

Work life balance

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❖ Abstract:

In recent days the changes taking places in business organization have led various consequences which have a major impact on the working life of the employees and the personal life. With increase in the stress levels, demands, increasing family level, socio-cultural attribute have made it difficult for people to create a balance between their work and family lives. And hence the present organizations have taken initiative to create a more suitable environment which would help employees to manage their work and personal life together. Due to high competition in globalized environment has led to sharp increase in the work life imbalance of employees. The main index that is quality of work, work place challenges, employee job satisfaction and retention does not only depend on the financial aspects but the main reason for employees to quit their jobs can be struggle between their work and life. This paper also examines the difficulties and complication in achieving balance between work and personal goals and discusses the current trends and solutions organization have in place for their employees to assist in performing the given tasks. And hence many of the organizations after having a detailed survey have realized this and various steps are been taken to provide work life assistance programs to enrich them further

❖ Introduction and Meaning:

Work life balance is the term used to describe the balance that an individual needs to keep between the time allocated for work and other aspects of life. Here life other than work is not restricted only to personal interests, family, social and leisure activities. The roots of work life balance are found in 19th century when the workers and union successfully campaigned against long working hours in factories, the origin of work life balance was found in the late 1970s and 1980s and was first used in US and UK. And it was during this period the organization framed the various policies like telecommuting and flexible scheduling and introduced other family-friendly policies. The main focuses of these policies were to remove the constraints in the path of women employees of the organization. According to Bosworth and Hograth (2009), a number of indicators represent the current policies of work life balance that is health and safety at work, equality, a flexible labor market and international competitiveness. It is an important aspect for both the parties that are the employees and employer. One of the reasons that the workers unable to cope up the balance between the two aspect i.e. family and work is the inability to balance the demands and pressure at work and the same demands and pressures in the home front. Role -overload (RO) that is having little time to do a lot many things in a limited span of time, Role interference (RI) that is when demands become incompatible become difficult for employees to carry on their roles effectively. Here it is been bifurcated into two parts and they are Work To Family Interference (WTF) wherein work gets the way of family life, And the other one is Family To Work Interference (FTW) where the family demands affects the working of the employees. Example, child care elder care etc. however, the main goal to achieve the balance in work life of any employee is not only dependent on herself/himself alone but also poses the same kind of responsibility on the employers as well, as they are the ones who take responsibility to set the various norms and conditions at work place.

❖ Aspects Related to Work-Life Balance:1. Genesis of Work-Life Balance:

The word “work family balance” was been first used in late 1970s by UK as specified above. Here it tries to explain that the individual’s personal life is not restricted only to his family levels, that is stability between work life and personal life, it says that over a period of time the employees interests have been shifted, and people are occupied with different roles in personal and professional life which aim to fulfill respective goals. This is said to be the major change in the terminology of work family balance to present work life balance. Most of the times the works suffer from apprehension and spillover effects about their lives such as they feel guilty about the intrusion of their personal life on the work life during the office hours and vice versa that is they keep thinking about the stress of work during the family hours. It’s noted that when the workers understand the balance in the responsibility to be carried on along with their personal needs it will be easy to achieve individual goals along with organizational goals. Work life balance is a issue which deals not only with individual’s but also with the employer’s, the society as a whole and the markets, as in the whole part of population it is seen that the trend of single earner of bread to a family is been changing drastically to both the parents participating in paid employment, which is making it more difficult to maintain a balance in work life balance.

2. Quality of Work and Life Been Perceived by Employees:

Here the main motto is to understand the kind of job satisfaction at work and good functioning at home to be achieved with minimized differences. The first parameter that is the job satisfaction and quality of work place can be retained in the organization through supportive management which gives the employees with the required amount of liberty and freedom. Secondly chance for personal growth which helps the employees to have a sense of oneness towards the organization and helps to achieve both the personal goals and firm goals together taking the firm’s profits to heights. Thirdly the nature of work which helps the workers to find their self satisfaction towards the work they are allotted to stimulating opportunities and friendly co-workers. This emphasizes on the importance of Stimulating opportunities here employees can apply their knowledge and learn new things from their co-workers. And hence it reveals that the aspiring job entrants seek to have high level of job security, career development and personal development in their working environment.

Organizations have a vital role to play in promoting work life balance. The most work life strategies include family care programmers, employee friendly benefits, flexible work arrangements, financial and wellness counseling. Work family conflicts may also include the aspects like time, strain and behavior. These three parameters have a impact on job satisfaction. Example in IT sector employees especially female workers do not tend to stay with a single organization for a long period of time due the reasons like odd timings, long working hours etc.

3. Empirical Research on Work Family Interface:

This mainly deals with era of 1970s and 80s where the primary focus was on the “role conflicts” which means the women employees had to seen through different roles I.e. within the organization and domestic or family related responsibilities. The educated working female employees had to face the competing demands of both simultaneously. The researchers have shown the linkage between the family and work and have shown the significant variables such as nature of work, spousal support, child care and play groups for the children, the type of family structure, perception and attitude of the family members, the extent of involvement in family or work, mental health of the

employees. According to them if these specified characters are been developed in the female employees and their families they would rather have a good interface, and help them to grow gradually over a period of time. As these can be called as a few advantageous factors there are also the factors which lead into conflict between the balance and they are no proper arrangements for children which leads to stress into the minds of employee during work, no adequate support from spouse, lack of clarity in working, lack of social support etc.

4. Work Family Balance Programmes:

There are many programmes which are been undertaken by the companies mainly to retain the employees in their firm which will increase the goodwill along with meeting various socio cultural obligations. Most of the programmes mainly stress on the development of female employees and providing them with required assistance so as they can attract the large population of educated willing to work employees. There are various formal and informal programmes which are been brought into action such as family friendly arrangements at workplace providing with required leaves to female employees such as maternity leaves etc. the formal programmes organized are to restricted to a limit, where in the informal ones have wide scope as compared. These also provide to see that there is equality in fixation of wages equal rights are been provided without any gender bias. The work culture and work ethics carried on by the employer also have a influence on the workers and having a proper EEO program Equal Employment Opportunity helps to retain the employees reducing the costs of employee turnover, recruitment and training costs etc.

5. Strategic HR Initiatives

Achieving work life balance is a great possession for an professional personnel, and this stage mainly deals with the various steps taken by the employer who is an important person in setting the norms and the conditions required for the stabilizing the balance between the work and the personal life of an individual as it does not only depend on the employee alone various other participants play a major role in strategic and HR initiatives, this phase can be divided into three parts by the employer to make the required changes in the working conditions of the workers and they are policies, benefits and services. Policies main cover the formal and informal programmes and mainly look on the aspects such as joining agreements, resigning formalities, types of leaves which are been provided such as paid and unpaid leaves etc, and also providing the workers with flexible timing and work from home facilities . benefits are extra non financial aspect provided to the workers by the employer to boost their morale and motivate the other employee by providing the employees with vacations with family for completing a particular task, providing employees with medical assistance which will bring out a sense of oneness among the employer and employee and also providing protection against various loss that may occur in near future in organization. Services can be the day care centers provided to children of employee so as that the employees work with all his/her dedication. Providing assistance in welfare programmes, having a proper set of leaves to be provided etc. and still there is long way to go to make a prefect strategic and HR initiatives.

❖ Benefits and Objectives of Work Life Balance

The main of aim of this to achieve the highest level of integrity and try to remove the imbalances caused in one's life due to various reason like stress at work, more responsibilities towards work or family, taking care of children or elderly etc. it all depends on making the required changes and arrangements in work patterns that will allow the workers to have a greater balance in the work life.

The main objectives of this is to provide the employees with right to request for flexible working timing, they include the demographical changes, helping the families to cope with their family structure also by increasing the interest of employees towards organization. The benefits associated with work/life balance is increased productivity of the employees which is been achieved by peace of mind at work, it helps to reduce the number of absenteeism of the workers as they have a good working conditions and a appropriate corporate culture, due to various practices and policies of the company an employee tends to have a less stressed life. And have a happier work and family life, it also increases the physical and mental health of the workers and aim on a better life of the employees, this also helps the employer to build loyalty in the minds of workers towards the organization by their various beneficial plans and practice, along with the employees have a sense of commitment and feel highly motivated by the work life balance making the work harder and better towards accomplishment of goals i.e. both personal and organizational. Framing a good work life balance also helps the companies in many ways firstly they help to meet the seasonal peaks and is so done by allowing the workers have flexible time of work and work from home opportunities etc, which will increase the productivity and help to meet with the demands prevailing in the market, the main advantages of part time works, shifts is that it makes sure that the production is carried on 24*7 basis without making the employees work for a longer period and distributing the workloads between number of workers. And due to this reason the stress and tension in the mind of workers is reduced which results in low employee turnover also reducing the cost of new recruitments their trainings and control staff turnover, it also increases the goodwill of the firm/company wherein the number of people would like to work with it also attracting the young talents.

❖ The Outcomes/ Results of Poor Work Life Balance

The major factors by which an organization can recognize the work life imbalance of the professionals can be by decreased productivity of the worker which is one of the hurdles in company's growth, to this problem there should a action at a faster rate by the employer, there can also be high level of employee stress which can cause various health issues to workers and by this even the quality of work performed by the workers may not match the standard targets, due to high tension the thinking abilities, creativity, innovation etc which are foremost required may not be obtained by which the employee may lack to fulfill work related tasks, sometimes there can also be over time working by the employees creating a greater imbalance in time management at work and personal life, this can also lead to consumption of lots of time to deal with emergencies which are other dependants of the employee such as spouse, children etc there can also be high rates of absenteeism and more number of sick employees due to high stress and no proper counseling these may further leads to increase in staff turnover casing an extra expense to the employers, and finally there can loss of competitiveness of the company in the markets due the various reasons mentioned above.

❖ Role of Stress in the Work Life Balance

Meaning and definition: Stress is an individual's response to a disturbing factor in environment, and the consequences of such reaction. "Stress is an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, physiological, and or behavioral deviations for organizational participants" the physical or physiological demands from the environment that causes stress are called as stressors. Stress can manifest itself in both positive way and negative way; enstress refers to positive stress which is seen

as motivator which helps the employee to reach the peak of highest performance, wherein negative stress may result to heart disease, alcoholism, marital breakup, absenteeism or other social and emotional problems. As per the survey by an industry lobby in 2012 showed that more than 78% of Indian corporate employees sleep less than 6 hours leading to various severe issues, it also states that Ranjan Das CEO of SAP died of a massive heart attack he was only 42 years old .

❖ Stressors/ Source of Stress and the Outcomes

Role overload here the arises mainly due to more work allotted to employee causing more stress, excessive workload has become a norm these days as large number of organizations have reduced their work force and restructured work, leaving the employees with more work and less resource time to complete the given task. There may be stress in the organization due to conflicts which can be inter role conflicts or personal conflicts. Managers create stress by exhibiting inconsistent behavior, failing to provide support, showing lack of concern, etc. Sexual harassment is yet another reason for stress among employee, this is been reported at a high rate in female employee as compared to male employees, it refers to unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that affects the job related performance of an employee adversely. There are a few instances where physical violence and aggression in workplace can cause high stress.

- ❖ Outcomes of high stress may have following results, physical problems related to health such as heart diseases, strokes, backache and arthritis, ulcers, headaches, cancer, diabetes, lung diseases etc. there is a direct relationship between stress and task performance i.e. high level of stress greater will be work disruption. Workplace aggression also is increased with stress, there are absenteeism and turnovers, and burnouts etc. this may lead to behavioral consequences like smoking, drinking, drug abuse, violence, accident proneness, appetite disorders, depression etc.

❖ Steps taken for Stress Management

Muscle relaxation which involves slow and deep breathing helps to relieve muscle tension, biofeedback it's a machine used to train the employees to detect and control stress, meditations like transcendental meditation (TM) , cognitive restructuring, proper time management, physical fitness, sound sleep all the above are individual level strategies. Even organization take up few strategies such as improvement in physical environment, changes in workload and deadlines, structural reorganization, more flexible work hours and sabbaticals various workshop dealing with role clarity and role analysis, behavior modification, career counseling, employees assistance programmes training in relaxation techniques. The EPA are designed in such way as to provide a greater help to employees which include diagnosis, treatment, screening and prevention, they also undertake health promotion programmes which deals with over all physical and mental health care of the workers.

❖ Work Life Balance and Gender

In the changing modern world the traditional norms that only the men of the house are the breadwinner and females are home markers is rapidly changing due the various factors prevailing in the global markets, with increased focus on the implication of work for family and vice versa. With emergence of dual career and single parenting the required attention is also been provided to role of gender in the labour markets and the sharp rise in of female participation in the global markets has

resulted in having part time jobs, casual work, changing worker expectation, growth in the social value associated with fathers involvement within the household. And hence it's become very important for the female employee to have a proper balance in their work and family life, as women are traditionally assumed to and still many of them have a role of home makers, the employers should take up initiatives to attract more women employees which will help to become self dependant especially in case of single parents, divorce etc, providing the required diversity management polices and various steps taken by the law and government has made very welcoming for female employees in all sectors of the economy, ensuring equality in laws and policies, have fair wages system, providing opportunities for promotions all these factors sum up to have a good balance in the work life of women workers. As the responsibilities increase there are also cases where the female employees have to quit the organization due to various reasons such sexual assault at work place, no proper support been provided to them, delay in promotions due to gender discrimination, harassment of female employees, pregnancy , family related responsibilities etc. To overcome these issues many changes have been made by the companies and government at large such as proper organizational control, reaching to the grievances of the worker no matter how small or huge they are, making suitable policies and other employee development programmes, there are facilities like work from home, pick up and home escort to female employees though it be in day shifts or night shifts. In India government has taken various steps by passing laws in favor of women employees such as Maternity Benefit Act, workplace harassment act etc. In India state of Kerala is the best example for dual role i.e. pursuing their career and taking care of family.

❖ Recommendations:

Following are few recommendations for flexible work options aimed at providing a better balance between work and life of employees.

- * Management support is for most important in the organization having only good policies won't help the employees there should be a regular checkups on the employees as well.
- * The working needs of the employees are to be studied in detail so as to understand the current situational issues and in accordance to them the EPA Employee Assistance Programmes are to be designed.
- * Certain steps should be taken to make employees realize that they should prioritize their work, which will bring in seriousness and workers might understand that all things are equally important.
- * When the manager's encounter the situation like high stress or the employees won't understand their roles and responsibilities required training programs, seminars, guest lecturers should be arranged in order to boost the employee morale and motivate them.
- * It should been noted by the supervisor that office work is been done within working hours not all the time it should be taken to home, and see to it that manager gets the work done in office itself and not at home.
- * As the personal life is not restricted to family only, they should allow leave options such as community service leave and pet care etc.

- * Allow employees to have option like work from home, flexible time and sick leave without any doctor certificate required. Its seen that as more of the supervision or rules are applied on the employees the more they tend to change their jobs.
- * As there is responsibility of children on the parents equally due to dual career, it should be allowed to bring your kids to work days, or they should be provided with day care centers.
- * It should also be seen that managers should organize company funded family oriented activities such as family dinners, movie vouchers, trips should be given to workers.
- * Maternity leaves which are been provided to female employees, similarly a part of them should be provided to their partner/spouse as most of them are nuclear families there should some leaves provided to take care of the partners during pregnancy.
- * During work hours employees should be allowed to take a small break which allows them reduce stress and work better in the organization.

❖ Conclusion:

Once work life balance has been well defined and all its aspects analyzed, some conclusions can be drawn, work life balance is not a “one size fits all” type of trend rather it is a trend which is viewed differently by everyone because each individual is different and ones perception changes from another, people have unique characteristics attitudes and perception of their achievement and enjoyments. Work life balance keeps changing on daily basis there is no specific formula to calculate and maintain work life balance, it all depends how one can achieve more from his work life and career wise along with a good personal life and other enjoyments. The main aim of having a perfect balance in work life balance worker should not be a liability to the company rather should be a very useful asset, when workers are satisfied with their life they work better which also increase productivity and help achieve the goals. Work life balance initiatives have the potential to significantly reduce absenteeism, improve employee’s morale and retain organizational knowledge and staff, mostly during economic crises in the markets. In today’s world where dual career, single parenting, is gaining importance there should related policies and practice in the organization which will help them retain their knowledgeable staff helping in reducing the other costs. However developing a work life balance policies is not enough. They are needed to be practiced and supported especially by the top level management. Employee’s expectation are changing drastically in these days in regards to work shifts, their flexible timing, working conditions etc, so as to meet up with these expectation organizations with co workers and managerial support will excel with carefully created suitable work options. HR policies should not only focus on the few aspects, but concentrate on the labour market as whole which consist of family such as single parents, shared parents, elderly care and also singles.

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