

LIFE MANAGEMENT OF CONTRACTOR'S SITE QUANTITY SURVEYOR

CHARIKA DARSHANI¹, RIDMIKA K.I.² & PERERA B.A.K.S.³

¹ Department of Quantity Surveying, University of Vocational Technology, Sri Lanka

^{2,3} Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

¹ *charikadarshani@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Life management controls the quality of one's work while ensuring one's quality of life with minimum conflicts. The contractor's site quantity surveyor (QS), who has to shoulder many responsibilities on-site amongst time constraints, can most probably experience a life imbalance. Because the personal responsibilities of female and male site QSs differ, the aim of this study was to identify the strategies that will enhance the life management of contractor's site quantity surveyors. The qualitative approach was adopted in the study, and the required empirical data were collected by interviewing 20 females and 20 males contractor's site QSs. The interview findings were analysed using manual content analysis. Thirty-one and twenty-eight causes of life imbalance in male and female QSs respectively were identified. In addition, 50 and 48 strategies that will facilitate satisfactory life management in male and female QSs, respectively were identified. Some of the identified causes and strategies were common to both male and females QSs.

Keywords: *Life management, Contractor's site QS, Causes, Strategies*

1. Introduction

Life management helps one to maintain a flexible approach towards one's personal environment with minimum disturbance (Kotera, Green, and Sheffield, 2020). According to Bryne (2005), life management focuses on five important areas: work, family, friends, spiritual development, and health. For those who work in the industry, life management has become trendy and indispensable because it benefits them while also benefiting their businesses, and the society (Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent and Alegre, 2016). Quantity surveyors (QS) are one of the key stakeholders of the construction industry (Lee and Cullen, 2018). The quantity surveying profession has changed over time and the quantity surveyors now have to bear high workloads, which are stressful to them (Abendroth, 2018). The construction industry being complex and risky, the QSs working in the industry find it difficult to maintain a life balance (Panojan, Perera and Dilakshan, 2019). Moreover, the roles of the male and female QSs in their jobs, families and personal lives differ (Bowen, et al., 2014; Gregory, et al., 2013). The life balance of QSs has already been explored in general. However, gender differences have to be considered when focusing on the life management of contractor's site QSs. Nevertheless, contractor's site QSs require special attention in these studies because they have to carry a huge workload at sites making life complex and stressful to them (Ashworth and Hogg, 2013). Therefore, life management of contractor's site QSs has to be studied for male and female QSs separately. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate how the life management of contractor's site QSs can be improved. The objectives of the study were to identify the causes of life imbalance in male and female contractor's site QSs and propose strategies for their life management. Some of the causes are common to male and females QSs, while some are unique to either male or female QSs.

2. Quantity Surveyors in Construction

The construction industry encompasses a wide range of activities, products, and skills (George and Loosemore, 2019). Hence, the work capacity expected of a construction professional is high (Ochieng, 2015). Lingard and Francis (2006) highlighted that professionals working in the construction industry experience considerable work-related stress. The professional QSs in the construction industry have a huge responsibility to ensure that construction project costs remain within their estimated costs (Bowen, et al., 2014) because they are required to handle cost estimating, cost planning, cost controlling and reviewing, and contract administration (Mbachu, 2015). In the construction industry, a QS can work as a contractor QS, consultant QS or client QS (Ashworth and Hogg, 2013).

2.1 CONTRACTOR'S SITE Quantity Surveyors

The QSs in contracting organisations are attached to either the head office or a project site (Mbachu, 2015). George and Loosemore (2019) identified seven main tasks of contractor's site QSs: payment valuation; variation determination; allocation of preliminaries to elements; subcontractors' tender and actual cost evaluation; financial reporting; and cost accounting for material, plant, and workforce. The wide range of responsibilities they have to shoulder, time constraints, and the requirement to be constantly aware of site conditions cause stress in site QSs (Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent and Alegre, 2016). Hence, a concept such as life management will be an ideal topic for discussion among contractor's site QSs.

3. Concept of Life Management

Life management establishes "the relationship between institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labour markets" (Felstead, et al., 2002, p.57). According to Byrne (2005), life management has to focus on five aspects of life: work, family, friends, health, and spiritual activities. Thus, life management has to focus on these five areas. Through life balance, home and workplace satisfaction with minimum conflicts can be achieved (George and Loosemore, 2019). Paryani (2015) stated that family life involves taking care of family, children, parents, and health; and having effective leisure time. According to Holden and Sunindijo (2018), social life includes extra-curricular activities, such as sports, and visiting the gym and friends, and talking with the family. Paryani (2015) emphasized that poor physical and mental well-being causes unbalanced work and homework. Hence, as explained by Holden and Sunindijo (2018), having a healthy and strong body and mind set, is important for managing life. Paryani (2015) pointed out that spiritual peace enables to maintain a positive attitude towards work and life.

3.1 IMPORTANCE OF LIFE MANAGEMENT FOR FEMALE AND MALE CONTRACTOR'S SITE QUANTITY SURVEYORS

Van Eck and Burger (2019) disclosed that QSs play a significant role in the construction industry today. Lee and Cullen (2018) emphasized that contractor's site QSs have to bear huge responsibilities during project execution. Site employees, who are away from their families, have to comply with deadlines, manage staff and site operations, and engage in negotiations with other stakeholders and strive to resolve any disputes with them (Sajithkumar, 2014). The increasing levels of stress among QSs highlight the need for life management of QSs (Panojan, Perera and Dilakshan, 2019) working at sites. Heavy workloads; long working hours; job stress; poor working environments; poor health conditions; job insecurity; sleep deprivation; loss of control over work; incompetence; travelling and accommodation; risk and occupational hazards; poor salaries; poor rewards, compliments, and promotions; obsolete technologies; and domestic and family responsibilities were identified as the common causes of life imbalance in contractor's site QSs (Panojan, Perera and Dilakshan, 2019; Lingard, Francis and Turner, 2012; Sajithkumar, 2014; Gregory et al., 2013; George and Loosemore, 2019; Paryani, 2015; Holden and Sunindijo, 2018). Regular breaks/adequate sleep, flexible working hours, preparation of the day's program schedule early in the day, home working (E-working), job sharing and team work; work outs, helpful and understating partners, child adoption and fostering leave, dependency leave, regular vacations, self-evaluations, relaxing and amusing activities, positive mind sets will promote life balance in contractor's site QSs (Panojan, Perera and Dilakshan, 2019; Lingard, Francis and Turner, 2012; Sajithkumar, 2014; Gregory et al., 2013; George and Loosemore, 2019; Paryani, 2015; Holden and Sunindijo, 2018, Sunindijo and Kamardeen, 2017).

Even though most causes of life imbalance and strategies for life management are common to male and female QSs working for contractors at sites, Gregory et al. (2013) emphasized that the working environments of male and female construction professionals are based on the gender, and that

therefore different. Females have to fulfil their career obligations while shouldering family responsibilities (Panojan, Perera and Dilakshan, 2019). Sunindijo and Kamardeen in 2017 argued that compared with female professionals, male professionals hold senior positions in their workplaces and consequently they experience relatively more stress because of job risks and possible negative implications of any mistakes they make at work. Sunindijo and Kamardeen (2017) revealed that the causes and consequences of life imbalance in people differ according to gender. Therefore, the factors associated with life imbalance of contractor's site QSs will depend on the gender. Thus, life management of contractor's site QSs has to be studied for male and female QSs separately.

4. Research Methodology

The causes of life imbalance in contractor's site QSs and the strategies that will promote life management in them were identified from the literature. Gunnell (2016) identified that the qualitative approach can be used in a research where intangible evidence and non – numerical data have to be gathered. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), the qualitative approach involves developing questions, collecting data from relevant personnel, and analysing the collected data to obtain their real meanings. Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted in this study. The required empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviewees, 20 females and 20 male QSs in the age group of 25–40 years and holding varying designations, were selected using purposive sampling. The period between 25 and 40 years (in age) is the most challenging period in the life of a QSs owing to family responsibilities, and the focus on carrier development and qualification acquisition. The details of the interviewees are listed in Table 1. Interview findings were analysed using manual content analysis.

Table 1. Details of the Interviewees

ID	Designation	E	A	M	ID	Designation	E	A	M
F1	Project QS	4	29	Single	M1	Senior QS	10	35	M/C
F2	QS	3	29	M/NC	M2	QS	1	25	Single
F3	Senior QS	5	30	Single	M3	QS	1	26	Single
F4	Senior QS	14	40	M/C	M4	Cost Manager	4	40	M/NC
F5	Senior QS	7	31	Single	M5	QS	1	28	M/NC
F6	QS	3.5	29	M/NC	M6	QS	7	32	M/NC
F7	QS	4	30	Single	M7	Chief QS	10	34	Single
F8	Senior QS	8	34	Single	M8	QS	6	30	Single
F9	CA	5	31	Single	M9	Senior cost manager	4	29	M/NC
F10	Senior QS	11	34	M/C	M10	Lead Cost Controller	13	38	M/C
F11	QS	3.5	29	M/NC	M11	Project QS	5	30	M/C
F12	Senior QS	14	40	M/C	M12	Senior QS	4	29	Single
F13	Claim Engineer	5	29	M/NC	M13	Chief QS	10	34	Single
F14	QS	10	31	M/NC	M14	QS	7.5	27	Single
F15	Electrical Estimator	4.5	28	Single	M15	QS	7	32	Single
F16	Contract Manager	11	36	M/C	M16	QS	5.5	30	M/NC
F17	QS	4	29	M/NC	M17	CE	13	37	M/NC
F18	CA	7	32	M/NC	M18	Project QS	5	29	M/NC
F19	QS	4	29	M/NC	M19	Senior QS	5.5	29	M/NC
F20	QS	6	34	M/C	M20	Commercial manager	8	34	M/C

E - Experience, A - Age, M - Marital Status, M/NC - Married with no children, M/C - Married with children, QS - Quantity Surveyor, CA – Contract Administrator, CE – Construction Engineer

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 CAUSES OF LIFE IMBALANCE IN CONTRACTOR'S SITE QS

Twenty-one and eleven causes of life imbalance in male contractor's site QSs were identified from the literature and by the interviewees, respectively. Similarly, for the female contractor's site QSs, 17 causes were identified from the literature, while 11 causes were identified by the interviewees. The 32 causes related to male QSs and the 28 causes related to female QSs are listed in Table 2 with the causes identified by the interviewees highlighted in bold.

Table 2. Causes of life imbalance in male and female contractor's site QSs

Causes of Life Imbalance in Male QSs	L	N	Causes of Life Imbalance in Female QSs	L	N
Heavy workload	√	19	Heavy workload	√	20
Job stress	√	19	Long working hours	√	20
Long working hours	√	18	Unrealistic deadlines	√	20
Family responsibilities	√	18	Domestic responsibilities	√	20
Poor management	√	18	Traveling and accommodation	√	18
Poor working environment	√	17	Risk and occupation hazards	√	17
Poor health	√	17	Poor working environment	√	17
Exhaustion	√	17	Poor health	√	16
Employers' last-minute expectations	√	16	Loss of control over work	√	16
Loss of control over work	√	16	Incompetency	√	16
Job insecurity	√	15	Job insecurity	√	15
Lack of sleep	√	15	Lack of sleep	√	14
Personal ambitions	√	15	Personal ambitions	√	14
Regular changes in working conditions	√	14	Lack of recognition through rewards, compliments, or promotions	√	14
Poor salary	√	12	Obsolete technologies	√	13
Risks and occupation hazards	√	12	Poor salary	√	13
Traveling and accommodation	√	12	Regular changes made to client's requirements	√	13
Lack of commitment	√	12	Focus on higher studies or career development	X	12
Lack of recognition through rewards, compliments, and promotion	√	11	Not being up to date	X	12
Incompetency	√	11	Lack of proper office systems	X	5
Obsolete technologies	√	8	Lack of paid leave	X	4
Poor interpersonal skills, teamwork, and self-confidence	X	8	Lack of competent supporting staff	X	3
Lack of paid leave	X	4	Lack of commitment	X	2
Incorrect decision making	X	2	Lack of interpersonal skills, and self-confidence	X	2
Competitive environment	X	2	Lack of support from the family	X	2
Dominating superiors	X	2	Pursuit of perfectionism	X	2
Self-centered objectives	X	2	Too many responsibilities	X	2
Time devoted to higher studies or career development	X	2	Favoritism / Discrimination	X	2
Addictions	X	1			
Non availability of profitable projects	X	1			
Salary delays / Non-	X	1			

Causes of Life Imbalance in Male QSs	L	N	Causes of Life Imbalance in Female QSs	L	N
payment of salary					
Favoritism / Discrimination	X	1			

**L – Found from the literature and N-Number of Interviewees who responded*

According to Panojan, Perera, and Dilakshan (2019), issues associated with travelling and accommodation are separately responsible for life imbalance in contractors’ s site QSs. However, the interviewees were of the view that because travelling and accommodation are interrelated, they should be combined and considered as one factor. The heavy workload of contractor’s site QSs was common to male and female QSs because it influences the quality of work, time available to the family, social engagements, and physical and mental well-being. The interviewees identified several additional causes of life imbalance, such as personal ambitions; poor interpersonal skills, teamwork, and self-confidence; lack of paid leave, that are common to male and female site QSs. Usually, males are the breadwinners of their families. Therefore, the financial stability of the family is one of the main concerns of a male. Thus, non-availability of profitable projects, delays in paying the salary or the non-payment of the salary, and self-centred objectives were identified as causes of life imbalance unique to male site QSs working for contractors. Sunindijo and Kamardeen (2017) identified that male professionals can be influenced by their superiors. Thus, dominating superiors was identified as a cause of life imbalance in male site QSs of the contractors. The causes such as incorrect decision making and competitive environment that are unique to males are a result of their authoritative nature of the superiors. Some causes such as unsupportive family and pursuit of perfectionism are unique to female QSs working in sites for contractors. According to the interviewees, these factors are a result of the unique role played by females at home. Gregory et al. (2013) also have stated that the differences between the factors that cause life imbalance in males and females could be due to the specific roles that females play at their homes. The failure to be up to date, lack of proper office systems, lack of competent supporting staff, and too many responsibilities can cause life imbalance in female site QSs of contractors.

5.2 STRATEGIES TO MANAGE THE LIFE IMBALANCE OF CONTRACTOR’S SITE QS

Eighteen and thirty-two strategies were identified from the literature and interviews, respectively for life management of site male QSs of contractors. Similarly, 18 and 30 strategies for life management of site female QSs of contractors were identified from the literature and interviews, respectively. All the strategies are listed in Table 3 with those identified from the interviews indicated in bold.

Table 3. Strategies to overcome life imbalance of contractor’s site QSs

Strategies for Male QSs	L	R	Strategies for Female QSs	L	R
Having regular breaks/adequate sleep	√	20	Having regular breaks/adequate sleep	√	20
Arranging flexible working hours	√	20	Arranging flexible working hours	√	20
Preparing a program at the beginning of the day	√	20	Preparing a program at the beginning of the day	√	20
Home working (E working)	√	20	Home working (E working)	√	20
Job sharing and teamwork	√	20	Giving advance notice about overtime work	√	20
Granting paternity leave	√	20	Arranging women only courses	√	20
Offering rewards and compliments	√	20	Offering rewards and compliments	√	20
Doing workouts for physical well-being	√	20	Granting extended maternity leave	√	20
Getting helpful and understating partners	√	20	Job sharing and teamwork	√	20
Granting child adoption and fostering leave	√	20	Doing work outs for physical well-being	√	20
Granting dependency leave	√	20	Take caring of children with the assistance of the spouse	√	20

Strategies for Male QSs	L	R	Strategies for Female QSs	L	R
Take continuous vacation / break from the work	√	20	Granting child adoption and fostering leave	√	20
Conducting self-evaluation	√	20	Granting dependency leave	√	20
Obtaining the services of family advocates	√	20	Take continuous vacation / break from the work	√	20
Maintaining a daily diary	√	20	Working on shifts	√	20
Engaging in relaxing and amusing activities	√	20	Thinking positively	√	20
Thinking positively	√	20	Engaging in relaxing and amusing activities	√	20
Selecting jobs carefully	X	18	Conducting self-evaluation	√	20
Managing work proactively	X	17	Introducing new technologies	X	19
Working smartly	X	17	Managing work proactively	X	19
Using convenient travelling facilities or finding accommodation close to the site	X	17	Developing competencies through lifelong learning	X	19
Arranging interactive communication platforms	X	17	Working smartly	X	19
Introducing new technologies	X	16	Declining to accept unrealistic deadlines and working with competency	X	19
Developing competencies through lifelong learning	X	15	Being content and maintaining positive attitudes	X	19
Declining to accept unrealistic deadlines and working with competence	X	15	Getting the employer to provide reliable day-care services that can be monitored online	X	16
Allocating work to a suitable team, and monitoring and supporting the team as required	X	15	Arranging company system updates	X	15
Focusing on the work	X	14	Allocating work to a suitable team, and monitoring and supporting the team as required	X	15
Grabbing new opportunities	X	13	Having an aesthetically pleasing and clean working environment	X	14
Arranging company system updates	X	13	Having a proactive leadership	X	14
Encouraging site safety among the workers and employees	X	13	Working with commitment	X	14
Working effectively and efficiently	X	12	Maintaining improved communication	X	14
Offering a salary commensurate with the work	X	12	Adhering to stipulated safety standards	X	14
Offering festival bonus	X	11	Arranging organisational recreational activities	X	13
Investing part of the savings	X	10	Using convenient travelling facilities	X	12
Taking care of children with the assistance of the spouse	√	10	Arranging health schemes	X	12
Having an aesthetically pleasing and clean working environment	X	10	Offering a salary commensurate with the work	X	11
Arranging organisational recreational activities	X	9	Selecting jobs carefully	X	10
Having affordable private goals	X	9	Inquiring from the employer about the salary in advance and marketing oneself	X	10
Conducting project management during pre-contract stage	X	8	Granting festival bonus	X	10
Conducting individual risk assessment	X	8	Focusing on the work	X	9
Having a proactive leadership	X	7	Offering salary increments based on performance	X	9
Having a proper IT & R&D	X	5	Conducting project	X	6

Strategies for Male QSs	L	R	Strategies for Female QSs	L	R
division in the working place			management during pre-contract stage		
Maintaining a high standard of professionalism	X	5	Having rest rooms	X	5
Inquiring from the employer about the salary in advance and marketing oneself	X	4	Having a flexible program (Floating between tasks)	X	4
Offering salary increments based on performance	X	4	Having yearly reviews with the superiors	X	3
Liaising with the employer/management about the resource requirements	X	4	Arranging a health and safety insurance cover	X	3
Informing the management about the lack of competent employees / subordinates	X	2	Using a time management app	X	1
Having peaceful surroundings with huge paintings of light colours	X	1	Maintaining updated master documents	X	1
Having yearly reviews with the superiors	X	1			
Keeping a record of the orders given	X	1			

**L – Found from Literature and N-Number of Interviewees responded*

From the interviews, a set of strategies that can be adopted for life management of male and female site QSs were determined. Managing work proactively, prioritizing the work, planning the work, and adapting smart and effective approaches can be the strategies for handling heavy workloads and rigid time frames. Similarly, developing competencies through lifelong learning, working with commitment, arranging organisational recreational activities, granting festival bonus, arranging company system updates, maintaining a clean and comfortable working environment, conducting project management during pre-contract stage, having yearly reviews with the superiors, and declining to accept unrealistic deadlines and working with competency were identified as the strategies that will help manage life imbalance of both male and female site QSs working for contractors.

As stated by Sunindijo and Kamardeen (2017), conducting individual risk assessment was introduced by the interviewees as a strategy for the life management of male contractor's site QSs because of their exposure to various risks. As an extension of this strategy, obtaining a health and safety insurance cover was identified as a strategy for the life management of female site QSs of contractors because even females are exposed to risks and hazards. Several strategies, such as grabbing new opportunities, having affordable private goals, inquiring from the employer about the salary in advance, and investing part of the savings were identified as strategies unique for the life management of male QSs' working at sites for contractors, males being the breadwinners of families. As stated by Sunindijo and Kamardeen (2017) as well, keeping a record of the orders given and maintaining a high standard of professionalism are strategies that can be adopted for the life management of male QSs holding senior positions and working at sites for contractors. Being content and maintaining positive attitudes, getting the employer to provide reliable day-care services that can be monitored online, and having restrooms are suggested as strategies unique to handling life management of female site QSs working for contractors. Maintaining updated master documents was introduced as an important practice by a female site QS, because it avoids stress arising from mistakes and errors that occur when working with many documents.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The contractor's site QS is a major stakeholder of a construction project, who has to shoulder many responsibilities. Hence, the contractor's site QSs experience life imbalance. According to the study findings, addictions, non-availability of profitable projects, delays in the payment of salaries or non-payment of salaries, incorrect decision making, competitive environment, and having self-centred objectives were identified by the interviewees as distinctive causes of life imbalance in the male site

Qs working for contractors. Unsupportive family and pursuit of perfectionism, which are two distinctive causes of life imbalance in female site Qs working for contractors, should be given due attention by female site Qs. Life imbalance of site Qs of contractors can arise because of their incapability; influence of staff, peers, and superiors; organisational practices; and cultural and social factors. Incapability can be overcome by carefully selecting jobs, developing knowledge and competencies, taking care of one's health, and proactively managing time. Implications of organisational practices can be managed through proactively managing work, arranging company system updates, introducing new technologies, and maintaining an appropriate working environment. Several strategies, such as being content and maintaining positive attitudes, getting the employer to provide reliable day-care services with the facility to monitor online, and having restrooms, that are unique for overcoming life imbalance of female site Qs of contractors were also revealed in the study. The causes of life imbalance in contractor's site Qs and strategies that can be adopted to overcome the imbalance differ according to the gender. Thus, the study findings will help create an efficient and effective working environment for both the male and female site Qs working for contractors.

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