Balancing Professional & Personal Life

GloCal Fellowship Career Development Series

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Balancing Professional & Personal Life

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Introduction

Work-Life balance

- Work-life balance refers to an individual's prioritisation between professional and personal activities in his/her life
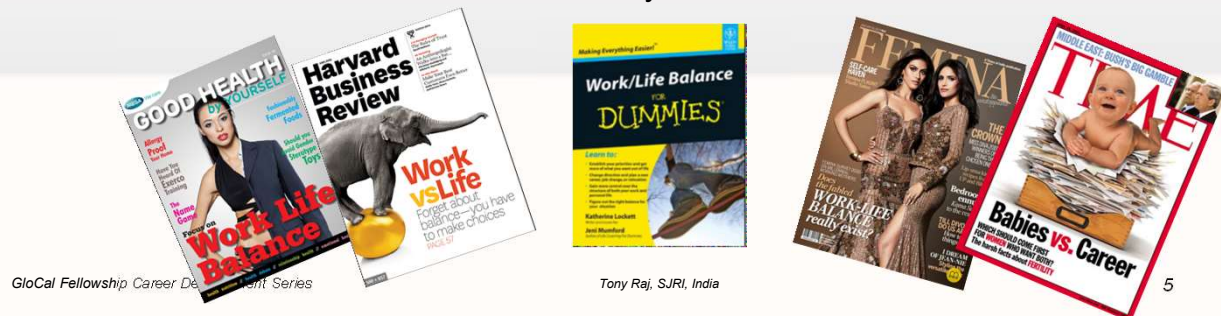
Introduction

Work-Life balance

- Some say this is an 'elusive ideal' at the worst – 'a complete myth'

  Harvard Business Review - 2014

- 'Does the fabled work-life balance really exist?' - *Femina 2020*

Introduction

Work-Life balance

- In research & academia, 'work-life balance' can be challenging to define as the boundaries are 'not always easy to draw'

- Should be defined as 'work-rest-of-life', because 'work is a big part of my life and I love what I do'

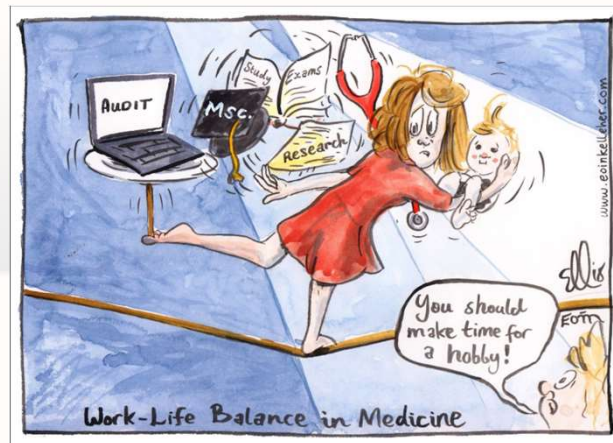- `Sometimes passion can blur the line between professional and personal life'

Do we need a Balance?

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Do we need a Balance?

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Do we need a Balance?

- A growing number of individuals in academia are seeking a balance between personal and professional lives.
- This is influenced by several broader societal & tech changes:
  - Increased number of women taking up careers in science, research and academia
  - Increasing sense of family responsibility & parenting among both men and women
  - Increasing expectation that men involve themselves in housework & parenting
  - Technology penetration has caused work to enter homes.

Do we need a Balance?

In a recent global survey of Work-Life balance in academics & staff
- Times Higher Education Global Survey 2017
- 2379 staff surveyed – 85% Academics | 67% Female
  - UK   - 61%
  - USA   - 17%
  - Au   - 05%
  - Overall 56 Countries from 6 continents participated.

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)
https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/work-life-balance-survey-2018-long-hours-take-their-toll-academics#survey-answer
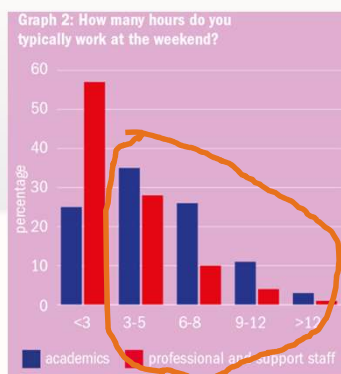
Do we need a Balance?

- **Workloads and workhours have increased in universities**.
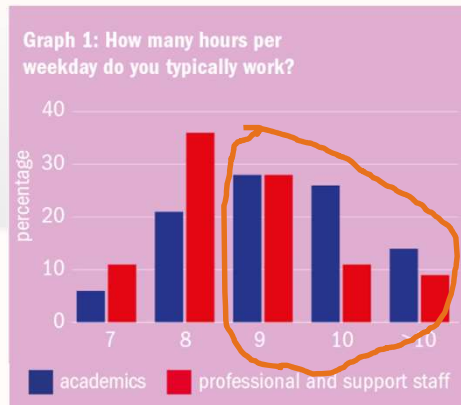
Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

Do we need a Balance?

- **Increasing time spent on work on weekends**
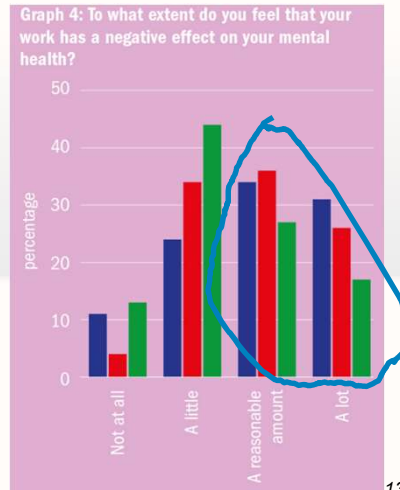

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

Do we need a Balance?

- **Negative effect on Mental Health**

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

■ male academics
■ female academics
■ professional staff

Graph 4: To what extent do you feel that your work has a negative effect on your mental health?

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Do we need a Balance?

- **The effect of having children on working hours & career development**

Graph 6: If you have children, to what extent do you feel they hold back your career?

Graph 7: If you have children, how many more hours per week would you expect to work if you did not have children?

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)
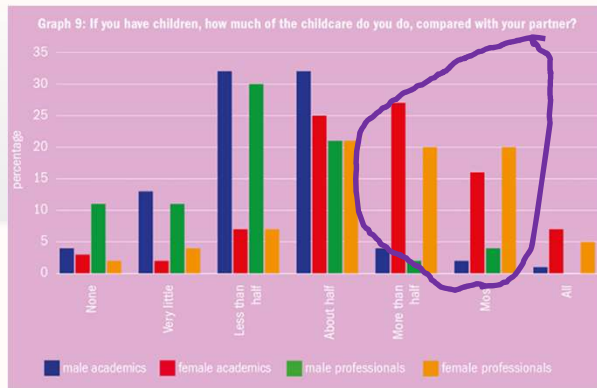
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- **Share of Childcare**

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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Do we need a Balance?

- **How does work-life balance in academics compare with friends?**

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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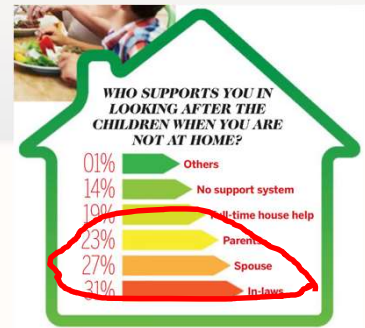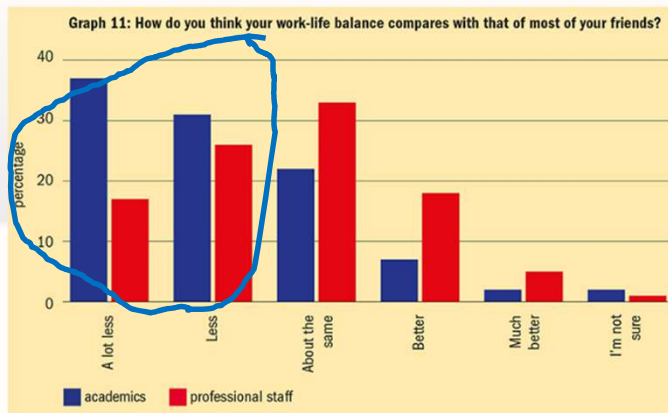*16*

Do we need a Balance?

- **Maintaining relationships with friends**

Many academics in particular seem to struggle with maintaining relationships with friends, which is a good indicator of work-life balance.

"A senior lecturer at a university in north-west England only manages to see most of his friends "once a year" because of "the realities of working and family life", combined with the fact that he lives far away from them".

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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Do we need a Balance?

- **How does work-life imbalance affect relationships?**

46 per cent of academics say that their job gets in the way of their ability to conduct a successful relationship "a lot", while a further 26 per cent say that it does so "a reasonable amount"

Graph 13: To what extent do you feel that your job gets in the way of your ability to conduct a successful relationship?

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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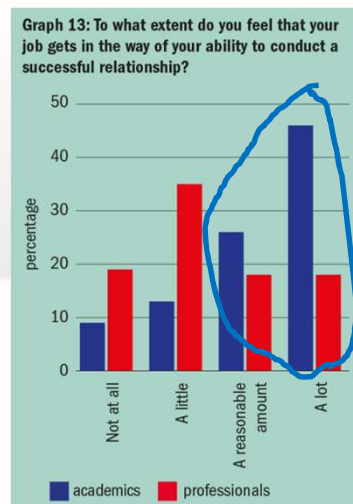
Do we need a Balance?

• **What would you expect to improve if you changed careers?**

"33 per cent of academics expect to improve work-life balance and 22 per cent wanted less stress"

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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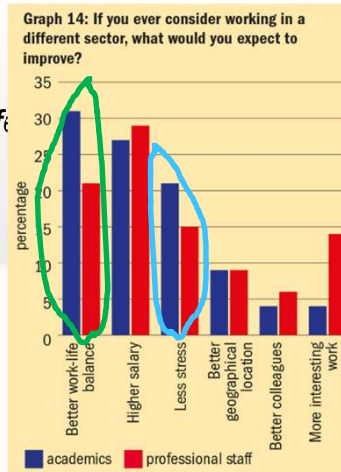
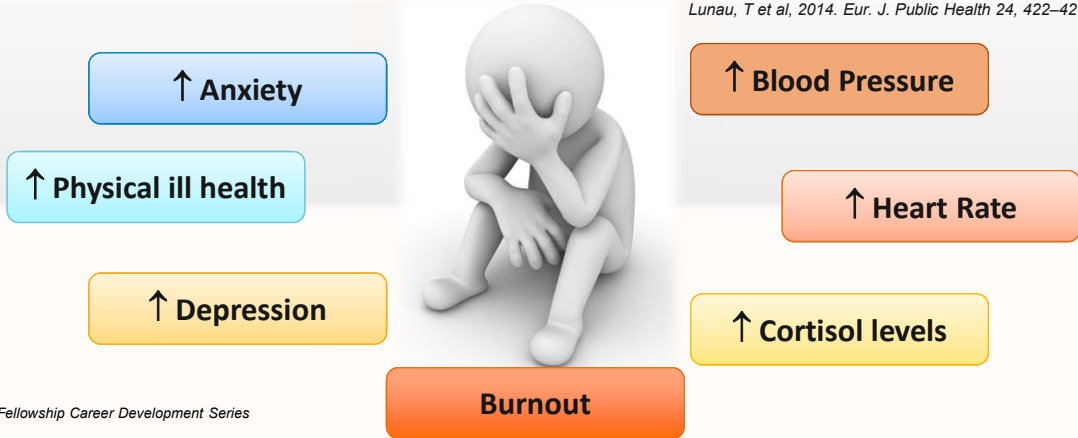# Do we need a Balance?

Summary

1. Increasing workhours, workload and working on weekends
2. Worsened mental health (~ 68% of respondents)
3. Having children affected careers and increased workhours
4. Share of childcare (>50%) was the burden of women
5. Work-life balance in academics was worse-off than their friends
6. Academic work affected maintaining friendships
7. Work-life imbalances affected maintaining successful relationships

Source:
Work-life balance survey 2018: - Times Higher Education (THE)

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Do we need a Balance?

Poor Professional - Personal life balance could lead to:

Lunau, T et al, 2014. Eur. J. Public Health 24, 422–427

↑ Anxiety

↑ Physical ill health

↑ Depression

↑ Blood Pressure

↑ Heart Rate

↑ Cortisol levels

Burnout

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What do early and mid-career researchers say?

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What do early and mid-career researchers say?

- In another qualitative study done between 2010-2011
  - 100 former US recipients of NIH K08 / K23 Awards
  - 28 Mentors
  - 59% women | 41% Men

- 63 % of female K award recipients indicated that work–life balance was a significant personal concern (vs 33% males)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

What do early and mid-career researchers say?

5 themes emerged:

I. **The Challenge and Importance of Work–Life Balance for the Physician-Researcher**

"The thing that I prize the most, and I know I share this with other women in academic medicine, is really being able to have both the family and the successful career….it's crazy busy with the two, but without the two, it just wouldn't be as satisfying and fulfilling." (Female, K-Awardee)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

What do early and mid-career researchers say?

II. Societal Expectations, Gender Roles, and Spousal Dynamics

Many respondents felt that work–life balance issues were especially challenging for women, in part due to societal gender roles.

"…I think it's the social conditioning.…It's a social thing that we expect women to be more into the child raising thing and men to be less…"(Male, K-Awardee)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

What do early and mid-career researchers say?

III. The Role of Mentoring in Achieving Balance

Some female respondents commented that they had modeled themselves after being mentored by role-models who were women clinician researchers.

"I think I have learned from my mentors. In particular, two female mentors…I've learned a lot in terms of working to be as productive as you can be with your academic career…but realizing that you still have to fit in the rest of your life as well, especially being a woman…." (Female, K-Awardee)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

What do early and mid-career researchers say?

IV. Institutional Policies and Practices: The Flexibility of Academic Work

While, some described having express support from their institution for utilizing flexible scheduling, others relied on flexibility on an ad hoc basis:

"allowing me to work from home. I didn't have to do it under the table like I've heard some people do. We actually had it all written out what days I would be here and what days I would be there...." (Female, K-Awardee)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

What do early and mid-career researchers say?

V. Stereotypes and Stigma

Although participants were high-achieving individuals with K Awards, a number of female respondents felt that women were more likely to be perceived as prioritizing *family over work*, even when this was not accurate:

"There is...just sort of an attitude about...what the women's priorities really are and what happens to women when they have babies...there is some willingness to accommodate, but there is also just a lot of pressure to show that...it's not interfering with my work...." (Female, K-Awardee)

Strong et al. 2013, J. Gen. Intern. Med. 28, 1596–1603.

How does one address this issue?

How does one address this issue?

- There is no simple solution – like a 'one size fits all'

- It can be challenging to find a tailored solution because of the dynamic & highly personal nature of each one's professional and personal work.

- Research suggests that successful faculty/researchers are those who have a sense of control over their work & schedules

How does one address this issue?

Here are some tips collated from various sources:

1. Begin by self reflection

2. Set boundaries

3. Work smarter, not longer

4. Managing technology

5. Prioritize self care / "distractions" outside work

6. Create a support network

How does one address this issue?

1. Begin by self reflection

Self-reflection is essential to selfcare and one's sense of balance**.**

- Review goals, short term & long term – professional and personal

- Develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP)

- You can also use the "Wheel of Life" tool to map out areas in your life

How does one address this issue?

2. Setting boundaries

Setting boundaries or protected time for activities do help improve focus for both professional / personal activities.

– Time for writing manuscripts/ reports/data analysis

– Time for family activities

– Learning to say 'No' for activities that are not relevant
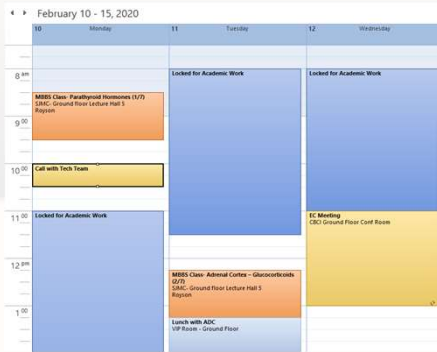
How does one address this issue?

3. Work smarter, not longer

Effective time management is usually learned through experience.

– Explore the 168 hour week exercise to do a time audit

– Use a single calendar to schedule activities, block time for tasks etc

– Flexibility – do not schedule every hour of the day, keep windows

– Prioritize activities using the Eisenhower Decision Matrix

How does one address this issue?

3. Work smarter, not longer

The Eisenhower Decision Matrix

How does one address this issue?

4. Managing Technology

– Email: Answer email at scheduled times, turn off email alerts

– Messaging Apps: Schedule time for response

– Turn of all alerts from unimportant Apps on your phone

– Apply discretion on taking calls at work or at home.

– Sometimes it good to be 'unplugged'

How does one address this issue?

5. Prioritize self care

– Ensure adequate sleep, exercise, nourishment

– Have at least one thing that you do which is not work-related

- Yoga, dancing, Pilates, music, or any other recreational activity or hobby

– Address physical or mental health issues promptly

– "Distractions"- time away from the office can give you a fresh perspective

– Organize your space at work and home | practice mindfulness

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How does one address this issue?

6. Create a support network

– At work, build a supportive network, rely on colleagues, take inputs, discuss/brainstorm issues and 'look out for them'

– Finding a supportive work environment is a good starting point

– At home, having a supportive partner/spouse/family is also key.

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Conclusion

- Balancing Professional and Personal life is an important aspect for researchers/ faculty/ physician-researchers

- Mentorship interventions, improved Institutional policies, addressing cultural aspects and encouraging a professional culture should improve this balance.

- Women continue to bear the burden of this imbalance and steps to help reduce gender stereotyping & stigma about flexibility at work are required.

Conclusion

- Successful researchers are those who have a sense of control over their work life and personal schedules.

- Self reflection, goal setting and time management are essential for a good balance between personal and professional life.

- Overall an individualized person centric approach is required to improve the balance between professional and personal life.

Q & A

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THANK YOU!

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