

CONFERENCE 2023

Shaping the Future:

Key Themes in Higher Education

A relational framework for work-life dynamics: Academics' experiences and reflections

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Background / Context

- COVID-19: catalyst for change in work practices (hybrid/ remote work)
- Blurred boundaries between work and home
- Family structure / number and age of children
- Parents (especially mothers) took on intense emotional labour, experienced more stress and frustration
- COVID-19 pandemic revealed and exaggerate gender norms

Work-Life Balance

- Extensive research has emerged on prevalence, causes, consequences and strategies for coping with work-life balance, work-life conflict and work-life enrichment for academics
- **work-life balance:** state of equilibrium in performing work & non-work roles,
- **work-life conflict:** interrole conflict in simultaneously fulfilling work and non-work responsibilities,
- **work-life enrichment:** benefits and positive experiences gained by involvement in both work and non-work domains.
- WLC and WLE can co-occur

Research Aims

- The aim of this study was to understand lived experiences of academics with respect to work-life interface during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conceptualisation

- Border Theory
- Institutional Intersectionality
- Relational and multi-level framework



Fieldwork

Interpretative
phenomenology

Qualitative
reflections of 6
academics

Purposive &
snowball sampling

Access
(physical &
social)

Structured written
& oral interviews

Thematical analysis to
identify, analyse and
interpret meaningful
patterns

Findings

- Wide prevalence of work-life conflict among academics.
- Work borders remain relatively impermeable despite virtual spaces
- Working from home unremittingly blurs the physical and psychological boundaries between work and home domains.
- Experiences of work-life interface are differentially skewed for academics depending on the interplay between individuals' ease of technology adoption, employment status, support network and family structure.

Findings (continued)

- Immigrant single parents of young children seem to have exacerbated experiences of struggling to maintain work-life balance in the pandemic.
- Research activities have taken a backseat during the pandemic
 - raises questions over ethical performance reviews

Conclusion/ Implications

- Need to reconceptualise WL dynamics using qualitative approaches
- Planning employment roles and duties of academics with diverse situations warrants substantial review
- Focus on employee wellbeing and mental health
- Organisational culture and leadership have an impact on how changes in learning community structures and processes are approached by academics.
- This calls for revisiting WLB policies and programs in higher education industry which pay attention to inconsistencies in domain structures, mechanisms and domain members, as well as reassessment of performance evaluations of the faculty.

Key References

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Thank you



**Research
Questionnaire**

Grade Bullying in Academia

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