



WORK- LIFE BALANCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

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 its effect on various 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 endeavour has been made to provide an overview of various aspects 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.

Keyword: *Work-life Balance, Work –Stress, Work-life Conflict, Career Growth, Turnover, Absenteeism, Work-life policies.*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the existing literature on Work-life balance with the identification and description of work-life balance with number of sections, first with Career growth and work-family conflict, second section describe Motivation and Work Life Balance, third section reveals to Job Satisfaction and Work Life Balance, fourth section examines Turnover, absenteeism and Work Life Balance, fifth section assesses Competitive environment and Work Life Balance, sixth section explores Appreciation and Work Life Balance, seventh section identifies and describes Work-life practices/policies and Work Life Balance, & eight section discusses on Work Stress and work-life imbalance, lastly draws conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The literature on Work-life balance with different prospective are studied and available, in recent years, there has been an increased interest in work family interface in the human resource management literature, especially regarding the sources and outcomes of conflict between these two spheres. A number of studies have addressed this issue from different perspectives. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Greenhaus et al. (1989) examined the antecedents of conflict between family and work, Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) presented an institutional perspective on organizations' responses to work-family issues. In addition, Campbell, Campbell and Kennard (1994) have studied the effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of women. The work-family issue is even further expanded to address the relationship of business-marriage partners (Foley & Powell, 1997).

Rebecca Bundhun quotes in "The National (2009), an Abu Dhabi National Paper"¹ that "Women and men generally have a different perception of what the "life" part of the balance involves. For women it tends to be devoting more time to family, while for men it is spending more time pursuing personal interests." She also quoted the paper of Dr Katty Marmenout, a research fellow at the INSEAD School in Abu Dhabi with his words that "work-life balance is not simply about equally dividing the time spent on one's work and personal life, but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual's priorities". So, this allows for acceptance of the happy workaholic or the satisfied stay-at-home mum or dad. "How can we measure or evaluate work-life balance? The best indicator would be that it should feel right," she said. Whereas researcher Murphy and Doherty (2011) revealed that it is not possible to measure work-life balance in an absolute way as there are personal circumstances which influence the way that is perceived but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual's priorities whereas employees must draw a firm line between their home and work lives and be confident that the line is in the right place (Harvard Business Review, page184).

Hyman and Summers (2004) classified seven major problems which are associated with current practices over work-life balance these are unevenness of adoption across different sectors and organizations, lack of formalization of policies at organizational level, restricted employee voice over the introduction and implementation of policies, policies are primarily to meet business needs rather than those of employees, there is no evidence of reduction in working hours, tangible and intangible work intrusions into domestic life, domestic responsibilities are still conducted primarily by

¹ <http://www.thenational.ae/business/checking-the-work-life-balance#ixzz2UZ0ZE8n>, accessed on 28.05.2013

women irrespective of their employment status. Researcher Vloeberghs (2002) revealed that there is a need for a practical instrument to measure the present situation of work- life balance. However, as revealed by the researchers Eikhof et. al. (2007), the current work-life balance policies are narrow-minded in terms of addressing the needs and aspirations of employees but there is need for its realization as reflected in Emerald article, Human Resource Management International Digest, Vol.12 Iss: 7 (2004) which emphasized that the employers are realizing for its responsiveness and take inventive in trying to meet employee expectations for flexible benefits that help with their work-life balance.

Miller (1978) emphasized that earlier the work life used to begin at age 16 and end at age 70 and now begins at 20 and ends at 62 for most of the working personals. However, restrained effects of the increase in average length of life over the last 80 years may be associated with certain changes in work- life history as more people reach the older ages with their health to permit them to enjoy leisure and image of the retirement years. In spite of that changing view of marriage like relationships also affects work-life balance as many women are no longer expecting lifelong partners, and consequently they stress the importance of acquiring skills and qualifications as stated by researcher Lewis et al. (1999) whereas in contradiction to the above Milkie and Peltola (1999) stressed that happier marriages are related to a greater sense of success in balancing work and family.

Higgins et al.(1992), Hochschild (1989), Kelley and Voydanoff (1985), Hochschild (1989) Thompson & Walker (1989) revealed that working women face well-documented conflicts due to their continuing role as primary caretakers for their homes, children, and/or elderly parents being women's greater responsibility for children and other family members and they experience more interruptions than men resulting common household problems. However, at family front researcher Milkie and Peltola (1999) stated that one will feel less successful in achieving their own work-family balance if spouse has to do the smaller portion of housework whereas Kiecolt (2003) found that who find work a haven spends no more hours at work than those with high work-home satisfaction. However, Higgins and Duxbury (1992) expressed that work conflict is a greater source of work-family conflict whereas personal or family lives, interfere with work are associated for fewer hours but work that interferes with life matters as revealed by the researcher Reynolds (2005).

2.1 Career Growth and Work-Family Conflict

As suggested by researcher Tymon et al. (2011) that employees can improve their perceived career success by balancing long and short –term goals, improving their competence, and communicating openly with their managers. There are four factors as revealed by Rasdi et al. (2009) which have predictive potential on managers' career success are individual – related factors, organizational- related factors, managerial competencies- related factors, and the person-environment fit factor. Scott-Ladd and Marshall (2004) emphasized that participative decision making contributes to performance effectiveness and led to greater gains in the workplace whereas as reflected by researcher Ballout (2008) the Individual- specific variables will be more likely to predict family – to - work conflict and perceived career success, while work-specific variables will be more likely to predict work- to - family conflict and career success. The employees and employers have to identify appropriate strategies for balancing work and non-work domains in such a way that employees strive to perform work and family roles successfully, and employers ensure that employees have the necessary infrastructure and tailored-made family supportive programs to encourage them to achieve dual- success: success in family relationships and success in careers. Today's working men seek the dual objective of maintaining a successful career while being involved in their children's lives (Cunningham, 2001). However in contradiction Barnett and Hyde (2001) found that women who had multiple life roles were less depressed and had higher self-esteem than women who had fewer life roles.

'Harnessing widely esteemed values and adopting the language of "Cultural revitalisation" rather than cultural change appeared more effective in securing broader support of employees to have work-life balance' (Callan, 2008). However as elaborated by the researcher McDonald et al. (2005) there are five dimensions that affect organisational work-life culture these are lack of managerial support for work-life balance; perception of negative career consequences; organisational time expectations; the gendered nature of policy utilisation; and perceptions of unfairness by employees with limited non-work responsibilities whereas changing the habits of employees does not necessarily imply a change in "work-life balance" particularly if the culture of the work environment does not change (Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com).

2.2 Motivation and Work Life Balance

It is a prerequisite to have effective motivation of employees in the workplace (Bansal and Sharma, 2012) Influencing motivation (Hall et al., 2009) leads the combination of two personal variables: tendency to approach success and tendency to avoid failure (Atkinson and Feather, 1966). Some researchers have identified that Masculinity – Femininity dimension also affects motivation (Bansal and Sharma , 2012) whereas fathers tend to use work-life balance measures to spend time with the families where increase their sense of entitlement (Gregory and Milner, 2011) and a voluntary approach to work-life balance may only deliver positive benefits to woman (Doherty, 2004). Herzberg *et al.* (1959) developed two distinct lists of factors; one is task-related which caused happy feelings or a good attitude within the worker and Herzberg called these as motivators. These are:

- Recognition
- Achievement
- Possibility of growth
- Advancement
- Responsibility
- Work itself

Whereas, other were not directly related to the job itself but related to the conditions that surrounded to do that job. Herzberg named it as hygiene factors:

- Salary
- Interpersonal Relations – Supervisor
- Interpersonal Relations – Subordinates
- Interpersonal Relations – Peers
- Supervision – Technical
- Company Policy and Administration
- Working Conditions
- Factors in Personal Life
- Status
- Job Security

2.3 Job Satisfaction and Work Life Balance

Spector (1997) emphasized that Job Satisfaction is the degree with which people like their jobs where some people enjoy work and find it to be a central part of life and others hate to work and do so only because they must. In other terms, Job satisfaction simply means that how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs. As it is generally assessed, job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable. In the past, job satisfaction was approached by some researchers from the perspective of need fulfilment means whether the job met the employee's physical and psychological needs or not (e.g, Porter, 1962; Wolf, 1970). However, this approach has been de-emphasized because today most of the researchers tend to focus attention on cognitive processes rather on underlying needs. The attitudinal perspective has become the predominant one in the study of Job Satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

The term of Job satisfaction is referred by different researcher in a different way. Borah (2012) referred it to a pleasurable or positive emotional feeling of an employee whereas Gupta and Sethi referred that "Job satisfaction may be termed as a reaction of an individual towards job" (Gupta A., and Sethi J.A., 2012, p.58). According to Green, "Even though the definitions vary, a commonality among them seems to be that job satisfaction is a job-related emotional reaction" (p. 6). A job-related emotional reaction can be a sign of an employee's emotional wellness, can be affected by other employee's behavioral influences, and can be an indicator of overall organizational operations; therefore, it is important to clarify the various levels of job satisfaction and the factors that it comprises (Green; Spector, 1997). Employers have also attempted to focus on employees' job satisfaction considering that it has a relationship between the survival of an organization and the continual intellectual drain resulting from employee departure (Garber, 2003; Middlebrook, 1999; Murphy, 2003). Select skills that employees bring to their positions within the organization, as well as the knowledge employees acquire over time, are all lost when employees quit. In fact, sometimes key employees and company leaders leave a revolving door of knowledge and skills (Reed, 2001). Harkins (1998a) estimated that turnover can cost as much as three to five times the annual salary of the employees involved, and he stressed the importance for leaders of addressing this cost for companies. Employee withdrawal leads business leaders to examine ways to cut costs in tighter labor markets because turnover is a significant profit killer in organizations (Hacker, 2003; Joinson, 2000). As mentioned, some job satisfaction factors that may lead to turnover have been identified. A brief review of these positive and negative job satisfaction factors are important for many organizations to understand the problems and costs incurred by employee departure.

However, Borah further quoted that employee's positive attitude towards their job is very much essential to increase productivity of an organization whereas balancing the demands of work and family life are associated with employees' physical and mental health as well as occupational variables such as job satisfaction, performance, absenteeism, and turnover intentions (Aquinas, 2007). Human nature is very complex and required to be managed well by understanding their personal and as well as work environment issues. Most of the studies reflect work-life balance measure on individual appraisals regarding the level of satisfaction or success with the balance between work and family life (Voydanoff, 2005). However, Konrad and Mangel (2000) emphasized that job satisfaction can be increased by implementing work-life balance policies by reducing conflict between work and family. In other term, satisfaction creates confidence, loyalty and ultimately improves the quality output from the employees (Tietjen and Myers, 1998). There is a need to have work environment in such a way that employees can reach their full potential and enjoy their Job Satisfaction.

In other term, there are various theories given for job satisfaction by various experts from time to time. Green (2000) revealed it to organizational psychology. Whereas Maslow (1954); Herzberg (1966); Glisson & Durick(1998) explained it by dividing job satisfaction into three category these are content theorists, process theorist and situational theorist. Content theorist related to need fulfillment with job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). Process theorist defined job satisfaction as mingling of individual, job and organizational variable (Admas 1963; Vroom 1964) According to Locke, these theorists suggested that "real satisfaction with the job could only be provided by allowing individuals enough responsibility and discretion to enable them to grow mentally" (p. 1299). According to Green (2000), "Originally, job satisfaction was studied as a predictor of behaviors such as performance, absenteeism, and turnover. More recently the interest has shifted toward identifying factors that influence or predict job satisfaction. Personal and work-related characteristics can influence job satisfaction" (p. 11).

However, as revealed by Balasubramanian L. in her article (published in The times of India, Ahmedabad Mirror dt 24.05.2013, p. 28) that “ sometimes a person find that there are some valid reasons which trigger the decision to quit, especially if there is no job satisfaction to the demands of work upsets your personal life schedules”.

2.4 Turnover, Absenteeism and Work Life Balance

Recruiting and retaining highly skilled staff is a challenge facing all types and sizes of organizations in the 21st century. It requires taking a strategic approach to the attraction, selection, development and retention of employees, in order to meet staff, business and societal needs (Dunne, 2007).

As revealed by researcher Murphy (2003) “Preserving an organization's intellectual capital due to loss of key employees is a global problem”. However, there is lower level of turnover intention when organizational socialization is prominent and an adequate range of opportunities that satisfy career aspirations exist within the organization (Bigliardi et al., 2005). However, control of turnover and absenteeism is observation of employee’s behaviour and performance to detect any changes representing job dissatisfaction (Levin and Kleiner, 1992).

Studies indicate that employee turnover increases if there is mismatch between management and employees (Dawley, Andrews & Bucklew, 2010). Employees can’t enjoy their job if they are working with tactless and inflexible manager (Muhammad Sajjad et. al, 2013). Workplace flexibility helps to improve overall employee flexibility and empowerment to have work-life balance which reduces turnover. (Emerald article, Human Resource Management International Digest, Vol.16 Iss: 6, 2008). Researchers found that “against the odds, a public sector organization can attract and retain a high quality workforce in a highly competitive market” (Curson J.Y., and Skidmore T., 2010). However, as far as professional women and their quitting from the jobs are concerned Balasubramanian L. further quotes that “another important reason for professionals, especially women quitting their job is relocation after marriage, or the call of being a mother.”²

Whereas, as revealed by Comfort et al., (2003), a satisfied workforce may be valuable because employees are then less likely to be absent and consequently affect the bottom line whereas Clutterbuck D.(2003) had his view point that overwork causes stress- related absenteeism, poor retention levels, low creativity, appalling customer service and unethical employees behaviour. Clutterbuck D. also quoted that [the] companies offering positive policies on Work-Life Balance also benefit from shorter absences by people on maternity leave (p.24).

2.5 Competitive Environment and Work Life Balance

Staying competitive and managing career can be difficult in a challenging economy however researcher Curson and Skidmore (2010) found that against the odds a public sector organization can attract and retain a high quality workforce in a highly competitive market. However, researcher Rethinam and Ismai (2008) revealed that it is difficult to separate home and work life in an increasing competitive environment.

Bloom et al., (2007) revealed that having established the correlations of Work- Life balance with several factors on competition and productivity. Researcher Bloom and Reenen (2006) found that tougher product market competition drives higher productivity and at-least part of this seems to work through improving management practices.

2.6 Appreciation and Work Life Balance

In a recent poll focused on employee productivity, T Jinsite, a division of TimeJobs.com³, found that "more than 35% of the employees consider lack of recognition of work as the biggest hindrance to their productivity. According to them, rewards and recognition for achievements at workplace act as morale booster, which in turn increase their productivity." Ceniza- Levine C. (2013) expresses in an article in “Forbes woman” that if you feel undervalued, decide first what would represent the appreciation you are seeking – is it words of praise?, is it a promotion?, is it a raise? However, an importance of considering trust over and above organizational efforts directed at supporting employees through a show of appreciation for their contribution and concern for their well-being (Paille et. al., 2010).

2.7 Work-life Practices/Policies and Work Life Balance

Business performance can be affected by number of ways but one of these is Work- life balance policies as in the present scenario of competitive labour market, employers can attract better recruits by offering Work-life balance policies with having competitive remuneration packages. However, work-life balance policies can enhance productivity; reduce cost by improving staff retention rates, decrease negative spill-overs, reduce extended hours and fatigue to reduce negative effect on productivity which further minimises stress and contribute to a safer and healthier workplace (Ratzen et al., 2011). Bloom et al. (2007) stated that on average larger firms which are typically more globalize have better work-life balance practices and Employers are being encouraged to introduce work-life policies and make them more inclusive in order to enhance their business performance (Wise and Bond, 2003) as policies which help employees balance their work and non-work priorities have become increasingly popular among employers in recent years (Wise and Bond, 2003). However firms employing larger numbers of professionals are more likely to implement work-life policies being their scarcity, harder to attract, more valuable and more expensive to recruit and retain than less paid employees whereas there are least availability of work-life balance policies for low skilled workers especially those in generally low skill

² <http://www.educationtimes.com/index.aspx?page=article&secid=27&conid=20090520200905181421499632863247e>, accessed on 24.05.2013

³ <http://www.examiner.com/article/polls-find-link-between-employee-appreciation-and-workplace-productivity> accessed on 05.06.2013

industries in supporting Galinsky and Bond (1998) emphasized that in the US, it is found that companies employing a greater proportion of hourly workers, people who are generally concentrated in lower-paid jobs, were the least likely to offer work-life balance policies. Margarita Mayo, Juan Carlos Pastor & Ana Isabel Sanz (2008) emphasized in their study that usage of flexible organizational policies to neutralize the effects of work stressors on family satisfaction. Whereas, organizational climate changes is one of the ideas to facilitate better work-life balance for employees and harnessing its esteemed values for adopting cultural revitalization (Callan, 2008). There is little research on the impact of work-life balance practices and policies on women's career advancement (Straub, 2007). Straub (2007) further quoted that "An interesting issue is whether work-life balance practices and policies help remove the glass ceiling". However, in ONGC, a flagship PSU company, has shown its impact with the article "Breaking the Glass Ceiling in High Seas"⁴ which emphasizes that ONGC broke the Glass Ceiling in High Seas, bringing about a new cultural paradigm in offshore operations by employing these women engineers and as quoted by Narendra Goyal, OIM-SHP, "ONGC is global company. Change in mindset is very important to establish this integration. Women are equally capable and would bring in a lot of value in terms of cultural change and alternative perspectives".

2.8 Work Stress and Work-Life Imbalance

Mohan and Ashok (2011) explained that "Stress is often developed when an individual is assigned a major responsibility without proper authority and delegation of power, inter personal factors such as group cohesiveness, functional dependence, communication frequency, relative authority and organizational difference between role sender and forcal persons."

Work stress and work-life imbalance are correlated with workaholism, regardless of gender (Aziz and Cunningham, 2008). Supervisor support and work-family culture are related to job satisfaction and affective commitment (Baral and Bhargava, 2010). Dealing with the work- family- tension results the career as subject of social fascination and family as a factual task (Kasper et al., 2005). There are strong connections between dimensions of the work place, stress and job satisfaction. However, there is an absence of theory to provide conceptual understanding of these relationships. (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003). Work- family balance is associated with quality of life when there is substantial time, involvement, or satisfaction to distribute across roles (Greenhaus et al., 2002).

As conceptualized, work and family life are separate domains having no bearing on each other however, it is now recognized that domestic identities and responsibilities sometimes spill over into the workplace and that organizational identities and responsibilities often cross into home life (Halford, 1997; Kanter, 1977). Whereas personal or family lives, interfere with work are associated for fewer hours but work that interferes with life matters (Reynolds, 2005). However, employees' attitudes towards their hours of work, and perceptions and complaints about work-life imbalances actually deals with working time and complaints about time pressure which are unrelated to hours actually worked (Roberts, 2007). Moreover, the prevalence of management control of the work life balance agenda and management's discretion in the operation of work-life issues (Hyman and summers, 2007).

Reasearcher, Buddeberg-Fischer et al (2008) stressed that a well balanced integration of professional and private life is an essential goal for the new generation Moreover, informal arrangements and managerial discretion are important in realizing work and care balance (Burgess et al., 2007)

3. 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).

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⁴ http://reports.ongc.co.in/wps/wcm/myconnect/ongcreports/home/gallery/feature_archieves/top_story/breaking_glass_ceiling, accessed on 21.05.2013

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