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Determinants of Organisational Stress and Worklife Balance: A Review of Literature

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Abstract:

Stress and work life balance is now a global buzzword. Research is going on this arena to reach out the causes behind stress and work life balance. The following literatures will be focusing on the issues associated with stress and the work life balance and the adverse outcomes of it. Here a cause and effect relationship can be established from the literature review. Stress is described as the state of emotional or mental strain that is caused due to some unavoidable circumstances. It has now become a topic for social and psychological concern for many individuals and organization both. Organizations are employees based and if the employees are not functioning in a proper manner, then the growth of organization is hampered and they fail to perform in the competitive global market. The literature review papers here chosen ranges between year 1999 to year 2011. And out of the review, the conclusion that we decipher is that stress is the outcome of excessive workload, unusual timing, low job security, less of motivation from the supervisors and coworkers, unhealthy work environment, which brings to hampering the health as well as the job of an employee. And since stress and work life balance are both having a cause and effect relationship with each other, or are intertwined terms the adverse outcomes of stress has a negative impact on individuals work life balance which is mainly seen in the dual-working couples.

1. Introduction

Stress a state of mental or emotional strain or tension which results from adverse or unavoidable circumstances. Work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between the paid work (i.e. job) and various personal activities which includes spending time with family, taking care of the children at home taking part in social activities etc. Stress and work life balance are the very recent topics of study for many researchers. Researchers across globe are spending time and money to find the reasons behind stress and how it is affecting the work life balance. Now-a-days stress is mainly experienced by any and every individual in the organization where they are working. There are varied reasons behind occurrence of stress like long working hours, work overload, lack of mental support from supervisor and co-worker, working in shift hours etc. These affect the individual both mentally and physically. Mentally they become demotivated and start avoiding their work, cynicism, poor productivity, turnover, sick leave. And physically they are vulnerable to all kinds of diseases which make them unable to work. This is a serious concern for all organizations as it affects the organizational effectively and overall performance of the organization is hampered which affects the organizational goals and objectives. Similarly work life balance also has some adverse effects on the employee behavior towards their work. The work life balance issue is mainly noticed in the dual career couples where the women especially who has to go out for job finds difficult to juggle between both the job and home matters. They are not able to give a proper time to family, their children, and thus the private life gets hampered. Due to this many working mothers who once had an elevating career had to quit job in order to maintain their family life. The issues related with work life balance were severe conflicts between the couples which affected the child growth, and it even lead to divorce and separation.

The topic is important as they both are very severe issues faced in the psychological and social domain. Any individual who is undergoing such a stage fails to put their effort in their work and thus leads to a failure of their job. We all know that employees are the strength of any organization. So if the employee is not working properly the organization will not be able to deliver its outputs on time and hence the effectiveness of an organization gets affected which leads to a failure.

2. Objectives of the Study

- 1. The primary objective of the literature review was to find the root cause of stress happening in employees due to organizational change and how to reduce the problem by reviewing the existing literature.
- 2. The secondary objective was to derive remedies and also find alternative measures for the work life balance faced by dual-career couples.

3. Methodology of the Study

For this review, only scholarly articles with the key word/phrase 'stress', 'work life balance' and 'physical and psychological outcomes of stress' have been referred. The articles referred were from the year 1999-2011.

4. Literature Review

- 1. Schabracq (2000) focuses on the technological advancement which is an effect of globalization. Technological changes also encompass the political, social and economic changes, and how employees are adapting to such changes is the main discussion of the paper. The article focuses on some sources of stress like poor morale, poor productivity, turnover, sick leave, permanent vacancies, where it could be considered an underlying factor hampering organizational success and productivity. The stress related issues should be looked into and strategies should be formulated to inculcate on the same. This rapid change will lead to health issues in employees and the productivity and effectiveness of their work will get hampered. So the pace of the change should be lowered to some extent as a time will come when people with less technological knowledge will be an obsolete identity in the market.
- 2. Lovelace, Manz, Alvez (2007) focuses on leaders and their leadership skills which are enhanced through leadership development program are mainly conducted to handle the stressful situations and to manage it in a proactive manner. Here in this literature we will discuss on the concepts of self-leadership and shared-leadership which is mainly derived from the multi-disciplinary model based on literatures from physical and psycho-social domains. Thus the practice of self-leadership and shared leadership will help to keep an active and healthy work environment. The multi-disciplinary model is found to be the best-fit for leaders who can tackle stressful situations in a proactive manner.
- 3. Brightman (2000) focuses on the techno-social change which organizations are facing and how employees are adopting to the change. The literature says that the change effect helps in developing the self-mastery trait in an indivisual. In this literature we come know the different stages of change. Thus the change has many positive effects which help to develop the concepts of leadership, management, employee involvement and resource utilization. The change effect causes mangers to evoke an energy in themselves and and pass it down to their subordinates to sustain the change. The TRY model is used here in the literature for studying the change.
- 4. Imtiaz and Ahmed (2009) have studied the effects of stress on employee productivity and performance. Here the medical students of Rawalpindi, Pakistan were surveyed. A field study was done on the health and medical officers from all the health organizations of the city. The study was accomplished by primary data collection done with the help of a questionnaire. The findings were based on the stress levels and it was checked through the SPSS software. Different underlying factors of stress were found such as personal issues, lack of administrator support, low span of work etc. Thereafter a negative relationship between stress and job performance was determined. Co-relation between high personal dilemmas and stress showed a decline in financial reward, concentration over work, and decline in job performance.
- 5. Michie, Williams (2003) explains the psychological ill health faced by employees when they are subjected to long hours of work in the organization, work overload, lack of decision making. These stress situations were mainly faced due to organizational change. Here the literature will focus on the relationship between work factors and psychological ill health. For this, sampling was done on the reviews of NHS Centre. It is a qualitative survey where electronic devices were used in the sampling procedure and the people surveyed were mainly the medical officers, staffs, nurses. The literature review was based on topics such as aim of study, study design type and study of population. The study concluded that factors causing to the ill health of the employees was due to long of hours, work stress and lack of appreciation from supervisors which resulted to job strain
- 6. Vakola, Nikolaou (2005) focuses on occupational stress caused by organizational change. Organizations are embarking on programs which lead to such change. The literature focuses on the OB constructs of employee commitment and organization stress caused by the change. Sampling was conducted on 292 participants and with ASSET measurement tool the two variables organization commitment and workplace stress was measured. A negative relationship was derived between stress and organization commitment. The impact of the stress was reflected in the employee's work which caused to many stressors. The results derived from the findings were not supportive as a moderator to get relationship between organization stress and change. Issues which were associated with change was the lack of training which should be given to employees after every change. Here a positive relationship was derived between the employee commitment and change.
- 7. Tennant (2001) mainly focuses on the relationship between work related stress and outcomes like burnout, fatigue, absenteeism and accidents. The survey was cross sectional which was conducted with the help of questionnaires. The samples collected were on two groups of different economic status viz. white collars and blue collars. The blue collar employees mainly the labour class people stated that noise was one primary reason for stress which resulted to ill heath like mental sickness, absenteeism, anxiety and depression. The white collar employees which included teachers, doctors, nurses, and other health workers stated that stress was mainly caused by social factors, client stress, and overload of work and thus these moderating variables had a negative impact on the health. Occupational stress caused by constant change in workplace structures is one reason for ill health and thus it is becoming a normative study for further research.
- 8. Wallgren, Hanse (2010) focuses on the stress faced by IT consultants .The IT professionals are considered to be the most technologically knowledgeable people. In the literature we will cite the basic difference between the IT professional and IT

- consultant. IT professionals are those people who are working with their own company and are not on a deputation job. But IT consultants are those who are employees of IT consultancy firm and are deputed to to some client location within country or abroad to fulfill the client requirement and who has to face a fierce global competition every day, due to which these people are constantly upto upgradation of their technical skill. A cross sectional study was conducted on the Swedish IT consultants and the findings said that motivation was one factor which acted as a mediator between job control and perceived stress. The variables and constructs were measured through SEM model. Interview was done with the help of a web enabled questionnaire and the response rate was calculated through a five point and nine point scale. The stress factors found in any IT consultants was an after effect of long working hours, excessive pressure, client delivery which causes to stress in them and hence affects their motivation if the job is not accomplished properly.
- 9. Vakola, Tsaousis, Nikalaou (2004) has limited on the emotional effect faced due to organization change. The emotions and reactions of organization change are called as 'emotional endurements'. Thus these emotional aspects were measured by indepth interviews which were mainly on the parameters of emotion, anger, cynicism, anxiety. Here in this literatue we also know that intelligent people are more likely to react to any change because they perceive the change more quickly and thus the reactions to their stimuli is also very quick. The personality factor in this literature was measured by FFM (Five Factor Model) where many meta- analytic studies which were conducted and thus this model helped to study the individual differences of the employees.
- 10. Pool (2000) focuses on the stressors which we face in our day to day environment. Here a relationship is established between the organization culture and the stressors created due to organizational change. The SEM model was found to be the best fitting model to measure the variables associated with the change. The study concluded that a constructive culture will help to reduce different issues related with stress like job tension, burnout, low motivation and will bring increase in job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance. It is believed that if the mission and vision of any organization is in sync with the culture prevelant then the culture is considered to be enriched in nature. With such an enriched culture the strategy implementation and formulation can happen properly. If not so then the organization goals and success suffers a loss.
- 11. Michie (2002) discusses the cultural reason for causing stress and how we can manage stress at our workplace. Here in this literature they focus on the leadership skill which has to be built in any individual at the managerial level so that they are able to understand employees problems and help to cope with it. Hence strategy implementation should take place and the problems faced by employees need be reported to the labour department and trade unions (if existing)which can take care of the health and safety measures of the organisation.
- 12. Keen (1981) mainly focuses on the long term change which the organizations are facing due to the globalization effect. This has lead to the expansion of an organization in terms of its size and structure. Thus a relationship is established between organization change and information system. This lead to many causes such as social inertia, resistance and counter implementation. The pluralistic nature of the organization is affected. The literature will focus more on the political rather than on the technological nature of the organization.
- 13. Crosbie, Moore (2004) focuses on working from home, a good option to maintain the work life balance. A study was conducted on the British labour force to understand the same. The literature shows three spheres of our life and how the work life balance is fitting in these spheres. First sphere is time and space, second is the care time and third is the work time space. The interview conducted was a focus group interview which was carried out on three groups of people viz professional workers, unskilled and semiskilled workers. The feedback collected was a mixed feedback where some people supported and some did not gain much from this practice.
- 14. Walker, Wang, Redmond (2008) focuses whether home made business a better option to maintain work life balance. The literature is a study on the mothers who find difficult to manage the work and life balance and seek for an alternative form of employment. The impact on work life balance was found good as women had enough time to look after their children, to manage their home and also be economically sufficient. This option helped reduce family- related conflicts. Here a survey was conducted in Western Australia and a sample size of 62 was collected. The survey was based on the issues faced on areas such as operators, business characteristics and home-made business. The sampling gave a result that home made business was a better option of making income for both men and women as it had flexibility on their work schedule, where they can manage both family and profession.
- 15. Hakim (2006) focuses on the gender differentiation made in an organization. The literature focuses on the feminist approach theory which helps to make the family-friendly policy in an organization. Recently the labour law has come up with many solutions which will reduce the pay gap existing between male and female. With the help of family-friendly policy the gender equality is brought to focus and the glass ceiling effect is taken into consideration.
 - This literature also discusses on the Preference Theory, which is considered a good theory for the work life balance. The theory is grounded on many disciplines such as historical, empirical and seeks to be the best theory for all rich modern societies. Historically, it is a fit because all our values become predictors of our behaviours. Preference theory has categorized women based on their careers who are work centered women, adaptive women and house centered /family women. Thus the women fitting in these categories are judged on their priority of work and their personal life.
- 16. Messermith (2007) focuses on the work life conflict of the IT professionals. It is the globalization effect which causes to longer working hours, 24/7 shift working, onsite client support, which has mainly lead to the work life conflict of these professionals. Hence the HR managers should take initiative in building policies which would help them to solve conflicts and handle stress.

- Policies such as family –friendly policy, flextime, training given to employees to handle stress situation, mentoring programs should be initiated. Thus it can help the professionals mainly the women to devote some time for their family as well as manage their work simultaneously. Secondly the literature also focuses that the common problems associated with IT professionals are burnout, turnover and qualitative statements. These issues should be looked into and policies should be formulated on the same.
- 17. Pettigrew, Woodman, Cameron (2001) focuses on how to straddle the social and organizational change which we are facing every now and then. The literature mainly focuses on various aspects of history, process and action where we can stem down to get the actual reason why such change is occurring. Here survey is done on organizations of 10 countries and then a comparative study is made to map the changes occurring in the surveyed countries. A link is established between the change and organizational preference.
- 18. Brown (2010) opines on the perception any women holds about their job and the challenges they face in the real world. During their motherhood phase, they face a tough situation to manage between their family, children and job. Thus juggling with all the factors lead to an imbalance in their life. On the other hand, in the organization they fail to seek any kind of mental support from their superiors and thus a demotivation sets in. So to get a solution for this problem a survey was conducted with the help of an open ended questionnaire which measured the perceived and real impact of motherhood on working women. The rationale behind the survey was to bring a contradiction in the perception the working mothers have about their job and the challenges they face when they are into it. The findings said that even women who are experiencing a career elevation prefer to give priority to their home and child first than their job. Thus a negative relation between women career and motherhood was established.
- 19. Valk, Srinivasan (2011) focuses on the work pattern of women in the IT industry and the challenges they face to keep a balance with their work and family life. In India IT industry is considered to be the most stressful industry, where employees associated with it should be constantly motivated to lead a better performance in their job. Motivation should come from family perspective as well as professional perspective. The literature focuses on the problems of work life balance faced by working women who are at their middle age, where they are handling huge responsibilities at work as well as home. For the purpose a qualitative survey was done on 13 women of Bangalore IT industry whose ages ranged between (28-36) years. The survey was done with the help of a semi -structured interview. The age variation gave a better study and a clear picture of how women of different status, are facing a challenge to manage both work and family. Findings say that more HR policies should be implemented where women can have a better work life and the balance of the duo can be maintained properly. Policies such as job sharing, telecommuting, parental leave, day care facilities for the children, onsite childcare, canteen facilities and flextime should be introduced so that the women can manage their work and family both properly.
- 20. Smithson, Stokoe (2005) focuses on the gender equality and the impact of it on the work life balance. Here the literature discusses on the feminist theory which is to a gender neutral approach of any organization. The approaches says that there should be equality in terms of pay and opportunities in an organization and the flexitime allocation for all working mothers should be lenient in nature than that of the male. The survey carried out on the women came with a concept of gender-blind organization where women were considered at par with the men in all situations and was relegated out of the' mommy tracks. 'Policies should also be formulated for men such a macho—maternity where leave for a longer duration should be granted from organizations to take care of their child and family. Flexible working conditions should also be well formulated as the women are subjected to dual side of work and family.
- 21. Williams (2008) states in the literature how the work life balance of the shift workers are affected due to the erratic working time. The literature mainly tells that working on shifts has many bad effects not only on the health side, but also the family side of any individual. The shift extends upto the weekends where the working mothers face a problem of childcare. Here a survey was conducted on shift workers whose age ranged between (19 -64) years and was compared with the full time workers. The statistical implication of multivariate analysis is used to bring the impact of work schedule on the demographic and socioeconomic variable and the affect of it on worklife. Factors such as worklife balance and work overload was examined properly. The shift workers, mainly the night and evening shift workers were examined who were catering to the BPO and the KPO industry. The sampling was done on the logistic regression model. The findings decipher that shift working is not a suggested option of work life balance as many women workers had to cut off sleep due to the shift timings and faced severe ill health.
- 22. Bianchi, Milkie (2010) based his study on a family oriented topic which covers the daily issues faced by any family. It is a generalist survey, which was done between the period of 2000-2010. Here the survey was done on the low income families of American and European countries. The main objective of the study was to understand how the low income group families sustained during the poor economic times. Factors such as low wages, job loss, and low pension wages erode the balance and how these circumstances arise in conflicts with the family members. The literature can be a detail study on various topics concerning work and family issues like gender time and division of labour, paid work, maternal employment and child, work family conflict, work family stress and health etc.
- 23. Guest (2002) mainly focuses on the contemporary theories of work life balance and why it is considered the most important theory of management and social science studies. The literature mainly focuses on the traditional approach theories of work life balance. Now many modern researchers are working on the theory and the consequences of the theory is derived. The topic is also an area of investigation in psychology. Many studies in Europe are now being conducted on the issues of work life balance.
- 24. Judge, Thoresen (1999) says how managers cope with organizational change. Managers in an organization are influenced by 7 traits such as locus of control, self efficacy, positive effectively, self esteem, tolerance for ambiguity and risk aversion. These

- seven traits now are broadly categorized under 2 groups:- positive self concept and risk tolerance. Both the factors have a big influence to resist with the organizational change. Research showed that the extrinsic factors of change such as job level, salary, plateuing, and job performance have a bigger impact on the intrinsic factors such as organization commitment and job satisfaction. And the influence on one factor had a positive outcome on the other factor.
- 25. Pettigrew, Woodman, Cameron (2001) focuses on challenges we face in our daily life when the organizations are undergoing change. The pluralist theory may entail a stronger effect on social science and management to research on the change and innovation. The process of change is a continuous process. In an extremely complex world we should go beyond boundaries to experience the change and study on the diversity. The recent dichotomy in modern times has been theories and practice. The article needs to straddle more on the social and organization sciences to transcend the current belief which other scholars are engaging.
- 26. Markus, Robey (1988) based their study on theories of how information technology is bringing change in organizations. It consists works on several researches from academic disciplines and multi discipline such as social science, computer science, organization theory, management science. The article is based on causal theory which explicitly implies the cause and relationship faced with the change. The causal theory is determined as the best fit theory as it studies the cause of the change and the consequences leading to the change.
- 27. Jehn, North craft, Neale (1999)studied on the work force diversity on the socio-two modal category of diversity, value diversity, and informational diversity. Here in this literature the two moderators task group and task interdepence on task group were studied. This was mainly done on a multilevel study on the 92 workgroups. The informational diversity was found to influence group performance, but it initiated conflict. Social diversity was found to have an influence on the morale of the group member. Value diversity had a negative impact and it decreased satisfaction and the feeling of commitment to the group. The purpose of the study was to help the manager to create and mange the workforce successfuly.
- 28. Swody, Powell (2007) focuses on the organization family programs adopted by employers for their employees to meet their family needs. This was the cause and effect of the workforce diversity which had an impact on dual career couples. The women find difficulty to manage their work and family life and result in an imbalance of the both. The family- friendly initiative executed in many organizations has a positive impact on the employee behavior and develop a positive attitude towards work. The article highlights the parallel conceptual model which can be used at complex and multi level where employees can take decisions to participate in their family friendly programs. The model was propounded by Kozlowski and Kein. Here research was conducted at both the individual and managerial level to find the essence of the family-friendly benefit.
- 29. Rhoades, Eisenberger (2002) briefs on the understanding the employees have about their employers, how in return, the employers are taking care about the well being of the employees. The approach was mainly called as Perceived Organization Support. A meta- analysis survey was conducted and 3 major beneficial theories associated with this approach. The theory had some favourable outcome on the employee side such as job satisfaction, positive mood, and on the organization side such as effective commitment and lessened withdrawal behaviour. These are mainly the outcomes of the organization support theory, which addresses the psychological process underlying consequences of POS. The POS encircled on three aspects, firstly on the reciprocity of the feelings one gain about the organization, secondly the caring, respect, approval which relates with socioemotional needs and thirdly it strengthens employee belief through rewards which in turn increases performance of the employee. The support theory beliefs that every organization cares about its employees and reciprocate it in the form of commitment, loyalty and performance. It was introduced in the organization to get an employee and employer relationship.
- 30. Albertsen, Rafnsdóttir, Grimsmo, Tómasson, Kauppinen (2008) reviewed the effect of long hours worked in an organization and how it damages the work life balance. The long works worked has a bad impact on the child mental and behavioral growth. The review was based on a Nordic collaboration from the year 2005-2007 and literatures were taken on the topic of stress and work life balance. Here an empirical study was conducted. The study gave the results that factors which affected the work life balance was long work hours fit between hours and compensation, total workload and non standard work hours.

5. Findings

- 1. The findings we get from the literature review shows that stress and work life balance are mainly the cause of organizational change which is an outcome of the globalization effect. The employees affected by the change endure severe physical ailments such as health deteoriation, sickness, and mental instability. The emotional aspect of an individual is also affected when they undergo the change and very few people are there to give them mental and moral support.
- 2. The work life balance is mainly the cause of the extreme stress faced at organization level which is an outcome of organizational change, here the couples (esp. dual-working) are found to be the victims of the work life balance, where they are found to have conflicts amongst themselves which even result for separation and divorce.

6. Conclusion

After going through all the literature reviews we can conclude that stress and work life balance both are some severe issues faced at the individual and organizational context. Stress not only leads to ill health of any individual, but also causes mental disability for any individual to perform. Also, another important reason which we got from the literature review is that the constant and rapid changes taking places in any organization. This sometimes becomes a problem for the employees as they are not able to sustain the change and they start avoiding their work as they are not emotionally in a stage to accept organization change.

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