

Impact of Y-Breaks on Work-Life Balance and Sleep Quality in Working Adults: A Research Study

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Abstract: *Background: Work-life balance and sleep quality are critical determinants of employee well-being and productivity. Modern workplaces are characterized by high demands, technological saturation, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, leading to stress, burnout, and poor sleep. Structured wellness interventions, such as Y-Breaks, have been proposed to address these challenges.*

Objective: To investigate the effects of Y-Breaks on work-life balance and sleep quality in working adults.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative thematic analysis using secondary data from peer-reviewed literature, organizational case studies, and occupational health reports. Data were coded and categorized to identify key themes.

Results: Y-Breaks were associated with reduced workplace stress, improved emotional regulation, enhanced focus, and better integration of professional and personal life. Employees reported improved sleep patterns, reduced pre-sleep anxiety, and increased daytime energy levels. Organizational outcomes included higher job satisfaction, engagement, and lower absenteeism.

Conclusion: Y-Breaks represent a practical, low-cost intervention that can enhance both work-life balance and sleep quality. Further longitudinal research is needed to evaluate sustained impacts across diverse industries.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Sleep quality, Y-Breaks, Workplace wellness, Mindfulness, Employee productivity

I. INTRODUCTION

Balancing work demands and personal life is a growing challenge in contemporary workplaces. Globalization, digital connectivity, and competitive pressures have blurred the boundaries between professional and personal domains, resulting in increased stress, burnout, and compromised health outcomes. Sleep quality, an essential component of overall well-being, is often disrupted by occupational stressors, irregular schedules, and excessive screen exposure. Work-life balance is closely tied to physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and long-term career sustainability. Poor balance can lead to chronic fatigue, anxiety, depression, and impaired work performance. Sleep deprivation and poor sleep hygiene exacerbate these effects, creating a cycle of diminished productivity and well-being. Work-life balance is “the division of one’s time and focuses between working and family or leisure activities,” as defined by the Oxford English dictionary. Lockwood also defines work-life balance as “a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person’s job and personal life are equal” (Lockwood, 2003). Inability to maintain the right work-life balance can have a devastating effect on one’s health, personal relationships, and productivity at work per se. Maintaining a work life balance even during regular times is a difficult task. During the pandemic, the new regulations in all sectors have made work-life balance even more elusive. (Raj Lakshmi & Oinam, 2021)

Y-Breaks are short, structured breaks that integrate physical movement, deep breathing, and mindfulness exercises. Unlike unstructured breaks, Y-Breaks are designed to actively promote physical and mental recovery during the

workday, aligning with occupational health principles and recovery theories. Stress can lead to workplace burnout if it persists for an extended period of time. Overworked employees are more likely to suffer from burnout. Fatigue, mood swings, irritability, and a drop in productivity are all symptoms of burnout. According to a Harvard Business Review study, burned-out employees' psychological and physical problems cost the United States \$125 billion to \$190 billion in healthcare costs each year (Eric Garton, 2017). By promoting work-life balance, employers can save money while also retaining a happier life with more productive workforce.(Sri & Ratna, n.d.)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is defined as the ability to allocate adequate time and energy to both work and personal life without one domain consistently undermining the other. Determinants include workload, scheduling flexibility, organizational support, and the ability to detach from work during non-work hours. A healthy balance leads to reduced stress, increased satisfaction, and greater employee retention.

2.2 Sleep Quality

Sleep quality refers to the degree to which sleep is restorative, uninterrupted, and sufficient for optimal functioning. Poor sleep quality is linked to reduced cognitive performance, impaired decision-making, and heightened risk of chronic diseases. Occupational stress, irregular work hours, and digital overuse are major contributors to sleep disturbances among working adults.

2.3 Workplace Stress and Wellness Interventions

Chronic workplace stress impacts both mental and physical health, increasing the likelihood of burnout, absenteeism, and reduced productivity. Wellness interventions—such as mindfulness training, flexible work arrangements, and structured breaks—have been shown to mitigate stress and improve employee well-being. Stress is assumed to impact people's mental and physical health, as well as in the workplace, where there may be less efficiency due to burnout, sick leave, and high turnover. Thus, stress can be costly for both workplaces and society, something that motivates attempts and interventions to reduce stress and increase wellbeing. Naturally, workplaces with demanding tasks and stressful environments can have a negative impact on both mental and physical health.(Hagen & Hagen, 2024)

2.4 Y-Breaks: Structure and Mechanisms

Y-Breaks incorporate mindfulness, deep breathing, and stretching in a 5–15 minute format. They are grounded in the Attention Restoration Theory (ART) and Stress Recovery Theory (SRT), which posit that mental fatigue can be reduced through restorative activities. Physiologically, they activate the parasympathetic nervous system, improve circulation, and counteract the effects of sedentary work.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design: A qualitative thematic analysis was adopted, focusing on secondary data from peer-reviewed articles, workplace case studies, and occupational health reports.

3.2 Population and Sampling: Sources were selected from diverse industries, including corporate offices, healthcare, and education, to ensure a broad perspective.

3.3 Data Collection: Secondary data were obtained from academic databases, organizational wellness reports, and government health guidelines.

3.4 Data Analysis: Data were coded and categorized into themes relating to psychological benefits, physical health impacts, organizational outcomes, and challenges in implementation.

IV. RESULTS / FINDINGS

4.1 Impact on Work-Life Balance

Employees participating in Y-Breaks reported improved ability to manage work and personal responsibilities, reduced stress levels, and greater satisfaction with work-life integration.

4.2 Impact on Sleep Quality

Regular engagement in Y-Breaks was associated with improved sleep duration, fewer nighttime awakenings, and reduced pre-sleep anxiety, contributing to better overall rest.

4.3 Additional Observations

Organizations noted increased employee engagement, reduced absenteeism, and higher job satisfaction. Physical benefits included reduced musculoskeletal discomfort and improved posture.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings support the potential of Y-Breaks as a workplace intervention to improve both work-life balance and sleep quality. Psychologically, Y-Breaks provide a structured opportunity for mental detachment, fostering emotional regulation and resilience. Physically, they counteract the detrimental effects of prolonged sitting, enhancing circulation and reducing discomfort.

Organizationally, Y-Breaks contribute to a culture of well-being, which can improve retention, morale, and productivity. However, challenges such as managerial skepticism, inconsistent participation, and cultural resistance remain significant barriers.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This study relied on secondary data, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships. The majority of available evidence is drawn from office-based environments, reducing generalizability to other sectors. Many outcomes were self-reported, which may introduce bias.

VII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs across multiple industries, incorporate objective physiological measures, and evaluate cost-effectiveness. Research should also explore digital delivery of Y-Breaks for remote and hybrid workforces.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Y-Breaks are a low-cost, scalable intervention with the potential to enhance work-life balance and sleep quality among working adults. While current evidence is promising, further empirical research is required to validate long-term effects and optimize implementation strategies.

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