

Factors Affecting Work Life Balance - A Review

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Abstract

Organizations are under tremendous pressure to improve their performance and success in the competitive business world. Psychological empowerment increases employees' sense of personal control and motivates them to engage in work, which in turn results in positive managerial and organizational outcomes (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Work-life balance has always been a concern for quality of working life and its relation to quality of life. Individuals experiencing interference between work and personal lives are also significantly more likely to suffer from reduced psychological well-being and physical health. (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 1998).

The literature review on Work-life Balance has been framed up in view of its gained popularity with the major aim to have prosperity of society and the realization of fulfilling lives for its employees by supporting the growth of every employee and the further development of the companies. The literature identifies various factors affecting quality life conditions i.e. Job Satisfaction, Work Stress, Career Growth, Turnover, Absenteeism, Appreciation and competitive environment in context with Work-life Balance and its practices/policies. In this paper, an endeavor has been made to provide an overview on various factors of Work-Life Balance through the review of existing literature. The sources referred include various journals, books, doctoral thesis, working papers, reports, magazines, internet sites, newspapers etc and has been reflected as references at the end.

Keywords - Work-life Balance, Family-life, Work-life, Job Satisfaction, Work Stress, Career Growth, Work-life Balance and its practices/policies and Factors.

Introduction

A well developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life - (William Arthur Ward).

Work life balance is defined as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains to a level consistent with the salience of each role for the individual.... [that] introduces the possibility of a hierarchy of roles; however... it does not demand that a hierarchy is neither necessary nor desirable for balance" (Reiter, 2007, p.277).

Work/life is commonly referred to as work and family. To balance between the family responsibilities and work responsibilities has become a challenge for the people in many professions. Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea and Walters (2002) defined the work life balance (WLB) strategies as those strategies which enhance the independence of employees in coordinating with the work and non-work aspects of their lives. Work-life conflict is a form of inter-role conflict where the role demands of work interfere with the role demands of home or leisure activities (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The strain due to the disagreement between home and work domains has increased amongst

employees in most sectors of the economy (Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007). Employees expect from their employers to address their need of work life conflict (Kossek, Dass and DeMarr, 1994). There is a dire need that organisations adopt such human resource policies and strategies that could accommodate the work and life needs simultaneously to lessen the work and family role strain (Cieri, Holmes, Abbot and Petti, 2005). Russell and Bowman (2000) asserted that the issue of work/life balance is gaining an increasing attention by the employees related to all organisations and managing the conflict between work demands and family responsibilities have become a serious challenge for organisations. Managing rising demands from the work and family domains represented a source of high strain for many employees which even lead to the health problems among employees. Although it is believed that work family role strain is more common among women employees, but men also experience stress resulting from differing roles and demands (Burley, 1994).

The role of work has changed throughout the world due to economic conditions and social needs. Fact is, work was a matter of necessity and survival. Throughout the years, the role of "work" has evolved and the composition of the

workforce has changed. Work still is a necessity but it should be a source of personal satisfaction as well. Therefore, tension and work target related pressure; work load at family makes an individual difficult to find balance between work and personal life. Professional working in industry, managers, doctors, directors, bankers, and software professionals are the few examples that are facing the brunt of hazard constantly.

A convergence of powerful trends in the early 21st century is pressuring employers to re-think their people practices. Indeed, the timing seems right to make the quality of work life a strategic focus for business, as well as a public policy priority. These challenges (workforce aging, increasingly competitive labor market, information technology and rising benefit costs) create new possibilities for employers to achieve organizational performance goals while simultaneously meeting workers' personal goals. At the same time, so many employees are experiencing a reduced quality of work-life. This is reflected most prominently in work-life imbalance and job stress. With more women employed than ever before and dual-earner families' common, work-life balance is an ongoing quest.

A lot of people are having a more difficult time finding balance in their lives because there have been cutbacks or layoffs where they work. They're afraid it may happen to them, so they are putting in more hours, (Psychologist - Robert Brooks define) Work-life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life.(Hudson, 2005).

"The amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy." Definition of work-life balance noun from The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press.

"The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life. The way to achieve this is to adopt an approach that is "conceptualized as a two way process involving a consideration of the needs of employees as well as those of employers" (Lewis, 2000: p.105)

The working conditions of work are changing: changes in technology, globalization pressures, women involvement in working, fewer young people and an expansion of the older generation.

- Almost 19 per cent of employees work in workplaces operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. One in eight employees work both Saturday and Sunday.
- Almost 11 per cent of employees work 60 or more hours a week typically in professional and managerial jobs.

- More than one in eight men with dependent children works 60 hours or more a week.
- 56 per cent of women preferred greater flexibility in their working arrangements to longer maternity leave on their return to work following maternity leave.(Source: Orange 2006)

Today, Industries have realized the importance of the work life balance in originations for their employees and they are trying to setting up policies for balancing a work life balance. Companies are trying for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, so it makes office environment better for working and also positively impact productivity of employees.

Review of Littrature

Work-life balance refers to people having enough time to have balance in their job and home life. Karakas and Lee, (2004) explained work life balance issues as spending good time with family members, getting free time to be able to relax for emotional wellbeing and health of family members, having good communication and support from the fellow colleagues, obtaining high quality child care and education; and being satisfied with the work load. According to the study of Kinman (2001), the strongest factor of psychological distress and job dissatisfaction was related to work life conflict. He found out that over half of the academics surveyed complained that they have to regularly work at home during the evenings which cause stress. Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996) asserted that majority of the employees reported that they remained preoccupied with work issues even after leaving the workplace and feel difficulties in sleep at home.

The demand from organisations to attend to the family responsibilities of employees has been increasing due to the rise in the number of single parent's households and dual earners (Goodstein, 1994). Elliott (2003) explained that major problem faced by the working parents of children, aged six or younger, is to afford high quality child care which is costly and consumed a large portion of income and reduces the likelihood that the mother will be employed. The double burden of child care and elder care puts more emotional burden on women than on men. In reality, it is still women who keep hold of the major responsibilities for childcare and are much more likely to work part-time, sparing time for family responsibilities (Daly and Lewis, 2000). Gerson (1993) explained that fathers also experienced tension in child caring as their working wives are not present at home to look after their kids. Thus, in early decades of twentieth century some large companies felt the need that employers should allow free time and energy to workers to look after their children. Child care facility thus positively affected employee's decisions to remain

employed at the company (Kossek and Lambert, 2004). Ross and Mirowsky (1988) demonstrated that employed mothers who felt difficulty making child-care arrangements suffered from high depression. Research by Jaffrey and Karen (1991) indicated that relative to childcare, elder care involves more unexpected care giving situations, and it is more difficult to manage and causes greater levels of stress for the care provider. Greenberger et al., (1989) showed that married women often spend a lot of time and energy in taking care of their in laws, especially the parents of their husbands, in short the principle care givers for the elders are women, who provide care in their roles as wives, daughters and daughter in laws. In addition, because many women who care for the elders also care for the children as primary caregivers they become more accustomed to care giving as compared to men (Blair and Litcher 1991). Like child care, eldercare can adversely impact employees personally, and professionally as well as emotionally, and financially. The impact of elder care on professional lives of employees includes increased absenteeism, sluggishness, a reduction in work hours, unavailability for overtime work, a shift from full-time to part-time work, and in some cases early retirement. (Ross and Mirowsky, 1988). Not only the elder care responsibilities have affected the employed workers but also prevented some people to enter the work force (Frone, Russell and Cooper, 1992). The cost of elder care manifests not only in economic and financial terms but also in terms of caregiver's overall health. Caregivers report feelings of depression, isolation, loneliness and stress due to their care giving obligations (Kossek and Lambart, 2004).

According to Sullivan and Lewis (2006) schedule inflexibility increased depression in both men and women and increased physical distress such as insomnia, appetite problem, tension related aches and pain. Christensen and Staines (1990), found that flexitime programs decreased late comings, absenteeism, and turnover. In their research, Thomas and Ganster (1995) have found a positive association between flexitime policies and job satisfaction. They concluded that flexible time policies enhanced employee productivity by decreasing absenteeism and turnover, and positively served families by decreasing depression in employees as families get more time to spend together which reduces work/ family conflict.

Gilbert (2002) stated that longer working hours though reduces general family satisfaction, but workers who are more committed to their work reported significantly higher family satisfaction as compared to the workers who are less committed to their work. So it is not only the work timings that affect family but the behaviour of workers towards their jobs that affect their family life.

Greenhouse and Powell (2003) have suggested that certain working conditions, such as time flexibility can mitigate the negative effects of work demands on family life.

New requirements at jobs have brought an increased workload. Professional lives characterised by more and more challenges, frequently changing assignment, work and time schedules, job insecurity and frequent relocations are some of the factors which cause work life strain. Most of the faculty new to the campus report that they feel isolated, and they are often besieged due to unclear expectations and heavy workloads (Luce and Murray, 1998).

Frone (2000) found that work-home conflict equally affected the health of men and women whereas Emslie, Hunt and Macintyre, (2004) did not find any significant gender differences in perceptions of work-home conflict. According to the study by Thompson et al. (1998), it is a general perception that organisations with lower level of work life conflict possess supportive organisational culture. Kossek, Dass and DeMarr (1994) explained that one of the reasons of the work life strain is a lack of integration between the employee's life and organisation's goals. He further asserted that negative culture, poor working environment and bad attitudes of supervisors create barriers to the implementation of work life balance.

Roehling and Moen (2001) predicted that earnings (salary), schedule flexibility, family friendly work policies, and supportiveness of colleagues are related to work and life strain. Non supportiveness of colleagues affects the employee loyalty negatively. They further found that a partner with unstable or low income increases the financial burden on other partner.

Smith and Smith (2008) found that future accountants give high importance to work-life balance in making career decisions and they feel that a healthy work-life balance positively affects their job performance. They further explained that Maslow's hierarchy theory and McClelland's motivational needs theory provide theoretical support for understanding people's motivation to achieve a healthy work-life balance. According to Kinman and Jones (2008), reward imbalance is one of the reasons of work stress among the employees. In their study, schedule flexibility and the autonomy of the employee in his work were found to be a key predictor of work- life balance. Parasuraman and Simmers (2001) also found that self-control or having autonomy in the work can help individuals to schedule work in a way that reduces the likelihood of work-family conflict. A study by Warren and Jhonson (1995) showed that managing dependence on colleagues at the job increases social demands and stress. Personal problems with colleagues affect the employees psychologically and make it difficult for them to manage household work effectively.

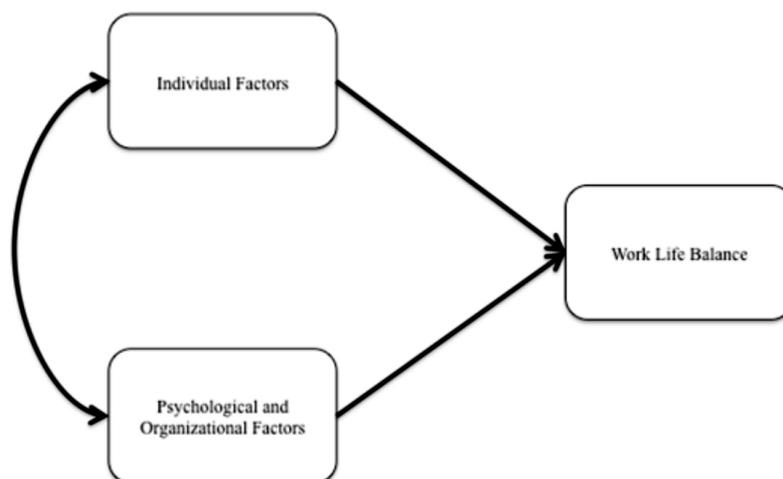


Figure .Conceptual Model of the Factors Affecting Work Life Balance.

There are various factors which affect work-life balance and had been studied by various authors. These factors could be related to an individual, family-related, work-related and family and work-related. A number of researchers like Adams et al. (1996), Duxbury and Higgins (2001), Martins et al. (2002), Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003), Schieman et al. (2003), Ezzedeen and Swiercz (2002), and Haar and Bardeel (2008) found that work life balance /work family conflict affects job satisfaction, family satisfaction, life satisfaction, career satisfaction and job stress. Higgins (2001) examined the effects of three types of work family conflict – role overload (having too much to do), work to family interference and family to work interference on the organizational performance and quality of life of employees, parental status) and sources of support (co-workers, community, financial resources) on the negative relationship between work- family conflict and career satisfaction. Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003) examined the relation between employees’ beliefs about having a balance between work and personal life, and the feeling of job stress, job satisfaction, and reasons why one might quit his/her job. In this paper, an endeavor has been made to provide an overview on various factors of Work-Life Balance through the review of existing literature, which led to emergence of eleven factors. These factors are :

The first factor which was identified through Analysis was Social Support. Social Support is an important factor which contributes to work-life balance. When people have social support from work and family, they can balance their lives with proper peace and harmony. With the usage of technology, it becomes easier to balance work and family domains.

The second factor which was identified through Analysis was related to Organizational Issues. Organization plays an

important role in initiating work-life balance policies for its employees. If organization emphasizes on proper work-life balance policies, it can lead to better performance and employee satisfaction.

The third factor which emerged through Analysis was Stress Issues. Stress is the major cause of unhappiness among employees, whether it is real or imagined. Stress being one of the major factors which affects work-life balance of employees leading to fatigue, mental illness, depression, heart diseases, and ultimately loss in productivity.

The fourth factor which emerged out of Analysis was Information Technology. IT is one of the major factors of work-life balance as it helps in providing 24*7 accessibility and connectivity.

The fifth factor emerged through Analysis was Work Issues. Work being an important factor affects work-life balance of employees, as if there would be work overload, it would increase stress level and it will create an imbalance in the lives of the employees.

The sixth factor which was identified through Analysis was Family Issues. Family holds an important place in a person’s life. If an individual is happy and gets social support from his family, then it enhances work-life balance. If an individual is unhappy from family, it may create work related stress and conflicts.

The seventh factor identified through Analysis was Social Issues. An individual can’t live in isolation. There are certain social duties which he needs to fulfil in order to keep his life at peace and harmony.

The eighth factor which emerged through Analysis was Supportive Factor from organization. An employee to be committed and involved in the organization must require

support from his organization which can enhance his performance and balance his work-life too.

The ninth factor emerged through Analysis was Work overload factor. Work overload is playing a crucial factor in increasing the stress level and creating imbalance at work as well as in family.

The tenth factor which was identified through Analysis was Individual Issues. An individual is responsible for creating a proper balance between work and family if he is able to manage both the responsibilities and manage himself also.

The eleventh factor which was identified through Analysis was Lack of Knowledge. Lack of knowledge is a factor which creates problem as individual is unaware about the issues that are emerging related to work-life balance in this changing scenario and how can IT help in creating a balance.

Conclusion

Rapoport and Bailyn (1996) addressed in a report to the Ford Foundation that ? The separation of work life from family life has existed since the Industrial Revolution and remains largely intact today even though it has never reflected the way most people live. The business world has responded to work-family issues with an array of programs and policies that address specific family needs but do not change this basic assumption that employees' work and private lives are separate and conflicting?. However, Work-family research has long been guided by the role stress theory, wherein the negative side of the work-family interaction has been put under the spotlight. Recently, the emphasis has shifted towards the investigation of the positive interaction between work and family roles as well as roles outside work and family lives, and scholars have started to deliberate on the essence of work-life balance (Jones et al., 2006).

Today, Industries have realized the importance of the work life balance in originations for their employees and they are trying to setting up policies for balancing a work life balance. Companies are trying for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, so it makes office environment better for working and also positively impact productivity of employees. A convergence of powerful trends in the early 21st century is pressuring employers to re-think their people practices. Indeed, the timing seems right to make the quality of work life a strategic focus for business, as well as a public policy priority. These challenges (workforce aging, increasingly competitive labor market, information technology and rising benefit costs) create new possibilities for employers to achieve organizational performance goals while simultaneously meeting workers' personal goals. At the same time, so many employees are experiencing a reduced quality of work-life. This is reflected most prominently in work-life imbalance and job stress. With more women employed than ever before

and dual-earner families' common, work-life balance is an ongoing quest. Furthermore, there are many signs that job performance expectations have been ratcheted up since the 1990s. Thus, with both employers and employees under pressure to find ways to improve the quality of work life — and through this, enabling employees to contribute their best efforts — surely there is common ground for action.

Every person's individual factors are affecting perceptions of work-life balance include orientation to work and in particular the extent to which work (or home) is a central life interest and aspects of personality including need for achievement and propensity for work involvement. Energy levels are often ignored but in the context of high demand need to be taken explicitly into count. They may be linked up to issues of self control, including center of control and stamina for coping with pressures of competing demands.

By looking at the factors affecting work life balance, result indicates that spousal supportiveness at home and colleague supportiveness at work contribute positively to work life balance, whereas child care problems, elder dependency at home and unfair criticism at work place contributed negatively towards work life balance. Thus, finding of this research shows eleven factors which have been identified related to work-life balance. Out of eleven factors, social support, Organizational factors, Stress factors, and IT factors are the major factors which affect the work-life balance of an individual.

The outcomes of work-life balance are numerous. Again that outcomes may be related to personal satisfaction of a person and well-being at work place, at house and in life as a whole, to somewhat more objective indicators of behavior and performance at work and at home and to impact on others including work colleagues and family and friends. Any one of these could be developed in some detail and at present serve to illustrate the richness of the potential research agenda.

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