RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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ABSTRACT

In the competitive business environment, Organization needs to be aware about changing demand of their women employees at work and home. The changing life style and diversified working needs have compelled employer to give attention towards work-life balance. From employee perspective, it is the maintenance of a balance between work life and personal life. Especially women employees are facing various issues and challenges in their life because of increased multiple responsibilities of their work and family. It is very sturdy for women employees to manage the competing demand between work and life. Poor work-life balance adversely affect employee, their family, organization and the society as whole. Work demand and family demand should be managed by adopting appropriate coping strategies because on the one hand work-life balance helps to increase satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and productivity on the other hand it reduces the absenteeism and turnover rate. This paper focuses on understanding the issues and challenges faced by women employees and the impact of work life balance on commitment, motivation, productivity, performance, satisfaction and turnover of the employee. It has also been inferred from various studies that work life balance leads to organizational excellence. The implication of the study is to enlighten the subject in a broad perspective to employees, employer, policy makers and government so that the corrective action be taken and make the women working hands more efficient and their job enjoyable.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Women Employees; Organizational Excellence; Issues

INTRODUCTION

Earlier men were responsible to earn livelihood for their family members, while women used to stay at home. The role of women was restricted up to family care but today the scenario has changed, women are choosing a career along with the taking family responsibilities. The working conditions and terms of employment have changed in the competitive and globalized economy as a result employee particularly women employees are facing many difficulties to carry out both the responsibility of their work and their home smoothly. The burden of multiple responsibilities and the competing work demand as well as family demand create conflicts which give rise to work life imbalance. The family role of the women employees get expanded after marriage as they have to assume multiple roles of their home like child care, eldercare, healthcare etc, in addition to their work responsibility. They tend to give more emphasis to their family responsibilities as compared to work responsibilities. In the case of single parent, both responsibilities are equally important, therefore, today it become difficult for them to manage the competing demand between their both roles.
The issue of work life balance is not only important for employees but it is equally important for employers, therefore, organizations need to implement effective work-life balance practices to support their employees in maintaining proper balance in both the life. Work life balance has emerged as a big issue for employees, employers and family.

The term “Work-Life Balance” was first used in U.S in the late 1970 to describe the balance between an individual’s work and personal life. It was coined in 1986. Work-life balance is a person’s control over the responsibilities between their workplace, family, friends and self. Work-life balance is the part of human resource management which is receiving increasing attention from the organization, employee, policy maker, and employee representatives (Russell & Bowman, 2000).

A successful Work-life Balance strategy reduces a level of stress, conflict and raises job and family satisfaction in the employee while increases productivity and decreases healthcare costs for the employer.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work life balance is described as people who control and manage see-saw of both life and career with achievement and satisfaction (Blunsdon et al 2006). It is the term used to describe those practices at workplace that acknowledge and aim to support the needs of employees in achieving a balance between demands of their family and work life. Work life balance means adjusting the pattern of work so that the employee can benefit from a better fit between their work and areas of their personal life and in long run hope to achieve sustainable development and profitability (Verma, 2007).

Finding an equal balance between work and life is the biggest challenge women face today. According to a poll of 500 Canadian female managers and executives, the majority of women today agreed that balancing work and home life is difficult for females in leadership roles. Work domain and family domain has been identified as causes of work-life conflict.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) has defined as inter-role conflict in which pressure from the work domain and family domain are mutually mismatched that is participation in one role made difficult for women employee to perform the responsibility of another role and they have also claimed that work-life conflict increases when people have to perform multiple roles, which often lead to overloads and interferences. Hence, professional women often experience a role overload due to high energy and time requirements and the commitment to family and work. It was found that long working hour, work overload, overtime, unsupportive supervisor as work issues interfered family life and on the other hand child care, elder care, unsupportive family member was found as family issue which interfered work life. Thus, both lives have been affected with each other. (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994; Gutek et al, 1994).

Lakshmi.S.K & Gopinath, S.S.(2012) examined in their study the effect of work life balance on women’s performance and work attitude and also determined the factors affecting work life balance by taking the data from 30 women employees with reference to teaching faculties belonging to various disciplines. It was found that marital status, additional working hours, requirement of flexibility, number of dependents, childcare and overtime etc. were the various factors which affected the work life balance of women employees.

A research study was done on Chinese women employee in administrative roles at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand explored the work life balance experiences of Chinese women in administrative roles. Its aim was to contribute to the body of knowledge on work life balance issues and to investigate Chinese women’s coping strategies for integrating work and non-work lives. It was found that work-life balance policies offered by the university helped women employees to address their work-life balance issues. It was further observed that varieties of coping strategies such as support from family member, time management, building clear boundaries, changing mindsets etc. were actively adopted by Chinese women as mechanism to cope with tension arising from competing demand (Yan Ma, 2008).
Family, friendly work environment such as flexi time, shift working, etc has been portrayed as an important component of work life balance. Better work arrangement helped employees to obtain a better blend between work and non-work lives while providing organization with a means of recruiting, retaining and motivation their workforce (Bachmann, 2000; Schwartz, 1994).

Morgan.L (2009) has identified the impact of work-life balance and family-friendly policies on employee’s job satisfaction. It was suggested that these family-friendly policies helped organization to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and family. The employees with proper work-life balance contributed to job satisfaction. Triveni.K (2011) aimed to find out the impact of work life balance of women employees on their absenteeism and turnover from sectors like education, BPO, IT, insurance, medicine, marketing and banking taking sample of 340 women employees at Bangalore and it was found that their level of impact of work-life balance differed based upon absenteeism and turnover of employees. Takeuchi (2011) found that turnover and absenteeism rate was lower among women employees who used flexible system which helped in achieving a balance.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to understand the issues and challenges faced by women employees regarding work life balance and how it can affect organization, family and employee also. This paper tries to find out the coping strategies which women employees can adopt in their life to cope up with the work-life balance issues and it also helps to understand the contribution of work-life balance in achieving organizational excellence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study is taken from the secondary sources like journal, magazines, articles, unpublished thesis. An attempt has been made to understand the issues and challenges in the context of work-life balance. A conceptual framework which has been framed on the basis of finding in the various literatures.

Issues and challenges in work-life balance: Today’s women are facing challenges by the demand of work and non-work. The dual role of women employee has made their lives becoming a juggling act. Work-life balance is the one of the most important issue now a day that HR professionals, employer and employee are expected to manage and efforts to be made to address work life balance issues for all sectors to increase their competitiveness and morale of the employees. The issues and challenges affecting work-life balance of women employee, can be classified in two following categories-

Work related issue- These are the issues which are related directly to the workplace of employees where they perform hectic and rigid schedule and often there is job dissatisfaction leading to personal problem as well.

- **Time management**- The root cause of most of the problem in life arises from poor time management. Time management is nothing but doing the right job at the right time. As women employees have to perform dual responsibility of their work and home and both the responsibility are equally vital for them. Therefore, managing time between both lives become most prominent issue for them.

- **Rigid work schedule**- Sometime organizations are rigid in their approach towards work. Women employees are not being allowed to reschedule their work as per need of their family requirement in that organization. Therefore, their family can get disturbed from this fixed schedule of working in organization which creates an imbalance between their both lives.

- **Remote Office**- Women employees face problem in attending offices at remote places. They likely to spend more time in attending office and return back to home. This reduces the time to spend at home and create family unrest resulting in work life imbalance.
Long Working Hours- The long working hours at offices reduces the fruitful time to be spent with family and also it can be restrain employee to attend the children from their school. This also creates an imbalance between their work life and family life.

Poor work culture- Unsupportive, hostile and rigid work culture adversely affect working life of women employee having a negative impact on their personal life.

The Heavy workload, Overtime, Unsupportive supervisor etc. have come to rise as issues for work life balance at workplace, all these issues have become reasons of work-family conflict which interfering the family life of women employee (Yildirim and Aycan, 2008)

Family related issues- Women employees come from different background and from different family settings they have to suffer many family related problems that affect their work are as follows-

Unsupportive family member- Sometime family member of a women are not able to understand the work demands of the organization and they put various restriction on women employee like restricting late working, restricting working from home, restricting to attend official tours, putting undue domestic responsibility etc., in such situation it is not possible for employees to meet work demands when their family members are not supporting and thus affect work life balance (Greenhaus, 1985)

Meeting domestic responsibility and roles- Women have to assume multiple responsibilities at home like cleaning, cooking, washing and caring of their child and elder and spouse therefore, it is big challenges for women to fulfill the responsibility at home effectively, in addition to work (Chen, 2012).

Age of children- Work-life balance affect with the age of children. Women employee with younger child face more conflict as compared to children with older age. As children grow, they tend to like more involvement in job and face this problem as lower rate.(Narayana, 2013)

Maternity issues: like Child care, health issues etc. These all family demand interfering the work of women employee rise family-work conflict. It means work gets disturb from the family.

Consequences of work-life imbalance: The incompatibility in work demand and family demand give rise to work-life conflict or work life imbalance. The long time persisting of work life imbalance in employee’s life affect individual, family and organization in several ways. The implication of work life imbalance can be described as follows-

At Individual level- Work life imbalance create problem of stress, tension, anxiety, depression, cardiovascular heart-related-related problem, sleeplessness etc. in the life of employee((Mc Brier, 2003).

At family level- Work life imbalance adversely affect family relation with spouse, parents and children. The strained relation with spouse can further leads to quarrels, divorce etc(Aminah, 1997)

At organizational level- Organization also experience a lot of trouble due to imbalance. A stressful, unsatisfied employee can not contribute to the organization at the fullest level. The work life imbalance increases absenteeism and turnover in the organization. The poor performance of employee result in decreasing productivity and profitability of the organization (Karatepe, 2013).

Coping Strategies for Work-life balance: The work life balance, particularly in respect of women employees has become a buzz word for today’s organizations, various strategies are being developed and adopted by the organizations to deal with the subject. Women employees are also needed to design and develop good life style practices to cope up with increasing work and family
demands. Today we need to manage ourselves instead of managing work and family as because both the dimensions are controlled by external environment and this is beyond our control.

We understand some prevailing coping strategies for women employees to cope up with work life imbalance:

- Prioritizing the task and schedules by strict obedience to time management rules. Women can manage their time through prioritizing their task bound with time framework. Say for example a women employee has multiple tasks to do in their life. Therefore, first she should analyze each task as per their importance and urgency and then should fix their order of priority for completion with given time framework. By doing so, she can easily manage their time between multiple roles.

- Be Loyal and committed to the organization and seek facilities like flexi-time working, part time, tele-working, compressed work-week, job rotation, maternity benefits etc.

- Share and convince the organization regarding family responsibility and seek appropriate cooperation from their supervisor/employer.

- Women Employees should also avail long leave for family tour for better mental and physical revival so that they can give their best contribution when return back to job with fresh mind. They should also get enough sleep for refresh their mind.

- Indulging in some creative hobby, meditation, prayer, voluntary services to reduce stress, conflict, depression etc

- Join sport club to keep fit and healthy(Cooke & Jing, 2009)

- Avoid doing official work at home and vice versa.

- Hiring tutor for a child’s homework.

- Employing a domestic helper to fulfill the home responsibility.

- Employees should draw clear boundary line between work role and family role.

The above coping strategies will help employee and employer to deal with the issues of work life balance. The Work-life balance not only bring happiness, peace in the life but it also prove a successful strategy for employer which show the way to survive in the tough market. Once work life balance achieved in the life of the employee it aid value to the organizational work culture and family life as well.

The benefits of work-life balance for the organization can be understood by an elaborative conceptual framework.

**Conceptual framework of Work Life Balance and discussion**
Relationship between Work-life balance and Organizational Excellence
(Self developed model)

This model illustrates how work-life balance contributes toward organizational excellence. The effective work life balance practices help to achieve various dimensions like Job satisfaction, Commitment and Motivation, Reduced turnover & absenteeism, Cost saving etc. which in turn responsible for achievement of organizational excellence. The details is given below:

Job satisfaction - Job satisfaction is the positive feeling, emotion of an employee towards his job. Today organizations strive to achieve the job satisfaction in their workforce because satisfied employee can contribute the best at his/her work and home. The job satisfaction is conducive to employee commitment, employee performance, and productivity. Satisfaction level of employee is affected by several variables like age, income, opportunities, promotion, fair supervision, participation in decision making etc. Work-life balance is one of major factor contributing in job satisfaction. When employees are capable to balance work life and personal life, a feeling of satisfaction toward their job emerge out (Morgan.L, 2009).

Commitment and motivation- The commitment and motivation of the employee enhance when employee finds supportive work-life balance practices from their employees. These practices motivate their employee to do work efficiently. Thus, Satisfied and motivated people become more productive and committed to the organization and put their best contribution to the organization (Nwagbara & Akanji, 2012).

Turnover and absenteeism – Employees especially women face a difficulty in achieving a balance between multiple role of their work and role of their home. They consider family responsibilities as primary goal. They remain absent and left their work at pending. In some cases, they have to withdraw from the organization. Thus, employer can help their employee to manage their time by providing suitable work-life balance practices like flexi-working hours, part-time, tele-work, child care support etc. which helps to reduce absenteeism and turnover rate leads to retaining talented employee in the organization. It has also been found that organization which support work-life balance have lower rate of employee turnover and absenteeism as compared to other organization that do not support (Takeuchi, 2012).

Cost saving- The work life balance practices enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the employee thus reduce cost of production. It also helped to retain talented employee which results in saving heavy cost of attrition because it costs so high to recruit the new employee. Thus a better work-life balance practices not only make human resource strong but also leads to cost saving.

It has been found from various review of literature that Work-life balance is not only benefit to employee itself but organization is also benefiting resulted in increased Job satisfaction, reduced turnover and absenteeism, cost saving, increased motivation and commitment. Highly satisfied, motivated people contribute in increasing productivity, profitability which ultimately leads to achieve sustainability and effectiveness in the organization which are key measure of organizational excellence. If employers are able to bring effectiveness and sustain their organization in long run with the help of all resources, then we can say that organization has achieved excellence. Thus, work life balance with all these factors in this conceptual model competitively lead to organizational excellence.

CONCLUSION

Today’s organizations have realized the need and importance of the work-life balance for growth and development of the organization. The growing demand of work as well as added family responsibility has created a gap between employee’s personal life and work. Women employees have to play multiple roles therefore, the family support as well as flexibility at work helps the women employee to cope up with this issue. Organizations are emphasizing to adopt various coping strategies for work life balance so that women employees can concentrate on their work and can enjoy both work and family life. It has been found from various literature reviewed and conceptual framework, it is shown that, if
employees become proficient to get the proper balance between their both lives which can help in increasing the morale and motivation, level of job satisfaction among employees, reducing the turnover and absenteeism rate, and increasing their performance at job as well as reducing the high cost. These all positive outcome make organization sustainable and effective which ultimately results in achieving organizational excellence.

LIMITATION

The study is based on only secondary data. The data taken for the study can be enlarged to make the findings more precise. All the dimensions of work life balance related with women employee have not been covered under the time and physical constraints. It is needed to be explored more variables by conducting experimental studies.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Work-life balance is an ideal situation where, there is least conflict between responsibility of work and home. Better work-life balance on one hand improves family relations as well as organizational relationship and on the other hand it improves working efficiency and performance of the concerned employee. The paper has implications for employee, employer, government and academicians to address the issues in effective way to improve the working conditions and work schedule so that the balance between work and family can be stabilized effectively and in efficient manner.

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