

Single but Strong: Work-Life Balance as a Determining Factor of Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT

The high divorce rate in Bandung has given rise to single parents who are required to meet economic needs, even though they often have to face difficulties in balancing work and childcare. The existence of a work-life balance can influence employee engagement among single parents in Bandung. Therefore, this research aims to determine the effect of work-life balance on employee engagement among single parents in Bandung. The number of respondents collected in this research was 154 single parents working in Bandung, selected using purposive sampling techniques. The measuring tool used in this research is data collection using a questionnaire in the form of a Likert scale for work-life balance and employee engagement. Data analysis used simple regression analysis. The results of this research used a simple linear regression test, which showed that there was a significant influence on work-life balance on employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.279$; significance 0.000). So the results of the hypothesis test show that work-life balance has a significant influence on employee engagement among single parents in Bandung.

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is defined as the dissolution of a marriage between a husband and wife who are still alive due to the failure to develop and perfect love between husband and wife and their bloodline (Rahayu, 2023). Divorce has two types with different meanings: divorce by life and divorce by death. Divorce by death is the termination of the marital bond between a husband and wife by a court decision, based on sufficient grounds that the husband and wife can no longer live in harmony as husband and wife (Wahyuni, 2022). Some of the reasons for divorce are due to economic factors and early marriage (Mauludin, 2023). Meanwhile, divorce by death is a condition where the marital status ends due to the death of one of the partners (Hadi, 2012).

Divorce cases in Indonesia continue to increase year after year. According to Statistics Indonesia, the trend in divorce cases in Indonesia reached 463,654 in 2023. West Java alone recorded the highest divorce rate in Indonesia in 2023, with 102,280 cases, or 22.06% of the total national divorce cases (Annur, 2024). Then in Bandung, the divorce rate is the second highest in West Java (Mauludin, 2023). The Religious Court recorded a yearly increase in divorce cases handled in Bandung, averaging 5%, or 300 cases per year. These divorces ultimately lead to the birth of single parents.

According to Zahrotul (2013), single parents are those who care for and raise their children alone without the help of a partner, either a husband or a wife. Furthermore, according to Fadul (2019), single parenting is the process of raising children with only one parent, namely the father or mother. According to data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in 2022, there were 18.25% of the total population of Indonesia were single parents. This figure indicates that there are approximately 51 million single parents in Indonesia, and the number of single parents in Indonesia is increasing every year. This then forces single parents to work to meet economic needs, although they often have to face difficulties in balancing work and childcare.

The challenges faced by single mothers and single fathers are certainly different. The challenge faced by single mothers who are forced to work is limited time to manage the house or kitchen, even to care for their children (Dwi, Rahma, & Citra, 2023). Meanwhile, the challenge faced by single fathers, as mentioned by Santrock (Pajipto, 2007), is the need to adapt to replacing the mother's role as a housekeeper, performing household chores and caring for her children, such as feeding, bathing, or telling bedtime stories, in addition to his role as head of the household.

Being a single parent requires meeting your child's needs in all aspects, especially in childcare, so that the child feels adequately educated by their parents. There is a phase when children are in early childhood, where children are between the ages of 2 and 6, which is a period of child development marked by rapid physical growth, rapid language development, and the development of social and emotional skills (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013). When parents are working, children at this stage can be entrusted to relatives or trusted individuals. However, the early childhood phase is closely tied to the role of parents in guiding, supporting, and stimulating the child's development

(McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013). In this phase, parents act as primary caregivers, providing the affection, security, and stimulation necessary for the child's growth and development. They also help children build social and emotional skills through daily interactions. Through support, guidance, and positive communication, parents can help children navigate this phase successfully.

Sembiring (2021) stated that single parents who work and care for children under six years old will experience stress and emotional burdens. Consistent with the results of a preliminary survey, 6 out of 10 respondents explained that their dual role presents a significant challenge because, without a partner to share the burden, they must ensure their physical, emotional, and financial needs are met. Demands placed on these aspects of life can include meeting children's basic needs such as eating, sleeping, and hygiene. This includes preparing meals, helping them bathe, and ensuring they get enough sleep. Furthermore, setting aside dedicated time for activities with children, such as playing, reading books, or engaging in creative activities, is crucial. On the other hand, work demands can include completing projects or assignments within a specified timeframe, often involving pressure to complete work quickly without sacrificing quality. Managing work demands while maintaining a balance with personal life and non-work responsibilities requires effective planning and time management skills. This then creates conflict between the work life and the personal life of single parents. This conflict is referred to as work-life balance.

Work-life balance is a theory that explains how individuals manage work and family environments to achieve balance (Clark, 2000). Fisher (2019) defines work-life balance as a balance of responsibilities and roles between personal life and work that run side by side without sacrificing or prioritising one side of life. According to Fisher, Bulger & Smith (2009), aspects used to measure work-life balance are Work Interference With Personal Life, how much work can affect family life. Personal Life Interference With Work measures how much an individual's personal life can interfere with their work. Personal Life Enhancement of Work evaluates the extent to which a person's personal life can improve the quality of their work in the workplace. Work Enhancement of Personal Life measures the extent to which work can improve the quality of personal or family life.

In line with the preliminary survey conducted by researchers regarding the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement among single parents in Bandung, the information provided by respondents also highlighted that single women and single men have the same psychological challenges, where both experience stress that results in mood swings, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm in living their days. This was then supported by the results of interviews, where respondents explained the difficulties resulting from the additional role, making them unable to sleep, worried about being laid off, easily sad and sometimes anxious about the fate of their children. Single-parent mother respondents stated that the additional role, namely when previously they only needed to care for children and do housework, then after becoming single parents had to start working to meet economic needs. Meanwhile, single-parent fathers stated that

the additional role, namely when they previously only had to work, then after becoming single parents, they had to take care of the children at home.

Difficulties in achieving work-life balance can then affect the quality of work for single parents as employees. Every company certainly needs employees who are energetic, dedicated, and fully concentrated on their work, or who are committed to their company (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Work-life balance can encourage single parents as employees to be committed and develop a sense of attachment to their work and organisation (Colakoglu, Culha, & Atay, 2010). If single parents cannot balance their personal and work lives, it will affect their employee engagement.

Employee engagement is defined as a positive psychological state that is active and bound to work, operationalised by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural energy (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). According to Shuck et al. (2016) explains that cognitive engagement is indicated by the intensity of mental energy expressed by employees to achieve positive organisational outcomes. Employees who are cognitively engaged pay attention and concentrate on their workplace, and they will expend energy on work-related activities. (b) Emotional engagement is indicated by the intensity and willingness of employees to invest emotions towards positive organisational outcomes. Employees who are emotionally engaged express influence directed towards various work-related targets of experience, and (c) behavioural engagement is indicated by the intensity to behave in a positive way that will influence performance and/or positive organisational outcomes.

A positive work-life balance can impact employee engagement, which is the level of employee involvement and dedication to their work (Chaniago, 2020). Therefore, when employee engagement among single parents is positive, it can increase their attachment to their work in their organisation. Single parents who can maintain a balance between work and personal life allow them to be more focused and concentrated at work. A study by Gallup (2020) also shows that engaged employees tend to have better performance, higher retention rates, and greater job satisfaction.

However, unlike single parents who are unable to maintain a balance between work and personal life, single parents as employees often feel stressed because they have to meet work demands. When employees feel stressed, they tend to experience decreased engagement in their work in their organisation due to stress and fatigue, which can affect the performance of single parents as employees (Allen & Shockley, 2015). Furthermore, difficulties in achieving work-life balance can also reduce the ability of single parents as employees to concentrate while working, thus preventing them from completing tasks more effectively and efficiently (Kremer & Hofman, 2016). This will certainly create new problems, both for single parents as employees and for the company.

In line with the interview results, 1 in 3 single-parent mother respondents stated that when they began living as a single parent working as a staff member in a private company, conflicts in their personal life caused stress and financial worries, which ultimately affected their work performance. Respondents often postponed their work, resulting in work piling up and being completed beyond

the deadline set by the company. Furthermore, the presence of conflict could potentially affect the respondents' emotional stability, for example, frequently getting angry with coworkers for unclear reasons. This resulted in awkwardness between the respondents and their coworkers.

Then, 1 in 3 single-parent father respondents explained that when they started living as single parents with a job as a marketer in a private company, they stated that even though their parents helped with childcare, when there were problems with their children, whether at school or play, the decision-making was still done by the respondents. This certainly added to the mental burden because they could not share solutions with their partners, which ultimately led to not being able to focus on work, not being able to determine which work priorities should be prioritised, and even some work piled up because they often postponed it. In addition, it was also found that when there was work, respondents could delegate work to others without considering whether the person was competent or not.

Furthermore, most respondents in the preliminary survey also stated that the imbalance in their personal lives affected their engagement with their work. Problems in their personal lives created conflict with their work, and vice versa, problems at work created conflict in their personal lives. However, 6 out of 10 respondents were able to separate the effects of conflict between their work and personal lives. This indicates the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement among single parents. Therefore, the authors believe that the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement among single parents is crucial to investigate.

Previous research by Dwi Putri Larasati and Nida Hanasati (2019) showed that work-life balance positively impacts employee engagement. The higher the work-life balance, the higher the level of employee engagement. The study also showed that work-life balance contributes to employee engagement. Another study by Fernanda Rachmadini and Setyo Riyanto (2020) showed similar results. The study found that work-life balance is one of the factors influencing employee engagement. The higher the work-life balance, the higher the level of employee engagement.

Based on the explanation described above, the researcher is interested in researching employee engagement, which is influenced by work-life balance in single parents in Bandung, not specifically in certain positions and jobs, because the focus of this research is to see the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement in single parents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Life Balance

Fisher (2019) defines work-life balance as a balance of responsibilities and roles between personal life and work that go hand in hand without sacrificing or prioritising one side of life.

According to Fisher, Bulger & Smith (2009), work-life balance refers to four dimensions, namely: (1) WIPL (Work Interference with Personal Life), this dimension refers to how much work can affect family life. (2) PLIW (Personal Life Interference with Work). This dimension refers to how much an individual's

personal life can interfere with their work. (3) PLEW (Personal Life Enhancement of Work). This dimension refers to how much a person's personal life can improve the quality of an individual's work in the world of work. (4) WEPL (Work Enhancement of Personal Life). This dimension refers to how much work can improve the quality of personal or family life.

Work-life balance is a condition of balance between the roles in work and the roles in personal life that an individual has without sacrificing one of the roles that he has, and with minimal conflict that occurs between the two roles.

Employee Engagement

According to Shuck & Wollard (2010), employee engagement is a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state of employees dedicated to achieving company performance.

According to Shuck et al. (2016), employee engagement refers to three dimensions: (1) Cognitive engagement, which is the assessment of whether the subject's work is meaningful and safe (physically, emotionally, and psychologically), and whether the subject has sufficient resources to complete the tasks or opportunities presented at the expected level of proficiency. (2) Emotional engagement, which is the subject's willingness to engage personal resources such as pride, confidence, and knowledge following a positive cognitive assessment. (3) Behavioural engagement, which is the subject's intention or desire to improve performance.

H₁: There is a positive influence between Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement among Single Parents in Bandung.

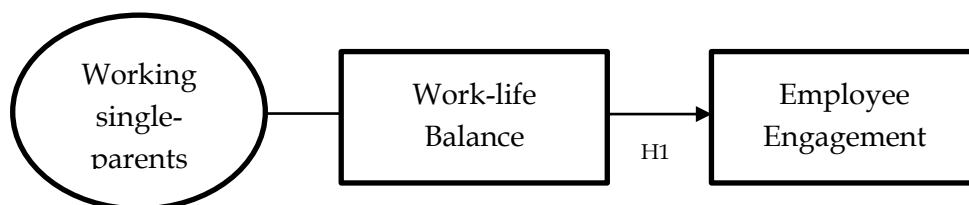


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This research employed quantitative methods. Quantitative methods are used to examine a specific population or sample by collecting data using research instruments, which are then analysed statistically to test predetermined hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2013).

The focus of this research was on working single parents. The sample was drawn using a purposive sampling method, where the researcher selected respondents based on whether they had children under 12 years of age, and based on the research objectives and aims that aligned with the researcher's considerations.

The instruments used in this study were the Work-Life Balance measurement scale from Fisher, Bulger, and Smith (2009), which has been adapted into Indonesian by Gianti Gunawan, Yus Nugraha, and Marina Sulastina (2019), and the Employee Engagement measurement scale from Shuck

(2016), which has been adapted into Indonesian by Karima Astari, Anissa Lestari Kadiyono, and Megawati Batubara (2022).

In statistical testing, the researcher used a simple regression test to determine the effect of Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement.

RESEARCH RESULT

Normality and Linearly Test

In conducting a regression test, the data must be distributed normally and linearly. After conducting the analysis, 8 outliers were found which were then discarded, resulting in 154 respondents who fit the research sample that was close to normal based on the Q-Q Plot or Quantile-Quantile Plot table, which is one of the normality test methods using graphs where the observation data is presented visually, so that it can be seen whether the data follows a normal distribution or not (Johnson & Dean, 2009). If the data is normally distributed, then the observed values (plotting points on the graph) should fall exactly along a straight line (meaning the observed values are the same as what we would expect from a normally distributed data set) (Field, 2009). The results of the Q-Q Plot table in this study can be seen below:

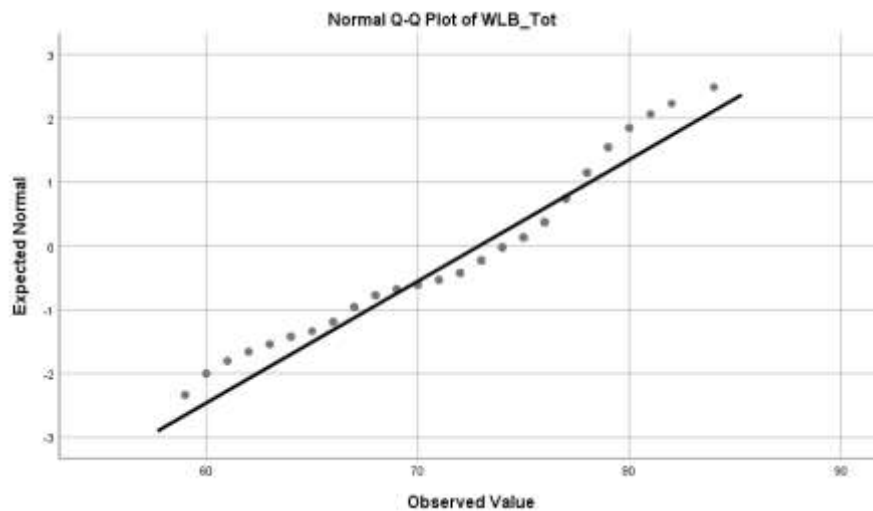


Figure 2. Normal Q-Q Plot Work-Life Balance

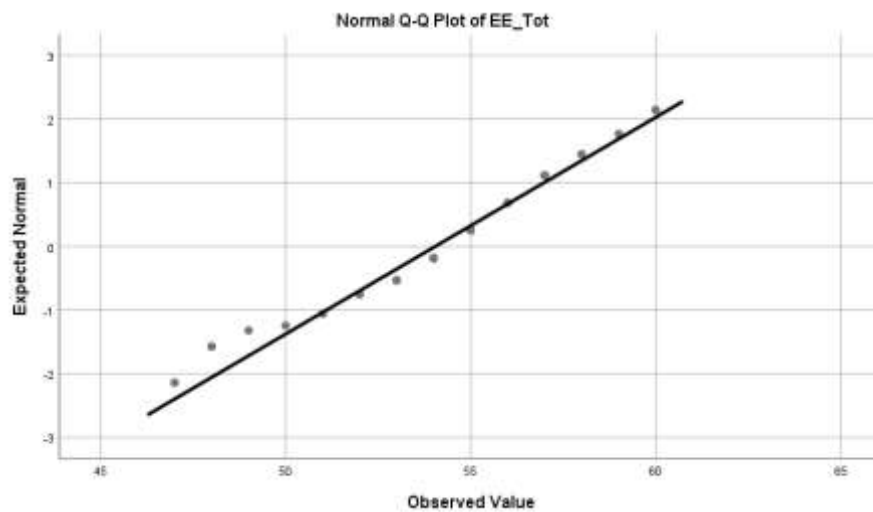


Figure 3. Normal Q-Q Plot Employee Engagement

Based on these results, it can be seen that the points follow the diagonal line. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of the measurement data for each variable is normally distributed and meets the normality assumption test. Based on this, the simple regression model does not violate the normality assumption and is a linear equation. In other words, the simple regression model has a normal distribution and a linear pattern.

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Table 1. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	32,013	2,798		11,440	,000
	WLB_Tot	,302	,038	,539	7,894	,000

a. Dependent Variable: EE_Tot

Based on the regression results, a model was obtained with employee engagement as the dependent variable and work-life balance as the independent variable. Interpretation of the coefficient using the Standardized Coefficients (Beta) value shows that the work-life balance variable influences employee engagement with a Beta value of 0.539, indicating that every one standard deviation increase in work-life balance will increase employee engagement by 0.539.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	,539 ^a	,291	,286	2,482	

a. Predictors: (Constant), WLB_Tot

b. Dependent Variable: EE_Tot

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out in this study, the Sig value is 0.000 and R² is 0.279, where H₀ is accepted and H₁ is rejected if R² < 0, while H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted if R² > 0. Which means H₁ is accepted, or in other words, work-life balance has a positive influence on employee engagement in single parents in Bandung. The next step is to determine the extent of influence of work-life balance on employee engagement using the R² coefficient of determination expressed as a percentage. The result is that there is an influence of work-life balance on employee engagement of 29,1% and the remaining 70.9% is influenced by other variables outside this research.

DISCUSSION

Balance is achieved when single parents can efficiently divide their time between work and personal responsibilities, allowing them to meet family needs without neglecting their obligations as employees. This means single parents are able to set clear boundaries between work time and family time, allowing each role to be fulfilled optimally. Furthermore, the ideal balance is subjective and can vary from one individual to another, depending on priorities, needs, and life circumstances. This is in line with Fisher, Bulger & Smith (2009), who emphasise that balance is not a static state but a dynamic one, meaning that individuals must continually adjust and manage their time and energy to achieve a balance that suits their situation and priorities. Therefore, when single parents can balance work demands with personal responsibilities, they will create a balance between work and personal life, which will influence engagement among single parents in their company.

Engaged employees are those who are fully involved and demonstrate a strong commitment to the company. Employees are considered engaged when they feel connected and loyal to the company. For example, an engaged employee demonstrates initiative in solving team problems and proactively shares new ideas that can improve the company's products or services. They also engage in extracurricular activities, such as attending training, workshops, or participating in company events. Single parents can feel more engaged at work by still fulfilling their role as parents, having time for themselves, such as rest, and engaging in activities they enjoy. Engaged employees possess a passion and commitment that encourages them to contribute positively and actively to achieving company goals, such as actively participating in team collaboration, collaborating with coworkers, completing their work on time, arriving at work according to a predetermined schedule, and participating in company events. Furthermore, achieving work-life balance also allows single parents to interact positively with coworkers and superiors, thus creating a harmonious work environment. This is in line with research conducted by Greenhaus & Allen (2011), which found that when employees can meet the demands of work and personal life, this results in a higher level of engagement in their work. Single parents as employees feel they can be more committed to their work duties.

Furthermore, the ability to balance their dual roles as caregivers and breadwinners influences single parents to contribute maximally to team projects, actively participate in team meetings and initiatives, and provide innovative ideas and effective solutions to work challenges. When single parents can balance their work and personal lives, they have a higher level of engagement, which can also improve overall team performance and support the achievement of organisational goals. This is in line with research conducted by Dwi Putri Larasati & Nida Hanasati (2019), which states that work-life balance has a positive effect on employee engagement. In this case, if a group of single parents is able to balance their work and personal lives, it can influence the group of single parents to be engaged in their company. The results of this study also support research by Laksono and Wardoyo (2019), which found that work-life balance affects employee engagement, where employees who successfully

maintain a balance between work and personal life tend to have higher involvement in their work. This indicates that increasing work-life balance can increase employee engagement.

In contrast, single parents who are unable to achieve a balance between work and personal life will negatively impact their engagement in their work. This hampered ability of single parents to achieve work-life balance can be caused by the challenges faced by single parents as heads of households, where they must also shoulder dual responsibilities, namely not only as the primary breadwinner, but also the role of childcare. Single parents must face work demands that often require significant time and energy, while also meeting the daily and emotional needs of their children. An inadequate balance between work tasks and household responsibilities can lead to a lack of rest time, a lack of social support, and increased stress. Furthermore, the inability to manage time effectively between work and family responsibilities can result in delays in completing tasks, a decrease in work quality, and a lack of motivation. As a result, the level of engagement of single parents in the company decreases, which impacts team performance and the achievement of overall organisational goals. The results of this study also support previous research conducted by Dwi Putri Larasati & Nida Hanasati (2019), which found that single parents who can maintain a balance between work and personal life tend to have higher engagement in their organisations. This is due to increased job satisfaction and commitment when single-parent employees feel that their personal needs are also met.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this study is that Work-life balance has a positive effect on Employee engagement among single parents in Bandung, with an R Square value of 0.279, where the R^2 value requirement is > 0.000 . In other words, when single parents can balance work life and personal life, it can make single parents engaged in the company where they work.

Work-life balance is crucial for single parents, as it allows them to manage both professional and personal responsibilities effectively. Achieving this balance leads to higher employee engagement, where individuals are more committed, motivated, and involved in their work. Research supports that a good balance enhances job satisfaction, collaboration, and overall performance. In contrast, an imbalance can lead to stress, reduced motivation, and decreased productivity. Therefore, supporting single parents in balancing their roles contributes not only to their well-being but also to improved team and organisational outcomes.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future researchers are expected to expand the sample size and data distribution to allow for generalisation. Furthermore, they can conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of work-life balance on employee engagement within a company, and conduct studies within specific companies to examine the impact of work-life balance and employee engagement on their employees. Future researchers can also consider other demographic

factors, such as number of children and job level, to understand how different groups respond to work-life balance and employee engagement.

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