

Balancing Work and Life for TV Professionals

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Abstract

In the television industry, where fast-paced production cycles, erratic scheduling, and high performance standards sometimes blur the lines between work and personal life, work-life balance has become a major issue. This study investigates the experiences of television professionals, encompassing journalists, producers, technical crews, and on-air talent, to discern the factors that affect their capacity to maintain a balance between professional obligations and personal well-being. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating survey data with comprehensive interviews, to pinpoint significant stressors, including time constraints, erratic work schedules, and the emotional labour associated with television program production. The results show that many professionals like the creative and changing aspects of their jobs, but they often have trouble with weariness, not spending enough time with their families, and keeping up with good habits. Organisational support, flexible scheduling, and clearer role expectations were all important factors in improving work-life balance and job satisfaction. The study shows that the whole industry needs to come up with plans that put employee health and safety first while also keeping the creativity and productivity needed for TV production.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Media industry, Occupational stress, Job satisfaction, and Television professionals

1. Introduction

Since the invention of television, the medium has always made people work longer hours and blurred the lines between work and play. A poll from 1993 found that most people who worked in television finished their workweek at least one day late and worked from home for an average of three to five hours every day. As a result, the rules that were put in place to set the workweek for a television staff writer were often broken (Wilczyńska, 2014). A similar thing happened during the picture-editing part of post-production, when a "lock-off" step was added to help with planning. During this time, directors typically put a lot of pressure on TV professionals to go to big meetings that often went on longer than the hours set by law (Reed et al., 2005).

Labour groups were quite concerned about the broken rhythms of work and play, which were seen as a necessary part of life in the television age. Unions and other stakeholders had to deal with program content, production deadlines, and professional time demands with an unusual sense of urgency because production financing and distribution guarantees were becoming more important. This was not the case before television. Television experts still welcomed the entry of unions and enjoyed enormous resources generated by the consolidated sector. These changes didn't fix the growing gap between work and leisure, but they did help shape the evolution of television content, which would later reflect popular tastes. This was the first change in the history of the industry, when professionals formed a collective fraternal society at the height of their professionalism.

2. The history of work-life balance in television

By the end of the 2010s, the idea of work-life balance had gone from being a minor issue on TV to a major concern for professionals, notably writers, directors, and editors, whose jobs didn't fit into a normal 40-hour work week. Television has long been seen as a "maverick industry" whose strange traits were not part of the corporate work-life balance movement. As a result, academia, labour unions, and even industry associations have not paid much attention to it. Scholars from the early to mid-twentieth century mostly painted the media as a source of soothing escape from a flood of ads. Even though there were a lot of studies on labour history in the 1960s, television was rarely brought up. There was still not much literature on unionisation. In the past fifty years, there has been a lot of debate about the social, cultural, and personal importance of TV shows. However, very few historians have thought about the process of making TV shows itself, rather than just looking at particular shows. Efforts to define television's role in the progression of communication have also been incomplete and disjointed.

There have been milestone anniversaries and histories of individual networks, but documenting the work culture of television across time is still not very common. The uneven journey from individual creativity going into making programs during the time of "maverick capitalists" (1935–1955) to the breaking up of that creativity into very specific tasks and the standardisation of industry standards is what makes up television's labour conditions. For public-service broadcasters with government charters, the dualism lasted longer than it did for commercial broadcasters. From a content point of view, the journey from naive hope to harsh reality has already been drawn. This journey has been marked by creative successes including new technologies, artistic breakthroughs, and changes in how audiences experience things. A comparative examination of production methodologies elucidates the evolution of television as a contemporary industry, contrasted with both popular and academic portrayals of the medium's inherent characteristics and societal influence (K. and J., 2015).

3. The TV industry's structural needs

There are many different jobs in television production, from writing and shooting on location to editing and mixing audio. Each job requires different talents and abilities. To make production easier, people, equipment, and other resources that are typically used on more than one project must be coordinated. To avoid conflicts during production, executives usually put shows in order of how far along they are. However, even when things are slow, many network, syndication, and cable entertainment jobs still require a lot of availability (A. Vampola and L. Hilt, 1996). Writers in scripted genres make outlines, scripts, and revisions that can be changed again throughout pre-production, production, and post-production. It is common for people to stay involved throughout the entire production phase. Animation, commercials, and episodic shows can all have extra work and independent call-in tasks during off-hours.

4. Ways that people and companies deal with problems

Jobs in the TV industry need a lot of time and effort. Heavy workloads are recognised to make it harder to combine work and life (Wilczyńska, 2014). In the creative and post-production fields, personnel often work more than their normal hours, and they may even have to work on their days off if they are needed. The producer's job is still the most demanding in terms of hourly participation across the board. When not engaged in production, high participation in many creative and technical areas leads to production-preparation overload. The unpredictability of prime-time nocturnal analysis and news work causes peak load. These structural factors restrict the implementation of many approaches to alleviate stress and improve work-life balance, while also impacting positive treatments.

A substantial body of literature delineates individual and organisational solutions to mitigate excessive workload. Individual techniques encompass improved time management, establishing distinct boundaries between professional and personal life, committed self-care practices, and goal-oriented involvement as opposed to unstructured activities, whether at home or in the workplace. Group-generated work shift designs with few evening hours reduce exposure to evening and night work. Limited interaction between different areas of logistics helps save time burdens. Organization-wide, on-site, and tele-supports for mental health are encouraging steps forward, but they aren't all in place yet.

5. Gender, Parenthood, and Burnout in Television Careers

Caregiving duties continue to affect media workers' lives in unique ways, increasing their degrees of burnout, which are still very different for men and women. The illustrations in the "The Revolving Door" research show how people move up and down in their jobs and how often they leave. People who work in TV often say that work-life balance is a big problem. The media industry has also been hiring younger, more diverse people, which is in line with changes in society as a whole. The option to work from home may seem to make it easier to balance work and life. The gender-based promotion gap shows that gender stereotypes and company policies that favour the time and resources of employees who don't care about caring are still in place. Media professionals who want to make time for family caregiving often do job crafting. Unplanned switching between projects makes people less productive. Nonetheless, substantial data indicates that moms consistently encounter higher levels of burnout compared to their male counterparts. Data from the CDC shows that parental burnout has almost tripled since the start of the epidemic (Artz et al., 2022). This makes it even more important to pay attention to the needs of working parents.

6. Technological Progress and Adaptable Work Configurations

Technological changes that change how people communicate are a borderline situation of flexible work arrangements that could make work-life balance easier or harder (Wilczyńska, 2014). The addition of remote collaboration capabilities is still a double-edged sword for the TV industry. Geographic separation no longer limits how authors, directors, producers, and post-production specialists can work together. The initial drafts, rough cuts for preview, and other elements in the production cycle can now all happen at different times (Chung and van der Horst, 2018). Modular and parallelised production methods can be quite helpful for productions that have tight deadlines. They keep things moving forward while cutting down on the number of people needed. These strategies can ease the pressure of competition during slow times. At the same time, complete project and team isolation can make it easier to put together portfolios for job applications, target specific producer or director jobs, or pitch self-contained projects to platforms. This kind of flexibility makes it easier to stop participating in the continuing conversations about projects. The widespread abandoning of established recording and watching rituals disturbs the bonding processes of a historically coherent format committed to the presentation of shared stories. Concerns about security in higher-risk offline arrangements make the creative process more compartmentalised and put intermediaries who are not as creatively involved in promoting proprietary or developing narratives in the spotlight.

Technology is likely to make work-life balance better and easier, but it also has the potential to make things more divided, less cohesive, and less trustworthy. To evaluate the technology's effect on improving balance, we need to know more about the social dynamics we want and the settings that support them (Padmanabhan and Sampath Kumar, 2016).

7. Comparative Viewpoints Across Regions and Functions

The study aimed to examine the work-life balance of television professionals by assessing the influence of employment conditions on their personal lives. Fieldwork was conducted in six regions: Spain, the Philippines, Gauteng (South Africa), Tokyo (Japan), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), and Seoul (South Korea). In these areas, there were some disparities in work-life balance, but other things were the same.

A comparative analysis of the collected data from different locations about the equilibrium between personal and professional life yields significant insights. Such a review allows for a wider understanding of the working environment of television staff and helps to determine if certain trends or suggestions may be shared among the selected regions.

The work of television staff is divided into numerous positions, each of which has its own set of responsibilities, teaches different skills, and requires a particular level of expertise. In quantitative terms, the amassed field data indicates that creative roles (e.g., production, directing, script-writing) generally carry a comparatively greater significance from a personal life standpoint than other roles such as technical (e.g., cameras, illumination, editing) or executive (e.g., administration, marketing, finance) domains (Young Choi et al., 2021).

8. What employers should do and what policies they should follow

Television companies that want to help people balance work and life can use a number of best practices. A strong governance structure makes sure that work arrangements are fair and ethical (M Southworth, 2014). This framework may include limits on how much work can be done in a week, access to paid vacation, and support for mental health and wellness (D. Tanner, 2018). Accountability systems, training on expectations and options, and inclusive leadership are all examples of complementary approaches that can make things work better.

Leaders in an organisation have a big impact on how employees feel and the culture of balance in general. Policies for hiring and promoting people are a strong way to make changes. Promoting people who set an example for sustainable practices and following rules is a straightforward way to show how important

they are. A lot of changes to employment contracts to make sure that working hours and time-off procedures are explicit sets expectations and protects personal time.

9. Future Trends and Strategic Suggestions

The TV industry is about to reach a turning point in how it makes and sells shows. This is because of the rise of streaming services, changes in how material is delivered, new ways of watching, and the slow return from the COVID-19 pandemic. Big players in the business predict big changes in the next three to five years, but they are still not sure if the hybrid ways that have come up during the crisis will last. Talks with people in the business show that there will be a number of interconnected changes in how things are made, how people are hired, and how talent is brought in. These changes will have an effect on work-life balance and other concerns like burnout and the desire to leave a job.

At this important point, television employers, trade unions, and public policy stakeholders should take a number of steps to stay informed and involved in the ongoing conversation. Organisations should keep an eye on how things are changing in other creative fields and beyond, while also encouraging people to think about and talk about what causes and effects are happening in the television industry. Keeping track of and reporting on things like the makeup of the workforce, the rate of turnover, the difficulties in hiring new employees, and the demographic traits of possible new workers would help people make better decisions over time to fix access and equity problems.

There are many ways to measure and share information on the current state of things and how close we are to reaching our goals. The percentage of employees who take time off on a regular basis during their careers is a basic overall measure, together with the number of requests that go unanswered. Monitoring the use of specified leave periods over time can indicate the implementation of newly instituted policies. The prevalence of elevated work intensity during the past year highlights the intensification of demands that new policies seek to mitigate. Talking about and writing about these issues will raise knowledge of associated problems, encourage proactive discussions, and help people figure out how to avoid the worst outcomes (Padmanabhan and Sampath Kumar, 2016); (K. and J., 2015); (Wilczyńska, 2014).

10. Conclusion

Work-life balance means fairly dividing your time and energy between your job and your personal life (Padmanabhan and Sampath Kumar, 2016). For people who work in television, these interrelated parts are very important for keeping a

fun, successful, and balanced profession. Since the advent of the electronic studio, success in television has been linked to extended hours of on-site engagement (RASHIDA BANU, 2015). Such constant worry will eventually lead to burnout and the loss of talented professionals (Wilczyńska, 2014). Recognising, confronting, and alleviating work-life imbalance demonstrates professionals' capacity to engage in their vocation with satisfaction, efficiency, and sustainability across diverse positions and geographical settings. Two unresolved enquiries were particularly noteworthy: which practices facilitate work-life balance for professionals amid the demands of television, and which employers have effectively adapted to regional, professional, vocational, and industrial diversity while upholding high standards and a positive work-life experience?

The study aimed to deepen the comprehension of work-life balance in television broadcasting by exploring three additional aspects and articulating a select few critical enquiries. Looking at how work-life balance has changed over time was an interesting exercise. With the rise of regional broadcast systems, productive work became linked to being dedicated to long periods of work on-site. Practitioners adjusted to the new rule by going to work every day, which was made harder by the need to meet ever-increasing public expectations and a growing list of duties. Unionism, technological advancements, managerial professionalism, societal aspirations, and other developments subsequently highlighted the impracticality of prior pledges, leading to growing criticism of television's adherence to the all-consuming paradigm.

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