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THE CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB): A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Concept of Work-Life Balance (WLB) is gaining a lot of attention in the area of various fields especially management. This is a concept which is very much related to the employees who are husband and wife and also working in any organization. Work and life are two different aspects in the life of any individual and a conflict has been observed in previous studies to make balance between these two aspects. Present study focuses on describing the conceptual framework of work-life balance. Paper also explains various studies carried out in this area and it also highlights the antecedents and consequences of work-life balance. Paper is theoretical in nature and concepts; previous studies and other major aspects of work life balance has been clarified with the help of various literature in this area.

KEYWORDS

work-life balance (WLB), employee, organization, stress.

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1. INTRODUCTION

nowadays, Work-life balance as a new issue in management subject relating to individual and also in the working environment is a great deal of concern with minimum conflicts (Gopinathan and Raman, 2015), and also a very trendy issue of debate in workplaces (Koubova and Buchko, 2013). In the words of Lockwood (2003), the term 'work life balance' was first introduced in 1986, however it was earlier discussed by various scholars for several years. Work life balance (WLB) is name of working 'smart' by managing individual's life with working less in a bendable and tension free environment (Kumar and Chakraborty, 2013). Moore (2007) says that research on the concept of WLB started in 1970s which was concerned with the female employees who have to look after their as well as their personal life at home also. Later in 21st century the topic of Work Life Balance (WLB) was very much concerned with both male and female professionals and their personal and workplace issues and conflicts (Frame and Hartog, 2003). Work- life balance (WLB) is a widely accepted concept which includes appropriate prioritizing between career and aspiration on one side, contrast with pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development on the other. Employees have been consistently concerned with extensive working hours and the intensity of work. In its initial period Work life balance was visualize in terms of work family conflict, defined role conflict as the simultaneous happening of two (or more) sets of pressures such that observance with one would make more difficult observance with the other (Kahn et al., 1964). According to Lobel (1991) work-family conflict is a condition that arises when participation in either role (work and non-work) is mismatched with involvement in some other role. Some people say that employees as individuals who are employed are expected to allocate equal balanced time to their professional and personal lives (Kumar and Chakraborty, 2013). Besides this some scholars i.e., Guest (2002) argues that the two lives (husband and wife) do not need equal weightings but that there should be a suitable and firm relationship between the couples. However, especially for business organization work life balance is now a major issue and a lot of work has been done and also going on to tackle this issue.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this study is to put a review on the concept of Work life balance (WLB). Study also focuses on establishing an association between WLB and two issues i.e., (1) Organizational Culture and Organizational Policies; and (2) technological advancement and also discussing the antecedents and consequences of WLB.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study is simply a review of literature. Findings and conclusions of previous studies have been used to establish association of WLB with two issues i.e., (1) Organizational Culture and Organizational Policies; and (2) technological advancement. Study also depicts the Antecedents and consequences of WLB on employees' work and family aspects.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Work Life Balance (WLB) has been carried out by scholars for more than 50 years. But there is still an on-going curiosity on such studies to prevent 'workaholism' as against 'alcoholism' (Bowen et. al., 2013). Workaholism is a kind of passion to work, and also the desire to fulfill family expectations by both the husband and wife. Concept of Work Life Balance has become a burning issue for both male and female employees who are at work and also with family and it require very careful handling to make the balance between work and family for both male as well as female employees especially when they are husband and wife. Work life balance policies and practices adopted by organizations are also very much important for employees as well as organizations in this respect.

4.1 WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB), ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

Grover and Crooker (1995) identified, the various family friendly policies items viz. compressed work week (Five day work week), Flextime policies (flexible scheduling programme, job sharing, work at home, part time work), Family Leave policies (Shorter work days for family issues, Compassionate leave, Extended paid maternity leave, Paid leave to care for sick family members) and Employee assistance program (Professional counseling, Life skill programs e.g., stress management, Subsidized exercise). After all, researchers found that employees' work life balance of is one of the major concerns in which they are highly concentrated to make them satisfied and sustained. Work life balance programs are found to be very much effective to minimize the work-family conflict and capable in improving

attitudes of workers, (Konrad & Mangel, 2000). A supportive culture has also been experienced to increase the perception that organizations care about their employees (Lambert, 2000). In their research Perry-smith et. al., (2000) found that those organizations which were having more comprehensive work-family plan were enjoying higher level of employee performance and also firm level performance. In their research Tausig and Fenwick (2001) aimed to measure perceived work-life balance utilizing two factors i.e., (1) the degree to which workers experience successful in balancing their work and personal life, and (2) the amount of conflict and disagreement they face in balancing their work and personal life. They found that employees experience an increased concern about balancing their work and personal lives and some time when excess work was negatively influencing employees' personal life. Roehling et. al., (2001) found that there is a direct relationship between Work Life Balance (WLB) programs and employee retention. They suggested that it is important for employees to sustain a healthy balance between their work and their personal lives. Less schedule flexibility is related with more work-family conflict. In the life of highly skilled employees who are technical professionals and are much more important for employers, there should be significantly a work life boundary for balancing the employees work and their life and employers should be very much concerned about this issue (Meyer (1997; Scandura and Lankau, 1997). Study of Frame and Hartog (2003) suggests that for balancing their work and other personal commitments such as family, friends, relatives, hobbies, art, travelling, studies, and also to lead a healthy life, employees must be provided flexible working hours from employers. Business culture is a term in which an organization works and employees has to follow certain norms of the business organization and this is associated with the work-related attitudes and formalities. Regular working hours, overtime and late reaching home is found to be negatively affecting the work life balance of employees. The literature with respect to work life balance puts various dimensions of work and life in the front by researchers. Study of Piotrkowski (1979) shows that men assume their homes as heavens, they feel their families as the way of satisfaction lacking in the occupational specialty. Women involved in business service tend to schedule, plan and set targets to maintain a balance between work and their personal life, which is generally referred as "time management" in literature (Macan, 1994). Various studies have observed reduced related stress outcomes due to work-life balance practices (Johnson, 1995). Thiede and Ganster (1995) conclude that supportive practices, especially flexible scheduling and supportive supervisors had direct positive effects on employee perceptions of control over work and family matters. Singh and Sahgal (1995) concludes in their study that maximum men involving with double career suffers with maximum level of stress, followed by single women with career, followed by women with no career and minimum stress was found with those men whose views were at home and were housewives. In their study Adams et. al., (1996) found that when work obstructs with family life it also tends to reduce job satisfaction as well as life satisfaction as a whole. The concept of work-life boundary would be better as a process of creating and maintaining more or less distinct territories of the self (Christena, 1996). Galinsky et. al., (1996) concluded in their study that employees feels more happy and feel less stress when they have much control and autonomy on their work and because of these that also perceive less family work related conflict. Study conclusion of Carlson and Perrewe (1999) show that individual experience of work family conflict can be reduced by a supportive work culture at the work place. In their study Milkie and Peltola (1999) observed that women and men experience similar level of achievement in balancing work and family and various types of work family tradeoffs. New work culture, practices and fast technological advancements are changing the nature of various works. In this regard accessibility of Work Life Balance Practices minimizes employee absenteeism (Cooper, 1999; Dex and Scheibl, 1999). In various organizations when employees grow older and acquire experience, these employees are frequently promoted to higher positions in their respective organizations. After this their family responsibilities and commitments also increase. In such a case, enhanced pay alone will not bring satisfaction to them because they have other needs and commitments to fulfill (Shields et. al., 2015). Too much work hours are associated with increased anxiety, which naturally ends to depression (Ashforth et. al. 2000). In this situation, both physical and mental health is necessary for the Work Life Balance of employees. Employee job satisfaction is also associated with work life balance practices. Nowadays, WLB initiatives are very much helpful to attract new talent for organizations and also for enabling the existing employees to make a better balance in their work and life domains. These WLB programs in an organization have to be introduced by its top management, and in the case of Australian construction industry these initiatives are helpful to minimize absenteeism and staff turnover by 3.8% and 3.6%, respectively, and increased employee satisfaction by 13% (Lingard et. al., 2012).

4.2 WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB) AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Technological advancement and up gradation have also made an effect on work life balance of employees. Due to technological advancement and introduction of internet based work some of the employees are taking their work outside office and they do their work at home, this particular change have also very negatively affected employees work life balance and it has reduced the boundary gap between their work and life (Cooper, 1998) and family depressing spillover from work to non-work life i.e., emotional tiredness, has been observed which adversely influence organizations in the form of high turnover and short commitment (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). Technological advancement has amplified the mobility of employees by associating them to the internet and making them much work flexible and also make them available all day (Wajcman et. al., 2010). The capability of the employees to access internet via computers, smart-phones, laptops and other devices has made their work more effective irrespective of time or location, efficiently going beyond the work-family boundaries (Ferguson et. al., 2016). Study of Holden and Sunindijo (2018) concludes that Work Life Balance of professional in construction field is influenced by various factors i.e., business culture, technology, travel time, salary, health and Work Life Balance policies,

5. ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

5.1 ANTECEDENTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

Since work life balance is a concept related to human affairs and it also undertakes some antecedents. These antecedents can be categorized in two parts i.e., Personal predictors and Organizational predictors which has been explained as below:

5.1.1 Personal Predictors

An employee's personal factors have been included as antecedents of work life balance. Studies have concluded that personal predictors that make an influence on work-life balance of any individual include two factors i.e., individual characteristics and cultural values. These have been discussed as:

Individual uniqueness

Studies have mentioned that an individual has various characteristics by which work life balance can be influenced which includes job involvement, family involvement, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and coping style (Blazovich et. al., 2014; Carlson et. al., 2010).

Cultural Values

Work life balance is also influenced by individual's Cultural values. Every individual has its own cultural values which they receive from their upbringings and it affects the degree of segregation of work and family (Schein, 1984; Triandis, 1989) the degree of supervisory support for work life balance is affected by power distance (Lu et. al., 2010) competitiveness at work is influenced by masculinity (Hofstede, 1980), and uncertainty escaping temperate the extent to which work-life conflict affects overall life satisfaction (Javidan and House, 2001).

5.1.2 Organizational Predictors

Antecedents of work-life balance also include two institutional factors i.e., job characteristics and organizational support.

Job Characteristics

Study conclusion depicts that a number of job characteristics including, time pressure at work, job demand, role ambiguity, job autonomy and scheduling flexibility affects work-life balance (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Support System

Research conclusions depicts that different organizational support programs which objective is to assist employees better manage their work and life demands affects the employees work life balance. Most of these programs are intended to improve work-life balance. These programs include childcare assistance, part-time work, part time work, flexible work arrangement, parenting resources, eldercare resources, family leave policy, social support at work and health programs (Sirgy & Lee, 2018)

5.2 CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

Consequences of work life balance can be understood in three terms i.e., outcomes related to job, non-work outcomes and outcomes related to stress.

5.2.1 Outcomes Related to job

In various studies it had been concluded that with the help of work life balance various work related outcomes i.e., job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, career development and success increases in a positive manner (Blazovich et. al., 2014; Carlson et. al., 2010; Frone et. al., 1997; Wayne et. al., 2004;). These researches also observed that work-life balance helps to reduce job burnout and alienation, job malfunction, absenteeism, and employees turn over intention (Whiston and Cinamon, 2015; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998).

5.2.2 Non-work Outcomes

Various researches in this field show that some of the employees' non work related aspect i.e., life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, family performance, family satisfaction, parental satisfaction, and leisure satisfaction has been increased by work-life balance (Allen et. al., 2000; Anaton, 2013; Carlson et. al., 2006; De Simone et. al., 2014; Fisher et. al., 2009). In many studies' various employee related issues i.e., cognitive problems, poor health condition and conflicts with family members found to be reduced due to work life balance of employees (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2002)

5.2.3 Outcomes related to Stress

Many Studies carried out in the area of work life balance has concluded that conflict between work and life leads to various mental and psychological distress related to individual employee (e.g., anxiety, emotional ill-being, emotional exhaustion, petulance and hostility, hypertension, hopelessness) and stress related to family (e.g., affective parental and marital stress), and it also demonstrates various illness manifestation of illness indicators (i.e., high blood pressure and cholesterol, cigarette consumption, alcohol abuse and somatic complaints) (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). Studies also shows considerable association between stress and work-life conflict and an increase in upset and frustration has been noted due to work life conflict (Allen et al. 2000; Frone et. al., 1992; Whiston and Cinamon, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

Work-life balance is one of the most important issue which is studied by various scholars and experts to know how work and life are different and how individual experience with these two aspects. Balancing work and life are a very difficult task because a lot of factors are there which are responsible in misbalancing the work and life. On the basis of previous studies, it can be said that various individual and organizational aspects are influenced by work life balance and there are various antecedents and consequences of work life balance on individual as well as on the organizations. Here, it is important for employees and employer both to understand the significance of the concept of work life balance so that individual and organizational objectives could be achieved without any clash between work and life.

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