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Work-life Balance: Evolution and Models – A Study in the Indian Context

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Abstract: ***In the present scenario of globalization, the number of working women in different professions has been increasing. Women entering the work force need to balance their personal as well as family life. Organizations in order to help the women employees maintain effective Work-life Balance are identifying the various models of Work-life Balance in existence. The present study endeavors to identify the different models of Work-life Balance in vogue that will help the HR managers formulate their WLB strategies effectively for women employees.***

Keywords: Globalization, Work-life Balance, WLB strategies

1. Introduction

Work-life Balance has become an ever increasing concern for both employers and employees. This is due to the ever increasing challenges of competition that requires the modern businesses to undergo frequent changes. In such scenario, managing these frequent changes of competition holds the key for success.

Work-life Balance (WLB) involves juggling workplace stress with the daily pressures of family, friends, and self. It is better regulation of multiple responsibilities at personal and professional life.The effective workplace support provided to employees helps them to maintain Work-life Balance. Balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases the organizational productivity and builds a sustainable workforce. Organizations that support the Work-life Balance of employees have now become more attractive choice for employees.

Clark (2000) has defined Work-life Balance as "The state of less role conflict with better satisfaction and good functioning at work and home".

1.1 Evolution of Work-life Balance

Work-life Balance programmes were reported to be in existence from 1930's. In 1930's, the W.K. Kellogg Company has 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 have 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. Despite of many policies implemented in the 1990's, they failed due to lack of better impact on real life challenges faced by the employees.

The eyeball view towards Work-life Balance programs by all Work-life professionals started after the failure of Work-life Balance programs implemented by human resource departments in the first years of the 21st century.

2. Review of Literature

Kahya and Kesen (2014) in their study 'The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Work to Family Conflict: A Turkish Case' analyzed the role of perceived organizational support (POS) on work-family conflict. Perceived organizational support (POS) is an important factor to reduce work-family conflict. An employee-organization concordance will provide blocking the work-related problems. This concordance occurs when the organizations provided practices are considered worthwhile by the employees.

Holly and Mohnen (2012) in their research study 'Impact of Working Hours on Work Life Balance' have tried to observe the link between working hours and satisfaction with desirable Work -life Balance. The balance is specific to each person and relates to satisfaction with job and all other parts in life, especially family life and free time. Flexible work hour arrangements decrease satisfaction when compared with fixed working hours. High working hours and overtime in general do not lead to decreased satisfaction. Compensated overtime has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The overall number of hours by which employees want to reduce their working time is driven mainly by overtime compensation.

McMillian, et. al. (2011) in their work 'Constructs of the Work/Life Interface: A Synthesis of the Literature and Introduction of the Concept of Work/Life Harmony' tried to identify the practical understanding of HRD construct definitions and measurement tools of work/life interface conceptions such as conflict, enrichment, and balance. HRD interventions should address organizational nature and the implications of creating value of employees' work/life

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interface. These HRD interventions need to promote organizational and individual development, change initiatives, and performance improvement.

Amstad et al. (2011) in their study 'A Meta-Analysis of Work–Family Conflict and Various Outcomes With a Special Emphasis on Cross-Domain Versus Matching-Domain Relations' has reviewed to analyze the work-family conflict and its results through meta-analysis. Work-family conflict is parallel to work-related outcomes, family-related outcomes, and domain-unspecific outcomes. There is no link between family-interference-work (FIW) and family performance. Work satisfaction is the central point of mental and physical health. Work-to-family-interference (WIF) and family-to-interference-work (FIW) have strongest association with domain-unspecific outcomes. Work-related outcome may be seen as an antecedent for WIF rather than as a consequence of family-to-interference-work (FIW). Work stressors influence one's work related well-being.

Keene, and Quadagno (2004) in their study 'Predictors of Perceived Work-Family Balance: Gender Difference or Gender Similarity?' has examined issues such as the relationship of work characteristics, family characteristics, and work-family spill over to perceptions of work-family balance and models of gender difference versus gender similarity. They demonstrated that work demands such as number of hours worked per week and work spill over into family life is the most striking predictors of imbalance for both women and men. Women not only respond differently than men to competing demands but also interpret the meaning of competing demands differently. Women report more balance when they give priority to family and men report less balance when they have no personal time for themselves due to work and more balance when they make scheduling changes due to family. Both men and women make more adjustments at home to oblige work requirements.

Selvarajan et al. (2013) in their research 'Social Support and Work-Family Conflict: A Test of an Indirect Effects Model' has appraised the cross domain indirect relationship between social support in the family domain and work-interference-with-family (WIF). The study found that people disclose and optimally utilize resources to reduce conflict.FIW via WIF indirectly decreases work related resources. Emotional spouse support is indirectly related to WIF via FIW. Indirect cross domain effects leads to a better understanding of cross domain linkages of social support and work-family conflict. Generic and family-specific forms of support should be placed in models of social support.

3. Models of Work-life Balance

Review of literature has indicated towards existence of several models of WLB as being practiced by different organizations. The identified models of WLB are listed as follows:

1) Working Hours Model

The Working Hours Model of WLB as given in Fig.1 has been proposed by Alam, et al. (2009). This model throws light on the interlink between long working hours and work-family conflict. This model states that at the personnel level work-family conflict precipitates to emotional exhaustion and at the organizational level it is translated into potential loss of female talent. Woman managers feel a strong pull to maintain balance between work and family due to extended working hours, i.e., 9-10 hours. The long working hours leads to work-family conflict (WFC). Schedule inflexibility, work stressors and working hours have a link to work-family conflict. Shorter working hours, i.e., 5-7 hours helps the women employees to maintain Work-life Balance.

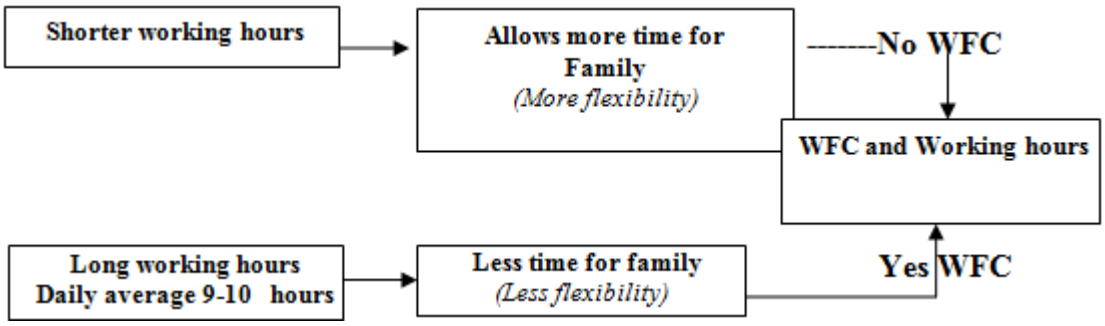

Figure 1: Working Hours Model

Reference: Working Hours model of work-family conflict proposed by Alam, et al. (2009)

Therefore, Working Hours Model suggests that organizations should have shorter working hours such from five to seven hours for the female workforce so that they will have a better WLB and the corresponding contribution to organizational productivity.

2) Career Progression Model

The Career Progression Model of WLB as given in Fig.2 has been proposed by Asiedu-Appiah, et.al. (2014).This model identifies that if more number of women employees is present in the organizations, Work-life Balance practices must be deliberately designed by the organizations. This model suggests that family life have a negative effect on the career progression of female lecturers. Work-life Balance (WLB) practices that make it possible for female lecturers in particular to pursue further studies, engage in research productivity and create opportunities for career advancement are significant sources of job satisfaction, employee retention and career development. WLB practices reduce absenteeism and results in increase morale and retention. There is a strong positive relationship between child bearing and child care and job progression of female lecturers. Reducing work-life conflict could help to create a healthier,

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productive and motivated workforce and help to position the organization as an employer of choice.

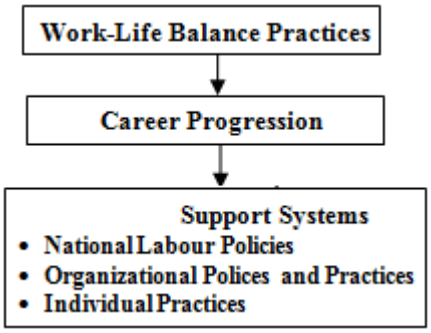

Figure 2: Career Progression Model

Reference: Conceptual framework for Work-life Balance of female lecturers proposed by Asiedu-Appiah, et.al. (2014)

The Career Progression Model thus recommends that organizations should implement Work-life Balance policies in order to achieve the desired performance and to improve Work-life Balance of female employees.

3) Emotional Exhaustion Model

According to the Emotional Exhaustion Model developed by Yavas, et.al, (2008) as given in Fig.3 reveals that the inter-role conflicts arising from the demands of the two domains, i.e., adult life, work and family leads to emotional exhaustion. Poor job performance and a higher propensity to leave the organization are the results of emotional exhaustion. Work-family conflict and family-work conflict impact the job outcomes of performance and turnover intentions both directly as well as indirectly through the mediating role of emotional exhaustion.

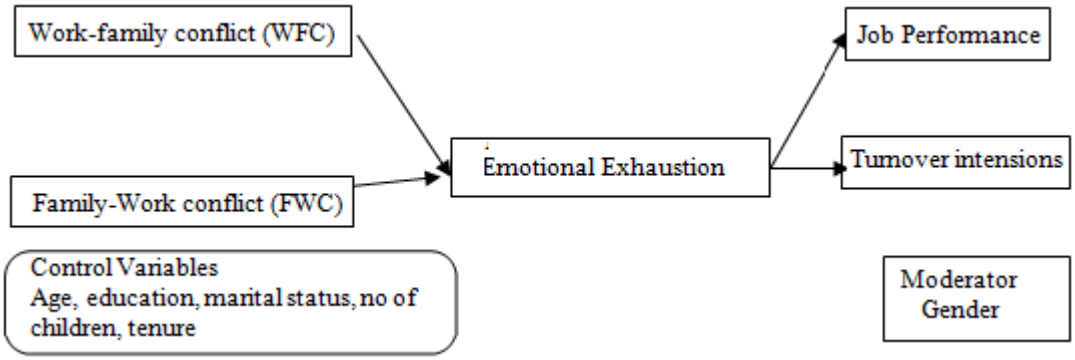

Figure 3: Emotional Exhaustion Model

Reference: Emotional Exhaustion Model of Work-family conflict proposed by Yuvas, et.al. (2008)

Therefore, Emotional Exhaustion Model views that employees facing conflicts from their work and family lives become emotionally exhausted. Gender acts as a moderator of relationships between emotional exhaustion and job outcomes. The organizations can reduce the emotional exhaustion of employees by developing and implementing gender specific mechanisms.

4) Work Commitment Model

The Work Commitment Model of WLB has been given in Fig.4. It has been proposed by Azeem and Akhtar (2014). The model identifies that Work-life Balance and job satisfaction are important for developing and enhancing organizational commitment among healthcare workers. Enhanced Work-life Balance of employees builds job satisfaction. The organizational commitment among employees also improves if Work-life Balance is achieved. The job of healthcare workers at all levels, i.e., doctors, nurses and other staff is challenging and demanding and they are image builders for the hospitals. Management support and commitment are required to implement Work-life Balance initiatives for health care workers.

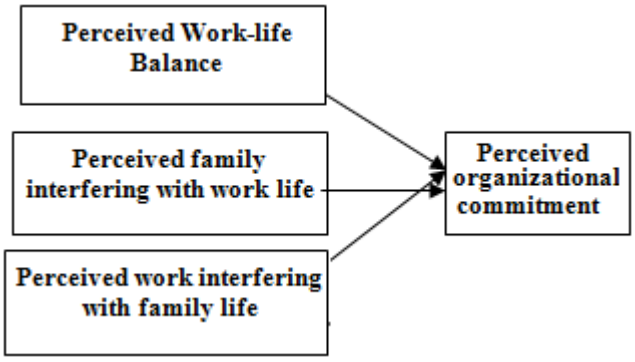

Figure 4: Work Commitment Model

Reference: Conceptual Model of Work-life Balance, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment proposed by Azeem and Akhtar (2014)

Hence, Work Commitment Model proposes that Work-life Balance builds job satisfaction among employees which leads to the organizational commitment in the long run.

5) Job Satisfaction Model

The Job Satisfaction Model of WLB, given in Fig.5, has been proposed by Nikkhah, et. al. (2013). The job satisfaction has a remarkable interaction with individual factors of employees work and family-life balance. Family-life Balance, work of an employee and organizational factors have direct link towards well-being of employees. There is also a favourable link between individual factors and

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organizational factors with job-satisfaction and well-being of employees.

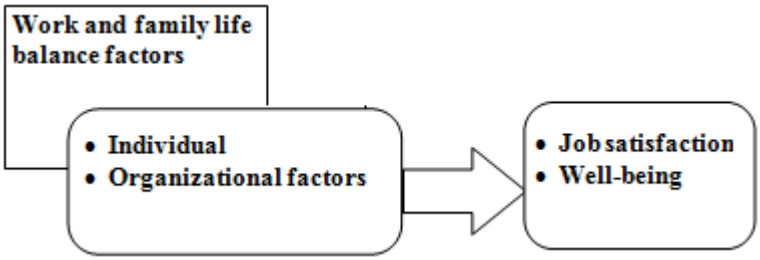

Figure 5: Job Satisfaction Model

Reference: Conceptual model of the link between job-satisfaction and well-being proposed by Nikkhah, et. al. (2013)

Therefore, the Job Satisfaction Model suggests that positive work and family-life balance have a significant positive correlation with job satisfaction of employees. Organizational factors have a direct influence on Work-life Balance of employees.

4. Conclusion

Work-life Balance is best viewed as a state of human life that leads to achievement of satisfaction in professional and personal life. Schedule inflexibility, work stressors working hours, poor job performance and emotional exhaustion are negatively related to Work-life Balance. Enhanced Work-life Balance of employees builds job satisfaction and leads to organizational commitment. Family-life Balance, work of an employee and organizational factors have direct link towards well-being of employees.

The identified models of Work-life Balance are Working Hours Model, Career Progression Model, Emotional Exhaustion Model, Work Commitment Model and Job Satisfaction Model.

The organizations need to identify the different factors that affect Work-life Balance of employees and need provide the Work-life Balance strategies that reduce work-family conflict.

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