



"A STUDY ON THE ANTECEDENTS AND FACTORS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS"

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ABSTRACT

Work /life balance as harmonious and holistic integration of work and non-work, so that men and women can achieve their potential across the domains in which they play out their life roles. Work-life balance is a major aspect of the quality of work and life of individuals and couples trying to manage multiple roles. work-life balance is important for an individual's psychological well-being, and that high self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall sense of harmony in life can be regarded as indicators of a successful balance between work and family roles (Clark, 2000; Clarke et al., 2004; Marks and MacDermid, 1996). However, there is a lack of consensus on how work-life balance should be defined, measured, and researched, and thus, the theorizing of what constitutes work-life balance, how it develops, and what factors enable or hinder it, is still in progress (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). The paper aims at identifying the factors that influence WLB.

KEYWORDS : Work – Life balance, Work – Life conflict, antecedents, Stressors

Introduction

A common definition of work–life balance, for example, describes it as a relationship between work/family conflict and work/family facilitation. This definition suggests that balance comprises two individual pathways of conflict (negative pathway) and facilitation (positive pathway), which interact in specific ways to produce balance. Greenhaus et al. (2003) described a measure of work–family balance based on three specific components: time balance (equal time between work and family roles), involvement balance (equal psychological involvement in work and family roles) and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family roles). Work–life balance is defined as “the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in and equally satisfied with work and family roles”. The balancing act of an individual in the three dimensional aspects of life namely organisational, societal and employee's personal life is termed as work life balance (WLB).

The consequences of poor WLB are diminished job satisfaction, poorer productivity and performance, lower organisational commitment, inferior career ambitions & success, increased absenteeism & intention to leave, as well as employee burnout, job stress, poorer physiological and psychological health, and diminished performance in personal life & family. A “good” work-life balance is defined as a situation in which workers feel that they are capable of balancing their work and non-work commitments, and, for the most part, do so. Work-life balance and imbalance are not seen as inherently beneficial or detrimental, respectively, for psychological well-being and quality of life. Instead, Greenhaus et al. (2003) state that it should be empirically tested whether equal time, involvement, and satisfaction balance is better for an individual than imbalance in favour of either the work or family role.

MODELSONWLB

Zedeck and Mosier [117] and later O'Driscoll [72] identified typically five main models used to explain the relationship between work and life of an individual. The first model is known as segmentation model, which hypothesizes that work and non-work are two distinct domains of life that are lived quite independently and have no influence on each other. This appears to be presented as a theoretical prospect rather than a model with practical support. In contrast to the first model, a spill over model put forward suggested that one domain can influence the other domain in either a positive or negative way. While, sufficient research to support this model has been reported, need exists for more comprehensive propositions about the nature, causes and consequences of spill over. The third model, termed as compensation model proposes work and family as to be two spheres of life and what may be lacking in one sphere, in terms of demands or satisfactions may be derived from the other sphere of life. For example, albeit work being regular and unchallenging, this could be compensated for by a key role in local area activities outside work. A fourth model referred to as an

instrumental model, proposes that activities of one sphere may facilitate success in the other sphere, classically exemplified by, an instrumental worker may explore ways to maximize earnings by undertaking hectic overtime work lasting several days against a routine job to purchase a home or a car for their Family. Another model referred to as Conflict model suggests that individuals encountering high levels of demand in all spheres of life and compelled to make difficult choices may end up in experiencing psychological conflicts with significant overload.

Need for Work Life Balance

Organization are not able to provide secure employment and that is why the attitudes and values of people in work are also changing and they are less willing to display unconditional commitment to the organization and as noted by Guest, 2002, the decline of work as central life interest along with conflicting demands of work results in an imbalance between work and rest of life. Another change is the entry of women in workforce in a big way, while still continuing with their earlier role of a homemaker. So, women are playing a dual role, that of a breadwinner as also a homemaker. It is generally women who take the primary responsibility for childcare and who, in situations of conflict, adjust their working lives to accommodate family pressures (Falkenberg and Monachello, 1990; Ramu, 1989).

From an employer's viewpoint, encouraging work-life balance may attract new hires, help re-duce turnover and absenteeism, and increase the chances of employees voluntarily engaging in “pro-social” behaviours that rise above and beyond their job requirements.

Although traditional thinking about work-life balance has tended to emphasize its relevance for women with children, there is increasing consideration of its importance for men, and for singles or couples without children. A survey by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2002 showed 70% of employees report an unhealthy balance between their work and personal lives. Still, 70% of employees ranked family as the most important priority in their lives (up from previous years; Halpern & Murphy, 2005). Taken together, the survey results suggest that employees view family as an increasingly valuable, but less attainable aspect of their busy lives. Employees report blatant failure when attempting to balance work and non-work demands.

Common causes of work place stress of women

- Unreasonable demands for performance
- Lack of interpersonal communication between the employer and the employees
- Lack of interpersonal relationships among the employees
- The fear of losing one's job
- Long working hours

- Less time to spend with the family
- Harder to balance work and home demands Treated inferiorly to your male colleagues

Review of Literature

Kirchmeyer [52] also defined a balanced life as achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains. He stated that to achieve satisfying experiences in all life domains requires personal resources like energy, time and commitment to be well distributed across domains. Subsequently, Clark [14] modified the definition as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict. Hill, et al. [36] defined, work-life balance as the extent to which a person can concurrently balance the emotional, behavioural and time demands of both paid work, personal and family responsibilities.

O'Driscoll, Brough and Biggs (2007) and Brough et al. (2007) discussed the occurrence of both work and family demands as the key negative antecedents of work – life balance. More specifically, the perception of sufficient time to meet acute work and family demands is the pertinent issue (Brough, O'Driscoll and Biggs).

Allen et al. (2000) described the existence of three groups of consequences of work–life balance: (1) work-related outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction, turnover intentions, absenteeism and performance), (2) non-work-related outcomes (e.g. marital, family and life satisfaction, and family performance) and (3) stress-related outcomes (e.g. psychological strain, burnout and substance abuse).

The strong association between work–life balance and turnover behaviours is explained by the decision of employees experiencing chronic imbalance to seek alternative employment with a more 'family friendly' employer (Brough et al. 2008; O'Driscoll et al. 2011).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) based on the work of Kahn et al. (1964), defined work family conflict as: "A form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role." Conflict between work and family has been found to be bi-directional (Frone et al., 1992a; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Lockwood (2003) defined the term from the viewpoint of employer, and of the employee. From Employees' viewpoint: "It is the dilemma of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities" and from Employer's viewpoint: "It is the challenge of creating a supportive company culture where employees can focus on their jobs while at work".

Heather S. McMillan et al, (2011) suggested that the individual harmony and its effects has developed a new Harmony based on conflict and enrichment. N. Krishna Reddy et al, (2010) concluded that the married women employees indeed experience Work Family Conflict (WFC) while attempting to balance their work and family lives. Thus, Organization needs to formulate guidelines for the management of WFCs since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees. Niharika and Supriya (2010) have studied the work based factors and family related factors that are considered to contribute to work life balance. Work based factors are flexi time, option to work part time and freedom to work from home and the family related factors are child care facility and flexibility to take care of emergencies at home.

According to Powell and Greenhaus (2006), women may have difficulties managing their own work/life balance, especially in work settings where they do not receive much formal support from their employer. If they want to strike any balance between work and their lives outside work, they must set this as a goal and find their own ways of achieving it. Women must have a desire to take control of their own work/life balance and take initiative, representing their own individual effort aimed at securing this work/life balance.

Work-life balance practices

- 1) **Compressed work week:** A compressed work week is an arrangement where an employee works the standard number of hours in a one or two week period, but compresses those hours into lesser work days thereby working longer hours at work
- 2) **Flex-time:** Flexible working arrangements take a number of structures. These include the flexibility in working time arrangement, the number of hours worked and with regard to place of work
- 3) **Family Leave:** Family leave policies allow employees to be away from the workplace for varying period of time in order to deal with family responsibilities (Bond and Wise, 2003).
- 4) **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP):** Employee assistance programs are intended to recognize the interaction between peoples domestic and working lives and to offer confidential counselling to staff to address personal or other problems, including work-related stress that may be affecting their performance (Clemmet, 1998).
- 5) **Job sharing:** Is a very widespread form of work that has many constructive aspects and is also viewed as a family-friendly practice. It is an employee driven trend and is variously used in response to the perceived need for more family friendly policies or as a means of tackling the unemployment crisis in some economies
- 6) **Job splitting:** It is similar to job sharing except that responsibilities and tasks are generally equally divided; both staff members are responsible for their own different tasks. This can be a useful approach in that it may make use of the particular skills of each employee, with a resultant net gain for employers.
- 7) **Compressed hours:** Compressed working weeks, involve the reorganisation of work time into extended, but fewer, —chunks— during a working week. This could mean working hours being compressed into 3, 4 or 4.5 days a week, or 8, 9 days out of a fortnight.

Benefits of WLB to the Employer

- 1) Improved productivity
- 2) Attract new talent
- 3) Retain valued employees
- 4) Improves employee loyalty
- 5) Increases employee job satisfaction
- 6) Increases commitment to the organization
- 7) Reduces absenteeism
- 8) Recruit and retain the best talent
- 9) Reduces turnover intention
- 10) Promotes ethical behaviour among employees and also organizational citizenship behaviour improves:
- 11) Better organizational performance
- 12) Improved recruiting

Conclusion

Work-life balance of an employee is as important for the employing organizations as it is for individual employee. Work-life balance of an individual employee when viewed collectively for the total workforce of an organization results into a colossal impact on the qualitative and quantitative organizational performance. Those who had satisfactory work-life balance with the assistance of the policies implemented by the employing organization, tend to be more effective at work. Some of the strategies and skills at work such as planning, organizing and setting limits can be used at home and work place for accomplishing a satisfying and fulfilling well balanced life both professionally and personally. Women employee should care the family both physically and financially to satisfy the family needs.

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