



SUBSTANTIATING THE RELEVANCE OF WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB) AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS: THE PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Work cultures have often demanded a transformation from inflexibility to flexibility. There is a life at work and at home and also a life having space for leisure. Worklife 'imbalance' has over a period of time attracted concern because of increasing problems related to employee health, monotony at work place, declining levels of productivity and efficiency at the employee level. The current pandemic COVID 19 has on one hand allowed majority of the working population access their work from home and on the other hand disturbed work life balance, at large. This paper aims to substantiate the aptness of *Worklife balance as a crucial management function during the 'PANDEMIC TIMES'*.

KEYWORDS : Work life balance, COVID, Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Novel coronavirus was named Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) by WHO in February 2020. The virus is referred to as SARS-CoV-2 and the associated disease is COVID-19. As of 15 May 2020, over 4,444,670 cases have been identified globally in 188 countries with a total of over 302,493 fatalities. The lockdown and the following closure of the international corridors affected the Indian Economy and work culture in major establishments. Eventually working houses were closed and people made to work from home. this meant no teamwork and hampered communication among employees.

Better teamwork and communication offer a conducive working environment. This leads to enjoyment at work and increased passion for it. The spread of home working is opening up a new range of possibilities for the way businesses can work and structure themselves. As well as opportunities and benefits, home working brings new responsibilities for the employer and employee.

A balanced work life is of advantage to an employee's health. The underlying principle perhaps is the increasing realization that certain issues pertaining to the imbalance in working life and personal life of an individual are being overlooked.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Work-life Balance programmes were reported to be in existence from 1930's. In 1930's, the W.K. Kellogg Company implemented the four shifts of six-hour to take over the traditional daily three hour shifts. This new shift has brought a transformation by increased employee morale and effectiveness. The term Work-life Balance (WLB) was formally coined for the first time in 1970's, to state the balance between one's work and personal life. In 1980's many companies started to offer child care programs and employee assistance programs (EAP). The 1990's was the major era during which the Work-life Balance programs had a better identification as a vital topic for women. The first gesture of these programs started primarily to support women and children through Work-life solutions. Vast research in this decade viewed that job preferences are based on their own Work-life issues.

However, it was not until 1986 when this notion began to be relevant in the United States, where in the 80's and 90's companies began to implement work-life balance policies (Lockwood, 2003) mainly in response to an increasing workers' disregard towards their families due to their focus on accomplishing organizational goals. But work-life balance is not limited to family members assistance, it also includes other fields in individuals' life such as managing studies, travel, sports, volunteering, personal development and leisure. For this reason, the term work -life balance has replaced what was originally known as Work-Family Balance (Hudson, 2005).

Thus, the relationship between work, family and personal life can be explained through models proposed by Zedeck and Moiser (1990).

In true sense, World War II brought a considerable interest in employee work-family issues worldwide because of the increase of women employees in defense industries which led the federal government to

provide facilities such as child care facilities (Glass & Estes, 1997).

Segmentation Model	Spillover Model	Conflict Model
Family and work life are different areas, with no relationships or influence between them. Currently this model does not work in the reality.	Family and work life can affect each other both in a positive and negative direction	Family, work and personal life generate demands competing to be satisfied with the resources of individuals, such as time and energy.

Post war era saw the increase of government mandated provisions being offered to employees such as health and life insurance, social security like pension plans, and disability protection in forms of worker's compensation for accidents, and diseases institutionalizing the notion that employers had at least some obligations to provide security to employees' families (Glass & Estes, 1997).

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. (McPherson and Reed 2007, 13).

WORKLIFE BALANCE AND THE PANDEMIC

The current pandemic COVID 19 has on one hand allowed majority of educators access their work from home and on the other hand disturbed work life balance, at large. It really becomes difficult when both work and personal life operate from the same space. Worklife balance among school teachers is a crucial management function during the present 'CORONAL TIMES'.

WLB programs can help organizations retain valuable workers they have recruited and trained by reducing the conflicts. The HRM Department needs to formulate WLB policies and strategies so as to assist the employees to balance their professional as well as personal life.

The Covid-19 crisis has shoved work and home lives under the same roof for many families like ours, and the struggle to manage it all is now visible to peers and bosses. As people postulate how the country may be forever changed by the pandemic, we can hope that one major shift will be a move away from the harmful assumption that a 24/7 work culture is working well for anyone.

What has been made clear through this pandemic is the importance of disseminating knowledge across borders, companies, and all parts of society. If online learning technology can play a role here, it is incumbent upon all of us to explore its full potential. With schools and daycares closed, work cannot continue as normal simply because working remotely is technologically possible. WLB policies implemented by schools should play a key role in building a supportive work-family/life culture.

LEARNING STRATEGIES ADOPTED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Online Education has taken its place in the present education system because it is the only source of connection among the teacher and the taught in these times of social distancing and isolation. Students are being educated using:

1. Online Virtual classes conducted on following modes:
 - a. Zoom
 - b. Microsoft Teams
 - c. Google classroom
 - d. Cisco Webex
2. Creation and uploading of Audio Visual Teaching Aids (using video making apps)
3. Online Learning Apps (like BYJU's)
4. Online portals (like Diksha)
5. SWAYAM PRABHAT.V. VIDEOS
6. Powerpoint presentations

WLB POLICIES DURING PANDEMIC

1. Providing equal access to technology and resources
2. Flexible Working Hours
3. Job Sharing among teachers
4. Supporting teachers on the use of digital tools

CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS

1. Lack of Technical Knowledge
2. Unavailability of Required Resources (Like Smart Phone, Laptops Etc.)
3. Lack of Training
4. Lack of One to One Interaction- esp. in subjects like Mathematics/ Accountancy/ Science
5. Mapping Learning Outcomes

CONCLUSION

Work–life imbalance in conjunction with human resource management is associated with decreased job satisfaction, productivity, and eventual burn out. An organisation designed to work effectively in the area of human resources has many potential areas and one of them is worklife balance. Work–life balance is often discussed and difficult to achieve. There is significant amount of research that the ability to continue as top organisational players need a well directed human resource having an optimum worklife balance. Although achieving work–life balance is an individual task that cannot be standardized, tools for assessing work–life balance and evaluating priorities may be helpful in increasing awareness of imbalances.

COVID-19 and the global shift to remote work has made many employers more understanding of the need for work-life balance, even as it made that balance harder to achieve. And this has implications for the available talent pool.

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