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The Relevance of Work-Life Balance in India in Present Scenerio

Ritika Ahuja

Assistant Professor, Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, India

Abstract:

Currently, in the Indian context, the concern over work life balance is a pertinent issue. Today's scenario is marked by the fast changing environment, intensive pressures ,greater use of technology, high professionalism and greater work stress. Today's age consists of many working fathers and mothers whose main aim is to find a "proper fit and balance" between work and family. When these employees go home, they should not carry any and work stress with them. This concept of Work-life balance has a deep and everlasting impact on employees attitudes & behaviours as well as on organisational effectiveness. Thus, it is a challenging issue for all the HR managers , leaders and researchers. The organisations must aim to provide such a practical & workable work –life balance policies and environment to its employees that meets the needs of both the organization as well as its employees. Also, merely, the creation of such policies will not help, until such an organisational culture is fostered that supports the use of such policies. Thus, this research paper is an attempt to study the work-life balance issues in detail and focuses on the initiatives and strategies adopted by the organisations and employees to balance their work and life interface. This paper is an attempt against the highly augmenting working hours and work pressures and also deals with the problems that the employees have to face , especially in India where the families are given the top priority.

Keywords: Work-life balance , Employee Engagement, flexible working hours, employee commitment and satisfaction

1. Introduction

In current scenario Work-life and Work-family issues are the subjects of research attention. It is leading to the active discussions about the implications of poor work-life fit for both individuals and society at a large. But, it is interesting and important to note that Work-life balance does not mean devoting equal time to both paid and non-paid works. In its broadest sense, it means a "reasonable fit" between the multiple roles in an individual's life. It means to have an equilibrium between the amount of time and effort than an individual has to devote to his job and his personal activities so as to have an overall sense of harmony & synchronization in life. According to Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com (It is an international work-life balance and consulting company), "Work-life balance is meaningful achievement & enjoyment in everyday life". He also adds that, to achieve better work-life balance, each individual needs to work smarter so that more and more work can be done in less time.

Work-life balance policies and practices are a deliberate and honest initiative on the part of the organization to have changes in its culture and programs so as to reduce the work-life conflicts and to make their employees more efficient and effective at work and in the other roles. The concern on WLB issues is more today because of the demographic and work-place changes, such as: a greater numbers of working women, shift from the joint family to nuclear families, emergence in the number of single parents, urbanization factors, a rise in the 24x7 working society culture and technological enhancements. Also, the companies nowadays feel that the engaged employees i.e. those who are willing to do extra efforts and go extra mile, have a deep effect on the success of a business and are thus seeking strategies that will allow them to build engagement. In todays economy, the employees are looking for improving and enhancing their skills, to grab the best opportunities, to have out of the box thinking, creativity , ideas and wants to work and dedicate themselves to a good reputed organization which provides them psychological satisfaction. And, research shows that all those organisations which provides such a workplace environment and conditions of meaningfulness are more likely to have engaged employees. Work life balance is extremely important for engagement. But, for this, HR managers may have to understand the unique needs of diverse groups and must recognize the individual differences and then design and implement the policies accordingly.

Work-life balance is an imperative consequence of the professional world for both men and women. This issue is more relevant for a developing country like INDIA because as a country surges towards development and enlightenment, its social structure becomes more open and wide in providing equal opportunities to all the members of the society. And thus, this development has resulted in better opportunities for the indian women in terms of education and employment opportunities. So, this study tries to examine the pressures of being women and being a part of the family in modern India and also with the pressure on organizations to attract and retain women in the workplace.

2. Review of Literature

- IOAN LAZĂR (2010) argues that building an organizational culture which supports work-life balance is a long term process for large organizations. It involves changing the way people think and talk about their work and about work-life

balance so that using flexible working options and other work-life initiatives becomes accepted and normal for everyone regardless of their gender, seniority within the organizational or personal commitments.

- SUSI AND JAWAHARRANI (2010) finds that Work-life balance and employee engagement has become a visible benchmark among high- performing organizations that reap the economic and reputational benefits of being publicly recognized as a 'best place to work' or an 'employer of choice'. Many Family-friendly organizations feel the need for work/ life balance which include recruitment and retention of valuable work force, reduced absenteeism, reduced employee stress, health benefits, job satisfaction, and better life balance. It has been suggested that an effectiveness of work-life balance policies and practices must incorporate the effects of workplace culture and supervisor support of employees' efforts to balance work and Family responsibilities.
- JAGDEEP SINGH (2013) reveals that Family-friendly policies adopted by the organizations can help the employees to decrease the work-family interface and yield benefits for themselves, their families and their employers. Though there is dearth of formal friendly initiatives practiced in the organizations in India, supportive work culture and informal friendly environment can benefit the employees and organizations. Apart from this personal attitude, Indian values, beliefs, life style, time management and spiritual inclination can make a difference and help the employees to balance their work and life efficiently.
- SANGEETA BHATNAGAR & P K JAIN (2014) have analysed that Work life balance is important and it should be improved in all the organizations. If it is not improved it leads to poor performance, absenteeism and sick leave. Their study has provided some clear indication of employees general views on WLB, their experience & their needs for flexible working. It has helped in identifying the areas where improvement could be made & policies should be further developed.
- NAMITA (2014) pointed out that work-life balance must be supported and encouraged at all levels of the organization, including senior management, line managers and all staff. An organization which encourages work-life balance policies and practices will win the benefits of augmented employee engagement and also a positive outcome is dependent on a workplace culture that is supportive of using work-life initiatives.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the work-life balance issues which affects the employees life
- To study the various initiatives taken up the organizations for maintaining work-life balance issues.
- To study the various factors that leads to work-life imbalance of the employees and the problems which arises due to such imbalance.
- To study the merits of adopting the work-life balance policies for both organizations and employees.
- To study the Role of Personal values, beliefs, attitudes, lifestyles and spirituality for maintaining proper work-life balance.

4. Various Work-Life Balance Initiatives by Organizations

Various organizations can implement various work-life balance initiatives that may assist employees to have better work-life balance. There is no hard and fast rule as to what constitutes an ideal and acceptable work-life balance culture as this will depend on the operational requirements of the business and the needs of the business. But some of the family friendly policies are as follows:

4.1. Flexi-Time

Under this policy, employees are given an option to determine their start and end times, but are required to work for a certain number of hours which is mandatory. So, they can easily adjust the time as per their circumstances and can meet their family or personal emergencies as well as their professional commitments.

4.2. Work from Home Policy

This scheme is becoming more and more popular when employees are given an option to perform atleast some part of their job through home. This saves a lot of time which gets wasted in commuting and also allows them to perform their work in a less stressful and disruptive environment. Also, it helps in reducing the work-related expenses and is really a help for those who are unable to leave home because of special disabilities.

4.3. Paid Maternity Leaves for Women

Many organisations like IBM have launched such female friendly strategies that enable them to have work-life balance. And as per their analysis, 97% of the females have returned back to their organization over the last 10 years. So, such schemes are really helpful for retaining the female employees.

4.4. Compressed Work Weeks

It's a kind of arrangement in which employees work longer shifts to have an extra day off in their working cycle. With such an arrangement, employers can extend their daily operating hours, with less need to resort to overtime and employees in turn get an extra day off, and thereby allowing them to plan have longer weekends and mini vacations.

4.5. *Making the Operational Environment More Attractive*

The companies may try to improve the working environment so that employees may feel motivated. Some of the techniques are providing childcare facilities like crutches etc, company days out, paid vacations for learning, free exercise classes.

4.6. *Part-Time Jobs*

This kind of arrangement can allow people to participate in the workforce, improve their skills and gain experience. Such kind of labour force can facilitate re-entry into the workforce for all those who have had career breaks, for instance, those mothers who have stayed at home to raise their children.

4.7. *Seminars*

The company may organize various programs and seminars which may provide help to its employees so as to maintain work-life balance.

5. **Work-Life Balance Problems**

To frame formal work-life balance initiatives is the need of hour for the organizations. As given by Tara Shankar & Bhatnagar, the 10 best organizations which Fortune (2009) quote, are the ones, where employees feel “encouraged to balance their work and personal life”. But, for an employer, it might be difficult to understand that whether he has ensured work-life balance for his employees or not. Some health related issues also creeps in which may announce about the work-life imbalances and stress at the workplace. Some of those issues are as follows:

5.1. *Health-Problems*

The major effect of working in the stressful environment are health related problems like

- Tensions
- Headache
- Depression
- Eye-strains
- Hearing ailments

All these problems results in high turnover rates.

5.2. *Detachment from Family*

Since, the employees have to work for longer working hours on daily basis, they hardly get any time for their family. Also, the youth employees are expected to work overtime and work even on holidays which in turn leads for no time for their family. This problem gets multiplied when they are married and have additional responsibilities to fulfill. Eventually, they quit or faces many difficulties in maintain work-life balance, especially the female employees.

5.3. *Personal Bad Habits*

Because of work pressures and deadlines, the young employees tend to develop bad habits like alcohol drinking and smoking. It is also not unusual to see female employees smoking and drinking which is a social stigma. These employees sometimes develop such habits that it becomes difficult even for their parents to talk to them and discuss about it.

5.4. *Stress and Depression*

It is very usual to see employees suffering from Depression. They feel that there are limited opportunities for growth , high competition, deadly deadlines and more and more challenges. Also, as they do not get enough time for their families, they don't receive the love and affection of their near and dear ones, which augments this problem.

6. **Merits of Adopting Work-Life Balance Policies for Organizations**

The evidence for the business benefits of work life balance policies has been growing in volume and strength. The studies show a positive and strong linkage between work-life balance policies and reduced absenteeism, higher satisfaction and higher productivity. Some of the merits of adopting work-life balance policies are as under:

- Reduced absenteeism and lateness
- Employee satisfaction and commitment
- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved organizational image
- Increased retention of valuable employees
- Increased productivity
- To increase the participation of female employees
- To keep employees motivated and well performing
- To have better corporate social responsibility

7. Benefits of Adopting Work-Life Balance Policies for Employees

Work-life balance policies have a positive impact on employees as well. By developing a considerate, friendly and unified culture, organizations will be more attractive to the people of all the generations. Some of the benefits that employees cherish are as follows:

- Increased job satisfaction and motivation
- Reduced stress level and better productivity
- A greater sense of job security
- Cordial realtions with family and friends
- Better physical and mental health
- Better management of work-life atmosphere

8. Role of Personal Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Lifestyles and Spirituality for Maintaining Proper Work-Life Balance

Introducing the policies and maintaining the work-life balance is not only, the responsibility of employers. Employees attitudes, lifestyles, and belief system can play a major role in this. Increased commitments, deadlines, higher standards of living, intense competition has put pressure on the dual earning parents. But, eventually we are responsible for our own position. Increased urbanization and westernization has broken the joint family system due to which the dual earning parents faces more problems. Earlier, there were not much problems because the working mothers used to stay either with her parents or with her husband's parents. Also, the working parents are not practicing the preachings of holy books for e.g. getting up early, taking the bath, meditating, chanting the holy name and then starting of the day. They are more influenced with the westernized culture, late night parties etc, due to which their stress level gets enhanced. Many researches prove this point that all those who are more religious, spiritual and read the holy books have stable mind and thus are less stressful and easily adapt themselves to the changing environment. They have better mental and physical health.

9. Conclusion

Work-life balance is an important area of HRM that is receiving increasing attention from government , researchers and management. The concept of work-life balance has grown in its relevance due to changing technology, changing values, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles, increased complexities of work and family roles, the increase in number of dual working parents, more and more female employees in the workforce, breaking of joint family system and emergence of nuclear families. But, Work-life balance and employee engagement has become a visible benchmark among high performing organizations that reap the economic and reputational benefits of being publicly recognized as a “best place to work” or an “employer of choice”. When the organization realizes the importance of work-life balance and makes the policies based on it, they get the various merits of adopting such initiatives, for e.g. reduced absenteeism and lateness, increased satisfaction and motivation among employees, reduced employee stress and health benefits, better corporate image. Work-life balance must be supported at all the levels of the organization, including senior management, line managers and all staff.

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