

WORK LIFE BALANCE: INFLUENCERS AND REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has resulted in transforming the working world by transforming the interaction of social and cultural elements. An imbalance and disequilibrium is witnessed around the world in professional and personal lives of employees. Now-a-days, employees have got too busy in making a living that they do not have time to make a living. Moreover, surge in demands at workplace, tenseness of loss of employment, rising pressure of work due to unceasing work, rise in family expectations etc. are some of the influencers that have made work-life balance a complex affair. An overall physical and mental health of employees has been affected and degradation of family-life has been experienced. If attempts are made collectively by the employees and organization to eliminate this imbalance, it will not only favor the employee, but in turn benefit the organization as well. By introducing work-life balance to the employee, the organization will encounter lower day offs, belatedness and rate of workforce turnover. Therefore, it is essential to develop such an environment which would help to manage the work and family of an employee together. However, this study lays emphasis on finding remedies to cope with the challenges such as achieving a balanced work-life and managing personal and professional life in a sustainable way.

KEYWORDS: *Work-Life Balance, Challenges, Influencers, Remedies, Globalization.*

Introduction

Meaning of Work

- Activities which are done for purpose is work
- To do something in order to earn money is work.
- Work is activity directed towards the accomplishment of a set or purpose.
- Work may also be explained as sphere of activities undertaken by individuals for number of reasons.

Through Work-life balance employees of an organization can have a balance in their personal and professional lives. Hudson (2005), defined work-life balance as the disseminating of an individual's time and focus between work and family". Work-life balance inspires the employees to divide the time according to the priorities and to get a grip by spending time with family, maintaining health, etc. as well as making a career. It is a key concern in the business world as it helps in motivating the employees and enhancing the faithfulness towards the organization. Work -Life balance is a control measurement of when, where and how the employees work. It is achieved all through when the interest of an individual for a fulfilled life inside and outside the waged employment is acknowledged and respected as a yardstick, to the mutual interest of the individual person, Line of Work and the community. It is a self-defined, self-determined contentment that an individual could achieve or can fix as an Aim that enables the person to organize effectively numerous tasks at work-place, at home, and in their society. It adds to physical, spiritual, family and community health, and achieve it without sorrow, stress or damaging impact. It is about "living contented all through and getting a control over a person's time so a person can achieve that" (HR Magazine, 2001).

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Effects of Work Life Balance

The workers begin to have good association with the system management when they have a balanced life. Balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases company productivity and reduces employee turnover and absenteeism. Introducing employment policies that encourage a healthier work-life balance for the employees could immensely benefit an organization. When employees maintain balance, the organization they work in, remains balanced. When stress is managed, a positive atmosphere is created which proves to help in protecting health physically and mentally. A happy and contented employee becomes more positive and productive.

Some of the benefits of work life balance are discussed below:

- It helps in boosting employees' motivation and helps them to work more appropriately at job.
- It helps in reducing the tenseness of employees as they could spend sufficient time with their family.
- Organizational productivity can be enhanced by having an employee who is cool and composed compared to those who are over-indulged in work.
- Good living can be achieved by possessing a healthy Work-life balance. It involves a balanced diet, physical wellness etc.
- Enthusiastic and ambitious employees could help in progression and proliferation of an organization as they are dedicated and committed to their work and career.
- It leads to lowering down absences and employee exit workflow.
- It helps to enhancing loyalty, consistency and driving force of employees.
- It helps in creating a contented and harmonious workforce.
- It helps in maintaining healthfulness.
- It helps in better decision making and prioritizing of work.

Effects of Work Life Imbalance

In the older times the balance between work and personal life were greatly maintained. Today, however, professional life is interfering with the personal life and to maintain a good work-life balance is not a simple task. Having an imbalance between work and personal life can have very damaging effects on one's health. An imbalance is basically an absence of well-defined and regularly enforced boundaries between personal life and Work-life. Not to have a good Work-life balance could end up leaving overexertion, nervousness and even depression.

Improper balance in Work-life balance is also influenced by the factors such as:

- **Anxiety:** If a person is exhausted, it reduces the capability to work efficiently and to have clarity in thinking.
- **Exertion:** Long hours of work could be the reason of stress which may have negative effects on one's immunity.
- **Insufficient Time for Family:** Long hours of work might make a person to skip crucial family moments. This can make one feel neglected and can damage relationships.
- **Lethargy:** Failing to set up borderline between work and home life could result in suffering from physical and mental strain. As an outcome, the ability to think also suffers. One productivity decreases and the person likely fails in the execution.
- **Tough Demands:** Working extra hours might lead to taking on extra responsibility. This can cause extra stress and challenges that one will have a really hard time facing.

Work Life Balance: Influencers

Role conflict, gender discrimination, children care issues, lack of recognition, health issues, time management issues, problems of social support etc. are some common factors which influences work-life balance of women in India. (Vijaya Mani 2013). These factors can be grouped in the following categories:

- **Domestic Factors:** These include children issues, spouse support, home responsibilities, parental responsibilities, spouse work hours etc. Studies were undertaken to examine the impact of these factors on work-life balance (Suchet and Barling 1986, Loerch et al.1989, Adams et al. 1996, Frone et al.1997, Aryee et al. 1999). Results revealed that women face less conflict between work and family if they get enough spouse support, ultimately results into highly balanced Work-life.

- **Job Factors:** Factors that have direct or indirect effect on work-life balance such as, task autonomy, task variety, task complexity, number of working hours, role conflict, flexibility in work schedule etc. Role stressors pertaining to work include role conflict and role ambiguity. Their level of severity causes variability in strain and conflicts for both women and men. Task complexities and task autonomy were found to have more significant impact on Work-life balance in case of females as compared to males. According to Greenhaus et al. (1989), Voydanoff (2004) and Butler et al. (2005), task characteristics also, have impact on Work-life balance.
- **Personal Factors:** Individual related factors that affect work-life balance include age, marital status, gender, emotional intelligence etc. A lot of studies have shown the impact of gender on work-life balance of an individual like, Williams and Alliger (1994) Higgins et al. (1994) Loscocco (1997) Grzwacz et al. (2007) Rajadhyaksha and Velgach (2009) etc. On the other hand, some authors reported that work -life balance is not affected by gender such as, Frone et al. (1992a) Milkie and Peltola (1999) Hill et al.(2001) Eagle et al (1997) and Wesley and Muthuswamy (2005). In the reference of literature review no definite results can be drawn with respect to gender discrimination in Work-life balance. However, on the basis of available literature studies which reported gender differences, it may be concluded that women employee experiences high work family conflict. Emotional intelligence has been found to directly relate to Work-life balance. (Carmeli 2003)
- **Stress Related to Survival:** When there is a threat to survival or health, or some unpleasant or challenging event is experienced, it is called survival stress.
- **Mental Stress:** It arises when an individual worries about events which are beyond the control, due to a tensed and hurried approach to life, or from problems in relationships caused by one's own behavior.
- **Weariness and Overstress:** Here, challenges in balancing Work-life occur from events and pressures at work and builds up over a long period of time. This can also occur in putting lots of efforts to accomplish too much in too little time or where you are not using effective time management strategies.

Remedies to Deal with the Challenges

- **Self-Sustenance**
Managing one's self properly may not be easy, particularly for adjusting adequate sleeping hours, scheduling exercise, and following nutritious diet. Self-management is recognizing the effective use of spaces in our lives, and other available resources including time and effort. It allows us to become master of our own life; others has no control over it.
- **Planning**
It involves making best possible use of our time and other supporting resources. Effective time management is ensured through deciding appropriate goals and identifying priorities. It helps in arranging appropriate tools to carry out specific tasks for achieving required results.
- **Managing Stress**
Due to globalization and fast changing lifestyles, Societies are becoming more complex day by day resulting in increasing level of stress among individuals. Every one of us needs to become adept to work with more number of people, facing lot of distractions, and noise and learn to work out of pressure-filled situations. We can reduce stress by focusing on one thing at a time instead of being involved in multi-tasking.
- **Ability to Change**
Change is virtually the only constant in this fast-paced world. Continually experimenting with new methods and re-adapting others are essential for building a successful career and a joyful family life. Effective change management entails making intermittent and intensive efforts to match your progress with that of your immediate world and ensuring that the volume and rate of change at work and at home is not discomfoting you and your family.
- **Relaxation**
Among work-life balance supporting disciplines leisure management has not been given due importance. It recognizes the importance of rest and relaxation- that leisure, and "time off" are vital components of human life and help in increasing their productivity. Effective leisure management requires varying one's activities so that it would not be monotonous.

- **Community**

Being a social animal, a human being needs to recharge and replenish their batteries constantly. In order to be relaxed, we should have a healthy and functional relationship outside work. It reduces the burden of work and lessens the stress associated with it. Spending noble time with the closed ones is one of the effective measures to reduce pressure.

Conclusion

An individual plays many roles in his/her life viz., parents, siblings, spouse, son/daughter, neighbor, friend, employee, colleague and many others. Also maintaining a perfect balance between career and family has always been a challenge for working professionals. Most of them try to bring out the best in every role and attempt to meet the demands that each role puts on them, even they are conflicting. This way work-life imbalance appears when the expectations imposed by many roles a person plays, clash with one another. Daily routines have also become more complex, which results into stress in the work or personal lives. On the other hand, balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases an organization's productivity and reduces the number of conflicts among co-workers and management. Therefore, the kind of remedies that have been discussed in the present study should be adopted by the employees to be stress free. However, an employee is not entirely responsible to manage everything. Organizations too are considered to be the facilitators of work-life balance.

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