



A Study on Work Life Balance in Contemporary Challenging Organizational Environment

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ABSTRACT:

A 'work life' balance refers to an employee's ability to maintain a healthy balance between their work roles, their personal responsibilities, and family life. Companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of helping their employees to achieve this balance as more staff are experiencing conflict between their work and personal roles. In today's age, many workers are seeing their personal responsibilities increase, from childcare and elderly care, to volunteer work, and family commitments. This comes at a time when their work responsibilities are also increasing, resulting in a conflict between personal and work commitments and an increase in stress.

The literature review on Work Life Balance has been done with a view keeping in mind the momentum with which the concept has become pervasive due to changing work-life style and with major aim to bring an insight into various forces surrounding it which hinders its equilibrium and solutions to overcome this disequilibrium. The current synthetic review helps in identifying the effects of organization support, work-family conflict, workplace stress and personality on work-life equilibrium.

In this paper an effort has been made to bring an insight into hidden issues of work-life balance. From our research it has been found out that women still are not treated equal to men, organizations face problems in implementing work-life balance policies and personality traits play a major role in reducing stress and balancing work-life continuum.

Keywords:

Work-Life Balance, Organizational Perspective, Workplace Stress, Working Women, Personality

Introduction:

Work-life balance is the term used to describe the balance that an individual needs between time allocated for work and other aspects of life. Areas of life other than work-life can be, but not limited to personal interests, family and social or leisure activities. Work-life balance is basically what makes a particular individual feel balanced while playing different roles in life as an employee, peer, subordinate at workplace and as a parent, a sibling and other social characters. If a person feel reasonable by just making himself happy not being stressed out by what others are feeling or what is going on other way round he is balanced. If a person feels stressed out by not performing his any of the role effectively he is unbalanced. So, it depends on an individual personality how one perform in different roles assigned to him by the job as well as society. Today, Work-Life balance issue is on everyone's mouth being on job or being at home this is a truth existing in everyone's life and one cannot drive back from it either one can balance it or not. So, to face this scorching fact everybody should be familiar with its various aspects to live life in a balanced way. The purpose of this paper is to review the recent relevant literature and to gain insight on the effects of various aspects like organization support, gender inequality, workplace stress and personality on work-life balance and find out forces which help in moving towards



equilibrium and future areas on which further research is required.

Literature Review:

Past 10 years studies have been reviewed on work-life balance and its various perspectives have been considered while selecting the available literature.

Hymans & Summers (2004) found major problems associated with practical implementation of work-life balance i.e unevenness of adoption across different sectors and organizations, lack of formalization of policies at organization level, restricted employee's voice, primary focus on business needs than on employees, no evidence of reduction in working hours, tangible and intangible work interruptions into domestic life. Finally, domestic responsibilities are still conducted primarily by women irrespective of their employment status. Eikhof et al (2007) suggested that reconceptualization is required to analyze both work-life balance and relationship between work & life. This implies current work-life balance policies are myopic in terms of addressing needs & aspirations of employees. In recent year's Murphy & Doherty (2011) revealed that it is not possible to measure work-life balance in an absolute way, because personal circumstances influence the way this is perceived. Long hours and presenteeism form "part of job" when accepting a role at higher level. However, modern technology has helped this to some extent by allowing senior managers to be accessible instead of having to be present in office.

From the above studies it has been found that measurement of work-life balance and implementation of work-life balance policies is doubtful in meeting needs and desires of individuals in profession.

Organization and Work-life balance:

From Organization perspectives Work-life balance issues raised were.

a) Varuhas.J.et.al (2003) analyzed that the most

significant factor affecting work/family balance appears to be organizational culture of firm. In general if organizational culture is not in fact family friendly measures will have little effect.

- b) The behavior and attitude of management play's significant role in work-life balance. Bradley.L et.al(2006) revealed factors influencing work-life balance from management perspective like negotiated time off for personal reasons, ad-hoc arrangements for dealing with emergencies are key strategy for employee engagement, satisfaction, commitment and achieving work-life balance.
- c) From HR side of organization Baralet.al(2011) analyzed that many employees are not even aware of certain policies even if those are available in their respective organization.
- d) Supportive workplace culture Bradley.L.Met.al(2008) revealed as per practical outcomes fair employees in long run will have access to most talented people and can convince employees on all levels to build firm-specific human competencies.

At last, Organization's experience problems in publicizing and practicing work-life balance practices owing to number of reasons. Kumar&Chaktaborty (2013) suggested some strategic moves can be taken, guidelines prescribed for employees and organization can be referred to & a compliance checklist can be chalked out to ensure that work-life balance practices are implemented. From the above studies it has been found that organization culture and organization support has a significant bearing on work-life of individual. Secondly, organization's experience problems in publicizing and practicing work-life balance policies which require to be implemented strategically.

Work-Life Balance And Stress Of Professionals

Stress factors affecting employee job & personal life Mughal et.al(2010) analysed that the independent variables task demands, role demands, organization



structure, organization leadership, interpersonal demand & job security have impact on dependent variable work-life balance. Negi&Singh(2010) analysed that work-life balance has become quest for professionals of banking industries and also that employees work better when they do make time for family and personal interests. Deshpandeet.al(2012) found in their study that there is difference in factors and impact on the employees of both public and private sector banks. Similar results were also found by Katyal et.al(2011) that there is significant difference in job stress of employees working in nationalized and non-nationalized banks, with employees of non-nationalized banks having higher job stress as compared to their counterparts working in nationalized banks.

Research also shows that there is no significant difference in either male or female perception of their work stress and family imbalance Aamir&Hira(2011) or Vijaya T.G et.al(2011). Work-Life balance and stress also affects turnover rate of employees Saeedet.al(2013) found higher variation in turnover rate due to work-life balance and stress. Apart from turnover, employee satisfaction is also related to work-life balance. Susi&Jawaharani(2011) and Rania.S et.al(2011) found that work-life balance is key driver of employee satisfaction which include recruitment & retention of valuable work force, reduced absenteeism, reduced employee stress, health benefits, job satisfaction and better life-balance. The studies make it apparent that there is difference in factors and impact on employees of both public and private sector banks. Secondly, work-life balance and stress affects employee's satisfaction and turnover rate.

Women and work-life balance:

First, Gender inequality as women are increasingly shifting their outlook of being a working women and managing both work & home responsibilities rather than just being housewives but their gender role hold

them back Choudhary.M (2013) revealed that a consistence rise of working women is measured in India, the need is to create congenial conditions in which women employees can balance work with personal needs and desires. Sandhu H.S et.al(2006) listed some important factors affecting their career:-

- a) Harmony in home and office
- b) Organizational support
- c) Family expectations
- d) Parenting effect
- e) Professional skills

Dubey.Set.al(2010) analysed that personal factors as well as factors at workplace significantly affect the work-life of female employees. Thus organization's efforts with family support can make women balance personal front with professional work.

Kumari.Ket.al(2010) and Thriveni&Rama(2012) revealed that demographic variables have significant effect on work-life balance of women like age, income, experience and marital status. Consistent with these results Reddy.N.Ket.al(2010) also found that work-family conflict and family-work conflict to be more among women having eldest child.

Mathew.R.Vet.al(2011) revealed major factor's influencing work-life balance of women entrepreneur's in India.

- a) Role overload
- b) Dependent care issues
- c) Quality of health
- d) Problems in time management
- e) Lack of proper social support

Secondly, after Gender inequality, Doble&Supriya(2010) analysed that both men & women strongly believe that flexible hours will enhance the work-life balance. Apart, from this Gregory & Milner(2011), throw a light on work-life balance policy for father's they suggests that fathers



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tend to use WLB measures to spend time with their families where measures increase their sense of entitlement (state policies of paternity leave) or where measures offer non-gendered flexibility (reduced work- ing time/organizational systems of flexi-time). In line with other studies it also finds that fathers extensively use informal flexibility where this is available (individual agency) work-life policies work best when they give fathers a sense of entitlement, by giving specific rights linked to fatherhood (e.g. paternity leave or “daddy month”-type arrangements), and or by providing universal rights (e.g. to reduced working time and/or flexible working time); however, where measures are linked to childcare they are often framed as mothers' rights when translated to the organizational level.

The research also shows that informal flexibility is used and valued by fathers within organizations, but that such informal arrangements are highly subject to local variation and intermediation by line managers and co-workers; hence, for effective and even coverage they would need to be backed up by formal rights. It is clear from the above text that irrespective of employment status domestic responsibilities are still conducted by women. Secondly, fatherhood has not been provided with specific rights to balance work and life.

Work-Life Balance And Personality:

Though from above research it is clear that organization's plays significant role in balancing work-life of employees. Rajadhyaksha.U(2012) analysed that organizational work-life interventions in India are varied and disparate and have focused mainly on the formal sector. There is no overarching government policy addressing work and family issues across different sectors. Implicit gendering of governmental policies and work-life initiatives covertly ratifies patriarchal structures that make such interventions necessary.

Other than organizational and government initiatives individual's demographic factors also affect their work-life balance Sharma&Bajpai(2013) found that age, marital status, no of dependents has high impact on work-life balance. These all are factor's which individual cannot control but in recent studies focus has been shifted to individual's personal factor's Kumar & Singh(2011) analysed that different dimensions of personality (extraversion, neuroticism & psychoticism) significantly moderate the relationship between stress state and job attitudes. Dumitru & Cozman (2012) analysed several personality traits such as social presence, empathy, independence, good impression, intellectual efficiency, psychological intuition, work orientation, femininity render individuals are more vulnerable to stress. Research says that there exist relationship between stress and work-life balance Vijaya T.G et.al(2011) and it is analysed that Deva doss & Minnie(2013) that personality traits plays a vital role in work-life balance. It is clearly stated in the reviewed text that certain personality traits are more vulnerable to stress and ultimately affects work-life balance.

Findings:

- Irrespective of employment status domestic responsibilities are still conducted by women.
- Fatherhood has not been provided with specific rights to balance work and life.
- Organization's experience problems in publicizing and practicing work-life balance policies.
- There is difference in factors and impact on employees of both public and private sector banks.
- Work-life balance and stress affects employee's satisfaction and turnover rate.
- Finally, it is the individual personality which helps a person to establish a balance between the varied roles assigned to him like certain personality traits are more vulnerable to stress and ultimately affects work-life balance and some are less prone to imbalance and thus they can manage the differences more suitably.



Conclusion:

After highlighting hidden issues under work-life balance we had come across important findings. To wrap up the results we can say that work-life balance issue is persisting because of various reasons like work culture inadequate HR policies and practices job insecurity, low compensations and many more. Also, there exists a difference in work-life of employees in private and public sector and more apparently employee's dissatisfaction is related to work-life balance and stress. Employee welfare and satisfaction should be the topmost priority of the organisations because human resource is the most vital asset of any organisation.

Some societal reasons are also responsible for the issue of imbalance as firstly, it is still a male dominated society where women are not treated equal to men. Secondly, men are still not considered for their fatherhood rights formally. Third, organizations are not taking strategic moves for practicing work-life balance policies. Recently, the focus has been shifted from supportive perspectives like Organization and family to individual's own personality. In the time of individual goal achievement a human being must try to balance his personal and work demands by analysing his own traits and have control over them as well as organization's must also recruit people for specific posts based on their personality traits.

So, we can conclude that all other factors being secondary in attaining work-life balance equilibrium the primary one is the personality traits possessed by a person which can be managed by oneself for a balanced and contented life.

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