

Impact of Work Life Balance on the Performance of the Employee: A Comparative Study on the Male and Female Employees

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ABSTRACT

Work life balance in recent years has emerged as a new challenge in human resource management. It aims at bringing cordiality, harmony and balance in the personal and professional life of workers. Employees have diversified roles to play in the family, society and organizations they work in; they feel a lot of pressure to bring coordination among these roles. Work-life balance enables workers to pay attention to all the important aspects of their life be it personal, societal or professional. Management has realized the need of devising and implementing work life balance policies to increase productivity in qualitative and quantitative terms as well. Many organizations have started introducing innovative policies on work life balance by offering opportunities like flexible work schedules, shared job responsibilities and family events and activities sponsored by the organizations. The objective of this study is to find out the impact of work life balance on the working pattern, performance and productivity of employee and evaluate it on accordingly.

Key Words: *Work life balance, performance, stress, WFC, FWC, organisation culture, productivity, time management, professional life, personal life*

Introduction

With the surge of industrial development in the world economy, a huge surge of variety of jobs in all cadres has been introduced, it has resulted into significant rise in the rate of unemployment and living standard. Earning today is not merely a necessity and a matter of livelihood but also a means to upgrade the living standard; the masses are determined to unleash all their energies and extract their full potential which has indeed bestowed upon them handsome salary, perks, and thereby satiating all their esteem needs. However, as every coin has two sides, the flip side has manifested into stress, relationship failure, frustration, workaholism; making the management, workers, governments and scholars to bring a solution and eventually an altogether new concept has come in the form of Work Life Balance. It aims at bridging the huge gap between personal, professional and social life of an individual and thereby bringing harmony in relations, better work culture and organizational effectiveness.

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Literature Review

The existing literature encompasses different aspects of Work Life Balance such as the evolution, need, significance, strategies for the implementation of WLB programme, cost-benefit analysis etc. In the recent years, the term “work-life balance” has replaced what used to be known as “work-family balance” (Hudson Resourcing, 2005). Various life activities that need to be balanced with employment may include study, travel, sport, voluntary work, personal development, leisure. “Work-life balance is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between career and ambition on one hand, compared with pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development on the other.” Subash Nath, Soumendra Patra (2010). Work–life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work–family conflict (WFC) (Coser ,1974). Long working hours affect family relations adversely and cause loneliness, anger and frustration. People who are unable to spend time with their children and other family members are often left with a sense of irreparable loss and guilt (Gambles, Lewis & Rapoport, 2000; Jones, Burke & Westman, 2006; Pocock et al., 2001). Moreover, longer working hours mean a declining interest and participation in local communities and civic activities, which threatens community sustainability, civic spirit and the care of community members (Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles, 2003). “Dissatisfaction with working life is a problem , which affects almost all workers at one time or another , regardless of position or status . The frustration , boredom and anger common to employees , disenchanted with their work life , can be costly to both individual and organization.” Dr. Rajesh , Garima , Sanjeev Arora (2008). Stress is usually conceptualized as work-role conflict, work-role overload, and work-role ambiguity (Rizzo JR et al, 1970), (Cooke Ra et al 1984). Each one affects WFC (Bachrach S B 1991). With respect to work-role conflict, the more conflict among work roles, the greater the chances that stress will increase and cause negative behaviors that interfere with fulfilling family roles. (Greenhaus J h 1987) Role overload is the result of having too many things to do in a given time period (Bachrach S B 1991). Having too many tasks to accomplish at work, the employee may need to use time allocated to the family role which causes WFC (Greenhaus J h 1985). Further, the existing literature focuses on WLB with regard to the women employees also. Schular(1978) found that the financial need is the main reason for women taking up employment. Phillips and Imhoff (1977) state that many women take up job on compulsion, but it is the career which is extremely gratifying. Super (1980) identified six common life roles. He states that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously

is a reality for the individuals. Kopp R G (1993) says multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the mental health and overall well-being of professional women. In certain cases, women with multiple roles were found to have better physical and psychological health than women with less roles. They cherished motivational stimulation, self-esteem, sense of empowerment and control, physical stamina, and bursts of energy (Doress- Wortes PB 1994). However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, weakness and stress. (Hughes DL et al 1994). Chassin et al.(1985) found that women with pre-school children face different types of conflicts and concluded that self-role congruence in women leads to better mental health. Higgins et al.(1992) found that family involvement and family expectations were related to conflicts in the family, but not related to WFC. High levels of family responsibility cause increased time requirements and strain on the family, thereby interfering with the employee's work roles.(Boise L et al 1996). As children and elderly family members require additional care, the obligation to meet their needs can influence family roles, which can create inter-role conflict (Khan RL et al 1964) and impact family roles , (Piotrkowski CS et al 1987) producing FWC (Boise L & Neal MB 1996) . Studies also reported that women having younger children experience more role conflicts (Buetell NJ et al 1980 & Bedeian AG et al 1998) . The literature undertakes the cost- benefit analysis of WLB also. According to Yasbek (2004, p.2) “the business case is established by weighing up the costs and benefits of introducing work-life balance policies and determining if the net impact is positive.” The cost of WLB policies is one of the most important aspect to consider while undertaking a cost-benefit analysis . The direct or indirect costs of WLB will ultimately depend on the type and number of the policies the management wants to adopt (Gray, 2002), administration costs , facing absenteeism (Dex & Scheibl, 1999; Yasbek, 2004); costs of making and implementing policies (Yasbek, 2004); reduced morale for those employees who do not get the benefits WLB initiatives (Maxwell & McDougall, 2004; Yasbek, 2004) etc. Thus the cost is one of the most crucial aspect while framing, devising and implementing WLB policies in the organization.

Work- Family Conflict and Family- Work Conflict

Two kinds of inter- role conflicts are significant while discussing WLB - Work- Family Conflict (WFC) and Family- Work Conflict (FWC). Greenhaus JH (1985) states that WFC is a type of inter-role conflict in which some responsibilities from the work and family domains

are not compatible and have a negative influence on an employee's work front . According to Marks S. (1977),Aryee S.(1992), Grandey AA, Cropanzano R.(1999) its theoretical background is a scarcity hypothesis which describes those individuals in certain, limited amount of energy. These roles tend to cause stress or inter-role conflict.

WFC is related to a number of negative job attitudes and consequences including lower overall job satisfaction. Negative job attitude may include being late at work, lethargic attitude, repetitive mistakes, resistance to change etc.

Greenhaus JH(1985) states further that Family–work conflict (FWC) is also a type of inter-role conflict in which family and work responsibilities are not compatible. FWC is more likely to cast its negative influences at the home front, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family.

WFC and FWC result from an individual trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which employees are operating.

		FAMILY WORK CONFLICT (WFC)	
		HIGH	LOW
WORK FAMILY CONFLICT (WFC)	HIGH	Danger	Management Alarm
	LOW	Family Alarm	Safety

SOURCE: Self Devised

Explanation:

i. Danger Zone : It shows high FWC and high WFC which is completely unproductive for family and domestic front as well.

ii Safe Zone : It shows low FWC and low WFC which is highly productive for family and domestic front both.

iii. Management Alarm: It shows low FWC and high WFC resulting into more adverse effects on professional front and so demanding greater concern from management.

iv. Family Alarm: It shows high FWC and low WFC resulting into more adverse effects on personal and family front causing disturbances into relations.

WLB and Male Employees

Gerson, Katherine(2011) states that young men want a balance between paid work and personal attachments without being victimized or exploited at work. Tahmincioglu, Eve (June 21, 2010) say “It seems that some traditional stereotypes are starting to lessen just a bit in terms of who’s responsible for care of the child”. Traditionalism is becoming less frequent due to what’s actually practical for each individual family.” Thorne, B. (2011) states that Men often face unequal opportunity to family life as they are often expected to be the bread earner ; he describes it as “the masculine ideal of a worker unencumbered by care giving obligations is built into workplace structures and patterns of reward.”.

Following are the major causes behind the work- life imbalance of male employees-

- i. Crucial role as bread – earner
- ii. Psychological pressure of fatherhood
- iii. Maintaining overall esteem need of the family
- iv. Non- recognition of their role in house chores
- v. Dependence of females members of the family
- vii. Male- ego causing comparison with successful female peers
- vii. Lesser freedom of demonstrating emotional outburst as compared to females

WLB and Female Employee

A women has multiple roles to play ranging from daughter to daughter-in law to mother . Therefore, there is a significant difference between the lifestyle of a married and an unmarried woman.

Williams, J. (2000). Although employers are offering many opportunities to help their employees balance work and life, these opportunities may be a catch twenty-two for some female employees. Even if the organization offers part-time options, many women will not take advantage of it as this type of arrangement is often seen as "occupational dead end". Even when the option to work part-time is available, some may not take advantage of it because they do not want to be marginalized. Galinsky and Stein (1990) have described that

main problems being faced by employed women include to look after children, and elders, long work hours, transfers and job demands etc.

Following factors are essential with regard to female employee and WLB-

- The multiple roles performed by women
- Role strain experienced because of multiple roles, i.e., role conflict and role overload
- Organization culture and work dynamics
- Personal resources
- Marriages
- maternity
- social support inclusive of family support and organizational support
- Career orientation
- career stage
- Coping and coping strategies
- Lack of recognition of the

Life stages and performance of female employee

i. Before marriage: Before marriage there are lesser role plays and so the concern for work is maximum; therefore, productivity is at its maximum.

ii. After marriage, before child birth: As the role plays and responsibilities at the home front increase, productivity starts decreasing as the concentration is shifted to the new responsibilities and relations.

iii. After child birth: After the birth of the child responsibilities increase a lot and till the child becomes independent to take care of himself or herself, there is a huge decrease in the productivity of the female employee but after crossing this stage productivity starts increasing. Campbell et.al. (1994) have analyzed the effect of women employment on family life and the impact of family life on work behavior. The research results revealed that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children. Contrary to expectation, women with younger children out performed women with older children.

Effective Implementation of Work-Life-Balance Policy:

A suitable policy has to be devised for framing and implementing WLB policy in organizations. The policy may encompass Transportation , Canteen, Day care centres, Postal/saving schemes, Flexi-working hours, part-time working, provide the information about work-life balance policies and special leave arrangement such as Annual leave & public holiday leave, Career Break leave, Leave for elective representative, Health care centres, rewards & recognition, career growth, Job rotation, Incentives, Performance related pays, Rest rooms and other government schemes like maternity, marriage, sick leave benefit, & medical benefits. Following are the essential points which need to be considered while implementing a WLB policy effectively-

- Identification of the need for introducing WLB Policy
- Creation of a Task-force that can lead WLB
- Conduct workshops for awareness and implementation
- Effective communication
- A proactive publicity programme containing job sharing, time flexibility and other policies
- A central database should be created regarding timings, shifts, intervals, leaves, short leaves
- Training sessions for managers
- Feedback from all cadres
- Using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Cost- benefit analysis of WLB
- Relevant changes in appraisal system
- Imbibing WLB in organizational culture

Challenges

McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2005) found that the gap between work-life policies and initiatives and their use, particularly by men and career-oriented employees, was due to five factors:

- Lack of managerial support for work-life balance
- Perceptions of negative career consequences

- Organisational time expectations
- Gendered nature of policy utilisation
- Perceptions of non - cooperation by other employees (i.e. those without family responsibilities)

Efforts to increase employee productivity in recent decades initially came through “high performance management practices” including longer work hours and presenteeism. It is believed that the discretionary effort which results from these practices can negatively impact on work-life balance (Yasbek, 2004/White et al). On the other hand, where discretionary effort is a result of investment in employee well-being, such as through work-life balance provisions, productivity improvements may be compatible with work-life balance (Konrad and Mangel, 2000; Yasbek, 2004). Sahibzada et al (2005: p.834) say overall job satisfaction is higher when the work-family culture is supportive rather than just offering family-friendly initiatives.

Following are the major challenges in the implementation of a WLB policy –

- Lack of Co-worker support
- Wrong perceptions of management e.g. staying for long hours is considered as a sign of commitment and high potential (Beauregard and Lesley 2008, 9-12).
- Communication failure on part of the management
- lack of management – workers integration
- Resistance by peer group
- Unwillingness and fear around how to manage a flood of requests if work-life balance initiatives were better communicated (risk management)
- mismatch between what employers offer and what workers want.
- A lack of recognition of the wants and needs of employees.

Conclusion

Male and female employees have different work life imbalances because the expectations from both of them on home front are different; however, on the professional front expectations from both are same as they both have to prove themselves productive from the point of view of the organization. Therefore, WLB strategies for them differ in various ways; but as far as the implications of WLB on performance is considered reduced level of stress, lesser absenteeism, better concentration on work , increase in creativity after implementing WLB policies certainly cast positive implication on productivity. Further, management needs

to consider WLB policies and implementation an investment which has the potential to bring qualitative and quantitative outcome as well.

Recommendations

Following topics can be undertaken for the purpose of research –

- i. Work life balance and women at higher cadres in the organisations
- ii. Work life balance: a comparative study of married and unmarried employees
- iii. Work life balance with respect to the political leaders
- iv. Work life balance with respect to the employees at lower cadres in the organizations
- v. Work life balance: A Two Way Effort by Management and Employees

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