva, 2013). The hospitality industry provides health insurance to its workers to reduce turnover and absenteeism, and increase productivity in the workplace (Wedderburn, 2000). Additionally, according to Azeem (2010), some organisations provide health insurance benefits to their workers and family members, including longstanding disability insurance, life insurance, temporary disability insurance, vision and dental insurance, dismemberment insurance, and accidental death. Furthermore, Kutty (2021) noted that Muscat hotel employers provide medical insurance to all their employees, as well as their families in some situations. Employees can seek treatment in private hospitals.

2.1.5. Paid Parental Leave

According to Earle & Heymann (2019), parental leave is the time off work associated with a child's birth or adoption. In addition, Anita (2015) described that almost all hospitality organisations provide health insurance for their employees. Besides, employers' benefit from offering health insurance to their employees, which helps them retain and recruit high-quality employees (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014). The hospitality industry provides health insurance for its workers to reduce turnover and absenteeism, and increase productivity in the workplace (Gibson, 2019). Earle & Heymann (2019) stated that the benefits of paternity leave include acknowledging the role of a spouse in helping his wife, protecting the well-being of the child and mother, assisting working couples in accomplishing work-life balance, and recognizing that women and men are complementary beings. Moreover, according to Kutty (2021), paid parental leave is a relatively prevalent practice in many organisations in Oman.

2.2. The Influence of Work-Life Balance Initiatives on Employee Career and Retention

Many researchers have emphasised the significance of work-life balance initiatives, such as time flexibility, a condensed workweek, working from their homes, parental leave, and health insurance, on employees' career development and retention of skilled and talented workers (Alison & Hall, 2017). Furthermore, Richman et al. (2008) discovered a link between work-life balance programmes

and workers' career advancement and retention. Furthermore, work-life balance initiatives aid employees accomplish their professional and family lives, which promotes employee retention and advancement in their careers (Roehling et al., 2001). Sumanarathna & Samarakoon (2019) also suggest that some work-life initiatives have a stronger influence on employee retention, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Work Life Balance Initiatives on Employee's Retention

Work-life Balance Initiatives

Flexible working hours

Compressed workweek

Working from Home

Paternity Leave

Health Inurance

→ Employees Retention

According to Garg & Yajurvedi (2016), work-life balance influences worker career and retention: when workers have a positive or work-family balance, they increase their productivity and feel satisfied working for the organization, which makes the organization try to retain workers because they have provided benefits for the company and show good performance. Much of the literature claims that work-life balance practices, such as compressed work schedules, job sharing, career breaks, and flexible work hours, have a crucial and positive impact on workers' retention (Borstorff & Marker, 2007; Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). Moreover, the effect of work-life balance initiatives on employee career and retention is that work-life balance allows workers to work more effectively, which facilitates the retention of talented and valuable workers for companies (Konrad & Managel, 2000). Additionally, many researchers have claimed that work-life balance initiatives such as work-from-home programs, part-time work, Sabbatical leave, childcare facilities, fitness centers, and sports facilities are key drivers of employee retention (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

Furthermore, much of the literature claims that work–life balance policies have a strong influence on employee careers and retention, as work-life balance initiatives enhance productivity, increase loyalty, and reduce worker stress, which leads to employee retention (Narayanan & Narayanan, 2012; Roehling et al., 2001). Besides, Walker (2001) stressed that a healthy equilibrium between work and family life positively affects a business organisation as it increases productivity, retains talented employees, and motivates employees. Moreover, Kristen et al. (2017) emphasized that work-life balance practices, such as career breaks, job sharing, and paid maternity leave, have a positive influence on worker career and retention, as they attract top talent and increase organizational productivity.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative research because it focuses on assessing and quantifying factors to produce findings (Williams, 2011). It comprised statistical evaluation and numerical data that addressed issues like "what," "who," "when," "where," "how much," and "how many" (Saunders et al., 2012). Additionally, quantitative research approaches involve gathering data in numerical form and then evaluating it with the aid of mathematical techniques, particularly statistics, to explain a phenomenon or problem (Apuke, 2017). This study employed descriptive research, which provides a detailed account of the circumstances, populations, and phenomena. It focused on addressing what, where, how, and when of the research, but skipped over the reasons (Sahin & Mete, 2021). According to Kabir (2016), descriptive research entails obtaining information to address queries regarding the actual instance of the study's topic, seeking to gather in-depth information and data by outlining the subject in great detail or testing hypotheses. In this analysis, non-probability sampling, also known as non-random sampling or a sampling technique, was utilized. Saunders et al. (2012) defined this method as one in which not every participant in the population has an equal chance of taking part in the study. Purposive sampling was used in this study, and hotel employees employed in Muscat, Oman, were the primary target population. The study was conducted on 164 people from Muscat and Oman. A questionnaire was used to collect information from the study participants (Williams, 2011). The questionnaire solicited responses from a population or sample whose opinions were closely related to the study's goals (Kothari, 2004). This was performed using the frequency distribution, percentage, rank, and

weighted mean. A statistical method known as frequency distribution is used to ascertain the distribution of respondents and the frequency of respondents who fit a particular profile, such as gender, age, and marital status. Using the percentage, it was possible to determine the proportion of respondents and the percentage of respondents who met a particular profile. To draw conclusions, additional pertinent statistical tools, such as correlations, were used.

## 4. RESULTS

4.1. Respondents Profiles

Table 1 shows that 56.1 percent of the respondents were women and 43.9% were men. Between the ages of 21 and 30, 23.8% of the respondents were in this age range. The remaining respondents (31.6 %) were between 41 and above, while 44.6 % were between the ages of 31 and 40. Furthermore, 58.6% of the respondents held a bachelor's degree. A diploma was obtained from 29.9% of the respondents. Master's degrees were obtained from 11.5% of respondents. There was no response from a secondary school or a doctorate. Additionally, 26.3% of the respondents worked at the reception. Security occupations were held by 22% of the respondents. Respondents from the food and beverage section accounted for 17.7% of the sample. Of the respondents, 15.9% worked in a hotel operations department. Sales- and marketing-related respondents made up 12.8% of the sample, whereas other departments made up 5.3%. Finally, in terms of years of experience, the majority of respondents (39.1%) had 4 to 7 years of experience, while 31.7% had 0 to 3 years. Consequently, 11.5 percent had 11 or more years of experience, followed by 17.7% with 8–10 years of experience.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	72	43.9
Female	**92**	**56.1**
Age		
21-30	39	23.8
31-40	**73**	**44.6**
41 and above	52	31.6
Education level		
Secondary School	0	0
Diploma	49	29.9
Bachelors	**96**	**58.6**
Masters	19	11.5
Doctorate	0	0
Department		
Reception	**43**	**26.3**
Security	36	22.0
Food and Beverage	29	17.7
Hotel Opertations	26	15.9
Sales & Marketing	21	12.8
Others	9	5.3
Years of Service		
0-3	52	31.7
4-7	**64**	**39.1**
8-10	29	17.7
11 and above	19	11.5

According to Figure 2, 59.7% of the respondents were currently able to manage their job and personal lives, while the remaining 40.3% admitted that they were unable to do so. This indicates that only approximately 60% of people are currently able to manage their professional and personal lives, with the remaining 40% finding it difficult to do so. A total of 40% is substantial; therefore, the focus is crucial.

Figure 2: Do you feel that you are currently able to balance your work with your family?
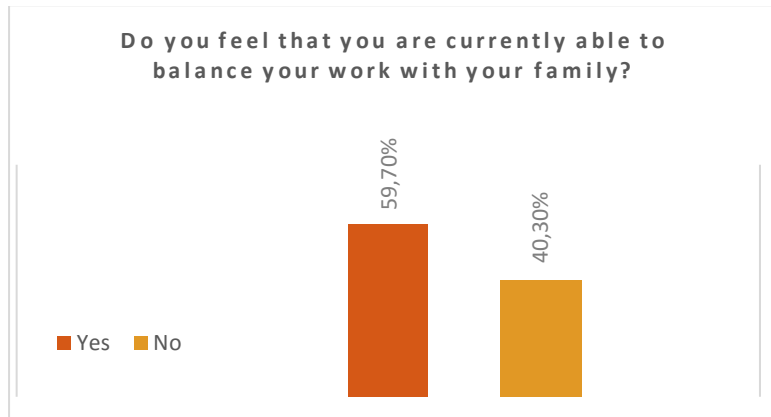
The work-life balance initiatives used in Muscat luxury hotels are listed in Table 2. The most popular work-life balance technique used in Muscat hotels was health insurance (82%). More and more businesses understand that by offering health insurance to their staff and workers, they can safeguard and promote their health and wellbeing, allowing them to be active and productive. The second, third, and fourth work-life balance initiatives that were used were emergency leave (73%), paid parental leave (61%), and career breaks (58%), respectively. This suggests that hotels in Muscat provide paid paternal and maternal parental leaves, career breaks, and emergency leaves to their staff. Job sharing (44%), flexible working hours (41%), and work-from-home options (37%) were further work-life balance initiatives implemented in Muscat hotels that were placed fifth, sixth, and seventh. On-site wellness programmes (34%), part-time employment options (17%), and reduced work weeks (8%) were other work-life balance efforts implemented at Muscat hotels. None of the respondents chose any of the work-life programmes listed below; possibly they were not available in their hotels. These initiatives include onsite childcare services, paid time off for life events, financial help for children's education, sabbatical leave, and paid time off for volunteering.

Table 2: Work-Life Balance Initiatives Practiced in the Hotels in Muscat

Work life balance initiatives	Percentage	Rank
Health Insurance	**82%**	**1**
Emergency Leave	73%	2
Paid Parental Leave	61%	3
Career Breaks	58%	4
Job Sharing	44%	5
Flexible Working Hours	41%	6
Work from Home Options	37%	7
On-site Wellness Programs	34%	8
Part-time Work Choices	17%	9
Compressed Work Weeks	8%	10
Onsite childcare Facilities	0%	11
Paid leave to attend life events	0%	12
Support children's education	0%	13
Sabbatical leave	0%	14
Paid leave to do community service	0%	15

Table 3 lists the work-life initiatives that have been found most likely to support employees in harmonizing work and family life. The highest mean score (4.27), which is ranked number one, is "Flexible Working Hours." By having flexible working hours, employees can more easily fulfil their commitments outside of work, such as taking care of family members, participating in various training sessions, exercising, and attending social and professional events. The second highest mean score is "Health Insurance (4.19)". It demonstrates how highly regarded health insurance is among the best work-life programmes among employees. Everyone's health is obviously vital, and when something goes wrong, workers find it difficult to concentrate and perform well. Paid parental leave (4.13) and part-time employment (4.06) are other work-life initiatives. "Strongly Agree" is the verbal interpretation

for each of them. This indicates that the employees genuinely cherish them. Other important work-life balance initiatives stated by respondents were compressed work weeks (3.96), career breaks (3.77), paid leave to attend life events (3.58), physical fitness and exercise facilities at work (3.24), and work-from-home options (3.01). The lowest mean scores recorded for two work-life balance initiatives, ranked 13 and 14, were paid leave to do community service (2.11) and sabbatical leave (2.04), respectively.

Table 3: In your opinion, which work-life balance initiatives may help you strike a balance between work and family life?

Initiatives	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Flexible Working Hours	**4.27**	**1.071**	**1**
Health Insurance	4.19	0.993	2
Paid Parental Leave	4.13	1.116	3
Part-time Work Choices	4.06	1.217	4
Compressed Work week	3.96	1.292	5
Career Breaks	3.77	1.058	6
Emergency Leave	3.71	1.151	7
Paid Leave to Attend Life Events	3.58	1.260	8
Onsite Wellness Programs	3.24	1.244	9
Work from Home Options	3.01	1.394	10
Job Sharing	2.91	0.916	11
Support Children's Education	2.76	1.320	12
On-site Childcare Facilities	2.48	1.079	13
Paid leave to do community service	2.11	0.941	14
Sabbatical Leave	2.04	1.248	15
Total	**3.35**	**1.153**	**15**

Figure 3 demonstrates that 77% of respondents agreed that implementing work-life balance practices helps employees advance their careers and retention. This indicates that a large proportion of respondents agreed that implementing work-life balance practices aids employees in advancing their careers. None picked up the "no" option, while 23 percent selected "sometimes."

Figure 3: Do you believe that work-life balance practises assist employee retention and career advancement?

According to Table 4, career breaks (4.35) have the highest mean rating for work-life balance practises that motivate employees to stick with their employers. This indicates that a large percentage of respondents' favourable career breaks provide employees with a chance to recharge and avoid tiredness. During this break, employees might learn new skills that could help them offer new perspectives and creative ideas to the office. Flexible working hours (4.29), and emergency leaves (4.11), received the 2nd and third-best mean scores, respectively. There are several reasons why employees seek flexible working hours in the workplace. Improving general well-being, fulfilling oneself, a wide range of habits, obligations to one's family, alleviating stress, and leisure and recreational pursuits are the motivations behind the need for flexible working hours. Therefore, if organisations want to retain their employees, they need flexible working arrangements. Hotels should also provide emergency leaves, as respondents seek time

off from work to attend a few specific events in their lives. Companies must be aware of these factors and provide paid time for workers. Part-time employment opportunities (3.96), health insurance (3.72), paid parental leave (3.53), work-from-home choices (3.44), and shortened work weeks (3.26) are additional work-life policies that motivate employees to stick with their employer. Hotels are expected to consider these factors and accommodate staff to ensure retention. The lowest mean scores recorded for physical fitness and exercise facilities at work were 2.83.

Table 4: Which work-life practises do you think could motivate workers to stay with their employers?

Initiatives	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Career Breaks	**4.35**	**1.117**	**1**
Flexible Working Hours	4.29	1.302	2
Emergency Leaves	4.11	1.074	3
Part-time Work Choices	3.96	0.989	4
Health Insurance	3.72	1.211	5
Paid Parental Leave	3.53	1.073	6
Work from Home Options	3.44	1.124	7
Compressed Work Weeks	3.26	0.974	8
Paid Leave to Attend Life Events	3.01	1.253	9
Onsite wellness programs	2.83	1.156	10
Total	**3.65**	**1.127**	**10**

Table 5 demonstrates a positive and significant association between work-life balance and professional development for employees. This was indicated by the Pearson's r value of 0.451 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.01. The results suggest that work-life balance efforts by hotels can assist employees in advancing their careers.

Table 5: Relationship between Work Life Balance Practices and Employee Career Development

Variables		Work Life Balance Practices	Employee Career
Work Life Balance Practices	Pearson's r Correlation	1	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	164	164
Employee Career	Pearson Correlation	.651**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		164	164

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

Table 6 shows that work-life balance and employee retention are positively and significantly correlated, respectively. This was indicated by the Pearson's r value of 0.634 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.01. The findings indicated that hotel employees benefited from work-life balance initiatives in various ways and preferred to stay in hotels for longer periods of time.

Table 6: Relationship between Work Life Balance Practices and Employee Retention

Variables		Work Life Balance Practices	Employee Retention
Work Life Balance Practices	Pearson's r Correlation	1	.634**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	164	164
Employee Retention	Pearson Correlation	.634**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		164	164

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

According to Figure 4, 79.10% of the respondents agreed that workplace initiatives to help employees balance their personal and professional lives are beneficial for organizational productivity and success. This demonstrates that the majority of respondents thought initiatives to help employees balance their personal and professional lives were advantageous to the success and productivity of the organisation. No one has contested this assertion. However, 20.90% of the respondents stated that they were uncertain.

Figure 4: Do you think efforts to balance the work and personal lives of employees are beneficial for organizational productivity and success?
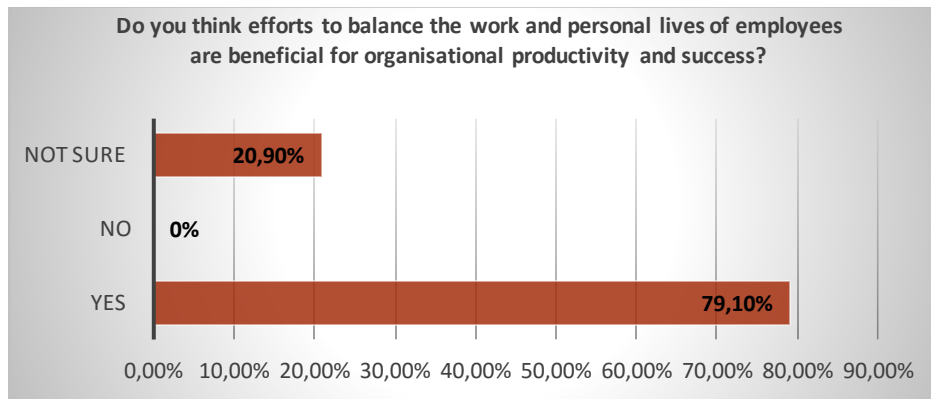
5. DISCUSSION

Objective One: To analyse the work-life balance initiatives practiced in Muscat hotels

The findings in Table 2 indicate that the majority of the respondents noted that the work-life balance initiative practiced by Muscat hotels includes flexible working hours (4.27). This finding is compatible with Peshave & Gujarathi (2014), who stated that the hotel industry offers flexible working hours to minimize the gravity of long working hours. The results further agree with Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard (2014) and Ghebregiorgis (2016), who stated that Muscat hotels have introduced flexible working hours to assist employees in achieving professional and life responsibilities and fulfilling work-life balance. In addition, some of the initiatives that Muscat hotels use are flexible working hour arrangements and flexible scheduling (Scandura & Lankau, 1997).

Based on the findings (Table 2), most respondents said that health insurance (4.19) is part of the work-life balance initiative practiced by the Muscat hotel. This finding agrees with the literature, which shows that organizations provide health insurance benefits to their workers and family members. Health insurance covers a large part of workers' medical insurance premiums (Wedderburn, 2000; Belwal & Belwal, 2014; Prata & Silva, 2013; Kutty, 2021). In addition, this is consistent with almost all hospitality organizations providing health insurance to their employees to reduce turnover (Anita, 2015; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Some hotels in Muscat offer a myriad of benefits to their full-time workers, including long-term disability insurance, temporary disability insurance, life insurance, vision insurance, dental insurance, dismemberment insurance, and accidental death (Hilton Careers Team, 2020). The previous findings are consistent with the literature that states that Muscat hotel employers state that 'medical insurance is a must, and we provide medical insurance for our workers, and they can go to private hospitals.'

In addition, the finding further noted that (Table 2) most respondents stated that paid parental leave (4.13) is a work-life balance initiative practiced by the Muscat hotel. The findings are consistent with those made by Earle & Heymann (2019), Anita (2015), Peshave & Gujarathi (2014), and Gibson (2019), all of whom suggested that paid parental leave can help working couples achieve a work-life balance and acknowledge that women and men are complementary beings. This finding is consistent with the literature, which states that the Hilton Muscat Hotel made the decision to provide parental leave to support their employees. This decision benefited all Hilton Hotel team members, including those paid on a salary and hourly basis (Great Place to Work, 2018). Moreover, the Muscat Hilton Hotel gives ten weeks of leave with full pay to the mother who has given birth, and adoptive parents and fathers can take paid leave for two weeks (Hilton Newsroom, 2019).

Objective Two: To examine the influence of work-life balance initiatives on employee career and retention

Based on the findings in Figure 2, the majority of the respondents (77 %) stated that the implementation of work-life balance practices helps worker retention and career advancement. These findings match the literature that there is a direct relationship

between work-life balance programmes and workers careers and retention; work-life balance initiatives help workers manage their work and family lives, which influences employee retention and career development (Roehling et al., 2001; Garg & Yajurvedi, 2016). In accordance with the findings (Table 3), the majority of respondents stated that career breaks (4.35) encourage employees to remain with their employers. This finding is compatible with the literature, as Perry-Smith & Blum (2000) and Silaban & Margaretha (2021) described that work-life balance influences a worker's career and retention. According to the authors, when workers have a positive work-family balance, they will increase their productivity and feel satisfied working for the organization, which makes the organization try to retain workers because they have provided benefits to the company and show good performance. Furthermore, the other literature that is compatible with this finding is that work-life balance practices such as compressed work schedules, job sharing, career breaks, and flexible work hours have a crucial and positive impact on worker retention (Borstorff & Marker, 2007; Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012).

Table 4 demonstrates a positive and significant association between work-life balance and career advancement for employees. This was indicated by the Pearson's r value of 0.451 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.01. The results suggest that work-life balance efforts by hotels can assist employees in advancing their careers. These findings are consistent with the literature (Alison & Hall, 2015), which states that work-life balance initiatives such as flexible working hours, a compressed workweek, working from home, paternity leave, and health insurance have a positive influence on employees' career development, retaining skilled and talented workers. Additionally, Walker (2001) stressed that a healthy equilibrium between work and family life positively affects a business organization as it increases productivity, retains talented employees, and motivates employees to develop. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the literature showing that work-life balance initiatives such as work-at-home programs, part-time work, sabbatical leave, childcare facilities, fitness centers, and sports facilities are key drivers of employee retention and career progression (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Kristen et al., 2017).

Table 5 shows that work-life balance and employee retention are positively and significantly correlated, respectively. This was indicated by the Pearson's r value of 0.634 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.01. The findings indicated that hotel employees benefited from work-life balance initiatives in various ways and preferred to stay in hotels for longer periods of time. These results are in line with those reported in the literature. According to Richman et al. (2008), work-life balance initiatives such as flexible working hours, a compressed workweek, working from home, paternity leave, and health insurance have a positive influence on employees' careers, retaining skilled and talented workers. The results further agree with Narayanan & Narayanan (2012), Roehling et al. (2001), and Cegaraa-Leiva (2012), who claim that work–life balance policies have a strong influence on employee careers and retention, as work-life balance initiatives enhance productivity, increase loyalty, and reduce worker stress, which leads to employee retention. These results are further compatible with the literature showing that the effect of work-life balance initiatives on employee career and retention is that work-life balance allows workers to work more effectively, which facilitates the retention of talented and valuable workers for companies (Kossek & Ozeki 1998; Konrad & Managel, 2000; Borstorff & Marker, 2007).

6. CONCLUSION

The study's main aim was to examine the work-life balance initiatives used in Muscat hotels and investigate the impact of these initiatives on employee retention and career opportunities. Based on these findings, work-life initiatives are important for hotels and will aid staff in balancing their personal and professional lives. Flexible work schedules were one of the work-life efforts that assisted hotel employees in striking a balance between their jobs and personal lives. Additionally, career breaks are a work-life policy that motivates employees to stick with their company. The results also show that work-life balancing practices help with employee retention and career progression and that efforts to help employees balance their personal and professional lives are good for an organization's productivity and success. The main outcomes of the study demonstrate a favourable correlation between work-life efforts and employee careers and retention. Finally, respondents believe that hotels strive to strike a balance between employees' work and their personal lives, which is good for organizational performance and productivity.

6.1. Recommendations

It is critical to accommodate employee requirements in accordance with the hotel's work–life balance practices because a sizable portion of respondents in the current study claimed that they were unable to reconcile their job and personal lives. Instead of implementing the same initiatives for all employees, hotels have to clearly communicate the work-life balance initiatives that are being implemented to staff members and assist them in choosing the initiatives that best suit them. Besides, hotels should develop innovative work-life initiatives for staff members because they lower workplace stress, such as sabbatical leave, part-time work, and phased retirements. The study also recommends that Muscat hotels offer career breaks to staff members because they are critical to employee growth, work satisfaction, productivity, and turnover reduction. This study suggests that hotel management implement more work-life balance practices, such as providing staff with paid time off to use fitness facilities, reducing the length of workdays for those with young children, and providing on-site childcare and options for working from home.

6.2. Practical Implications

To assist employees in balancing their professional and personal lives, hotel managers must implement work-life balance practises. The study's findings reveal a link between work-life balance practises and employee retention and job satisfaction; thus, hotels should implement multiple work-life balance initiatives. Managers must provide flexible work schedules, health insurance for employees and their families, support children's education, part-time employment options, and paid leave to do community service. Along with this, practices such as career breaks, paid time off for important life events, and reduced work weeks can help employees stay with a company in the long term. The majority of respondents indicated that work-life balance practices inspire them to work diligently, which increases organizational productivity and success. Therefore, hotel managers should encourage staff members to choose practices that best meet their needs.

6.3. Limitations

Like any study, this study has its limitations, and there is room for further investigation and numerous perspectives on this problem. Future research may look at the same topic in other towns and cities in Oman, as this study concentrates on luxurious hotels in Muscat. Work-life programs at other hotels in Muscat, such as those in the four- to one-star range, and their effects on organizational effectiveness and staff well-being may be the subject of future research. Future studies could also examine the value of career breaks in employee development and in increasing organizational productivity. Future research can also concentrate on the implementation of flexible working in hotels, as many respondents in the current study chose this practice as one of their top work-life initiatives. A qualitative study may also be conducted to determine more about work-life balance practices and how they impact employees. Finally, additional research can examine employees' ages and genders to see how they affect work-life balance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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