



Is Work Life Balance a very necessary one?

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle calm balance" and "lifestyle choices". In recent years the challenge of maintaining a balance between work life and personal life has grown significantly influential in modern life style. Employees face greater workload, increasing time pressure and growing obstacles in satisfying both job and personal life demands. At work the demand for efficiency leads to more tasks, which have to be fulfilled in a shorter period of time, which disturbs the balance of work life.

KEYWORDS : Work life balance, Men, Women, Leave

Introduction:

Work-life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle calm balance" and "lifestyle choices".

The work-leisure dichotomy was invented in the mid-1800s. Paul Krassner remarked that anthropologists, use a definition of happiness that is to have as little separation as possible "between your work and your play". The expression "work-life balance" was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986.

Most recently, there has been a shift in the workplace as a result of advances in technology. As Bowswell and Olson-Buchanan stated, "increasingly sophisticated and affordable technologies have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work". Employees have many methods, such as emails, computers, and cell phones, which enable them to accomplish their work beyond the physical boundaries of their office. Employees may respond to an email or a voice mail after-hours or during the weekend, typically while not officially "on the job". Researchers have found that employees who consider their work roles to be an important component of their identities will be more likely to apply these communication technologies to work while in their non-work domain.

Some theorists suggest that this blurred boundary of work and life is a result of technological control. Technological control "emerges from the physical technology of an organization". In other words, companies use email and distribute smartphones to enable and encourage their employees to stay connected to the business even when they are not in the office. This type of control, as Barker argues, replaces the more direct, authoritarian control, or simple control, such as managers and bosses. As a result, communication technologies in the temporal and structural aspects of work have changed, defining a "new workplace" in which employees are more connected to the jobs beyond the boundaries of the traditional workday and workplace. The more this boundary is blurred, the higher work-to-life conflict is self-reported by employees.

Many authors believe that parents being affected by work-life conflict will either reduce the number of hours one works where other authors suggest that a parent may run away from family life or work more hours at a workplace. This implies that each individual views work-life conflict differently.

Employee assistance professionals say there are many causes for this situation ranging from personal ambition and the pressure of family obligations to the accelerating pace of technology.

Issues of WLB

The effective management of work life balance (WLB) is an issue increasingly recognized as of strategic importance to organizations and of significance to employees.

- WLB is an issue because Work Life Conflict (WLC) brings about a variety of undesirable consequences. Many of the consequences are health related, but not exclusively so. The effects on employee health are well - documented.
- In addition to the effects on individual health, there are also significant corporate health impacts. WLC has been shown to contribute to higher absenteeism and /or attrition rates, low morale, a great number of work-related compensation claims and productivity losses.
- Work can be organized in such a way as to reduce WLC and to promote WLB; for instance, giving employees more control over working time through flexible hours, telework and so on.
- Work life issues are an important 'bottom line' concern. Effective work/life strategies that meet the needs of an organization and its employees are vital to maintain a competitive edge in today's rapidly changing business environment.

Striking the Best WLB

There are certain strategies and initiatives listed below to manage Work life balance according to individual's need.

- Simplify Life: learn to say "no" if it comes in the way of your schedules. Staying home once in a while helps ease the frenetic pace of the workplace.
- Learn to de-stress: A certain degree of stress often enables people to perform better, but the key is to maintain it at manageable so that it can enrich and motivate. Sometimes it makes sense to "take it easy".
- Distribute the work load: An orderly and clean home reduces unnecessary tensions and makes life simpler. However, when the time is tight, learn to let go of expectations of extreme cleanliness. Even at workplace, learning to trust colleagues and delegating tasks and duties helps in sharing the burden.
- Identify and Implement: Keep a record of all the work-related and non-work related activities performed during a given week. After identifying the most important and meaningful activities, those activities which are done out of guilt or are deemed unnecessary can be delegated, if possible.
- Manage time efficiently: Planning household chores and duties/tasks well ahead of time prevents last-minute panic and tension. Efficient scheduling of appointments or tasks which can be clubbed together on the same day minimizes missed work time.
- Find out about flexi - work practices: Make enquiries in the organization if there is an option of flexible working arrangements and the criteria to opt for such policies.

- Nurture your self: Managing both household and work efficiently is quite challenging. Nurturing yourself to relish the lost energy is a good investment towards WLB. Some of the activities like taking a walk at lunch time, meditation, yoga or engaging in an activity most enjoyed can be a good way to recharge.
- Setup a work-free and chore-free day: Create at least one day in a week that is free of any job-related tasks and chores. This time can be utilized to develop a hobby and relax.

Business benefits of improved WLB

Organizations stand to gain by introducing employment policies that promote a healthier WLB for employees.

- Increased productivity - the quality of work improves and the productivity rises as they are more focused on work.
- Improved recruitment and retention - the recruitment and training costs can be brought down due to improved staff retention. An improved customer experience.
- Lower rates of absenteeism - there is a reduced number of sick leaves absent as the employees stay healthier.
- Adopting flexible and WLB - oriented policies builds a positive perception about the employer. This leads to better relations with the employees, continued staff loyalty, motivation and commitment.

Review of Literature:

Restubog *et al.* (2006) states that, employees' experience (perception) of work-life balance cause their positive response such as affective commitment and this favorable attitude leads then to behaviors that promote their contributions to their organization. Moore and Fiona (2007) conducted a research to compare work-life balance issues workers and managers of an MNC. It was concluded that many of the managers are not able to achieve work-life balance.

Dundas (2008) argues that work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and all other activities that are important to people such as family, community activities, voluntary work, personal development and leisure and recreation. According to Hayman (2009) 'Flexitime supports significantly higher levels of WLB than do traditional, fixed-hour working schedules'.

Hill *et al.* (2010) found that flexitime assists employees to manage their work and family responsibilities by allowing them to reduce work-family conflict and to improve functioning and performance at work and at home. Ioan Lazar *et al.* (2010) found the outcomes and the benefits of implementing work-life balance practices not only for employees themselves, but also for their families, organizations and society.

Janeen Baxter and Jenny Chesters (2011) findings indicate that negative perceptions of work-family balance are linked to long work hours, having to work extra hours and unpredictable work hours. This suggests that what women need most is control over the length and scheduling of their working hours. Rincy and Panchanatham (2011) revealed that role overload, dependent care issues, quality of health, problems in time management and lack of proper social support are the major factors influencing the WLB of women entrepreneurs in India.

Merideth Ferguson *et al.* (2012) identified that work-family balance plays a mediating role in assisting social support's contribution to both job & family satisfaction. Senthilkumar *et al.* (2012) results show that there is a close relationship between the demographical variables and the level of stress in balancing work and personal life. It is divulged from this analysis that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with their work-life balance.

Chandrasekar *et al.* (2013) found that, there are some factors of work demand that interferes with the personal life which leads to an imbalance state, work-life balance is different based on gender and nature of jobs, work-life balance has a positive relationship with job satisfaction. The study concluded that an efficient Work-life Balance is detrimental to an employee for improving their job satisfaction and productivity. Abhilasha Joshi Sharma (2013) identified the most significant factor to influence and enhance Work-Life Balance is organization commitment as well as an individual's and also suggested that work-life Balance strategies can aid organizations in creating a stress-free environment for working women & thus facilitate improved Work-life balance.

Hye Kyoung Kim (2014) identified that there is no direct effect of work-life balance on in-role performance. However, it was found that employees' experience of work-life balance increases affective commitment and that affective commitment has a positive influence on in-role performance. Sussanna Shagvaliyeva and Rashad Yazdanifard (2014) examined flexible working hours from its positive point of view. The investigation showed that introduction of flexible working hours brought some benefits for both employee and employer. Also, flexibility in the workplace gives employees time to perform outside of the work roles and it helps balance employees' work and life.

5 Tips for Better Work-Life Balance

"A lot of people are having a more difficult time finding balance in their lives because there have been cutbacks or layoffs where they work. They're afraid it may happen to them, so they're putting in more hours," says psychologist Robert Brooks, PhD, co-author of *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life*. The 5 ways he recommends for a better work-life balance are as follows:

1. Build downtime into your schedule.
2. Drop activities that sap your time or energy.
3. Rethink your errands.
4. Get moving.
5. Remember that a little relaxation goes a long way.

Responsibility of the employer

Employers can offer a range of different programs and initiatives, such as flexible working arrangements in the form of part-time, casual and telecommuting work. More proactive employers can provide compulsory leave, strict maximum hours and foster an environment that encourages employees not to continue working after hours.

Although employers are offering many opportunities to help their employees balance work and life, these opportunities may be a catch twenty-two for some female employees. Even if the organization offers part-time options, many women will not take advantage of it as this type of arrangement is often seen as "occupational dead end".

Even with the more flexible schedule, working mothers opt not to work part-time because these positions typically receive less interesting and challenging assignments; taking these assignments and working part-time may hinder advancement and growth. Even when the option to work part-time is available, some may not take advantage of it because they do not want to be marginalized. This feeling of marginalization could be a result of not fitting into the "ideal worker" framework.

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