

Organizational Policies and Its Impact On Work Life Balance:- An Investigative Study

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Abstract

In the changing scenario of Human Resource Management, Work-life Balance has become one of the major challenges which the organizations are facing. Transformation and revolution in the field of Information and Communication Technologies have affected the work-life and family life of every individual, but still this area is required to be explored more. The present study investigates the impact of organizations policies on the work-life balance of employees in Indore region. This study argues that impact of organization is a key factor that affects work-life balance, physical and mental well-being of employees and managers. The effect of organization on mental and physical well-being can be direct or through its effect on work-life balance. Convenience sampling was used to obtain the data from employees and managers in various sectors in Indore. The questionnaire consists of four parts: demographic aspects, perceived organization impact, and work-family balance, physical and mental well-being.

Keywords: *Work-life Balance, Family-life, Work-life, Work-life Policies/Practices, Work-life Conflict, HRM.*

Introduction:

Now a day maintaining balance in between work and life has been the focus of everyone including companies and employees. The fast moving life, instant access of everything does not put the individual in a more lax state; instead it pushes the person to do more with the seemingly more time in his/her hands. The individual engages himself/herself with more activities in and out of the office than usual as this seems to be supported by the adoption of flexibility measures in the workplace. The availability of technology anywhere which aids in the connectivity of people 24/7 further delineates the boundaries between work and personal life.

Organizations are under tremendous pressure to improve their performance and success in the competitive business world. Psychological empowerment increases employees' sense of personal control and motivates them to engage in work, which in turn results in positive managerial and organizational outcomes (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Work-life balance has always been a concern for quality of working life and its relation to quality of life. Individuals experiencing interference between work and personal lives are also significantly more likely to suffer from reduced psychological well-being and physical health. (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 1998).

This report helps us to know about the work-life conflict/work-life balance and its relationship to organizational effectiveness. Most of the research that has been conducted focuses on work-to-life interference, and they found that work has a negative impact on an individual's social and personal life. The mental well-being of employees is in the core interest of communities and organizations. Work-life balance "is the stability characterized by the balancing of an individual's life complexity and dynamism with environmental and personal resources such as family, community, employer, profession, geography, information, economics, personality, or values" (Crooker et al, 2002: 389). The linkage of work and personal aspect of lives has always been emphasized (Bruck et al., 2002; Gibson, et al., 2006). Gibson et a. (2006: 197-198) offered two explanations regarding the interconnectedness of work and life in the organizational setting: (1) the compensation effect implies that employees tend to compensate for low work or personal life satisfaction by seeking contentment in the other domain; and (2) the spillover view that indicates that job satisfaction spills over into one's work life and vice versa.

Work/life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life (Clarke, Koch & Hill, 2004). Work/life imbalance is when the pressures from one role make it difficult to comply with the demands of the other. (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Employees who experience increased stress due to work/life conflict and decreased perceptions of control over their work and non-work demands are less productive, less committed to, and satisfied with, their organization and more likely to be absent or leave the organization. (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 1998).

Studies suggest that employee morale, satisfaction, and performance are improved among employees who have received work/life programs such as onsite child care, time for elder care,

opportunity to study, opportunities for telecommuting as these reduce the level and intensity of stress that employees experience (Bruck, et al., 2002; Harmon, 2001; Garvey, 2001; Gibson et al., 2006). Thompson (2002) classified these work-life initiatives into five (5) categories namely, (1) Time-based strategies like flexi-time, telecommuting and job sharing; (2) Information-based strategies like relocation assistance, elder care resources, company work/life balance intranet; (3) Money-based strategies like leave with pay, scholarships for dependents; (4) Direct services like onsite childcare, concierge services and takeout dinners; and (5) Culture-change strategies like training or focus on employees' performance not office face time.

Literature Review:

Policies on wlb that are meant help employees better manage their work and life are called in the literature as work-family policies, now a days the term "WLB" replaced by "work-family balance" (Hudson Resourcing, 2005). Work pressure has been increasing in recent decades. Technological advancements have led to demand for speedy response. The working hours have continued to increase to maintain and fulfill demands of market and customers. As a result, the demand of work begins to dominate personal life and a sense of work life balance ensues. Quality of home and social life are deteriorating. Balance is a must in all aspects of life. It's just like walking on a narrow bridge, as long as we keep ourselves well balanced, we will keep walking towards our destination.

From the very beginning it is important to understand that work-life balance does not mean to devote an equal amount of time to every part of life; in its broadest sense, to gain the best satisfaction level in work life cycle in a person's life. Although definitions and explanations may vary, work-life balance is generally associated with equilibrium between the amount of time and effort somebody devotes to work and personal activities, in order to maintain an overall sense of harmony in life. (Clarke, et al 2004, 121) Greenhouse, Collins and Shaw (2003) define work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role. According to Johnson (2005) the employees' age, lifestyle, and environment play important role in one's perception of work-life balance. The conflict between work and family spheres is also considered especially when there is role conflict and strain (Friede and Ryan2005; Kossek and Lambert 2005); added to this is the productivity requirements in the workplace that often interferes with family responsibilities of individuals employed in sectors relying heavily on shift work (Williams 2008).

Many researcher work on this topic and found that Work Life Balance to be positively related to both organizational and individual. Giving the employees support, financial assistance and flexibility can enhance the organization's performance and increase Employee Satisfaction, (Konrad and Mangel, 2000), Employee-organizational commitment and attachment, and organizational citizenship behavior, (Lambert, 2000). Work Life Balance is also expected to have a positive impact on employee engagement. Employee engagement is essential to obtain high individual and organizational performance.

Work Family Conflict:

Work-family conflict as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p.77) has been conceptualized by Frone (2003) as bidirectional. It occurs when role demands in one domain interfere with the demands of a role in another domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964). Demands and responsibilities from work role, such as overtime or take-home work can interfere with family life or in conflict with the demands of family, making it difficult for individuals to fulfill their familial responsibilities. This is usually known as work to family conflict (Frone et al., 1992a; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996).

Types of Conflict:

There are 3 types of conflict defined by Greenhaus in literature: time-based, strain-based, and behavior based (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Time-based conflict happened when we spent more time and responsibility in only one area of life either in work or family. According to Greenhaus Strain-based conflict happened when strain and fatigue and irritability created from one role affecting the activities in the other role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). When the behaviors needs in one role are not compatible with the behaviors required in the other part of life than behavior based conflict happened (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 1997).

Work Life Balance and Conflict:

The bi-directional nature of work-family conflict has rested on the scarcity hypothesis. The scarcity hypothesis argues that people have fixed amounts of physiological and psychological resources and they have to make tradeoffs between competing demands of different roles for

their time and energy (Frone et al., 1992a; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986; Pleck; 1977, 1985) which influence the quality of experiences in the roles. For example, excessive work time and schedule has been found to create strain that triggers stress symptoms (Pleck et al., 1980). Likewise, energy and other resources devoted to the participation in one's role may make it difficult to participate in another role by interfering with the level of energy that can be devoted to the other role (Crouter et al., 1993; Piotrkowski, 1979).

Work-family conflict has been found to have a negative impact on the quality of employees' family life, such as marital satisfaction (Gutek et al., 1991), relationships with their children and spouses (Duxbury & Diggins, 2001). In contrast to the scarcity hypothesis which has concentrated on the negative outcomes of role engagement, Sieber (1974) has proposed the enrichment perspective in that engagement in multiple roles, or role accumulation provides access to various resources that can be utilized by individuals across various role performances. Marks (1977) argued that human energy is not finite. Participation in one role may lead to the expansion of energy and thus people can find energy for things they like doing. Frone (2003) has suggested that work-family balance included not only the bidirectional forces of work-family conflict. It also encompasses the positive influence of one role to another (Repetti, 1987). Individuals' engagement in one domain may lead to positive emotional response rather than negative response or strain (Verbrugge, 1986; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Stephens et al., 1997).

The extent to which individuals' participation in one life domain (e.g. work) may bring resources, pleasurable and enriching experiences to another role (Marks, 1977; Thoits, 1991; Barnett & Hyde 2001), or is made easier by the skills, experiences, and opportunities gained by their participation in another domain (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz, 2002a) was commonly known as work-family facilitation. Similar to the operation of work-family conflict, work-family facilitation is bidirectional in that it involves both work-to-family facilitation and family-to-work facilitation. Work has provided financial and other resources which enabled people to support and be more functional in dealing with problems in family. Family, on the other hand, offers emotional support that buffer stress arising from work. As Rothbard (2001) has confirmed that both negative emotions (work-family conflict) and positive outcomes (work-family facilitation) can result from engagement in both work and family roles, the positive and negative effects of work-family interface were not two opposite ends of a continuum (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999).

Although definitions and explanations vary, work/life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life (Clarke et al., 2004).

Objectives:

This study was designed to find out the relationship between the overall life balance, and bidirectional elements of work/life conflict (i.e., work-to-family and family-to-work), work personal life and impact of organizational policies on WLB.

Research Methodology:

The study was conducted with primary data using questionnaire as a tool to explore the role of work-life balance in organizations and impact of WLB policies of Organization. The data was collected by structured questionnaire with forty statements on a five point Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always). For the present study, 150 questionnaires were distributed to professionals working in Indore, out of which 120 dully-filled questionnaires were received and used for the research work. Data was collected through convenience sampling technique. The respondents were teachers, employees and management/owners of the private companies in Indore city. One of the questions was “What organizations should do to create balance?” The secondary data was collected through various magazines, journals, articles, internet etc. Appropriate statistical tools such as Regression Analysis were then applied on the collected data using SPSS 16.0.

Discussion and Analysis:

Now that organizations have already invest money, energy and time in developing and implementing work life/family programs in order to get the maximize productivity output, they should establish a supportive work family/life culture to encourage employees adapt these policies and programs. Actually, organizational culture change is a hard process, and the establishment of supportive work-family/life culture is affected by factors from social norms and identification (Haas et al., 2002), which make it even more difficult and complicate. HRM, as an important part in strategy implementation, should play a key role in building a supportive work-family/life culture.

From last year's there have been drastic changes in organizations especially in the field of HRM. The focus has been broadened from the micro level to more macro- or strategic perspective,

known as strategic human resource management. The basic promise of this perspective is that organizations that achieve congruence between their human resource practices and their policies should enjoy superior performance (Delery and Doty, 1996). The strategic human resource management perspective emphasizes that a workforce strategy should fit an organization's business goals, culture and environmental circumstances and that human resource management practices should be interrelated and internally consistent (Dreher, G.F., 2003).

First HRM department should make executive and organizational leaders aware of the importance of organizational culture in the implementation of WLB policies. Organization's leaders can show their commitment to the WLB programs by allocating needed resources (Rayman et al., 1999). Human resource managers may need to serve as communication channel between users of the programs and top management (Nord et al., 2002). They should communicate with high-level managers about how the new programs are affecting employees' life and organizational performance, and encourage them to support more to the WLB programs.

Second managers should be cautioned that some of their traditional practices may undermine the effectiveness of WLB programs (Nord et al., 2002). So, HRM should offer new training for them to accept the change in the workforce and the new job arrangement, by which to help managers and supervisors overcome difficulties to underutilize work/life options or devalue the contributions or commitment of flextime employees (Nord et al., 2002), then to change their attitudes towards the different employees with gender, position and family responsibility.

Third, women's position should be enhanced in the organization. Although work and family are not simply women's issues, the reality is that women often have more personal experience than men in dealing with work life/ family issues and are more likely than men to consider them (Bailyn et al., 2001; Council of Economic Advisers, 2010).

Fourth, new performance evaluation methods should be established by organizations. In order for the effective utilization of WLB programs/policies, the assumption that "a worker out of sight is a worker out of control" prevails in many organizations must be changed (Rayman et al., 1999), which demand the new performance evaluation methods.

Five, organizations should make these programs to be perceived as fair by both users and non-users, consideration must be taken to avoid subtle penalties with respect to task assignments, compensation and promotion (Nord et al, 2001). So, managers and supervisors should share control and responsibility of WLB Programs/policies with employees.

Conclusion:

There is direct relationship between the WLB and organizational policies and employees. HRM department should help organization to establish supportive organizational culture, such as the support from top management, the assistance to supervisors and managers, enhancement of women's positions, the establishment of the new performance evaluation methods, the consideration of fairness and co-workers. In all, only by the establishment of a supportive work-family/life culture, organization and employees capitalize on the implementation of WLB programs/policies. We want to enhance that everyone benefits from good practice in work-life balance.

In summary, a successful convergence between work and non-work aspects can be a win-win situation for employees and employers alike. Organizations must ensure that there is a work life balance to their organizations, which will open the new paths for better performance, improved morale and this will lead to higher job satisfaction, which will ultimately help to improve the organization's performance and profitability

Study Limitations:

For research we can use more diverse sample for examination of other differences. Also one more factor the accuracy of the analysis is totally dependent on the data we obtained from the respondents in select organizations.

Organizational Implications:

Organizations must ensure that there is a work life balance to their organizations, which will open the new paths for enhancing the performance, improved morale and results in higher job satisfaction, which will ultimately help to improve the organization's performance and profitability.

Future Research Directions:

1. Work Life Balance and Conflict can have numerous positive outcomes like increased organizational Commitment, Engagement etc and negative ones like Stress, Burnout, and Alcoholism etc. All these outcomes have not been studied and further research in these areas will throw greater light on the varied outcomes of balance and conflict.
2. Work life balance is influenced by a no. of factors. It is necessary that these factors and their effect are identified. It is also imperative for the Employers to address work life issues through understanding what employees want and proactively initiate strategies and programs to address work life conflicts & imbalances.

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