

Issues in work life balance of women employees in Indian Banking Organizations : A conceptual framework analysis

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ABSTRACT

It is assumed that work-life balance can bring a huge transformation at the organizational and individual levels. It helps an organization inherently build a strong value system, which is attributed to the work-life balance. This will help people realize what they want to do, which in turn will lead to stronger organizations based on stronger values, orientations, and ethics.

Being every unique individual and every unique organization, it is not possible to have a fixed pattern or to have one size that can fits all patterns of work-life balance practices. It is important for corporate to frame policies that are in interest of employees. However framing and practicing of such policies may add to some financial load but it should be considered as an investment to support work-life balance in form of increased managerial workloads as it will lead to fetch gains (both economic and performance related) in achieving strategic objectives (Clutterbuck, 2003). Increased flexibility, better customer service, high morale, motivation, commitment, and engagement, lower degree of absenteeism, improved organizational commitment, better recruitment and retention of a diverse and expert workforce, fulfillment of legal norms, quality of outcome and higher performance level etc can be the gains that employers can fetch in addition of being “employer of choice”.

The present paper attempts to explore factors affecting work life balance of women employees working in Indian Banking sector with an objective to understand impacts of such imbalance.

Keywords : Women Employees, Work Life Balance, Professional Challenges, Human Resource, Employee growth

Introduction

The growing role of women in fast pace life full of competitiveness and race to survive and meeting family and self-expectations along with the growth of the service sector is now enabling ample employment opportunities for the women in the country. The economic status is on the rise as both male and female partners are working for longer hours and for higher stress to make both ends meet.

In today's fast-paced place of work, most of the workers are counselled to do more, quicker, and with fewer funds. There seems to be an extra burden to be efficacious—whatever that means—than ever before. While doing the task of two or three people at the workplace, workers are anticipated to be model parents and have a gratifying personal life in which they back perfect children, enjoy their hobbies, undertake in the community, and take outstanding care of their bodies, spirits, and minds. But while the mission for balance is a delightful goal, it's just not a genuine goal for most people. Instead, it has converted one more "to-do" on an ever-expanding, guilt-inducing list.

The problem has been even worse in the case of those women who are working in the service sector. They are expected to play multiple roles not just as a successful, efficient, and determined employee but also good wife, mother, and sometimes caretaker of aged people too. This has made the problem of work-life balance even deeper and dangerous for such women. They are doing jobs and so sharing the financial responsibilities of the family along with their life partners. But ironically, their household duties have not been spared.

There are different perspectives about work life balance and its outcomes. A number of scholars, leaders and experts have worked upon to analyse theory of work life balance, however, there is no standard formula or approach that can help in attaining ideal work life balance or the role of work has changed throughout the world due to economic conditions and social demands. Originally, work was a matter of necessity and survival. Throughout the years, the role of "work" has evolved and the composition of the workforce has changed. Changes in the social, political, and economic fabric of societies have influenced and continue to influence both the nature of employment and its relationship to life outside work. Today, for majority of people, work is a necessity and routine activity but it is still not a source of personal satisfaction to great extent. Outlining a range of possible work-life balance arrangements and differentiating between those that are legislated for and those that are non-statutory, that fits to different environments, personality and outcome levels are yet to be worked upon extensively.

Work Life Balance

The history of work-life balance begins in the latter half of the 19th century when reformers successfully campaigned against long factory hours and were able to demonstrate that reductions in working hours had no impact upon levels of output. During the early part of the 20th century, changing approaches to leadership and thinkers associated worked upon to reduce working hours and a number of studies in this regard were conducted. The studies demonstrated the relationship between time spent at work and the level of output as interconnected in complex manner. These studies also considered role of other qualitative factors like importance of motivation and morale, fatigue, concentration, and attention to explain how reduction in working time could lead to increased production, better employee retention and healthy business environment and as a result organizations paid attention to alter work arrangements for working schedules, work breaks and organizational environment. (Hogarth et. al., 2003)

During the decades of 1960s and 1970s, the term work-life balance had yet to be extensively used, yet a number of factors were in process of identification that could give rise to a balance of employee friendly policies and result oriented organizations. These included: Health and safety at work; International competitiveness; equality; and the flexible labor market.

During the 1980s the political focus was very much upon liberalizing the economy, including the labor market. At the heart of labor market reform was the introduction of more flexible patterns of work – frequently referred to as “a typical forms of employment” (increased temporary/fixed-term employment, 7, etc.). This took place at a time of a major structural shift in the labor market with employment moving from the production to the service sector, which tended to favor female employment at the time.

The introduction of more flexible forms of work was an important strand in improving labor supply because it potentially allowed groups of individuals otherwise unable to enter the labor market the opportunity to do so. It was only during the 1990s, especially the latter half of the decade that the Government began to play a more interventionist role to give employees (and potential employees) certain rights with respect to establishing a work-life balance that suited them (Hogarth, 2003). Most people think of only one notion relating to work and life: the work-life balance notion. We need to know that the relationship has been evolving over time.



Conceptual Framework of Work Life Balance

In the cut-throat competitive environment, the organization's expectations from the employees are increasing. In order to meet the employer's demand, the employees must stretch themselves and focus more on their work which is creating work-life imbalance. In fact striking a balance between work- life and personal life is one of the most challenging issues being faced by the women employees in the 21st century. Creating a healthy work and home environment is an essential step to achieving work life balance. Not being able to balance the various domains in one's life may lead to a number of negative consequences such as work-family conflict, health risks, poor work performance, stress and depression. Therefore, finding a solution to

balancing one's work and personal life can positively contribute to an individual's overall well being, it can allow for greater productivity at work and it may lead to stronger relationships.

WLB and Women Employees in Indian Banking Sector

Indian banking sector has witnessed explosive growth and expansion ever since the economic reforms during 1990's. Global expansions, increased privatization, growing networks and digitization of procedures has created much better employment opportunities for women in the banking sector. In fact, the nationalization of the Indian banking sector in 1969 served as the first major step to reduce gender discrimination against women in banking jobs. Due to fixed working hours, dealing with a fixed range of clients, scattered staff etc are the reasons of attraction of women job-seekers to grab jobs in banks as it relates to their requirements and nature. Banks also were not only averse to taking them but even welcomed their entry because women have certain innate traits which fit in with the job requirements. Society and family members have also started accepting the equal rights of both the genders. Indian women are placed at the top most positions of many major banks and they are proving themselves to be competitive. Women are working as key decision makers, innovators, leaders and contributors for growth of economy. The mix of leadership quality, managerial ability and the administrative skills makes it even more achievable for women workforce in the banking sector. According to the 2013 Catalyst Census: Fortune 500 Women Executive Officers and Top Earners, women represented 17.6 percent of executives and 17.9 percent of the board of directors in the finance and insurance sector. In 2012, women represented 23.1 percent of all senior officers in Financial Post 500 companies, and in 2013 11.4 percent of chief financial Officers of Fortune 500. The banking Sector in India was primarily male dominated till 1980's. The scenario is taking turn from last three decades as the gender equality became fairly poised in Indian Banking Sector. Women executives like Chanda Kochhar, Naina Lal Kidwai, Arundathi Bhattacharya, Shikha Sharma, Usha Ananthasubramanian, and others at various levels are contributing a lot to the growth of banking sector. From the facts presented we can observe that the number of female employees in the banking sector is increasing year after year.

Literature Review

Deshpande (2013) holds that the changing economic system of India demands the double earning sources among the families. And because of which there is backdrop of the patriarchal-bourgeois concept of society according to which woman is defined by her biological functions. In the modern world, the women employees are playing the role as a care taker of the family and as a full-time worker for meeting the financial needs or to satisfy their inner urge to gain 'social identity' which leads to stress. The conflict has started arising out of women performing double role in the home and at work.

Goyal K.A, Agrawal (2015) in the paper titled "Issues and challenges of Work-life balance in banking industry of India" explained that Work-life balance policies and programs are an investment in an organization for improving productivity, reducing absenteeism, achieving improved customer services, better health, flexible working as well as satisfied and motivated workforce especially in banking industry.

Murthy M. and Shastri (2015) observed various issues in Work-Life Balance of Parents in the paper titled “A Qualitative Study on Work-Life Balance of Employees working in private sector”, like parenting issues: Need more time for children, Showing work frustration on children. Marital issues: Need more time of spouse, not able to give time to the spouse. Role conflict/ Role guilt: Doubtful about how good they are in the roles that they play at home... eg. as a mother or as a daughter in law.

Kumaraswamy M., Ashwini S. (2015) in a paper titled “Challenges in WLB of Married working Women” studied that it is important for employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and their private lives. Generally, those employees who have better work-life balance contribute more towards the success of the organization. The organization can render better service to the customers by having productive and efficient employees. Family sphere changes that have impacted the work-life balance of individuals in today's context include nuclear families, single-parent households, and dual earning parents, parents working at different locations and increasing household work.

Most of the studies available have observed high level of work life imbalance particularly in case of women employees. This is primarily due to traditional societal patterns that do not allow women to get her responsibilities shared and cause excess stress level. The struggle becomes even harder when work targets and work pressure increases which results in high level of Work Life Imbalance.

Women Employees and Problems in Professional Life

The Women in India is yet to be accepted at an equal in terms of responsibilities shouldered. The most basic struggle of women revolves around trying to make enough money to shoulder in physiological needs of the responsibilities this becomes even higher if there are children in the family as well. This struggle gets even relentless as in traditional societies like India, women have very little control over the work conditions and their finances. For men, struggle is generally confined to the work place, while home and leisure offer a contrast; whereas for women employees, struggle occupy all the aspects of her life. For women, there is no clear division in their work and leisure, in paid and unpaid work and in work and non-work relations. Personal intimate relations for women are also work relations and authority relations. But they are also personal-familial relations of caring and co-operation as well as of contradictions and hostility, of emotions as well as subordination.

Due to the problems and stress in personal life, employees have been negatively affected which also affects the organizational performance. In addition to this connection of the employees with their families during the working hours breaks or disturbs the connection of employees' with their job duties. Employees' communication with the family and friends during the office working hours sometimes causes serious tensions and stress in the employee. It reduces the efficiency and concentration level of the employees and they lack the sense of motivation to perform well in the organization. Employees, who work longer hours are considered as competent and dedicated regardless of the benefit gained by the organization in connection to their long working hours. For this reason, and the incentives offered to the employees, they seek to work for longer hours such that they can be considered for the promotion and for the increased reward for their

services to the banks. Because of the increased working hours, the performance of the individual may diminish, and the individual may not be able to perform effectively for the extra time as compared to the standard time.

Women Employees and Problems Faced In Social Life Due To Work

Such problems implies to the concept of equity and reasonableness, the workaholics work for longer hours, which is considered as disbalanced work life because of the lack of realization of the norms about where and how much time and energy is to be spent, in professional life resulting in conflicts between the professional and personal life . For the work life balance, an individual is required to consider the reasonableness of the time spent for his social life and personal life, and for this purpose, the general perception accepted in the society and professional bodies for working hours are to be considered as the touchstone for contrasting the average and exceptional working hours. The exceptional longer working hours may affect the work life balance if the social needs of a person are quite demanding, however if a person is not so social and doesn't need much time for its personal life might have less problems.

It can be observed now a days that employees are also enabling 24 hours service just to fulfill the job requirements and duties and in return they are been rewarded by various incentives without analyzing cost of efforts or amount of returns attained. On one hand, such incentives might have helped employees in availing rewards, benefits, and bonus through which they can meet financial requirements, whereas, on the other side such lucrative facilities disturb family life as they devote less time for family roles and responsibilities. Due to lack of time spent with family and lack of healthy family environment, family life get seriously affected due to merger and overlapping of work and social life which leads to stress and anxiety. In such scenario employees' work for the organizations even in their off timings and holidays and ignore the importance of their role in the family particularly in case of raising the children. Employees might get financial rewards from the organization for some time but increasing stress and anxiety, ultimately affects the performance in adverse manner in long run. There is no replacement of pleasant and satisfaction that one receives from his or her family. Similarly, social life also requires the deliverance of proper timing and attention for maintaining healthy relationship.

According to Poduval & Poduval (2009), it is not appropriate for an individual to dedicate their life completely to the work and ignoring their personal space. Growth of healthy relations and upliftment social life of employees help organization in improving and developing the personalities of employees in the organization for attaining better goals. Healthy social atmosphere gives an individual to think and work in a healthy as well as friendly environment. Happy and satisfied employees will be motivated towards optimum utilization of their skills and expertise in an effective manner with utmost energy for innovations and ideas. In order to have a healthy mind of employees, organizations work to provide multi aspect facilities to employees such as the holidays, leaves, medical assistance, stress busters, tours etc so as to boost their energy levels at work place for positive and better results.

Conclusion

Business performance can be affected by number of ways but one of these is Work-life balance policies as in the present scenario of competitive labor market, employers can attract better recruits by offering Work-life balance policies with having competitive remuneration packages. However, work-life balance policies can enhance productivity; reduce cost by improving staff retention rates, decrease negative spill-overs, reduce extended hours and fatigue to reduce negative effect on productivity which further minimizes stress and contribute to a safer and healthier workplace. It can be noted that on an average larger firms with better global networks, formulate better work-life balance practices and thus employers are encouraged to introduce work-life policies and make them more inclusive that can help employees to balance their work on one hand and can help employers to grow on business and economy, on the other hand. Business organizations employing larger numbers of professionals are more likely to implement work-life policies being their scarcity, harder to attract, more valuable and more expensive to recruit and retain than less paid employees whereas there are least availability of work-life balance policies for low skilled workers especially those in generally low skill industries.

Training is considered a form of human capital investment whether that investment is made by the individual or by the firm once employees are hired, training programs enhance employee job skills. Employees are expected to acquire new skills and knowledge, apply them on the job, and share them with other employees. Lauri, Benson and Cheney found that firms often delay training to determine whether workers are good matches and therefore have a lower probability of leaving the firm. Employees want good training opportunities to increase their marketability. The conventional wisdom used to be that if the company makes them marketable, employees will leave at the first opportunity. But today, companies are finding that the more training employees get, the more likely they are to stay. Indeed, when the training ends, the turnover tends to begin. A firm has the incentive to invest in the human capital of its workers only if there is an expectation of a return on its investment. Increasingly, companies are strengthening development for talent, thorough competency analysis, Input on individual interests, multi purpose and multi track assessment of capabilities and development needs, and the formulation of action plans.

The prevalence of management control of the work life balance agenda and management's discretion in the operation of work-life issues. A well-balanced integration of professional and private life is an essential goal for the new generation Moreover, informal arrangements and managerial discretion are important in realizing work and care balance.

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