

Work Life Balance for Working Couples.

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Abstract:

As the trend of Nuclear families is growing in recent years, and many young couples are staying away from their families for the jobs in various cities. The couples need to take care of the children and work simultaneously due to financial demands. This is creating a lot of stress on working parents as they tend to juggle between the responsibilities of their working organization and family. It can necessitate them to take more than available leave options, and job security can be at risk. Significant social and personal adjustments are necessary to cope with such a situation. Working parent especially one who has the good fortune would be able to balance their Work-Life. It is important to understand that both these jobs are extremely demanding, and to do justice to each without neglecting the other is a formidable task.

Keywords: Nuclear, Stress, Job security, Work life.

I. Introduction

As working parents have to manage work and home responsibilities efficiently; they have to struggle with managing the increasingly overlapping work and family domains. This study investigates whether

there are differences in satisfaction with job, job flexibility, and work-family balance of working parents. The couple try to integrate the boundaries between work and family in the way they prefer. Competing and multi-faceted demands between work and home responsibilities have assumed increased relevance for employees in recent years, due in large part to demographic and workplace changes, such as: a greater numbers of couple in the Workforce (dual-career couples), transformation in family structures (a rise in the number of single parents), a growing reluctance to accept the longer hours culture, and technological advancements. Working couple of today try fulfill family responsibilities and also try to remain fully involved in their careers coping up with the competing demands of their multiple roles. The caring responsibilities that working couple have lays a heavy stress on them when it is combined with their professional duties. The attempt of working couple to integrate, organize and balance the various problems and activities in their different roles simultaneously puts them under tremendous pressure. As a result, the family becomes an organizational stakeholder and this powerful social trend marked the beginning of the work/life balance paradigm shift. In response to these changes and the conflict they generate among the multiple roles that individuals occupy, organizations are increasingly pressured to design various kinds of practices, intended to facilitate employees'

efforts to fulfill both their employment related and their personal commitments. The way of how work-life balance can be achieved and enhanced is an important issue in the field of human resource management and has received significant attention from employers, workers, government, academic researchers, and the popular media.

II. Literature Review

Work-life balance is a key issue in all types of employment as dual-career families have become common and high work demands with long working hours have become the norm. The importance of helping employees achieve a balance between the demands of their work and their home lives has been emphasized. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of couple in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives. According to Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com (an international work-life balance and consulting company), “Work-life balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life”. Also he believes that to achieve better work-life balance, each individual needs to work smarter- to get more done in less time. According to European Research Study vol:13th has shown that Competing and multi-faced demands between work and home responsibilities have assumed increased relevance for employees in recent years, due in large part to demographic and workplace changes, such as: a greater numbers of couple in the workforce (dual-career couples), transformation in family structures (a rise in the number of single parents), a growing reluctance to accept the longer hours culture, the rise of the 24 per 7 society, and technological advancements.

III. Objectives

The Objectives of the Study:

- To study the various practices of Work life balance provided by the various organizations.
- To study the implementation of work-life balance in the organizations.
- To Provide Suggestions to overcome the barriers in work life balance among the employees.

IV. Research Methodology:

For this research purpose, secondary data has been analyzed through various journals, websites, and articles of magazines. Secondary data has been extensively used for this exploratory research, which is enumerated and recorded. The qualitative research is used in this paper, to ensure that all aspects of Work Life have been considered. Therefore, the current adoption, purpose and success of work life balance in selected organizations should be analyzed through an exploratory & qualitative research.

V. Current Practices of Work life Balance provided by the Organizations:

Nowadays, big corporate houses are facilitating their employees by ensuring that their employees are happy and satisfied. They provide better working environment and help them to manage their personal life and professional life. Through this paper we will be discussing the common practices being followed by the organizations for the balance of work life in case of married couple.

Work-life balance policies frequently include benefits such as flexible work hours, child- and elder-care provisions, paid maternity leave, adoption assistance, leave/time off, education assistance, health

assistance, and housing assistance. Flexible work hours, telecommuting, and job sharing also may encourage work-life balance, and for some organizations may help reduce costs for non-work-related absences. However, research clearly shows that regardless of what the organization promotes, direct supervisors/managers greatly influence the work-life balance of their subordinates. Managers, who focus on the desired work product, rather than requiring “face time” or logging overtime hours, can better enable their employees to balance work and life demands. Also important to note, the menu of work-life balance supports should be broad enough to meet the needs not only of parents with children, but also singles and childless couples.

Modern technologies, providing constant accessibility to internet and mobile devices, can blur the boundaries between work and non-work. Some employees’ workplaces are portable—traveling in the car or airplane, and residing at home or other locations – thus pushing work activities into what were traditionally non-work spaces. Conversely, employees easily can import personal activities (e.g., online shopping, videos, music, texting family and friends) into the workplace. This new capacity created by technology appears to be a mixed blessing for employees and their organizations. By creating pressure for employees to be “always on,” technology’s constant accessibility may lower employee satisfaction and productivity, which defeats its purpose. If employees feel obligated and are rewarded for responding to incoming technological communications, they may develop a compulsion to instantly check their messages, which interrupts the flow of their personal lives.

Organizations can implement various work-life balance initiatives that may assist employees to better balance their work and

family responsibilities, gain improvements in well-being and provide organizational benefits. There are a large variety of family friendly policies which include but are not limited to the following: flexible working hours, job sharing, part-time work, compressed work weeks, parental leave, telecommuting, on-site child care facility, In addition, employers may provide a range of benefits related to employees’ health care and well-being, including extended health insurance for the employee and dependents, personal days, and access to programs or services to encourage fitness and physical and mental health. Still, other practices may support children’s education, employees’ participation in volunteer work, or facilitate phased retirement. These additional practices fall outside the scope of our current paper, but can be viewed as supporting employees’ health, well-being, and work-life balance.

Flexi time allows employees, to determine (or be involved in determining) the start and end times of their working day. This can allow them to meet family or personal commitments/emergencies (enable employees to respond to both predictable and unpredictable circumstances), during the day or to reduce their commuting time by starting and ending work before or after the rush hour.

Telecommuting: It is becoming more and more common for people to do at least some of their regular work from home instead of going into the office. This type of arrangement is often called ‘telework’ or ‘telecommuting’ and can be advantageous for employees by allowing them: to organize their work day around their personal and family needs; to decrease work-related expenses; to reduce commuting time; and to work in a less stressful and disruptive environment. It may also help to accommodate employees who, because of particular disabilities, are unable to leave

home. The fact that employees who telework can use this added flexibility to capitalize on their personal peak productivity periods can also favourably influence a company's bottom line. Moreover, employers may be concerned by the initial implementation cost, potential legal liabilities, and difficulties in supervising and appraising the performance of teleworkers. Trade-Unions may disapprove of work-at-home clauses if they perceive them as leading to greater isolation of employees, reduced job security and promotion opportunities, and diminished health and safety protection.

Compressed Work Weeks: A compressed work week is an arrangement whereby employees work longer shifts in exchange for a reduction in the number of working days in their work cycle (e.g. on a weekly or biweekly basis). This can be beneficial for employees in terms of additional days off work (e.g. longer weekends allowing "mini vacations") and reduced commuting time, whereas employers can extend their daily operating hours, with less need to resort to overtime. Compressed work weeks are often initiated by the employee, but sometimes the employer may initiate the option to improve operational efficiency, to maximize production (reduced daily start up costs) or to establish longer business hours which can enhance customer service.

Part-Time Work: Part-time arrangements can also allow people with health problems, disabilities or limited disposable time (e.g. students) to participate in the labour force, develop their skills and obtain work experience. Finally, they can facilitate re-entry into the workforce for those who have had career breaks—particularly mothers (or fathers) who have stayed at home to raise their children—or provide a gradual exit for employees nearing retirement. From the employer's point of view, the use of part-time workers, where feasible, can help

maximize the use of human resources and increase operational flexibility, by providing additional coverage during peak periods. Part-time employment can also be considered unsatisfactory for those employees who would prefer working longer hours to increase their income, thereby ensuring a higher standard of living for their families.

Furthermore, part-time workers and those working less than 35 hours a week reported the lowest levels of both physical and psychological health problems. Part-time work is one strategy frequently used by workers who wish to better balance their work and family life. Part-time work should be promoted in more, higher-level occupations, for instance, Daimler Chrysler in Germany promotes part-time work in leading positions in the company.

Job sharing is an arrangement which allows two (or sometimes more) employees to jointly fill one fulltime job, with responsibilities and working time shared or divided between them. Job sharing may be appropriate where opportunities for part-time jobs or other arrangements are limited. Apart from the obvious advantage of allowing employees more time for other commitments, including family responsibilities, job sharing also facilitates the development of partnerships, where job sharers can learn from each other while providing mutual support. It can benefit employers as well by improving staff retention, increasing productivity and combining a wider range of skills and experience in a single job. In some cases, such an arrangement can also provide additional coverage during busy periods, while ensuring continuity of coverage when one partner is on sick leave or holidays. For business with substantial numbers of administrative, maintenance or customer-facing employees, offering flexible working conditions can be problematic. Where the

hours of work are customer-driven, organizations face limitations on flexibility for employees, but this is when family-friendly programs such as child care would be of most benefit.

Contextual factors that influenced the success of these work arrangements were management support and supportive organizational culture, the presence of formal human resource management practices regarding reduced work arrangements and assistance in the implementation of such arrangements.

Work-Life Policies as Strategic Human Resource Management Decisions

There are some motives for applying work-life practices by organizations: to increase participation of female personnel and make use of their capacities, to keep employee motivated and well performing, to make the organization more attractive to employees, to have a better corporate social responsibility.

VI. Implementation of Work Life Balance within the organizations

To attain work-life balance, employers can promote a positive work-life culture by actions at several different levels. First, at an organization-wide or department-wide level, consider implementing one or more work-life benefits such as telecommuting or flexible work hour options for employees, if and when possible. Look to other organizations as a source of innovative ideas. Second, remember that when managers and supervisors buy into the policies created to help balance work and life, employees are more likely to take advantage of them. Efforts targeted at supervisors can ensure that they understand how to implement these policies and benefits, as well as the potential benefits to the company of doing so.

Third, make employees aware of efforts they can undertake to optimize their own work-life balance. For example, encourage employees to utilize vacation time for purposes of recovery. By doing so, employees physically and psychologically detach from their work, and they report greater well-being in general. Recovery periods like breaks during the work day or vacations could be particularly valuable for the employees whose jobs prohibit other work-life benefits. In addition, consider sharing information from recent studies that identify and describe how employees have dealt with specific types of work-home boundary violations; including strategies that are behavioral (e.g., develop guidelines for triaging work and non-work demands), temporal (e.g., control work time, find respite), physical (e.g., manipulate physical space), and communicative (e.g., set expectations).

Finally, lead by example. If employees observe their manager setting firm boundaries between work and non-work domains, such as not responding to emails after 8pm, then they are more likely to follow suit. Large-scale actions targeted towards work-life balance, such as family-friendly benefits and policies can be important, but do not ignore the importance of small-scale, subtle (yet crucial) efforts such as day-to-day support from supervisors and coworkers to promote work-life balance within the organization.

VII. Suggestions to overcome the barriers in work life balance among the employees.

Implementing of work-life practices for organizational effectiveness may be compromised by lack of use these practices. Five distinct aspects of work-life culture have been identified from previous studies all of which should be considered by

organizations when attempting to improve employees' work-life balance. These are outlined below

Managerial support is consistently emphasized in discussions and studies as a factor influencing work-life balance. Managers play an important role in the success of work/life programs because they are in a position to encourage or discourage employees' efforts to balance their work and family lives. Where supervisors enthusiastically support the integration of paid work and other responsibilities, employees will be more likely to take up available work-life programs. On the other hand, it has been suggested that even in 'family-friendly' organizations, managers may send negative signals indicating that the use of flexible benefits is a problem for them, their colleagues and the organization as a whole.

Career consequences: The second factor associated with a barrier to the successful implementation of work-life practices is the perception of negative career consequences. The provision of work-life practices improved employees' organizational commitment, but only to the extent that employees felt free to use the practices without negative consequences to their work lives—such as damaged career prospects. The perception that using work-life balance practices will have a negative impact on their career prospects appears to be a powerful demotivator for employees' use of these practices.

Organizational time expectation: Another factor that influence the uptake and overall supportiveness of work-life policies is organizational time expectations the number of hours employees are expected to work; how they use their time (e.g., whether employees are expected to take work home); In several studies, however, long working hours have been identified as a signal of commitment, productivity and motivation

for advancement. This is particularly the case in organizations with "presenteeism" cultures where those who succeed are the ones who come in early and stay late as a matter of course. Known as "face time" being visibly at workplace, often for long hours—is seen as a sign of commitment, of loyalty, of competence and high potential, but also is seen as a major barrier to achieving work/life balance. Employees who do not give the maximum amount of time possible to the organization are often defined as less productive and less committed, and are therefore less valued than employees working longer hours; We consider that the shift to evaluating performance on the basis of outputs rather than time spent physically at the workplace is, however, an essential part of developing a culture that supports work-life balance. It is very difficult to implement flexible work arrangements in organizations where the focus is on hours rather than output, and presence rather than performance. This means that organizations that want to increase work-life balance need to introduce new performance measures that focus on objectives, results and output. To do this, they need to reward output not hours and what is done, not where it is done. They also need to publicly reward people who have successfully combined work and non-work domains and not promote those who work long hours and expect others to do the same.

Genders perceptions: Perceptions that work-life policy is developed only for couple are the fourth factor related to their use. A review of men's use of family-friendly employment provisions argues that barriers to men's use arise from three major sources.

First the culture of many workplaces casts doubt on the legitimacy of men's claims to family responsibilities. Second, the business environment, imposing competitive pressures to maintain market share and

increase earnings. Third, the domestic organization in employees' own homes often precludes men from taking up available work/life options. Some work-life provisions, such as paternity leave, are intended specifically for men and aim to foster a greater sharing of responsibilities between men and couple. Thus, encouraging more men to use opportunities for flexible work is important but clearly this requires a supportive work environment as well as changes in attitudes and expectations in the wider community.

Co-worker support: An increasing amount shows that workers who make use of work-life practices suffer negative perceptions from colleagues and superiors. The employees who used work life balance practices were perceived by co-workers as having lower levels of organizational commitment, which was thought to affect the subsequent allocation of organizational rewards such as advancement opportunities and salary increases. Some staff that use flexible arrangements have reportedly experienced 'family friendly backlash' or resentment from co-workers. In other organizations, employees without dependent care responsibilities (in this paper, defined as time spent performing childcare, eldercare or care for a disabled dependent) interpret "family friendly" as favoritism and complain that they are being "unfairly" or inequitably treated. We consider that such employees feel that their colleagues with childcare or eldercare responsibilities are "getting away with less work" and that the needs of childless employees are being ignored, but this kind of attitude should be changed. This backlash against "family friendly" makes it harder for organizations who wish to address the issue. In conclusion regarding such perceptions, it is therefore not surprising why work-life practices tend to be underused by male employees, single employees and career-oriented mothers; and

that apprehension of negative career consequences for using practices has been associated with increased levels of work-life conflict.

VIII. Conclusions

In conclusion we want to enhance that everyone benefits from good practice in work-life balance. For instance: business, through easier recruitment, improved retention, and easier service delivery; the economy, as the labor market grows more skilled and experienced people are available to work; □parents and careers, who can spend quality time at home as well as providing financial support through work; people with disabilities, through improved access to work; and □the workforce generally where they are better able to balance their work with other aspects of their lives.

The more control employees feel they have over their lives, the more able they are to balance work and family. An overall conclusion of much of the research is that work-life balance practice 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 a win-win situation for employees and employers alike. The ability to achieve satisfying experiences in all life domains enhances the quality of personal relationships and a range of organizational outcomes.

Availability and use of work-life balance practices, when provided in the context of supervisor and organizational support can reduce work-life conflict and increase positive appraisals of one's organization. These effects are often associated with employee attitudes such as increased job satisfaction and enhanced control over their work schedule. The results are: reduce

absenteeism, intend to turnover, job stress levels and work-life conflict and increased productivity. A lower turnover intentions means: lower recruitment and training costs, increased retention of valuable employee and increased organizational commitment and loyalty. All of these aspects are associated, in turn, with costs savings, higher customer satisfaction and implicitly higher levels of organizational performance. This article argues that building an organizational culture which supports work-life balance is a long term process for large organizations. It involves changing the way people think and talk about their work and about work-life balance so that using flexible working options and other work-life initiatives becomes accepted and normal for everyone regardless of their gender, seniority within the organizational or personal commitments.

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