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## **A Conceptual Study on Employee Work-Life Balance**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Work life balance (WLB) in this fast-paced modern era is increasingly challenging due to the fact, that it is very difficult to strike the equilibrium amongst work and other domains of life. However, there is a need to explore the (Gautam, 2018) concepts that affect the 'work' and 'life' balance. Organisations are under great pressure to progress in their routine and victory in this competitive world. When one's professional and private lives are in equilibrium, they can enjoy a rich and satisfying life. Work-life balance amongst employees has always been concerned for value of work-life and its relation to quality of life. Thus, here an endeavour has been made to provide a summary on various concepts of work-life balance and factors contributing to WLB/Conflict i.e. Job Fulfilment, Work Pressure, Professional Growth, Technology and Competitive environment. This is qualitative study made on literature review. On the basis of review made WLB have been examined with respect to organisational performance of employees, different factors were identified which can be further used to develop a model in order to carry a quantitative study. A strong need is felt with respect to employee friendly policies, flexible time and family support, etc., will lead to loyal and satisfied employees, otherwise the organisations may confront with problems like turnover, absenteeism and such other challenges.

**Keywords:** *Work-Life Balance, Work life conflict, Family Friendly Policies, Job Satisfaction, Absenteeism, Work stress, Technology, Turnover.*

## 1 Introduction:

Work-Life balance(WLB) is a dominant issue disturbing the well-being of work and family as they both are significant foundations of everyone's life. WLB (Work-life balance) is about successfully managing between remunerated work and non-paid work that are important to us such as giving personal time to oneself, spending time with near and dear ones(such as family, friends), taking part in amusements, hobbies, volunteering in social activities and undertaking further study. WLB denotes the level of prioritisation between personal and skilled activities of an individual life. Work- life balance is the extent to which an individual's needs are met in work and non-work aspects of life. Each person plays multiple roles in life - child, spouse, parent, friend and employee. Each role has specific responsibilities associated with it; work-life balance is the ability to manage these responsibilities without feeling conflicted or overwhelmed, balance is the result of the quality of the time spent, both at work and in non-work aspects of life. The increase in mobile technology, cloud-based software and the proliferation of the internet has made it much easier for employees to be 'permanently' at work, blurring the

distinction between professional and personal. Some commentators argue that managers authoritarian control have been replaced by smart phones and 'always-on' access to the workplace. Work life balance is the drive and jerk between professional and private responsibilities. In the year 2005, Voydanoff in his study made a conclusion that, work life balance is capability to meet one's personal and qualified work demands so that individuals can show operative participation in both spheres of life. A qualitative work-life balance is when people feel that their lives are being fulfilled both in personal as well as professional work. Rife & Hall, in the year 2015, made a study on work life balance and stated that there is minimal conflict between work and home, low turnover and absenteeism, and overall satisfaction. In the year 2005, Golder & Wiens- Tuers in their articles wrote, a strong work-life balance allows people to devote time with their family and friends while still succeeding in their career. When someone spends too much time at work and not enough time doing things they enjoy, unnecessary stress increases, and overall life satisfaction will decrease, leading to poor health, lower productivity, and lower performance (O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper, & Sanchez, 2003)

## 2 Objective of the Study:

- ❖ To understand the concept of Work-Life balance.
- ❖ To analyse the factors contributing to WLB/Conflict.
- ❖ To examine the consequences of WLB on Organisational performance.
- ❖ To study the different components of WLB.

## 3 Literature Review on WLB:

Eagle in the year 1997 in their study found that work and family restrictions were unequally penetrable with work to family conflict being more prevalent than family to work conflict. In a study conducted in the year 2005, of Taiwanese managers Hsieh, found that few managers found it difficult to balance work and personal lives and also they felt that work interference with family life was more as compared to personal life with the profession.

In the year 2001, Kim and Ling studied the types and sources of work family conflict among 102 married Singapore women entrepreneurs. The study was made using different variables such as working hours, inflexibility in work schedule, number and age of children and also included family support. The outcomes included job, life and marital satisfaction. The outcomes or results

depicted that that the number of working hours, role conflict and financial worries about business and work schedule inflexibility are positively related to work -family conflict (WFC). Whereas, attitude and emotional support from spouse was found to be positively related to work family conflict and spouse emotional and attitude support was negatively related with work family conflict. The outcome variables such as job, life and marital satisfaction were found to be negatively correlated to WFC.

In the year 2005, Wesley and Muthu swamy conducted study on 230 teachers in an engineering college in Coimbatore, India, found that work to family conflict was more than family to work conflict. The study indicated that interference of work into family was more than family into work.

Kinnunen and Mauno in the year 2007, conducted survey of 501 employees working in 4 different organisations viz., health care, manufacturing, supermarket and from bank sectors and the results indicated that that meddling of work to family was more prevalent than family to work among both the genders. However, it also concluded that, there was no gender differences in either work to family or family to work conflict. The findings of the study reported that work to family conflict was more than family to work conflict.

Baral, in the year 2010 conducted a study on 485 employees working under different organisations in India there was no gender differences in perception of employees with respect to work family enrichment. It was also found that working women and men experience more work family enrichment than work family conflict.

In 2009, Rajadhyaksha and Velgach in their study found that women experience higher family interference with work as compare to men. In the year 2007 Grzywacz undertook a research study to understand the contribution of culture to the occurrence and significance of work to family conflict. The study also evaluated the predictions drawn from the

models which highlighted the influence of cultural characteristics, such as collectivism and gender ideology on work family conflict. The findings from the study showed that individuals from more collectivist culture experience fewer conflict between family and work, as in these cultures work and family are viewed as more integrated. It also showed that level of work to family conflict differed with gender.

In the last few years, the WLB concept has become a cause of concern for various establishments. WLB practices and policies are being associated and integrated with wider and strategic business goals. Organizations often try to increase positive perceptions of employees regarding their WLB. Furthermore, from the studies made by Haar et al., in the year 2018; Sirgy & Lee, in the year 2017; Williamset al., 2016 concluded that organisations in order to allow and achieve varied work-related results such as job performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction etc strive to offer a healthy work environment.

In the year 2019, the unprecedented crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has intensely affected the notion of WLB for millions of individuals in organised and unorganised

sectors. The unexpected shifts in the nature of work and functioning activities by organizations have inevitably affected the WLB of employees (Palumbo, 2020; Utoft, 2020). Bhumika in the year 2020, in their study on effect of COVID -19 on WLB stated that the exposures to the COVID-19 crisis have put considerable physical, mental, psychological and emotional stress on employees. At the same time, they have been forced to work-from-home and adopt tele commuting/ remote work practices that have alerted their work–life responsibilities. In this challenging environment employees in varied professions are dealing with unparalleled workloads. Their roles and tasks have increased multifariously; they have to juggle their paid work roles and perform household, eldercare and childcare responsibilities. Certainly, one of the most demanding issues of current times on a global scale being witnessed is balancing work and personal life responsibilities.

Hence, WLB has become a dynamic phenomenon affecting an individual's insight about work and personal activities to weigh compatibility between both, which can promote growth in accordance with their present life priorities. WLB reflects the insights of

striking a balance between employees' professional and personal life, including understandings about societal life and relaxation time (Casper et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2020; Weale et al., 2020). Lewis and Beauregard, in the year 2018 in their study on WLB stated that generally, WLB is a contested term that holds varied meanings for different individuals. The concept was initially conceptualized as work–family conflict (WFC) and defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually inharmonious in some respect”(Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Later, it was further refined and elaborated as “Satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum of role conflict.” (Clark, 2000, p. 349). Further in the year 2006, it was argued by Greenhaus and Powell that work–family interface cannot always be negative and that work and family duties can be allies rather than opponents. Therefore, they introduced the concept of work–family enrichment (WFE) and defined it “as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006, p. 73). Later, in the empirical study conducted by Gareis et al., 2009; Mauno et al., in the year 2011 on Work family conflict



and Work life enrichment studies have provided strong support for negative and positive outcomes. The phrase “work-family balance” been replaced by the term “work-life balance”(Adisa et al., 2017), as life in this context refers to everything that takes place outside the work(Bello and Tanko, 2020; Brough et al., 2014; Casper et al., 2018; Haar et al., 2018).

### **Work related Factors and its consequence's on WLB:**

#### **Work-Family Conflict:**

Work-family conflict means, when employee's feel that his or her work pressures or when their efforts to maximise job requirements affect their family demands. Work-family conflict (WFC) has been an important topic for scholars, experts and society. Work-to-family conflict occurs when work interferes with family life, it includes prolonging /abnormal working time, or static work hours, overwork and other forms of jobstress such as -interpersonal conflict at work, extensive travel, career changeovers, uncooperative supervisor or unsupportive organization. Family-to-work conflict occurs when family interfere with work life, like presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, eldercare tasks, interpersonal conflict within the family

unit, uncooperative family members. According to Greenhouse and Beutell(1985) from their study, revealed that Work life creates increased role pressures when the roles are prominent to one's self- concept. It was evident from the empirical study made by Carlson and Perrewé in the year 1999; Michel et al., in the year 2010, that the traditional role identity amplified the conflict with psychological burdens. On the other hand, when work family conflict is reduced, employees expose greater job fulfilment, organizational commitment, high retention, less absenteeism and report greater family and life happiness(Lapierre et al., 2008).It is important to manage and balance the expectations of family and work for individuals ,since at times it can affect oneself when balancing the expectations of work and family and the conflicts accompanied along with them. Work-life conflict can have unfavourable results on families and workplaces causing anxiety, stress and depression (McBrier, 2003). In order to manage work-family conflict, individuals have to get support from family or work domain to reschedule activities (Powell & Greenhaus, 2006).

## **Technology and Stress Factor on WLB:**

Technology is the critical factor that influences work life balance. Technologies are transforming the traditional workplace and redesigning the work, work performance and work management in organizations. This makes understanding digital work and its impact on job performance critically important. Studies made by Towers, Duxbury, Higgins & Thomas in the year 2006; Middleton, in the year 2008 show that the technological innovations have greatly increased the work-efficiency of workers. Mobile technologies bring flexibility to employees in the shape of controlling speed, location, and time. Potential for productivity and efficiency as perceived by employees have been provided by technology (Towers *et al.*, 2006). The positive effect of technology on work-life of employees is that, it has increased the shape of work efficiencies by adding resources in the work environment. But, on the negative side, technology has made employees to be in contact without in office. It has generated sense of feeling with employees that they are never being off from work due to increased expectations (Towers *et al.*, 2006). Studies have proved that workers stress, anxiety level

and psychological and physiological well-being has been greatly affected due to mobile technologies. The stress level within employees has increased due to the feeling of being controlled by technology has lengthened work day, therefore impacting the family life (Hill *et al.*, 1996). Technology influencing WLB chiefly means Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) which include variety of technologies. Technological advancement can blur the boundaries between work and life since virtual or mobile technologies will allow, empower, and improve trans-temporal/trans-spatial communications by crossing the boundary (Arnold 2003; Felstead, Jewson, and Walters 2005; Golden and Geisler 2007; Kaufman-Scarborough 2006; Townsend and Batchelor 2005). Jarvenpaa and Lang in the year 2005: 5, broadly defined mobile technologies as “handheld IT artefacts that encompass hardware, software (interface and applications) and communication (network services).” As per this it states the effect of ICTs on WLB by considering mobile phones (phone call and short message services) and remote or tele-work setting through web-based communication as important types of ICTs. Mobile technologies are of special interest to researchers in quest of understanding WLB because these

technologies make an important shift in creating the boundaries between work and life (Duxbury and Smart 2011;

### **WLB and Job Satisfaction**

Job fulfilment and WLB are very much related to each other. Job satisfaction is a mental feeling of favourableness which an individual has about his job. Job satisfaction brings pleasurable emotional state that often leads positive job attitudes. The profitability and productivity of organisation depends on performance and commitment of employees that are interrelated to each other. These factors depend on employees of the organisation who has personal as well as professional life. Work life balance is a type of inter role conflict where, pressures from work and family domains are mutually inharmonious (Koizumi, 2000). Achieving WLB yields benefit to both employee and employer. Some organisations have leaders who can create the work environment where all employees and they themselves can achieve work life balance and well-being (Spinks, 2004). Job satisfaction is an emotion, feeling, need, want, likes and dislikes which are internal and external to the employee. Job satisfaction is critical to retain and attract well qualified personnel.

Golden and Geisler 2007; Shumate and Fulk 2004).

### **Organisational Policies and Work Culture:**

According to Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey 2013, organizational culture is the shared basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that symbolize a workplace and are picked up and taught to newcomers. According to Cameron & Quinn, in the year 2006, said the culture of an organization has many positive or negative effects including employee morale, commitment, productivity, physical health, and emotional wellbeing, and also the leadership style of supervisors. Based on the leadership style, determined by culture, employees will either feel comfortable having a strong work-life balance, or will not have a work-life balance because of pressures from leadership. An organisations policies and procedures for employees are determined by its culture. Some examples of employee policies are maternity leave, vacation and sick leave, as well as flexhours, and telecommuting. In a study conducted by Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, in the year 2009 stated that, Culture starts to affect an organization and the employees based on the overall goals,



values, and leadership style of supervisors and managers. Supervisors who provide emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling behaviours, and creative work life management will have employees who feel more comfortable using the benefits available to them. In a study conducted by Allen in the year 2001, demonstrated that managerial support affects the advantage of benefits offered to employees. When benefits are offered to employees, for creating a stronger work-life balance.

Organisations too are realising their role to enhance work-friendly policies. The pressure has increased on employees to deliver unmatched 24x7 service with ever-increasing competition. The employees as a result have been at work even after their normal work-hours and it is possible due to revolutionizing technology. Also, there is more diversity in organisations including increasing involvement of women workforce. A large proportion of women in the workforce especially at top execution position are attached with policies as job sharing, child care and flexi-time (Galinsky & Johnson, 1998). As a result, the employees of today highly value firms providing suitable policies on work-life balance. So many new innovative

strategies/policies adopted from organisations include flex-timing, job sharing, telecommuting, flattened working week to maternity benefits, parental leave, paternity leave, onsite day care, emergency child care, elder care arrangements. Organisations are providing benefits such as paternity leave, parental leave, study leave, part-time working, sick leave, extra maternity leave, emergence leave in order to recruit and retain the best talent -Maxwell & McDougall, in the year 2004. The work-life balance in the long run reaps benefits not only employees but organisations too. Organisations provide work-life balance policies due to business benefits, legal requirements and for employee well-being. Health care employees were seen to have lower work-family conflict, job dissatisfaction, depression and blood pressure because of supportive work-life balance practices-flexible scheduling and supportive supervisors as studied by -Thomas & Ganster, in the year 1995. When employees perceive supportive work-life balance policies from the organisation, it benefits both by increasing job satisfaction and by reducing the turnover rate as given by -Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, in the year 2007.

## 4 Different Components of Work life balance:

- ❖ **Time Management:** Effective time management will aid in setting specific goals and also helps to plan what to do that day. Time management helps to understand your strengths and use them to your advantage. Set goals based on strict timelines, they create a sense of urgency and motivate you to work within a set timeframe.
- ❖ **Stress Management:** Complexity in society can drive a lot of stress. Thankfully, there are things we can do to lessen that stress and help us deal with complex situations more effectively. The best way to combat the effects of stress is to switch between tasks, as this inevitably increases our anxiety. Focusing on one task at a time is your best bet for keeping your stress levels low. Dedicate some time to stress-busting activity like meditation, dancing, singing, painting, or anything else that you enjoy. Spending time with family, groups and your beloved ones is another way to avoid stress.
- ❖ **Self-Management:** Managing the activities of our lives can be challenging, but we must acknowledge that there are finite

resources available. So, important factor of work-life balance means taking responsibility for self-managing the spaces in our life, not expecting someone else to do these things. Ultimately, it's about becoming captains of our ship and doing things what on our own for personal upliftment. It takes self-for control to manage oneself. Set right priorities and have strong willpower.

- ❖ **Change:** Change is a part of lifecycle and it's the only thing that is constant in our fast-paced society. To advance professionally, one must constantly change their methods, adapt to new ones and make rigorous efforts to ensure that the volume of change does not overwhelm or overthrow you at home and work. Although it's not easy to move on and adapt to changes quickly, a rational approach and the skill to accept reality can enable you to makeover through changes.
- ❖ **Technology:** To advance professionally, it's important that one continuously change their methods to cope up with the demands of a fast-paced society. By constantly adapting new tools and methods, one is less likely to feel overwhelmed or defeated. Mute unwanted notifications, do not check

your phone as soon as you get up, and do not become a slave to technology. Let it serve you, use it at your convenience, and be mindful of how many hours you spend scrolling through.

- ❖ **Leisure:** Time off is an ingredient that the human experience needs. This can come from rest and relaxation, or possibly a weekly night

### **5 Benefits of Work-life balance:**

Work-life balance from the employee perspective, it is the quandary of managing work responsibilities and family responsibilities. Work life balance from the employer perspective, it is the challenge of creating a supportive work culture where employees give their full

#### **Benefit To the employees:**

- ❖ Better Time Management
- ❖ Autonomy and Personal Employee Growth
- ❖ Increased Focus
- ❖ Employee Engagement
- ❖ Personal well being

#### **Benefit to the Employer:**

- ❖ Improved Productivity of Employees
- ❖ Reduced Absenteeism and Lateness

out on the town. Just make sure you're mixing it up so that your time off doesn't become monotonous. That's when you'll start to feel drained and somatic. Take out one hour a day for

- ❖ your mental and physical health. Plan out holidays and catch up on your hobbies.

attention on their jobs while at work. Family-friendly policies are those that offer employees the freedom to address their personal and family obligations, while at the same time not negotiating their work responsibilities.

- ❖ Reduced Employee Turnover
- ❖ Builds up Relationship
- ❖ Improved loyalty and commitment

#### **Steps to improve Work-life balance**

- ❖ Creating leisure time
- ❖ Outsourcing work
- ❖ Prioritizing work
- ❖ Set enough time for relaxation
- ❖ Leaving out activities that waste time and energy

## 6 Conclusion:

In today's technological world where expectations are rising from employees to adopt customer orientation, work life balance is very much necessary. The work-life merge has already set its foot for employees where due to technology, time between personal life and work is difficult to segregate. In the coming future, the issues of work-life

balance/conflict are going to upscale due to lessening of boundaries between work and family life. The governments of nations are now realising value of highly motivated citizen who can be asset for the nation. It's high time for the nations to gear up to realize the full potential of their most valued resource in the shape as human resource.

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