



A study of work roster system on employees work life balance

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Abstract

Work life balance practices are deliberate organizational changes in programs or organization culture that are designed to reduce work life conflict and enable employees to be more effective at work and other roles. This paper mainly focuses on understanding how organization's 'Work life balance' policies assist employees in balancing their work and life responsibilities and also provides an indication on how the organization policies could be improved and how these policies when applied to all workers can be considered strategic human resource management that can translate into improved individual and organizational performance.

The need of the hour is to devise proper balance between work and life. Curriculum activities can be a part of job and proper working conditions further help establishing work-life balance. The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life. This paper is aimed towards understanding the meaning of employee's work-life balance and Work Roster System in the context of employment relations and knowing the importance of work-life balance for employers and employees.

Keywords: Work life balance, working hours, Organizational performance, Flexible Work Arrangement and Productivity, work-life integration, Work Roster System.

Introduction

Employees with work life balance feel their lives are fulfilled both inside and outside of work, and they experience minimal conflict between work and non-work roles and life in general and lower levels of stress in general. Historically, work life balance issues have been considered personal issues and employees have just responded to their employees needs by providing additional benefits such as onsite child care service and paid maternity leave in the workplace. However, with environmental shifts and value changes of employees, employee's desire for work life balance has increased and employees have begun to offer more active support of their employees work life balance [1]. Thus, organization efforts for ensuring employees work life balance are needed and valued more than ever. Competing and multi-face demands between work and home responsibilities have assumed increased relevance for employees in recent years, due to large number of demographic and workplace changes such as greater number of women in the workforce, dual – career couples, transformation in family structures – a rise in number of single parents, a growing reluctance to accept the longer hours culture and technological advances. In response to these changes and conflict they generate multiple roles that individual's occupy, organization are increasingly pressured to design various kinds of practices, intended to facilitate employees efforts to fulfill both their employment related and their personal commitments [2].

The hectic life of present times in search of job and then in retention and excelling in the job has put tremendous pressure on an individual's life. The equilibrium between life and work has tilted to the negative side. Therefore, once an individual

enters a job, the employer as well as employees needs to put all the positive efforts to turn this equilibrium back to its position. The system itself can give relief to the employed person to feel that they are taken care of. There must be proper balance of work among them. Curriculum activities can be a part of job and proper working conditions further help establishing work- life balance [3]. The system should be such that it encourages the efficiency and sincerity among the employees to feel that they are part and parcel of the organisation and not the neglected lot. The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life [4]. The way to achieve this is to adopt an approach that provides a two way process considering the needs of employees as well as those of employers. However, work-life balance does not always mean that employees have to divide their time equally into work life and family life. A work-life balance actually means to divide one's time for work and for one's own life. From this perspective, life includes family, self-reflection, recreation, spirituality and social interaction.

Review of Literature

We have a work life. We have a home life. And we have, in all probability, for gotten how to keep them separate. Climbing the organizational ladder often requires employees to work long hours and deal with difficult and complex issues. Some days on the job are likely fun and positive and other days are tension-filled and stressful [5]. A common dilemma for many people is how they manage all of the competing demands in work and life and avoid letting any negative

effects of work spill over into their personal lives. Research has in fact shown that employees who believe they do not have time for the personal life feel drained and distracted while they are at work. In addition, the spillover of negative aspect of work into an employee's personal life can lead to job exhaustion, disruption of relationships with family and friends, loss of enjoyment, and increased stress. Work-life balance is about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments, which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity. Numerous studies have been conducted on work-life balance ^[6]. According to a major Canadian study conducted by Lowe (2005), 1 in 4 employees experience high levels of conflict between work and family, based on work-to-family interference and caregiver strain. If role overload is included, then close to 60 percent of employees surveyed experience work-family conflict. However, some people appear to manage career success and a positive private life with ease. Experts say there is no single definition and some don't even like to use the phrase. But generally they agree work-life balance translates to satisfaction with one's entire life -- professional and personal -- and it can be reached even while working long hours. Let's first define what work-life balance is not:

1. Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance. Trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities is usually unrewarding and unrealistic. Life is and should be more fluid than that.
2. Your best individual work-life balance will vary over time, often on a daily basis. The right balance for you today will probably be different for you tomorrow. The right balances for you when you are single will be different when you marry, or if you have children; when you start a new career versus when you are nearing retirement.
3. There is no perfect, one-size fits all, balance you should be striving for. The best work-life balance is different for each of us because we all have different priorities and different lives. However, WLB is defined as - —The amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy. It can be difficult to get the right work-life balance. Experts say success lies not only in carefully defining how you want to spend your time, but in making sure you adjust your life and work as your needs change. Sometimes even small changes can make a difference. An unmanageable schedule and out-of-control home life can lead to depression, poor performance at work, and conflict with family and a feeling of burnout that can lead physicians to question whether to stay in medicine at all. WLB is a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee's primary priorities of their employment position and their private lifestyle ^[7]. Most psychologists would agree that the demands of an employee's career should not overwhelm the individual's ability to enjoy a satisfying personal life outside of the business environment.

Importance of Work-Life Balance

Technology has improved people's lives in many different ways. People can live longer, healthier lives because of technological advancements. A student can access vast

resources of information to complete assignments and a mother can see and talk to a daughter that is thousands of miles away. The advancements in the way people access information, communicate with one another, and complete tasks have allowed for flexibility in the workplace. It has also created a lack of distinction between work and family time. It is important to draw a distinction between work and life. People who are constantly tied to their jobs deal with the symptoms of stress and burnout. If a person doesn't have a time to relax and recharge, their ability to do their job decreases and their performance level suffers. Thus, from a management point of view, it is important to encourage a person to take time off from work instead of putting in long hours. Creating a schedule that allows a person to do activities they enjoy will help them to be better employees, friends, and family members ^[8]. Once the time to work is over the person needs to learn to walk away from the laptop and not answer the cell phone for work calls. This type of balance is not easy to achieve because there will always be people who want to make demands on an individual's time. People need to learn that it is okay to say no and only agree to take on additional tasks if they are important. Without creating a work-life balance a person isn't able to take time to enjoy the life they have worked so hard to create. They aren't available for friends and family members, and often take their stress out on the ones they love. They can also suffer from illness and physical disorders that stem from prolonged stress such as heart disease, alcoholism, and even diabetes.

Negative effects of work life conflict

Long work hours and highly stressful jobs not only hamper employees' ability to harmonize work and family life but also are associated with health risks, such as increased smoking and alcohol consumption, weight gain and depression. Work life conflict has been associated with numerous physical and mental health implications. According to a 2007 study by Duxbury and Higgins, women are more likely than men to report high levels of role overload and caregiver strain. This is because women devote more hours per week than men to non-work activities such as childcare, elder care and are more likely to have primary responsibility for unpaid labor such as domestic work ^[9]. Furthermore, other studies show that women also experience less spousal support for their careers than their male counterparts. Although women report higher levels of work-family conflict than do men, the numbers of work-life conflict reported by men is increasing. Work-life conflict has negative implications on family life.

According to the 2007 study by Duxbury and Higgins, 1 in 4 Canadians report that their work responsibilities interfere with their ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home. Employees, especially the younger generation who are faced with long hours, the expectations of 24/7 connection and increasing pressure of globalization are beginning to demand changes from their employers ^[11]. Also, people in the elderly employee segment are working longer now than in the past and are demanding different work arrangements to accommodate their life style needs. In one survey of physicians, control over work schedule was the greater predictor of reported work-life balance ^[12]. Demographic and work-life factors, in order of how strongly they affect work-

life balance:

- Control over schedule and hours worked
- Total weekly hours worked
- Number of children at home
- Total weekly hours "on call"
- Age
- Gender
- Income

Work-Life Balance Policies / Practices

There are number of work-life balance and flexible working arrangements. They are the clear policy statement that announces the organizations commitment for providing a flexible responsive work balance, which enables all employees to balance work and family / personal responsibilities supported by policy guidelines. Some of the important policies and initiatives taken in the study are elaborated below: Policies in the originations with reference to leave arrangements:

1. **Careers Leave:** It allows employees to take time off to care for and support a sick family or household member.
2. **Opportunity for leave if care arrangements** – for children or other dependents breakdown: If day care person taking care of children or dependents get sick, the employee is allowed to take leave to care for his/ her child or dependents.
3. **Study/ Training leave:** It allows employees to take time off for study or training.
4. **Career breaks:** It allows employees to negotiate a fixed period away from work to undertake study, while keeping a job at the end of the term.
5. **Cultural / Religious breaks:** It allows employees to take time off for cultural/ religious reason; public holidays excluded.
6. **Bereavement leave:** It allows employees to take a minimum leave of 2 days after the death of family or house hold member.
7. **Pooling of leave entitlement:** It allows employees to pool all entitlements like sick leave, career's leave etc, giving employees a larger number of days if they need it for family reasons.

Work-life balance approach in Indian perspective

The concept of work-life balance has been essentially stemmed from Western management theories. While the same may not have been present in traditional Indian businesses and corporate, increased focus on work-life balance in India is being seen. Companies like Infosys, Wipro, Yahoo India, Google India Dell India, Microsoft India, Accenture and HCL Technologies amongst many others have already begun taking steps in this direction. The steps taken by the Indian companies to maintain a good work-life balance at their workplaces are:

1) **Working from home:** Nearly 50,000 employees at IBM India and about 15,000 tech workers at HP India are taking advantage of their companies' work-life balance option. They virtually have no cubicle in their offices and are allowed to work from home. Microsoft India too reimburses telephone and broadband usage to their employees for working from home and offers them a variety of flexible working options.

2) Plan work in a way that you can take the weekend off:

Unlike western countries, a majority of the Indian workforce still functions on a 6-day week routine. However with certain MNCs taking the lead with 5 day work weeks, big corporate houses may very well be seen giving weekend offs to some of their employees.

3) **Opting for split shifts:** For the uninitiated, a split shift is one of the latest work-life initiatives that India Inc has taken to. In split shifts, employees can work for a few hours in the morning, attend to their personal work during afternoons when business tend to be typically slack and return in the evening to close the day. Companies like Aegis, BPO Outsourcing Solutions Company and Apollo Hospitals in Bangalore have also followed suit. This strategy allows them to induct more women into the workforce and retain talent who would otherwise leave due to inflexible work hours.

4) **Making full use of the company's facilities:** Surprisingly many employees who work in corporate houses with sprawling campuses and innumerable facilities do not actually use it. Many big companies in India offer gym facilities, sport courts, crèches, grocery stores, banking facilities and cafes within their campus. Employees should try to use these facilities within work hours for a quick rejuvenation.

5) **Optimisation of time at work:** Employees should look at maximizing all available resources, including time, to get work done. A great way to optimise time is to work on a schedule and follow a timetable. The Indian workplace is slowly moving away from the notion that longer hours spent in the office are directly related to higher productivity levels. For employees looking forward to a better work-life balance, this is a clear hint at gunning for an early exit from the office by boosting productivity levels during the day ^[10]

Conclusion

This paper has provided some clear indications of staff general views on work life balance. It has also identified a number of areas where improvements could be made and policies supporting flexible working arrangements could be further developed. Employees expect that organization should be empathetic towards employees' needs by providing Work life balance approach. It can influence employees' choice in terms of employment. From organization point of view, it makes good business sense to support Work life balance approach not just to recruit & retain employees but also because employees' feel that Work life balance approach enables them to work better.

An overall conclusion of WLB practices are most effective when they enhance employees' autonomy and increase their capacity to perform well in work and in family situation. In summary a successful convergence between work and non-work aspects can be win-win situation for employees and employers alike. It can be seen that work life balance practices benefits everyone, i.e the business, through easier recruitment, improved retention and easier service delivery, the economy as the labour market grows skilled and experienced people are available to work, parents and careers that can spend quality time at home, as well as providing financial support through work. This study basically made us to understand the different work life balance practices followed in the organization also helped us to understand the importance of the different

practices followed in the organization.

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