

Work - Life Balance : A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Work life balance has gained popularity as a working concept in recent years. Breaking the walls against pre explained framework of globalisation, ageing demography and quickly changing technology, work life balance has become the issue of concern in developed countries. From 1960's, the term has changed its essence and evolved from various terms like work and family roles, work-family stress, work-family conflict or interference, work-family compensation, work-family segmentation, work-family expansion and, finally to work-family balance.

This last concept refers to practice an individual tries to follow in order to have a control over how, where and when they work.

Change in economy and today's competitive environment is directly influencing individual's lifestyle and making it more demanding. Therefore, working hands desires for an appropriate balance between their work and life. This issue is now globally recognised and hence understanding of the same is required at individual level.

Keywords: Work and family roles, work-family stress & work-family conflict.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Dr. Manju Nair*, Aditi Kaushik**,

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Journal Global Values,
Vol. VIII, No.2,
Article No. 13,
pp. 95-103,
[http://anubooks.com/
?page_id=285](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=285)

Introduction

Work life balance is concept of positive alterations designed by organizations in order to minimize the strain between work life and personal life of an individual. Such alternative practices helps to improve individual effectiveness in both the domains.

In spite of ample research and literature that has been published there is so far no generalised usage of the terminology. With variations in publications two broad views are available for further progress of researchers. One perspective draws the attention towards conflicting aspects of the concept that refers to the individual conflict due to dissonance in role (several social). Such conflict is result of gap between perceived expectations and received outcomes, as well as from imbalance in different roles of individuals (Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985, pp. 77–82).

To counter the former view, second perspective is positive in nature and has been defined as enrichment. This results from individual's experience, skills or values that are carried over a period of time that can be quantified in term of work performance.

The purpose of this paper is provide a descriptive manuscript on work life balance and related conceptual terms on the basis of review of existing literature.

Job Satisfaction and WLB:

According to a survey conducted by Kronos and Future Workplace in 2017, employee burnout is a significant problem faced by organizations these days which is result of reorganized work structure.

(Felicity Asiedu-Appiah, 2013) in his work explained the importance of work life balance in improving employee performance professionally and personally both. Although need of balanced work and life differs gender wise since role and responsibilities of male and females are different at work and non-work front.

According to (Susi.S, 2010), Work life balance is directly related to employee satisfaction. This concept has initiated the need of understanding of important issues like employee retention, quality workforce, job satisfaction and improved work family equation. Also Work life balance needs to be promoted at workplace to be included as a vital part of work culture. Supportive work culture increases employee loyalty and commitment towards the organization.

(R.lockwood, 2003) defines Work life balance as “a managing work and personal responsibilities”. In his work important role of senior management in designing work life balance related programs is highlighted. Such programs increases employee motivation and hence employee's productivity in due course of time.

Work Life Balance Policies helps employee in managing their work and

family in a better way and enhance their attitudes and behaviours such as organizational attachment (Groover and Crocker, 1995), Job Satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998) and intention to stay (Lobel and Kossek, 1996).

(P. Berg, A. L. Kalleberg, and E. Appelbaum, 2003) in his article had mentioned that job attributes, organizational culture and its pertaining environment and employee-friendly policies have positive and progressive influence on individual WLB.

Stress and Work life Balance:

Many researchers have associated the relation of work life balance with individual's stress management. Various studies in the field of psychology have presented some proven facts that relate both the terms to each other. However, in spite of such findings most of researchers leaves the gap of understanding the individual approach to achieve work life balance even after realising the importance and value of such balance (Kossek et al., 2014).

(F.F.T. Chiang et al., 2010) has described how job related stress rises when one loses the control over the job. However, work life balance also supports the stretch in demanding jobs and the observed stress afterwards.

Now a days organizations are aggressively moving forward to include work life balance policies considering it as a primary task to increase employee commitment and loyalty in order to reduce the attrition rate (Dalton and Mesch, 1990).

While researchers are digging the ends of work life balance but practical studies are still not precise about how exactly job stress is related to it. Moreover, most studies have been narrowed down to Western countries (Perrewe et al., 2002; Welford and Mahtani, 2004), which certainly cannot be generalised to Asian context where the term is accepted but yet to be promoted (Luk and Shaffer, 2005).

Work life balance practices are directly related to job stress in three significant ways. At first, policies related to work life balance and its implementation can assist the employees as a supporting resource for managing their work domain in alliance with personal life.

(Demerouti et al., 2005) explained the consequences of imbalance in work life and personal life in terms of emotional trench and physical drain. Such problems arises with demanding jobs and its ultimate interference in family life leading to conflict.

Organizational commitment and WLB:

According to studies work life balance plays a key role when it comes to employee's belongingness with the organization. Work life balance policies have developed background of organizational commitment that indicates influence of

managerial models on organizational structure. Work family conflict is result of ambiguous working conditions(Siegel et al. 2005). Modern organizations are developing content based programs to support employees in minimizing the work-life conflict while encouraging balanced combination of work and personal life finally leading to positive contribution towards organizational performance.

(Foley et al. 2005; Ngo et al. 2009), proposed that employees reciprocated to organizations' concern when they receive the same in form work life balance programs. (Eaton 2003), evidently proved the positive impact of work life balance policies on individual's organizational commitment.

(Thompson et al.1999) scanned 19 different types of work life balance policies and concluded work family culture is important parameter for evaluating whether employees utilize work life balance programs that eventually influence organizational commitment.

(Wang and Walumbwa 2007) explained the relationship in terms of leadership. According to his study, transformational leadership affects the relationship of employee burnout and organizational commitment. Their results indicate that the employees' acceptance of work life balance policies depends on considerable involvement of supervisors in the process.

Although which component relates most positively to organizational commitment is still a discrepant discussion.

Career Growth and Work-Family Conflict

Career and goals are two pillars of individual's intent that serves as purpose in life. Natural and dynamic changes in environment due to economic conditions have also modified the lifestyle and one's desire with their career. The major challenge is how to balance work and personal life under such panorama.

(Tymon et al. 2011) explained three major factors which leads to betterment in individual's career success. These attributes includes moderation between long term and short goals, improved competency and open communication with peer and managers.

On the same aspect (Rasdi et al. 2009) projected four analytical factors that have potential contribution in progression of managers' career success. These factors include individual – related factors, organizational- related factors, managerial competencies- related factors, and the personenvironmentfit factor.

(Scott-Ladd and Marshall 2004) explained how participative decision making can measure performance effectiveness leading to personal growth at workplace whereas researcher (Ballout2008)projected individual factors as predictor of family – to -

work conflict career success and work-specific factors as predictor work- to - family conflict and career success.

In order to balance work and non-work domain, both employee and employer have to ascertain suitable approach to achieve work-life balance. Where employee tries to manage work and family roles, employer needs to ensure that employee have the required arrangements in support. Such parallel tasking can help employer in encouraging employee to achieve success in at both career front and family front (Cunningham, 2001).

Gender and Work Life Balance:

With rapid changes in economy, concept of dual earners in family is also evolving. Now, this restructure is not bounded by gender specific aspects anymore. Researchers although are not specifically focussed on gender biased findings of work life balance, but few studies have made their contribution for further research. According to (Beeny et al., 2005) women face more imbalance in their personal and professional lives rather than their male companions and expect more from others both at work and at home. Such a dissonance leads to lack of control over balancing their lives.

Though work life balance has been researched with reference to women, there has been change in life expectations (Evans, Carney, & Wilkinson, 2013). This is result of modifications in family, household, and partnership accountabilities with increase in dual- career families (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010).

(McClellan 2005), in his work explained how work-life balance was only a point of concern for working women lately. In case of men, conflict is only measured on the basis of professional achievements and societal expectations based on financial and professional demand (Aumann et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2013).

Unsurprisingly, studies proposes that for both men and women work performance is linked with positive and supportive organizational culture (Turrentine, 2005).

Absenteeism and Work-Life Balance:

Work life balance is not confined to retaining the workforce but is also associated with staffing function of the organization. For any organization manpower is one of the most important resource while thriving for business excellence, thus merely accumulating the same will not serve the purpose.

According to review by the CIPD (UK) in 2001, out of total respondents under research two third explained the dilemma of recruiting the right talent. This problem is also linked with the organizational outcomes in terms of complexities related to cost of hiring which is minimum £5000. This cost in many other surveys have been claimed to be four times higher due to issues related with punctuality and

regularity of employees.

Number of studies has concluded absenteeism from work is directly associated with work related problems and stress. However research in the past illustrated that non work related stress contribute more to absenteeism than work related stress. Work- life balance comprises factors such as working hours, job location, individual and family earning etc. therefore the companies who are lagging behind in implementing friendly WLB policies experience employee dissatisfaction. Such dissatisfaction keeps employee away from work leading to announced or unannounced absenteeism (Schonfeld ,2005).

Work-life Balance practices followed in Indian Companies

Although the concept of work-life balance have become very important aspect of organization behaviour and so as for human resource management, still not all the organizations are putting their efforts in execution of resolving initiatives. The question is still an open discussion if work life balance is real or just a concept.

In the support of the question Chandra (2012) has made some thought-provoking observation. According to the study organizations are now leaning towards those programs and policies which can provide sense of belongingness among employees and can improve the relations between employees and their folks.

Moreover, money remains to be the key motivator in the process; indeed, financial or material rewards have been the most important tools for improving employees' dissatisfaction of imbalance in work life and personal life.

While focussing in Indian context work life balance policies can be categorised into statutory policies and non-statutory policies. Statutory policies are regulatory in nature and being enforced under Indian Labor law. Most common examples are Factories Act, 1948, Maternity benefit Act, 1961 and Indian Penal Code, 1869, section 509(amended). On contrary non-statutory policies are based on discretionary power of employer. Such policies are flexible work timings, child care facilities, child education support, work from home etc. compressed work week, work from home etc. Such policies are helpful in reducing absenteeism, stress and moreover individual work family conflict (SaritSambitParida 2016).

Following are few initiatives adopted by Indian companies to support their employees with work life balance issues:

- 1. Intel India:** The Company provides flexible working hours, paid maternity leave of 84 days, resource and referral services, childcare assistance, Hospitalization insurance policy (covers employee & nominated dependants), annual leaves, recreational activities and study reimbursements.
- 2. Tata Consultancy services:** TCS innovated the concept of "Maitree" with

an aim to enhance the relationship between employees and their families. It also helps in building sense of belongingness as well as nurturing the hidden talent.

3. National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC): India's largest energy conglomerate NTPC provides wide range of activities focussed towards social and mental well being of their employees. Such benefit ranges from childcare support to post retirement medical settlements in order to meet any emergency that may occur in person's life in future.

4. Marico: Marico is working on the motto, "WE DON'T HIRE EMPLOYEES; WE WELCOME MEMBERS" and certainly they are standing on what they claim. They provide open policy of decide working hours by an employee himself if their job design allows to. Along with this they also let employee avail a contingency leave up to 4 days without written permission.

5. Tech Mahindra: Tech Mahindra launched programme named "Josh" that provides recreational activities to an employee like picnics, yoga, social gatherings, sports & musical events, etc.

According to The Economic Times (2014), corporate India is proactively focussing on problems related to employee's well being. They are churning out new and innovative ideas to resolve the issue of work life balance. Few more examples can be quoted in continuation:

1. Mindtree: From ideation to execution, Mindtree is providing digital and technology services worldwide. With excellence in deliverables, the company is also designing work friendly policies to enhance work life balance. Advancements in telecommunications is now becoming the biggest provision for work-from-home arrangements and Mindtree is executing this programme effectively in order to have a considerable contribution towards employee wellness and welfare.

2. HCL Technologies Ltd.: IT pioneer HCL Technologies facilitates their female employees with telecommunicating facility so as to help them in taking care of their new born. Such facility creates a sense of belongingness among the employee which ultimately leads to employees' loyalty towards the organization.

3. PepsiCo India: Now a day's companies not only are focussing resolving commuting issues or flexibility in working hours but they are outreaching at par. PepsiCo India has now started the system of free meals like poha & upma added with seasonal fruits. This comes as a convenience to unmarried employees and at times to married couples as well. Along with this, under collaboration with day care facilities like Ida and Intellitots company is now assisting employees in taking care of their small kids where the parent gets attractive discounts as well.

CONCLUSION:

Work life balance is a known concept now a days and have been researched in context to every working sector. By addressing this issue and implementing supporting programs, organization can certainly improve in terms of employee morale, individual job satisfaction, employee absenteeism. In today's competitive and global market knowledge preservation can help organization in difficult economic times that can be achieved with improved work life policies and work friendly environment. From the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that although work life balance issue are emphasized now and being given priority but results are not quiet visible at implementation level. Many sectors have changed their approach towards employee handling but for both private and public sector a long road is waiting to be crossed.

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