



Work–Life Balance and Decent Work in the Entertainment Industry: A Study in the Context of SDG 8

Ms. Madukshara T¹, Dr. R Raajalakshmi²

¹ Student, Department of Management Studies, School of Management Studies, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Pallavaram, Chennai. madukshara.thai@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of Management Studies, School of Management Studies, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Pallavaram, Chennai. raajisai28@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT :

This study investigates the challenges of work–life balance (WLB) within the entertainment industry, specifically focusing on its alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Utilizing a mixed-methods approach with a focus on professionals at Thai Creations and the broader regional sector, the research evaluates how irregular hours, production pressure, and project-based employment impact mental well-being and productivity. Findings reveal a workforce that is highly satisfied with creative roles but significantly strained by unpredictable scheduling. The paper concludes with an operational strategy for production houses to integrate "human-centred" workflows.

Keywords: Work–Life Balance, Decent Work, Entertainment Industry, Sustainable Development Goal

1. Introduction

The entertainment industry comprises a wide and dynamic range of professionals and organizations, including actors, directors, technicians, production houses, creative artists, freelancers, and digital content creators. These entities operate across multiple segments such as film, television, music, theatre, advertising, and digital media platforms. The nature of employment in this industry is predominantly project-oriented, often involving irregular and extended working hours, tight deadlines, and high-performance expectations. Entertainment professionals contribute significantly to cultural development, employment generation, and economic growth, particularly within the expanding digital and creative economy.

Despite its substantial contribution, the entertainment industry presents several challenges that adversely affect work–life balance. Unpredictable work schedules, job insecurity, intense competition, public scrutiny, and the absence of formal employment structures place considerable physical and psychological pressure on professionals. Furthermore, inadequate labor regulations, limited access to mental health resources, and a culture that often normalizes overwork contribute to stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. These factors ultimately hinder personal well-being, creative productivity, and long-term career sustainability within the industry.

1.1 The Problem Statement

Despite contributing significantly to cultural and economic growth, the industry normalizes overwork. Unpredictable schedules and the absence of formal labor protections create a "burnout culture" that threatens long-term career sustainability.

1.2 Alignment with SDG 8

The entertainment industry plays a significant role in fostering cultural value, employment generation, and economic growth within the creative economy. Aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), initiatives aimed at improving work–life balance contribute directly to workforce development, sustainable productivity, and inclusive economic progress in this sector. By promoting healthier work environments, structured working hours, and skill development opportunities, such initiatives enhance job satisfaction, employability, and long-term career sustainability for entertainment professionals.

Encouraging balanced work practices and mental well-being fosters creativity, innovation, and efficiency—key drivers of economic growth in a highly

competitive and project-driven industry. Improved work–life balance helps reduce burnout, stress, and high attrition rates, leading to better performance, cost efficiency, and consistent creative output. Furthermore, training programs focused on time management, mental health awareness, and professional development empower individuals to adapt to evolving industry demands while maintaining personal well-being.

As the entertainment industry serves as a major employment generator, particularly through film production, digital media, live events, and OTT platforms, strengthening decent work practices enhances economic resilience at both local and national levels. This is especially important in regions where the creative sector contributes significantly to tourism, media, and cultural industries. Thus, initiatives supporting work–life balance not only improve individual well-being and workplace fairness but also advance SDG 8's objective of promoting productive employment, sustainable economic growth, and dignified working conditions within the entertainment industry.

2. Literature Review: The Border Theory

- **Greenhaus & Beutell (1985):** Established that role conflict between work and family reduces life satisfaction.
- **Clark (2000):** Proposed the *Work-Family Border Theory*, noting that imbalance occurs when work "seeps" through the boundaries of personal life—a common occurrence in 24/7 production cycles.
- **Deery & Jago (2015):** Highlighted that the entertainment industry's reliance on "gig" contracts creates a unique form of stress-driven productivity.

3. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a **Descriptive and Analytical Research Design** to capture the current state of the industry.

- **Sample Size:** 44 respondents across three key departments (Acting, Production Management, Technical).
- **Tools:** Pre- and post-training structured questionnaires (5-point Likert scale) and semi-structured interviews.
- **Analysis:** Percentage analysis and Mean/Standard Deviation were used to interpret demographic and sentiment data.

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution

Department	Count	Percentage
Acting & Performance	14	31.8%
Production Management	14	31.8%
Technical & Post-Production	16	36.4%
Total	44	100%

4. Data Analysis & Key Findings

The data reveals a young, enthusiastic, but precarious workforce.

4.1 Demographic Insights

- **Age:** 45.5% of the workforce is below age 25, suggesting the industry relies heavily on "entry-level" energy.
- **Experience:** 40.9% have less than 2 years of experience, indicating high turnover or a rapidly expanding junior sector.

4.2 Work Intensity & Predictability

- **Working Hours:** 31.8% of respondents work more than 9–12 hours daily.
- **Stress Levels:** 54.5% report experiencing work-related stress "Sometimes," while 4.5% report it "Always."
- **The Predictability Paradox:** While 40.9% called schedules "Very Predictable," 45.5% remained "Neutral" on whether deadlines affected their personal lives, suggesting a "normalization" of high-pressure environments.

5. Case Study: Thai Creations Production House

Thai Creations (known for *Police Police*) serves as a model for "Reliability-First" production. Their strategy involves:

1. **Standardized Workflows:** Reducing last-minute "chaos" through digital scheduling.
2. **Multi-Skilling:** Training crew in multiple roles (e.g., editing and cinematography) to allow for shift rotations.
3. **Bootstrapping Financials:** Using lean production to avoid the "debt-trap" that leads to rushed, 18-hour shoot days.

6. Strategic Business Plan for WLB

To achieve a sustainable presence, production houses must shift from **Reactive** to **Proactive** management.

6.1 Operational Strategy

- **Lean Production:** Leasing equipment and using cloud-based collaboration tools (e.g., Frame.io, Slack) to reduce the need for physical "overtime" on-site.
- **Financial Integration:** Allocating a specific percentage of startup costs (estimated ₹50,000 for small units) toward wellness and training.

6.2 SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths:** High creative passion and technological adoption.
- **Weaknesses:** Irregular freelance contracts and "night-shoot" culture.
- **Opportunities:** Remote post-production and AI-assisted scheduling.
- **Threats:** Rising costs and "content-on-demand" pressure from OTT platforms.

7. Recommendations

1. **Regulated "Turnaround" Times:** Enforce a mandatory 10-hour rest period between shifts.
2. **Mental Health Infrastructure:** Small production houses should provide "Relaxation Spaces" on sets and access to counseling.
3. **Digital Workflow Adoption:** Moving pre-production and script-doctoring to virtual environments to preserve "home time."
4. **SDG 8 Policy Alignment:** Industry unions should push for "Decent Work" certifications for production houses that meet WLB standards.

8. Conclusion

The entertainment industry is at a crossroads. While satisfaction levels are high (100% of respondents reported being "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"), this is often driven by a love for the craft rather than healthy working conditions. To sustain the "Creative Economy," the industry must adopt the "Thai Creations Model": prioritizing the **human** behind the **camera**.

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