

Culture and Work-Life Balance

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Work-life balance is described as the equilibrium between work priorities and personal life in that neither domain is neglected (Haar, Russo, Sune, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). Imbalance, or conflict, occurs when the demands of work and non-work roles are incompatible such that fulfilling one role makes it difficult to fulfil demands in the other (Annor & Burchell, 2018). The purpose of the present study was to examine whether cultural beliefs and behavioural norms shape individuals' experiences in the work-life interface. The participants consisted of 285 employed undergraduate students (255 females and 30 males) who completed the Social Axioms Survey, the Brief Collectivism Questionnaire, the Work-Family-School Conflict scale, two work-life balance measures, and demographic items. The results from multiple regression analyses showed that cultural dimensions can positively or negatively predict perceived work-life balance. Cultures that strongly endorse the belief that one will be rewarded for hard work (reward for application) and strongly endorse norms associated with positive interpersonal interactions (prosocial motivation) score higher on perceived work-life balance. On the other hand, cultures that strongly endorse the belief that people and institutions cannot be trusted (social cynicism) and strongly endorse norms associated with conflict avoidance (maintaining harmony), and representing oneself/family positively (concern for face) score lower on perceived work-life balance. Further, the results from t-test analyses showed that, in comparison to native Canadian students, immigrant students are more likely to report that the amount of time spent in their family role does not allow enough time to fulfill all responsibilities in their school role, and that behaviors engaged in and valued in the school role differ from and impede behaviors that are appropriate and effective in their work role. The implications from this study are two-fold. First, while some cultures promote balance between work and non-work roles, other cultures may hinder it. Wellness initiatives aimed at promoting balance should tailor interventions with an understanding of how cultural beliefs and norms shape the individual's work-life interface. The second implication is that compared to native Canadian students, immigrant students may be particularly struggling with demands of work, school, and family roles. Therefore, immigrant students may need extra support in both academic and organizational contexts in dealing with time-based conflict between their school and family roles, and behavior-based conflict between their school and employment roles, respectively.