

## Work-Life Balance as a Practice Model of Human Resource Management: An Overview

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### Abstract

*The balance between career and family has always been a challenge for every organization. Schedules are getting busier than ever before, which often causes work or our personal lives to suffer. Work-life balance involves juggling workplace stress with the daily pressures of family, friends, and self. Modern employees demand greater control over their lives and a bigger say in the structure of their jobs.*

*Work life balance is part of the general well-being. There is a clear indication that higher work-life imbalance, the lower are life satisfaction, happiness, subjective health and emotional well-being. Work life balance programs have all the potential to extensively reduce absenteeism, improve employee morale. The efforts to promote work life balance may vary from organization to organization depends upon the nature of work force. In the present era of globalization companies aspire to reduce costs, it depends upon human resource expert to comprehend the serious issues of work life balance and become of winner work life programs. The present paper suggests the means to balance the work life as well as the personal.*

**Keywords:** *Work life balance, Human Resource Management*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of work-life balance has now become centre of attention for almost all companies, political institutions, research institutions, families, individuals and trade unions at both national and international level. Work life balance is an important topic in human resource management that means to combine work and life in a way,

that both are achievable. Work life balance is generally related to role overload, time management, time pressure, job satisfaction, job stress, organizational commitment, life satisfaction, turnover, welfare, social security, working time, flexibility, family, fertility, (un)employment, migration, consumption, demographic changes, leisure time and so on.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

In 1986, the term “Work-Life Balance” was first identified, but its usage in everyday language was still sporadic for a certain number of years. Although, interestingly work-life programs existed in early years such as 1930, but people did not recognize them. Before the Second World War, the W.K. Kellogg Company created some flexible work hour shifts for their employees who replaced the traditional daily working hours, and the new shift resulted in increased employee efficiency and morale. In 1977, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, for the first time in his influential book, *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*, raised the issue of Work-Life Balance and brought it to the forefront of organizations and research. This concept forces organizations to follow work-family friendly environment. Therefore, in the 1980s and 1990’s, some organizations began to offer work-life programs who aimed to promote balance work-life. The first waves of these programs were mainly to support women with children (Brough et al., 2008). Now-a-days, many work-life programs have been introduced which are less gender specific and identify other obligations as well as those of family.

### **Work-Life Balance & HRM:**

Literature has shown that concept of Work-Life Balance is worth for discussion

as it aims to create a balanced work-life. Work life balance is becoming an important issue as people deals with shrinking workplace and time pressure. Many studies have highlighted that work-life initiatives offer a win-win situation to both employees and employers and affect business progress and performance in many ways as improving work life balance practices increase productivity, employee well-being, reduces costs, lead to improve retention and recruitment and better motivation and morale for employees (Maxwell, 2005).

Various theories have revealed that work life balance policies try to minimize stress and add to a healthier and safer work environment. Work life balance has been associated with greater employee commitment, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior and its policies are beneficial for individuals, their families, physical health, mental health, relationships, creativity, organizations, and society (Brough et al., 2008 & Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

Employees expect their employers to recognize that in addition to job they also have a life that includes their family, friends and social gathering. Studies have shown that a workforce that is out of balance faces stress and dissatisfaction which reduces family and work engagement. Work life balance issues are one of the main reasons which forces workers to quit their jobs.

Therefore, work life balance is an important and increasingly hot topic because it's about improving people's quality of life and aims to widen access to career opportunities and paid employment. Firm size is also the next best predictor of the presence of work life balance policies; because its size affects the extent and type of work life balance policies a firm can offer. Large companies are more likely to offer longer and paid parental leave and flexible working hours (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kucharova, 2009). In the recent time majority of the firms have recognized that creating a balanced work and family life of employees is the only solution of all problems and the senior management has become more proactive about their employees health and they are introducing and implementing work life strategies.

### **Importance of Work-Life Balance:**

When employees feel a greater sense of control and ownership over their own lives, they tend to have better relationships with management and are able to leave work issues at work and home issues at home. Balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases company productivity and reduces the number of conflicts among coworkers and management.

Companies who gain a reputation for encouraging work-life balance have become

very attractive to workers and will draw a valuable pool of candidates for new job openings. These companies also tend to enjoy higher employee retention rates, which results in less time-consuming training, more loyalty, and a higher degree of in-house expertise.

Many studies have shown that employees who have a positive work-life balance do a better job at work, so promoting this balance is beneficial to individuals and the company.

### **Factors Creating Work Life Balance:**

The role of social/family support and supervisor/co-worker support has consistently emerged in literature as an important factor that influences work family balance in a positive manner. Social support includes support from an employee's parents, siblings, spouse or partner, children, friends and extended family. Of particular importance is support from the spouse who contributes in a variety of areas including moral, domestic and childcare support, earnings and personal financial management, home and family responsibilities, career management and interpersonal support. Family support also includes the exchange of support among relatives.

The personal social support can be further conceptualized as emotional and instrumental support, thus suggesting that it

positively influences the individual's functioning at work. The role of workplace support, i.e., the support received from supervisors and co-workers is another critical element of work family balance. Organizational and supervisor understanding of family duties are positively related to satisfaction with the balance between work and family life. Workplace support via an organizational approach involves the implementation of family friendly policies, which are associated with integrating work and family responsibilities and achieving a healthy work and family balance.

Organizations offer a wide range of work family benefits and programs to their employees. Through research it is found that flexible work arrangements allow individuals to maintain a balanced life. There is also importance of supportive supervisors, peers and colleagues in managing their work family balance. Literature recognizes that all of the above mentioned variables have a greater impact on women. An emerging category appeared to achieve work life balance that is self-management or reinvention: reconsidering not only the kind of work one wants to do but also the kind of person one wants to be and the sacrifices one is prepared to make to grow into that new self (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011; Wayne et al., 2007; Voydanoff, 2004). Communication about work life programs to employees and providing proper resources

and rewards to them also contribute towards work life balance.

### **Measure To Promote Work Life Balance:**

Some of the major approaches or methods to promote work life balance at the organizational level may be as follows.

#### **1. Sensitize Employees:**

One of the best ways to promote healthy work-life balance is to actually teach your employees about it. Offer seminars on what work-life balance is, why it's important, and different things they can do to achieve it. Organization can host the seminar yourself, have them take a webinar, or even hire a professional to give the presentation for employees. Educating your employees will give them the tools they need to help themselves— and that's a crucial step.

#### **2. Flexible Working Hours:**

Allowing your employees to have flexible work hours or days, often referred to as "flextime," is a great way to encourage a healthy work-life balance at your office. There are several different options for flextime: organization can give a weekly hour requirement. Flexible work arrangements will allow employees to have a life outside of work as well – they can get their work done and still attend their child's soccer game or go to that housewarming party. This shows your

employees that you value them as people, not just as workers.

### **3. Encourage Efficient Work – Not More Work:**

Working more and being productive are not necessarily one and the same. For example, Britain has longer working hours than their European neighbors, yet still has lower productivity. In addition to performance concerns, working long hours has proven to be damaging to employee morale – The Mental Health Foundation reports that when working long hours, 27% of employees feel depressed, 34% feel anxious and 58% feel irritable. So instead of encouraging employees to work longer hours, instead encourage them to work more efficiently. This will not only solicit better work quality from your employees but will keep morale high as well.

### **4. To promote work from Home:**

Trying to maintain a balance between home life and work life is no simple task. So why not make it easier on your employees and bring their home to work? Sponsor office events, like LinkedIn's Bring In Your Parents Day, where employees are encouraged to invite their families (or a friend – working parents aren't the only ones who need balance!). Events like these will give employees the chance to spend time with their loved ones, but also give

you a chance to get to know your workers a little better. Plus, involving their families will make your employees feel you value them as human beings (rather than just workers), which creates a better working atmosphere for everyone.

### **5. Foster Creativity:**

In addition to physical fitness, encouraging the employees' to maintain healthy mental fitness is just as important. Allowing them time and space to pursue creative projects will not only give them a better sense of balance but foster the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that will benefit the business in the long run. Google, for example, offers a 20% program, which allows developers to spend 20% of their time on creative side projects.

### **6. Offer Community Engagement Opportunities:**

Another great way to connect the dots between work time and out-of-work time is to offer community engagement activities that are meaningful and beneficial. For example, organization could consider offering eight hours per year of paid volunteer time to your employees as an incentive to get involved in important community causes.

### **7. Encourage Short Breaks Throughout the Day:**

On a smaller scale, it's important to workers' mental and physical health to take frequent breaks throughout the day. The human body was not designed to sit still and stare at a screen for eight hours, and doing so can lead to a wide variety of health issues. Taking breaks at work also makes employees better at their jobs because they are more focused, less burn out, and more productive in the long-term.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we like to say that people who combine all aspects of their life in a balanced manner should therefore be the most satisfied and happiest one. Work life balance is part of the general well-being and the higher work-life imbalance, the lower are life satisfaction, happiness, subjective health and emotional well-being. Work life balance programs have the potential to extensively reduce absenteeism, improve employee morale and keep hold of organizational knowledge, particularly during hard economic times. In such a marketplace where there is increasing globalization and companies aspire to reduce costs, it depends upon human resource expert to comprehend the serious issues of work life balance and become of winner work life programs. It will cost some money, but in the long run, the company will benefit from this. If properly introduced and implemented then work life balance programs can be win-win situation for

employee, family and organization. Flexible working arrangements are important but it should be catered according to employees' needs, resources, time and demands to get more improved results. Work life balance is associated with quality of life and is not only a moral issue – it is productivity and economic issue, a workplace issue and a social issue, and needs to be addressed as such.

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