

A Literature Review on Work Life Balance

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Abstract

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. Although definitions and explanations vary, work life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life. The study of work life balance involves the examination of people's ability to manage simultaneously the multi-faceted demands of life. Although work/life balance has traditionally been assumed to involve the devotion of equal amounts of time to paid work and non-work roles, more recently the concept has been recognized as more complex and has been developed to incorporate additional components.

Key Words: Work life balance, Involvement, equilibrium

Introduction

What is Work?

The definition of work can be as narrow as paid employment or as broad as an activity that involves effort. Porter (2004) suggests that –the meaning of work has varied across time and culture- a curse, a calling, a social obligation, a natural activity, a means to a better life or simply what they do because they have to.|| (Porter, 2004 p.425). The variety of meanings expressed demonstrates how individual the concept of work is, and that it is strongly influenced by the experiences of those defining it. The definition can be broad and inclusive as it recognizes the wide variety of work situations that may be encountered.

In particular, (Lewis 2003) suggest that –work is often defined in terms of obligated time, whether paid or unpaid (p.344). This definition incorporates the multiplicity of activities that people may consider are work related. It includes the time one spends going out to paid employment, participating in volunteer activities, to the time spent to performing household duties or obtaining education. Although it is clear there are many activities that can be classified as work which do not involve an individual being paid, for the purpose of this research, work will be understood to paid work, as that provides a certain amount of clarity when distinguishing life activities. The benefit of using this narrow definition of work is that it

will ensure subjects interviewed in this study will be able to clearly differentiate work and life issues. Individual perceptions about work will ultimately influence whether it is viewed from a positive or negative perspective and whether this view will lead to positive or negative outcomes for the organization (Douglas and Morris, 2006). There tends to be an underlying assumptions expressed in some of the literature that work is something the individual is compelled to undertake in order to earn an income, and that it is more or less an intrusion into the activities in which he/she would much prefer to participate (Eikhof, et al., 2007). It is this type of perception that leads to a negative view of what work means in people's lives and can also lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration which in turn lead to a loss of productivity. Issues such as organizational design and work intensification (Savery and Luks, 2000) can also put more pressure and stress on employees.

On the other hand there is a research that shows that work is a very positive activity in the lives of many individuals. According to Eikhof et al. (2007), rather than being an intrusion, work can be a source of self fulfillment and satisfaction. People are able to come to work when there is a sense of purpose and clarity about what they are aiming to achieve; there is a structure around what they are doing, and there are often clearly defined goals against which they can measure their performance and therefore be clear about what they have achieved. One study conducted in the United Kingdom revealed that over 60 percent of men and women are actually satisfied with their work situations and about 2.4 million workers prefer work to home (Wasles, 2004 & Eikhof et al., 2007) indicating that work can provide a sense of purpose and happiness in people's lives. Furthermore it could be suggested that the enjoyment of work has very positive outcomes, as more motivated employees are less likely to suffer from stress induced conditions leading to potentially leading to problems like absenteeism (Burke, 2000). This attitude will affect the way the people view the amount of time spent on work as opposed to the time they had available for what could be considered life activities'.

What is Life?

The technological revolution is supposed to bring an increased time for leisure (Lewis, 2003) and provide opportunities for individuals to pursue activities that gave them variety in their lives. In fact, people are working longer hours than pre-industrial revolution workers. (Evans,2000). Throughout history there have been changes in the way individuals allocate their time, because the days were defined in terms of required activities. Typically from the 1950's until the advent of more accommodating technology, workers would travel to the actual place of employment, carry out their work requirements, and at end of day return to

their place of residence and undertake other duties or activities. (Connell,2005). This might have involved playing a sport, engaging in study, or having dinner with the family or even extended family.

The weekend is a time when, unless employment required shift work, the individual participated in what would be seen as leisure activities or family time (Totheyrs et al, 2006). There is a clear distinction between work and life. With the introduction of technology and labor saving devices it has become more difficult to distinguish between the two concepts (Lewis et al., 2003). The options these technological devices provide have made it more of a challenge to determine how they define a leisure activity. For the purpose of this research leisure can be considered from two different perspectives. Firstly, there is an unallocated time they have for the activities they freely choose to do, and then there is a time they spend doing the activities they associate with enjoyment (Lewis, 2003). Thus, in terms of this definition, the life component of work-life balance is ‘what they do when they are not committed to work schedule and when they freely choose to participate in those activities.’

For some the plethora of choices employees spend their time when they are not working, include looking after family, enjoying a hobby, pursuing the many options for ongoing education or seeking out opportunities to travel. The choices are also expanded due to the vast number of entertainment options, surfing the readily available information on the internet and communicating using the many new and instantaneous methods available leading people to seek out the time to spend on these activities. Thus, individual need to take the opportunity to make choices about how they allocate the time available to maximize satisfaction from ‘life’. This broad and inclusive view of leisure serves to provide a distinction from the work definition minimizing ambiguity in the research.

Work-Family Conflict

Bloom and Van Reenen (2006) found that work family conflict can also have negative impact on the organization, both financial and non-financial-issue. Based on a study of 732 manufacturing firms in US, France, Germany and the UK. Organizations which offer better work life balance practices enjoyed higher productivity. As far as non-financial aspects of organizational performance is concerned, research shows that firms that adopt more better work life balance policies can improve the level of job satisfaction and increase organizational commitment among their employees.

Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Lambert, 1990; Payton, Miyazaki & Brayfield, 1976; Repetti, 1987; Staines, 1980; Zeddeck, 1992 there are number of mechanisms linking work & family: spill over, compensation, segmentation, resource drain, congruence, and work-family conflict Greehaus & Beutell (1985, p.77) Work family conflict, is a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.

The concepts Work-life balance and Work-life conflict have received much attention in academic literature (Hayman, 2005; Moore, 2007; Peacock, 2005). The terms work-life balance and work-family balance are often used interchangeably, but generally are applied to the same concept (Hill et. al. 2001; Quick et. al. 2004; Reiter, 2007).

Often work-life balance is defined as the absence of conflict between work and family or personal roles (e.g. Frone, 2003; Quick, et al., 2004). Balance and conflict are separate constructs which coexists, whereby an individual can experience high levels of both concurrently (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006; Hanson et. al. 2006; Wayne et.al. & Fleeson, 2004). Work-life balance is the degree to which an individual can simultaneously balance the emotional, behavioral and time demands of both paid work, family and personal duties (Hill, et al., 2001). In contrast, work-life conflict occurs when involvement in one domain, for example work or personal life interferes with involvement in the other domain (Hanson, et al., 2006).

Work-Life Spillover theory states that a person's attitudes, emotions, skills and behaviors produced in one domain (either work or personal life) flow into the other (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006; Frone, 2003; Zedeck, 1992). Spillover can have positive or negative effects, and can occur in both directions work to personal life and personal life-to-work (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006; Hanson, et al., 2006; Hill, et al., 2001).

Work-Life Balance

Agha K. et.al. (2017) in their study "Work Life Balance and Job Satisfaction : An Empirical Study Focusing on Higher Education Teachers in OMAN" they found that while work influence with personal life interference with work had a negative relationship with job satisfaction, work and personal life enhancement had a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Marta Mas Machuca,et.al (2016) in their study "Work Life Balance and its Relationship with Organizational Pride and Job Satisfaction" it was found that there is a positive relationship

between supervisor work life balance support and autonomy with employee work life balance in addition work life balance is positively related with organizational pride and job satisfaction. Danam Tressa A. and Manisha C.K. (2016) in their study of “work life balance of female teachers in Kendriya Vidyalaya in Uppal,Hyderabad it was found that 25% of teachers are not completely satisfied about amount of time spent at works as it takes away the quality of work and they are missing out on family life and there is a need for the institution to initiate work life balance programmes for employee satisfaction

Vijaya Kumari S. and Manohar Selvi A. (2016) in their study “The Impact of Work Life Balance on The Well Being of Employees in The Telecom Sector” they have highlighted the following points

- Existence of negative effects of poor WLB due to high levels of work-family conflict and family-work conflict on family satisfaction
- Negative effects of poor WLB due to high levels of work-family conflicts on work satisfaction and psychological health
- Demands and pressures from work and family domains have an adverse impact on family satisfaction

Mahesh B.P. et.al. (2016) in their study “A study of Work Life Balance and Its Effects on Organisational Performance” found that an organization cannot work up to its maximum potential unless there is total participation and commitment from all the employees, which comes from a sound balance between work and life and an excellent quality of work life of its employees is necessary for an organization to achieve constant growth and profitability in the market

Mohanty Atasi and Jena Lalatendu Keshari (2016) in their study “Work Life Balance Challenges for Indian Employees : Socio-Cultural Implications and Strategies” highlighted the importance of Building an organization culture that supports through changing the way people think and talk about their work life balance, so that using flexible working options and other work-life initiatives becomes accepted normal for every one regardless of their gender, seniority within the organization or personal commitments

Shukla Shalini and Bagali M.M. (2016) in their paper titled “A Study on Work Life Balance : In Indian Travel and Tourism Industry” they pointed out that Those companies which provide flexible working schedules, job sharing and job clarity, sound leadership and a variety of leave arrangements for their staff, are most likely to retain their female employees

Yadav Taruna and Rani Sushma (2015) in their paper “Work Life Balance: Challenges and Opportunities” they have traced on the following very interesting points

- Employee time saved – work/life scheme benefit is the amount of time saved by means of support such as an EAP, to assess and resolve personal problems.
- Work/Life plans propose a solution to retention afflictions.
- Organisation Commitment to Work/Life plans is directly associated with employee motivation and productivity.
- Work/life programmes can decrease absenteeism.

Vijaya Kumari S. and Manor Salvi A. (2015) in their paper “An Empirical Investigation on Work Life Balance among Telecom Employees : Emerging HRM Interventions with Reference to Nokia Siemens and Ericsson Telecommunications” they have traced on the following points

- Difficulties faced in balancing the work demand and life (family) responsibility.
- There was high correlation between the difficulties faced and the balancing act to be performed
- The significant result reflected in the areas of career advancement factors, organizational support and the balancing act to be performed

Ms. Mamata,et.al.(2015) in their study “Work Life Balance Issues and Its impact on Dimensions of Wellness : A Review of Literature” The concept of WLB has been widely studied in sectors like Manufacturing, IT, ITes, Banking, Education, Healthcare, Hospitality, Service Sector, Engineering etc. Studies are both qualitative and quantitative

Ms. Aggarwal Nidhi (2015) in her study “Work Life Balance in E-Age: A study of Women Employees” found that Employees report average level of work life balance and are generally cool with their working provision

Malik Sangeeta (2015) in her paper titled “Effect of Work Life Balance on Gender and Marital Status” highlighted the following points

- There is significant relationship exists between work life balance and marital status
- The gender had a marginal impact on WLB
- The interaction effect of gender and marital status was also found significant

Murthy Mridula N. and Shastri Shailaja (2015) in their study “A Qualitative Study on Work Life Balance of Employees Working in Private Sector” have emphasized on following points

- Developing new interests outside organizations and family, employees go in for hobbies and recreational classes.
- Active adjusting techniques : keeping domestic help, one of the parents leave home late for work to leave kids to school
- Action oriented strategies : discipline at home

Fepohunda, Tinuke. M (2014) in their study “An Exploration of The Effects of Work Life Balance on Productivity” found that WLB imbalance has organizational outcomes like elevate rates of absenteeism and turnover, decreased productivity, dwindled job satisfaction, growing healthcare costs, reduced level of organizational commitment and loyalty

Singh Smita (2014) in her study “Measuring Work Life Balance in India” concludes The scale developed in the current study has items measuring both time and strain based conflict. Further behavior based conflict is also taken in to account

Yadav Rajesh K. and Dabhade Nishant (2014) in their study “Work Life Balance and Job satisfaction among the Working Women of Banking and Education Sector – A Comparative Study” found that Work life balance can be achieved by the factors responsible for job satisfaction such as : supportive colleagues, supportive working conditions, mentally challenging work, equitable rewards and employee oriented policies

Agarwal Parul (2014) in her study “A Study of Work Life Balance With Special reference to Indian Call centre Employees” found out the following important points

- There is significant impact of nature of job on work life balance of call centre employees. They have to deal with demanding customers and solve their myriad problems. Some of them reported the feeling of getting sandwiched between personal and work demands
- There is a difference in the work life balance of male and female call centre employees
- There is no difference in the work life balance of day and night shift call centre employees

Hye Kyoung Kim (2014) in his study “Work Life Balance and Employees’ Performance : The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment” found that No direct effect of work life balance on in-role performance. However, it was found that employee’s experience of WLB increases affective commitment and that affective commitment has a positive influence on in-role performance

Deiva Sigamani. J and Shankar. G (2014) in their paper “A Study on Work Life Balance of Employee in Information Technology (IT) Sector at Chennai” have found that

- Majority 100% respondents admit that they led a happy life by ensuring a balance between work and life
- 92% feel that having a WLB increases the commitment level with the organization
- 76% admit that WLB initiatives by Organisations help in retaining the employee

Joseph Kim and Keung Ho (2014) in their paper “An Examination of The Underlying Concern of Work Life Balance for Managerial Intellectual Learning” found that Work life balance does not have impacts on managerial intellectual learning, job performance and quality of life

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