

A Study on Key Factors Impacting Work Life Balance of Doctors

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Abstract

Work life balance aims to study the extent of being able to achieve a satisfactory level of happiness in executing the responsibilities of two domains i.e., work and personal lives. Every profession experience the challenge of achieving the right balance between the work and life. The intensity of balance varies from profession to profession and also on the industry type. In this paper, we have examined the key factors which has an influence on the work life balance of doctors. Literature reviews were analysed and key factors both from personal and work environment were identified. Factors from personal lives like demography, dependents, children, home responsibilities, leisure, societal expectations, health etc have an influence on work life balance. Work factors like environment, boss, peers, culture, working hours, time management, multiple roles, policies etc have an definite influence on the achievement of work life balance of doctors.

Index Terms- Work Life Balance, Family, Time Management, Work-Life Conflict, Stress.

1.0: Introduction

Work life balance is the most widely researched topic from many decades due to the importance it has gained in the lives of the employees. But this topic keeps changing its influence in varying contexts of time, geographical conditions, business industry type and many other reasons which may unique to a particular organisation and also in the business environment. Every company has varying factors that influence the work life balance of employees depending on the industry type and business environment. In this research paper, an effort is made to know the factors which are responsible for supporting or disturbing the work life balance of doctors working in hospitals. We are aware that in Indian context, still we face the mismatch of few number of doctors to the population prevailing in our country. In many estimates it is very clear that only one doctor exist for 10000 people in many geographical locations except major cities of India. Health issues are increasing year on year due to various reasons, hence the services of doctors fraternity is playing a key role in maintenance of good health in our society. Work life balance determines the extent to which doctors are happy and satisfied in their work commitments and also executing their responsibilities of professional life. This paper concentrates on different factors which may be internal to the hospital or external from the working atmosphere which influences the work life balance of doctors.

2.0: Literature Review

Young (2013) conducted a study on work life balance of public hospital doctors in metropolitan cities. The study was conducted among 200 doctors specialized in various domains working in different public hospitals of Hong Kong. A questionnaire was designed to collect the data. The findings of the study revealed that more than half of the respondents agreed that their work life balance was severely disturbed with continuous fatigue and less sleep. Average work hour per week of doctors was around 57 hours. Few respondents agreed that they used to work for more than 80 hours per week. Apart from that they had average overtime work of 4 hours per week. Many doctors worked for continued duties up to 18 hours and few of them stretched upto 40 hours. In addition many doctors worked on call duty for 9 hours per week. Nearly 52% of the respondents had only less than 2 hours per day for their personal work.

Leslie Rourke (2014) explained the Canadian rural doctors life and their relationships and boundaries with the community. In rural practice doctors are aware about the patients demographic, economic conditions of the patients. It also includes complex multi-faceted doctor-patient relationship like perceptions, ignorance, confidentiality breaches and removal of boundaries. In many instances doctors exhibit boundary violations with paternalistic approach. Doctors in rural practice either will give more importance to medical practice or will concentrate more on personal life. It becomes important to explicitly express to the concerned people that medical profession is not 9 to 5 job.

Vital work life and Cejka Search (2015) did a research survey on stress and burnout of Physicians. The objective of the study was to focus on different facets of physicians lives that lead to stress and burnout who play a critical

role in American healthcare. A multiple choice questionnaire was designed and sent to more than 1,50,000 Physicians and 2005 Physicians completed the survey. 85% of the respondents were full time practicing doctors. 66% of the respondents agreed that stress level is increasing year on year. The top three work related factors which lead to increased stress are paperwork and increased administrative demands, too many hours of work, personal compensation related issues. The top three personal life related factors which led to enhanced stress levels are concerns about work life balance, not enough time for exercise or wellness activities and not enough time for leisure/recreational activities.

Federico and Danyal (2015) studied on work life balance of doctors and requirement for a new scale to measure the same. The study focused on the emotions, dilemmas, feelings of the doctors who struggle to manage the official and personal responsibilities. The study found that many doctors suffered from carry forwarding the patient sick condition even returning to the home. Many of them had a practice of taking only two hour sleep after working for ten hours and also taking only ten minutes quick snap when it was too a busy schedule. Junior doctors almost neglected their family commitments and personal life while completely involving in the treatment of patients and following the required norms. Some experienced doctors have learnt to become emotionally blind after finishing their working hours towards the condition of patients. Also they have learnt the art of planning the available weekends and free time more meaningfully. Also many practitioners have learnt the trick of stop worrying about many aspects which may lead to unwanted stress and depression. Some factors like difficult working conditions and inefficient leaders make doctors work more complex in nature.

Tait et.al.,(2012) did a study on impact of burnout and satisfaction relating to work life balance among US Physicians. The researchers objective was to determine the Physicians satisfaction with work life balance among different specialized doctors. 7288 respondents completed the survey. The survey was conducted using the probability based panel. Descriptive statistics, Kruskal Wallis test, chi-square test, multivariate analysis, regression were used for statistical analysis. The findings of the study revealed that physicians with specializations like dermatology, general pediatrics and preventive medicine had highest rate of satisfaction with work life balance, whereas physicians who practice general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology had the lowest rate of work life satisfaction.

Amit and Shashank (2008) in their conceptual study on Indian Physician's health quoted various related findings to highlight the doctors health conditions. In a study by JAPI Ramachandran among 2499 doctors belonging to urban and semi-urban areas more number of them suffered from cardiovascular disease symptoms. In another study of 200 medical students, 22% of them had received the medical interventions for overcoming depression. In a study covering 90 doctors majority of them had tough work life balance because of increasing work load, more number of patients, adhering to new government policies, learning new advancement in medical field.

3.0: Research Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the key factors that will influence the work life balance of doctors. The researcher opted for related literature analysis and finding out the key factors. Qualitative approach describes the vital essence and holistic view on the topic from different stakeholders which will give specific meaning (Hanson et al.,2011). This approach helps us to gain a vast meaning derived from different literature works of the experts (Chang et al.,2010; Cresswell,2009) and tries to differentiate the unique experiences of the experts who have actually crossed the true experience (Stake,2005,2006)

4.0: Key Factors of Work Life Balance

Gender determines a key reason which influences the work life balance of doctors working in hospital of many countries. The research undertaken by Tabea Bienek (2014) explained that the family type and members responsibilities influences the extent of work life balance. It is emphasized that fathers usually take up the financial responsibility of the family and hence has little time towards the family and social commitments. They spend maximum amount of active time in their work and fulfilling the obligations of the family hence time for personal needs will get reduced. Work and life is usually classified as the activities carried out as the part of employment and life includes the family and personal life (Guest 2002). It is seen the changing trend across many economies the culture of many adults preferring to become employees rather than entrepreneurs which made them to keep fulfilling the assignments given by the employers (Bellavia, Frone 2004). Many experts narrowed down to the problem started in the United States where women employees had the responsibility of working in the outside enterprises and also add the additional responsibility of taking care the children and household tasks which made their life's more challenging and complex (Lingard, Francis 2009). According the researchers like Lockwood (2003) work life balance term was coined in 1986 in the United States and also had its origin in 1977 as mentioned in the book titled "Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy" made the terminology to be

popular and lot of scope emerged in the area of research. Authors like Lothaller (2009) defines work as the series of responsibilities executed as part of individual employees career and life as the accumulation of aspects like health, free time, orientation towards religious practices, enjoyment in fulfilling the family responsibilities. Also it is explained that the extent and different types of roles played by the individual person both in work and family has the impact on their having balance in both the spheres.

Many organisations even in the health sector especially hospitals have started designing the key policies which will support the work life balance of their employees. Poelmans and Caligiuri (2008) effective work life balance policies will reduce the work life conflict and bring synergistic performance in both the domains of work and life. Experts have given many classifications of work life balance like image or the broader perception about the organisation, opportunities for creating more employment, financial prudence and quality of transactions in the society (Lingard, Francis 2009). Many hours of work will lead to the extensive stress and exhaustion resulting in the gradual decrease in the health parameters of the employees (Schneider, Windel, Zwingmann 2002). Lack of time due to the extended working hours will result in less leisure and relaxing time. Human beings are social in nature and need to be in the nature and society with many interactions among the loved one's and friends. But the extent of work and family commitments may not have time towards leisure and relaxing.

The dependents in the family like children, spouse and parents make the employees have lot of responsibility and there is a need to give time for various works in the family. A tiny unit of any society is a family. We all love our families and there is a strong need for the building of a strong and harmonious family in order to have mental peace among the employees. A lot of significance is given to the upbringing of the children and also it is the youngster's responsibility to take care the needs of the elderly people of the family. Hence it becomes very crucial for the organisations to design family friendly policies to help balance their work and life. Some of the key policies can be maternity leave, children care leave system, teleworking, flexible working time, reduced working days, company kindergarten etc (Lockwood 2003).

Eating and sports behaviour have undergone rapid change in most of our societies when compared to the traditional set up due to reduce time, nuclear family set up, lack of patience, unorganized lifestyle, changed working time, excessive travelling etc (Iwasaki, Takahashi, Nakata 2006). Increasing trend of more hours spent in the working domain is emerging as the key trend which has most impact on the work life balance of the employees (Yamada 1999, Genda 2000, Lunsing 2003). Inability of the men workers to avail paternal leaves have severe consequences of being not available during critical time. Working systems with the inability to be flexible in their schedule, operation process, resource wise and output will become intolerable as time passes for an employee due to increasing expectations and pressure. Addressing the psychological belief system of employees and ensure that we have the working environment which is always motivating is key to the achievement of work life balance among employees (Murthy and Shastri, 2015).

Organisations who have designed and implemented employee work life programmes are in a good condition to achieve a good work life balance among employees. Factors such as age, number of working hours, qualification of employees, total disposable income sources for a family will have greater impact on the employee health and well being (Connie et al., 2015). Researchers have also expressed their findings that health of employee will start decreasing due to key factors like increasing stress level among employees, mismatch or huge possibilities of imbalance between work and life, clear ignorance of supporting policies to work life balance from the organisation side (Christopher, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Wang et al., 2008). Work-family conflict arises due to the incompatibility existing between the two key domains of everyone's life i.e. work and life (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Another group of researchers consider generational differences as the catalyst to maintain or having imbalance in the work and life zones. Authors like Misty et al., (2016) found that Gen X had faced highest ratio of work life conflict. Where as Baby boomers experienced increasing family-work conflict. Among all the generations Millennials were more work centric and Baby boomers had their entire focus on the family system. Highest work-life imbalance is experienced in Millennials who always have the attitude of chasing more money and material comforts (Duh 2016). The life cycle stages of an employee also have high influence on the extent of balance achieved between work and life (Erickson et al., 2010).

The issue of work-life balance is prominently prevalent among dual-earning couples in the medical profession (Haddock et al., 2006). When the husband and wife are both employees in some organisations and committed for a salary from them have least possibilities of achieving work life balance due to the varying demands and commitments (Barnett et al., 2003). In the medical profession work life imbalance will result due to the aspect of both couples working and experiencing higher stress level which has a negative impact of the peaceful personal lives. Issue of child management, joyful existence, caring for each other, looking after the elderly dependents will not be possible

hence an aspect personal burnout will be experienced by the dual earning couples (Adam et al.,2008;Buddeberg-Fischer et al.,2008;Gjerberg2003).

Emotional exhaustion experienced by the medical profession has a great impact on the imbalance created on work and life aspect. More working hours, increased responsibilities in the personal front and lack of time for personal well being added more worrying reasons for making work-life balance very difficult for the medical doctors (Gawande 2011). Due to the changing dynamics of family in our society like increasing travel time, outside eating habits, high nuclear families, dual-working couples, single parents, parents situated in two different places and high rate of household activities have added more pressure resulting in increased imbalance in the work and life phenomenon (Walia 2011).

Changing workplace demographics is slowly becoming a key aspect for the increased work life imbalance phenomenon. It is very common today that many organisations have witnessed a high rate of diverse workforce (Wells,2007). Female employees and in general there is a increasing trend towards childlessness in their families (Wood & newton,2006). Non-work factors like spouse, parent, dependence of elder people, leisure enjoyment, marriage, parenthood, taking care of home needs have all added certain element of pressure on the employees (Premeaux and Adkins, 2007).

Cultural aspects of the working organisations and also the family system have a key role in the determination of extent of work life balance achieved by the employees. Multiple dimension of culture will have a definite impact on the work life balance like nature of individualistic or emphasis on the collective efforts and gender differentiation (Ollier-Malaterre,2014). Gender differences in the medical field will have an emphasis on their work life balance. Women doctors usually get married to a professional and have a double responsibility of working and managing the home. They take extra effort in food preparation, financial planning, vacation planning, shopping and management of household responsibilities (Dadrie et al.,2017).

The existence of work life balance policies or programs may or may not favour the employees. If the policies are oriented towards greater performance and availing policies it is of less use. If the firm try to increase their benefits than the employees by designing the policies then it is very less use in maintenance of work life balance (Consolacion et al.,2016).

Changing and continuous evolving of the work itself has brought many advantages and disadvantages. Higher emphasis on continuous learning of employees, developing them for future requirements, high performance work models, employees involvement in the decision making, job crisis, outsourcing of jobs, less cost countries taking the jobs of higher cost prevailing economics have added certain stress element into the lives of employees resulting in increased concentration on work and less involvement in their personal lives (Sally and Martin 2012).

Technological interventions have an advantage and also disadvantage to the working professionals in the medical field. Dramatic pace of variations or difference in the work and life domain of doctors are due to rapid penetration of many technologies (Kossek and Lambert 2008). Life style is a evolving trend which has brought many new emphasis to the topic of work life balance (Schein 1984).

5.0: Findings:

The extent analysis of literature on work life balance among doctors found that factors like Family type whether nuclear or joint family influences them of less dependence or high pressure. It is a clear change in the trend from past few decades that women have entered the workforce which have altered the family fabric in a significant manner. Organisational policies and its genuine caring aspect will support work life balance or if it is only display paper then its existence will have no meaning to the employees. Mass production and high efficiency has resulted in reduced employee strengths and more working hours for the existing employees. Hence long working hours will add many complications in to the health of employees. Effective time management skill will make employees more organized and well positioned to tackle any possible challenges. Improper time management will enhance the stress levels and decrease operational efficiency of the employees. Human beings need to get associated with family, friends and society in order to boost up their morale. Due to increased work and family challenges leisure and society involvements is slowly decreasing for most of them. Dependents in the family bring lot of responsibilities to the doctors. They need to invest their time for caring and looking after these dependents. Responsibility of looking after children is a sensitive issue. Since children with young minds need lot of attention and absolute love and care. If the parents are not able to dedicate adequate time then bondage with children will have lot of challenges. Health of employees need to be managed at any cost without which health issues will have a cascading effect on doctors lives. Many doctors are ignoring their personal health, often go to meet psychologists and take their suggestions to have effective work and life balance. Extensive travelling due to work commitments reduced the time with family

members, leads to the consumption of outside food, getting adjusted to the changing geographical conditions, stress created due to long hours of lonely travel will have an impact on the work life balance. Dual earning couples have added new complexity to the topic of work life balance, and any new solution or formula may not work out for these couples because both of them have self goals and earning potential which cannot be questioned or ignored. Workplace is a interesting place where we spend so many hours of our life time. Any connected element of working environment like superior relationship, peer engagement, team dynamics, culture, rewards and recognition, innovation, freedom, empowerment etc have a definite role on the employees in having a great work life balance. It is completely true that many gadgets and interesting technologies have added value and also brought many complex behaviours among us which we never exhibited few decades back. Technology if used to the possible limits and potential can be a great fusing tool or else it will become a key dividing factor among the family members and loved ones.

5.1: Conclusion

By the research studies and findings of great experts we can come to a conclusion that there exists a set of factors which have made the lives of doctors completely imbalance from their work commitments and personal lives. Factors from their families like dependents care, children, household responsibilities, marriage, getting settled, hobbies, time management, expectations of the society, leisure time, relaxing activities, demographic variables, education, financial background etc have a definite influence on the work life balance.

On the work front, working hours, superior relationship, working conditions, environment, peer support, technological changes, constant skill upgradation, lack of organisation support, poor policies, low pay system, abuse from the patients and their families, travelling, statutory requirements, higher education, multiple responsibilities etc have made work life balance for doctors a difficult topic for understanding.

5.2: Suggestion

Doctors are also human beings, patients, relatives and government bodies should respect their lives and bring a stringent policies in truest sense against any form of violence meted out against these professionals. Since organisations like hospitals are driven by the quality of doctors they own, it is essential that they implement above the benchmark standards in terms of policies, compensation systems etc. Doctors after certain experience, need to involve in higher knowledge acquisition and transformation and allow their junior colleagues to perform less complicated procedures. Systematic and compulsory leave system should be implemented to allow the doctors to have regular leisure and enjoyment with their loved ones. Experts who have spent adequate time in the medical field should become pioneers in the art of pushing their young doctors to have a holistic view of life and enjoy it to the fullest possible extent. Work pressure handling techniques and prioritization bases working methods should be trained for doctors.

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