

ABSTRACT

Along with the second global shift there is an increasing tendency to off-shore many customer-facing and back-office services, such as call centres and chat support, financial and banking services and software developing and maintenance services, from the Global North to low cost locations in Global South such as Sri Lanka. It provides employment for many young people in the workforce while requiring them to provide their services at foreign servicing hours (on time zone dependency basis). Thus, the requirement to undertake non-standard work schedules alter the biological patterns as well as the nature of relationships of these time zone dependent workers, hence desynchronising them from their local counterparts. Against this backdrop, the present study explores how working at non-standard hours affects the time zone dependent workers' work and non-work life balance and how they manage it amid their incompatible day-night behaviours. The study draws special attention on the individual coping strategies adopted by time zone dependent workers while shedding light on gender and gendered division of household labour as well as workers' perceptions on organisational climate.

Under the qualitative research approach, case study strategy was adopted as the main method of qualitative inquiry. The sample for the study, which includes married men and women time zone dependent workers and managerial level employees, was drawn from four Sri Lankan BPO organisations based on purposive judgmental sampling technique. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews—both one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews. Gathered data was analysed and multivocal convincing arguments were built up using the themes identified by using the thematic analysis method. The findings of the study show that though time zone dependent workers' social lives are desynchronising from that of their local counterparts, they have rearticulated the way they produce their social life with a more inward approach within the homelike environment at workplace. Time zone dependent workers adopt various individual coping strategies to manage their work and non-work life balance, such as support and shared responsibilities at home and at work, adjusting the available times and non-available times with the family members, secession, [support from the] extended families, spouse's awareness about the nature of work, negotiation at home, at work and on HR policies, use of technology, cognitive strategies, advance personal planning, use of representative agents and stay-at-home spouses. However, the findings suggest that separation of work domain and non-work domain is not an easy task in time zone dependent work and therefore steps should

be taken in synergising them. The findings show that due to the increasing popularity of information technology related professions in the offshored business process outsourcing industry, the whole information technology profession is negatively perceived by the wider society in relation to their capability of maintaining proper work and non-work life balance, thus leading to several social issues.

Keywords: non-standard work schedules, time zone dependent workers, work and non-work life balance, individual coping strategies, gender, gendered division of household labour, perceived organisational climate