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Antecedents and Outcomes of Work-life Balance

Adeeba Irfan
Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies and Research, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, U.P. India
Dr. Feza T. Azmi
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management Studies and Research, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, U.P. India

Abstract:
Purpose: Work Life Balance (WLB) has gained attention in almost every sector. However, there is a need to explore the factors/ antecedents that cause Work life balance and then the resulting outcome. Thus, the purpose of this study is to map the antecedents and outcome of Work Life Balance.
Design/methodology/approach: This study is qualitative and is based on the extensive literature review. On the basis of literature review, research propositions were framed and then on the basis of propositions a model was developed that can be proved by other researchers.
Findings: Different antecedents like flexi time and family friendly policies etc were some reason that when present can cause work life balance and job satisfaction and organization commitment were the positive outcome.
Managerial implications: This study may provide insight regarding the problem that employees usually face. There should be employee friendly policies , flexi time and supervisor's support etc and then that can led to more committed and satisfied employees otherwise there will prevail problems like turnover and absenteeism etc.
Research Limitations: The study is based on a literature review. There is a need to carry out a quantitative approach to make the research more useful and applicable.

Keywords: *Work- life Balance, Family friendly policies, job satisfaction, organization commitment*

1. Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) can be defined as a measure of proper control as to how, when and where people work. Proper work life balance can be achieved when an individual is able to fulfill all his/her needs in respect of both family and work. In the early 1970s, WLB emerged as primarily a woman based issue, considering the fact that female employees had a tough time coping up with work and family responsibilities. However, by 1980 the focus shifted towards the development of effective policies for WLB in light of both male and female employees (Frame & Hartog, 2003).

Changes in the workplace and in employee demographics in the past decade have led to an increased concern for the boundary between employee work and non work lives. More and more women are joining the workforce and dual career couples are becoming increasingly common. As a result of these changes, there has been an increasing interest among researchers and practitioners towards the concept of work-life balance. Work life balance is a broad concept encompassing prioritization between 'work' (career and ambition) on the one hand and 'life' (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Related, though broader, terms include 'lifestyle balance' and 'life balance'.

Byrne (2005) describes WLB as juggling of five aspects of one's life at any one point in time: work, family, friends, health and self. Clutterback (2003) defined WLB as awareness of different demands in relation to energy and time, ability to allocate the time and energy among different domains of work and life and then to apply and make choice. Sparrow and Cooper (2003) suggested that WLB include those practices that have the capacity to increase the autonomy and flexibility of employees in the process of balancing different requirements. There are WLB issues that are extremely important in the workplace, these are: increased level of stress, competitions and insecurities in the workplace. All these factors are important and they lead to disruption in WLB (Bonney 2005). Though it is not easy for any organization to inculcate all the employee friendly policies, but incorporation of such types of policies are beneficial for employee, employers as well as the society at large. These benefits include: lower rates of absenteeism, increased productivity, reduced overheads, improved recruitment and retention, satisfied and equitable workforce and improved customer experience.

Interference between work and non-work responsibilities has a number of negative outcomes. In terms of job attitudes, employees reporting high levels of both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict tend to exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Behavioral outcomes of both directions of conflict include reduced work effort, reduced performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover Anderson, Coffey, and Byerly, (2002); Both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict have also been associated with increased stress and burnout (Anderson et al., 2002; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), cognitive difficulties such as staying awake, lack of concentration, and low alertness (MacEwen & Barling, 1994), and reduced levels of general health and energy (Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996). Work-life

Balance is important for life, family and job satisfaction and it also helps in reducing absenteeism, turnover (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000).

Work-life Balance policies affect the well being of employees (Hayward *et. al:* 2007). Work-life Balance policies/ practices may include (Budd & Mumford, 2005):

- Flexi time
- Job share
- Working from home
- Having parental paid leave
- Having a nursery in work place

2. Antecedents/Factors Affecting Work Life Balance

There are large numbers of factors that affect work life balance of an employee. Ngo and Lau (1998) examined that there are two aspects of work and family boundary, i.e. work inference with family and family interference with work. It has been found that there are large number of job related factors (hours of work, career salience and work involvement) that have direct bearing on the work life balance issues of both male and female employees. Given a choice, most employees prefer a job that offers Work-life Balance in relation to a good salary (Pezzini, 2005). Work-life Balance policies affect the well being of workers (Hayward *et al*., 2007). Lauzun *et al.* (2010) examined that how supervisors act in response to the work-life balance requirements of their employees through a qualitative research.

Warner and Hausdorf (2009) suggested that organization and supervisor support helps in attaining Work-life Balance. McPherson (2007) said that there cannot be Work-life Balance in any organization without the top management support, as they are the one who are policy makers. Lockwood (2003) discovered different tactics that should be employed by the top management to achieve balance in work-life. Frone *et al.* (1997) suggested that it is organization as well as supervisor's support that leads to Work-life Balance. Lauzun *et al* (2010) selected supervisors from Fortune 500 companies who were surveyed regarding their responses to employees' desires for work-life accommodations. Data show that flexibility and schedule changes were the most frequently requested work-life accommodation and that such type of requests were accommodated 58% of the time. The most common barrier to obliging employees' request was deficiency authority. Results provide significant insight into the ways that work organizations can hold and authorize supervisors to provide employees' with work-life balance.

Family friendly policies are those which provide benefits to an employee family. Nowadays these are being used by the top management as a strategy to inculcate Work-life Balance in the organization (Dizaho & Othman, 2013). A policy of the organization, such as child and spouse support helps an employee to meet demands from the family and that reduces the work-family conflict (Amah 2010). Policies related to working from home help employees in maintaining Work-life Balance (Tipping *et. al*: 2012). Valcour and Hunter (2005) suggested that working from home provide flexibility and helps achieving Work-life Balance especially in women employees. One of the other employee friendly policies is teleworking which provide employees with a chance to manage work and life issues amicably (Drew, 2006). Policies related to child care assistance is also one of the important aspect vis-à-vis Work-life Balance. Pre- school and school going children are in need of their parents and this is the matter of concern for all working parents. Thus, children supportive policies also lead to work-life equilibrium among employees (Beauregard *et al.* 2009). Hooker *et al.* 2011 suggested that policies related to emergency leave, maternity leave and study leave also acts as antecedents to Work-life Balance.

It has been shown that non-standard hours of work have a negative bearing on Work-life Balance (Kauppinen, 2005). In India, Factories Act, 1948 states that an employee should not be allowed to work more than five consecutive hours without a period of rest. William (2008) stated that if an employee works 46 hours or more in a week then that employee will be dissatisfied and stressed. Tipping *et al*. (2012) stated that an employee has to work 1900 hours per year and that it is based on the number of working hours/ week minus holidays. Beyond this, it leads to work-life imbalance. Compressed working weeks or compressed hours of work can help an employee to work few days in which they have to achieve their targets and then they can manage their family responsibilities during other days (Tipping *et al.*, 2012). Flexi time enables employee to maintain proper Work-life Balance (Tipping *et. al*: 2012). Flexi time bears positive impact on the productivity (Bloom *et. al*: 2009). In the same way flexi time enables women employee achieve greater balance between family and work roles (Scandura & Lankau 1997).

3. Outcomes of Work-life Balance

According to Allen (2001), WLB is often seen in terms of organization commitment. It is expected that work life balance enhances an employee's commitment towards the organization. Organizational commitment is the individual' emotional attachment to the organization. The basis behind many studies has been to find ways to improve how workers feel about their jobs so that these workers would become more committed to their organizations. Organizational commitment predicts work variables such as organization citizenship behavior, turnover, and job performance.

Eaton (2003) found that WLB practices improved employees' organizational commitment, but only to the extent that employees felt free to use the practices without negative consequences to their work lives - such as damaged career prospects. According to Liff and Cameron (1997), use of work-life leave provisions is low among staff with career aspirations due to the belief that taking such leave will be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the organization. Interference between work and non-work responsibilities has a number of negative outcomes. In terms of job attitudes, employees reporting high levels of both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict tend to exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Working families' publications (2008) concluded that employee who is better able to balance work and family issues will have lower level of stress and will be more committed and satisfied. Further, Forsyth and Polzer-Debruyne

(2007) suggested that effective WLB policies help in reducing turnover intentions and increases job performance. If there are policies that are employee friendly then that will lead to increased job satisfaction, affective commitment and reduced intention to quit (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It was also found that organizational commitment is associated with turnover intentions of employee (Meyer & Allen, 1997). There is inverse relationship between organizational commitment and leaving intentions, which means that if there is high Organizational commitment then there will be lower intentions to quit and vice-versa (Elangovan, 2001).

Loyalty is also a type of commitment. Aityan (2011) defined employee loyalty as being committed to the success of the organization and an employee's feeling that working for this organization is the best option that they have. Moen, Roehling and Roehling (2001) suggested that flexi time policies, support of supervisor and all related things have direct bearing on employee loyalty. Supervisor's support reduces work-family role conflict and enhances loyalty among employees (Bond, 1998). Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) suggested that supervisor's support involves the type of social exchange that creates obligation among employees and finally leads to loyalty. WLB has a positive impact on employee loyalty (Dizaho & Othman 2013).

It has been found that WLB has a positive impact on organization citizenship behavior (Lambert, 2000). Osterman (1995) suggested that WLB programs enhance commitment and loyalty in employees and then that leads to organization citizenship behavior. Organ (1988) defined organization citizenship behavior as the behavior which is discretionary and beneficial to the organization and is shown by an employee without any greed of reward etc, and such behavior promotes organization effectiveness.

Job satisfaction is also one of the positive outcomes of WLB. Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as how people feel about their job. It depends on the extent to which people are satisfied or dissatisfied with their job. Diaz- Serrano and Cabral Vieira (2005) discovered that job satisfaction is an important predictor of overall well being and employees intentions to quit. There is a relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention (Arthur, 2001). Rose (2001) suggested that supervisor's support and employee friendly policies etc. that help in attaining WLB enhance job satisfaction as well. Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) too concluded that job satisfaction is a positive outcome of WLB. Forsyth and Polzer-Debruyne (2007) suggested that when an employee perceives that his employer is supportive and is helpful in integrating family and work related issues, it results in higher level of job satisfaction and organization commitment. Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) find out that there is impact of work obligations on personal life and that there is a linkage between the WLB and job satisfaction. Babakus *et al.* (1996) found out that if there is fairness in policies than the workers are likely to be more satisfied.

It has been found that nature of job, workplace environment; employee friendly policies and organizational culture have positive impact on Work-Life Balance (Berg et al., 2003).All employee friendly policies that are beneficial to employees increases job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Berg *et al*., 2003). In addition to this, Grover and Crooker (1995), used 1991 General Social Survey and examined that family responsive policies, flexible work schedule and dependent care, as part of WLB policies, have positive impact on turnover intentions and organizational commitment. Valcour and Batt (2003) suggested that if employee friendly policies are induced in the organization then there will be reduced turnover among employees.

Work-life Balance in an organization leads to more committed and satisfied employees and such outcomes will lead to financial benefits to organization. Thomson *et al.* (2008) found that various renowned companies made measurable financial benefits after including flexible working patterns and other Work-life Balance policies. Beauregard and Henry (2009) suggested that WLB practices rest on attracting better applicants and reducing work-life conflict, hence it enhances organizational performance.

Fleetwood (2007) suggested that WLB policies and practices reap such benefits to the organization that can be measured financially. These benefits are:

- Increase productivity
- Improved recruitment and retention
- Lower absenteeism
- Reduced overhead
- Improved customer experience
- Motivated and satisfied workforce

Thus, it can be inferred that all WLB policies leads to increased productivity, improved recruitment and retention, improved customer experience and lower level of absenteeism and overhead etc.

4. Research Propositions

Based on the above discussions, the following propositions may be forwarded:

4.1. Antecedents

As already discussed, several researchers (e.g. Ngo & Lau 1998; Pezzini 2005; Lauzun *et al.* 2010; Frone *et al.* 1997; Amah 2010) have agreed that the most common antecedents to Work Life Balance include supervisor's support, employee friendly policies and flexible work schedule.

- Proposition 1: Supervisor's support has a positive relationship with Work-life Balance.
- Proposition 2: Family-friendly policies have a positive relationship with Work-life Balance.
- Proposition 3: Leaves benefits have a positive relationship with Work-life Balance.
- Proposition 4: Flexible work schedule has a positive relationship with Work-life Balance.

Outcomes: As already discussed, several scholars (e.g. Allen 2001; Eaton 2003; Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Aityan 2011) have suggested that WLB affects organization commitment, employee loyalty and job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior and consequently all this affects turnover intention and actual employee turnover.

- Proposition 1: Work-life balance has a positive relationship with organization commitment.
- Proposition 2: Work-life balance has a positive relationship with employee loyalty.
- Proposition 3: Work-life balance has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.
- Proposition 4: Work-life balance has a positive relationship with organization citizenship behavior.
- Proposition 5: Work-life balance has a negative relationship with turnover intention & actual turnover.

Based on the above propositions following model is conceptualized:

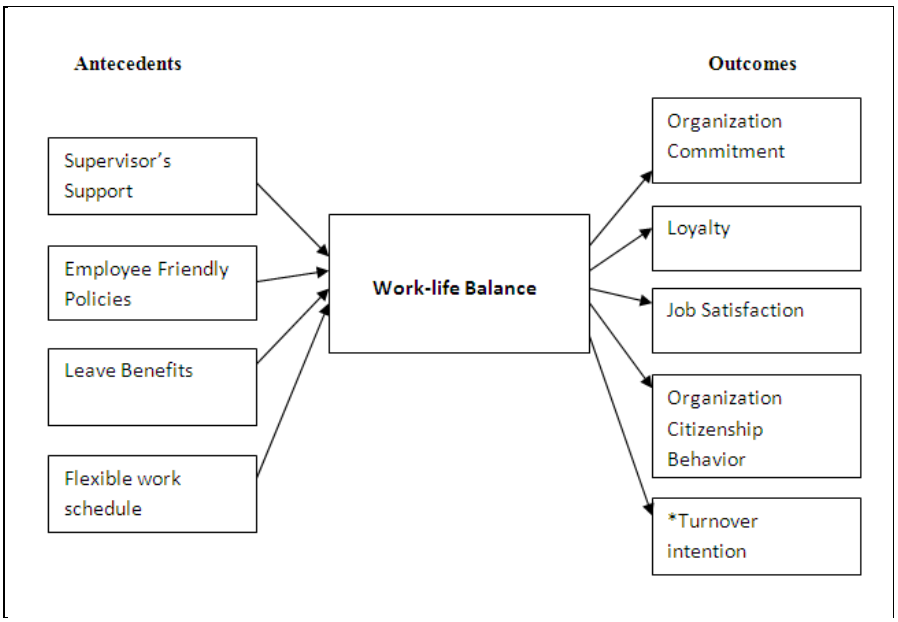

Figure 1
**WLB has negative relation with turnover intention*

5. Conclusion

It has been found from the literature review that if in an organization there are flexible work schedule, supervisor's support and family friendly policies then there will be outcomes like more committed and satisfied employees and they will also have reduced intention to quit the organization and such positive outcomes will reap positive financial benefits to the organization (Babakus et al. 1996; Amah 2010; Allen 2001; Ngo & Lau 1998; Pezzini 2005; Lauzun *et al.* 2010).

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