Impact of work life Balance on Women Employees Having Quality Life

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Abstract

Quality of work life and Work life balance cannot be seen as two different entities. Both depend on each other. If Quality of work life accommodates the definition of satisfaction gained from the job, then Work Life Balance must be satisfaction in life. Nowadays Managerial personnel feel frustrated because of alienation over their conditions of employment. The factors contributing to the problem are that the workers themselves are changing. They are more educated, more independent and they began reaching for higher order needs, which is more than psychological needs. Therefore, employers now have to redesign jobs for a better quality working life i.e. work life balance. As a result, work life balance is an increasingly hot topic in boardrooms and government halls today. We also examine the possibility that alternate work schedules affect perceived work-life imbalance—the "time bind." The results show that alternate schedules per se do not "unbind" time. However, perceived control of work schedules increases work-life balance net of family and work characteristics. The most consistent family characteristic predicting imbalance is being a parent. The most consistent work characteristic predicting imbalance is hours worked. Once we control for hours worked, women and part-timers as well as younger and better educated persons are shown to perceive more imbalance. However, they also report higher levels of schedule control and since schedule control improves work-life balance, it may be more important for unbinding time than schedule alternatives. The purpose of this paper is therefore to quantify the effects of quality of work life on women employees, as well as work life balance issues. Recommendations to management can be presented for both government and private organizational consideration to accelerate the implementation of a very successful work life strategy within organization.

Keywords: Quality of work life, work life balance, physical needs, psychological needs, work schedules, control, women employment.

Introduction

As the work culture changes drastically in the recent years, the traditional concept of work to fulfill humans' basic needs is also facing out. The basic needs are continued to diversify and change according to the evolution of the work system and standards of living of a workforce. Thus a definition by Suttle (1977) on the quality of work life as the degree to which work are able to satisfy important personal basic needs through their experience in the organization is no longer relevant. The factors that determine the quality of work life is Work Life Balance.

The concept of work life balance is not new but with the changing pace of life and increase in stress levels, negatively affecting the quality of work, has made many organizations think about the strategies for maintaining a work life balance. A group of workforces that is greatly affected by the quality of work life as a result of dynamic changes in work life balance of employees is specifically women employees working in organized sector.

As the aim of quality of work life is to identify and implement alternative programs to improve the quality of professional as well as personal life of an organization's employees, the work life balance strategy offers a variety of ways to reduce stress levels and increase job satisfaction of the employees. The fundamental principle of designing activities around the topic of work life balance is that work should be part of life. Therefore the demand for work-life-balance solutions by employees and managers is expanding at an unprecedented rate. Over the coming decade it will be one of the most important issues that executives and human resource professionals will be expected to manage.

Industries have realized the importance of the above. Indian organizations are setting up policies for maintaining work life balance they are going in for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes office a better place to work and also positively impact productivity.

"When life is busy, or all our energy is focused on a special project, it's all too easy to find our self "off balance", not paying enough attention to important areas of our life. While we need to have drive and focus if we are going to get things done, taking this too far can lead to frustration and intense stress."

This is the present scenario of all working people in today's busy and hectic life schedules which leads to imbalance among the different important parts of life. Everyone is so busy in their jobs that they don't have time to even have a look on the different aspects of their life i.e. 'Personal life and Family life' the result of which is imbalance in Work and Personal life. Work-personal life conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible. Obligation of one can force an individual to neglect the other. If a person is not able to create a balance in his work and personal life, he is not able to fulfill the professional as well as the family responsibilities. Therefore the "Work and Life study" of employees has become a very crucial and important part of any organization.

As the human asset is the most valuable resource and if it will not perform well, it will affect the performance of other resources as well. Balance in life cannot be achieved by the efforts of the company alone; the employees also have to work in this regard by setting their priorities. Work and Life balance affects the performance of the employees which is directly related to the performance of the organization.

Quality of Work Life

The term Quality of Work Life (QWL) was initially introduced in the late 1960's as a way of focusing on the effects of employment on the worker health and general well being, and a way to enhance the quality of a person's on-the-job experience. QWL can be defined as "The quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment." QWL is a process by which an organization responds to employee needs for developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work. Numerous works on work life thereafter proves that what happened in the workplace have significant impact on individuals and their families (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

QWL programs can be evaluated on the basis of following points:

a) Fair compensation and job security: The economic interests of people drive them to work at a job and employee satisfaction depends at least partially, on the compensation offered.

Pay should be fixed on the basis of the work done, responsibilities undertaken, individual skills, performance and accomplishments.

Job security is another factor that is of concern to employees. Permanent employment provides security to the employees and improves their QWL.

b) Health is wealth: Organizations should realize that their true wealth lies in their employees and so providing a healthy work environment for employees should be their primary objective.

c) Provide personal and career growth opportunities: An organization should provide employees with opportunities for personal/professional development and growth and to prepare them to accept responsibilities at higher levels.

d) Participative management style and recognition: Flat organizational structures help organizations facilitate employee participation. A participative management style improves the quality of work life. Workers feel that they have control over their work processes and they also offer innovative ideas to improve them. Recognition also helps to motivate employees to perform better. Recognition can be in the form of rewarding employees for jobs well done.

e) Work-life balance: Organizations should provide relaxation time for the employees and offer tips to balance their personal and professional lives. They should not strain employees' personal and social life by forcing on them demanding working hours, overtime work, business travel, untimely transfers etc.

f) Fun at workplace: This is growing trend adopted by today's organizations to make their offices a fun place to work.

3

The aim of QWL is to identify and implement alternative programs to improve the quality of professional as well as personal life of an organization's employees.

Work Life Balance

The expression "work life balance" was first used in the late 1970's to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. Work life balance can be defined as "the perfect integration between work and life both not interfering with each other". According to Julie Morgenstern "Work life balance is not about the amount of time you spend working vs. not working. It's more about how you spend your time working and relaxing, recognizing that what you do in one fuels' your energy for the other."

Poor work life balance leads to many disastrous things like tardy, bad performance, lack of motivation, more errors, absence from work and so on. The worst thing is that poor work life balance reduces quality of work life and productivity without any doubt. When an employee won't be able to give time to his family at home, he will feel stressed out at work whereas sound work life balance will definitely have a positive impact on the organization. The quality of work life improves significantly as employees feel fresh and not stressed out at all. They know when they go home; they will have enough time to spend with their families. Thus, this practice most certainly enhances productivity and results in business growth.

The Six Components of Work-Life Balance

1) Self-Management

Sufficiently managing one's self can be challenging, particularly in getting proper sleep, exercise, and nutrition. Self-management is the recognition that effectively using the spaces in our lives is vital, and that available resources, time, and life are finite. It means becoming captain of our own ship; no one is coming to steer for us.

2) Time Management

Effective time management involves making optimal use of your day and the supporting resources that can be summoned – you keep pace when your resources match your challenges. Time management is enhanced through appropriate goals and discerning what is both important and urgent, versus important or urgent. It entails knowing what you do best and when, and assembling the appropriate tools to accomplish specific tasks.

3) Stress Management

By nature, societies tend to become more complex over time. In the face of increasing complexity, stress on the individual is inevitable. More people, distractions, and noise require each of us to become adept at maintaining tranquility and working ourselves out of pressure-filled situations. Most forms of multi-tasking ultimately increase our stress, versus focusing on one thing at a time.

4) Change Management

In our fast-paced world, change is virtually the only constant. Continually adopting new methods and re-adapting others is vital to a successful career and a happy home life. Effective change management involves making periodic and concerted efforts to ensure that the volume and rate of change at work and at home does not overwhelm or defeat you.

5) Technology Management

Effectively managing technology means ensuring that technology serves you, rather than abuses you. Technology has always been with us, since the first walking stick, flint, spear, and wheel. Now, the rate of change is accelerating, brought on by vendors seeking expanding market share. Often there is no choice but to keep up with the technological Joneses, but you must rule technology, not vice versa.

6) Leisure Management

The most overlooked of the work-life balance supporting disciplines, leisure management acknowledges the importance of rest and relaxation- that one can't short-change leisure, and that "time off" is a vital component of the human experience. Curiously, too much of the same leisure activity, however enjoyable, can lead to monotony. Thus, effective leisure management requires varying one's activities.

Difference between Quality of Work Life and Work Life Balance

Quality of work life can be defined as "The quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment" whereas "Work life balance is an individual's ability to fulfill their work and lifestyle responsibilities with minimum conflict and maximum contentment." Quality of work life refers to how are the working conditions i.e. it can be temp., humidity, or any other environmental factor or it can be work culture, amenities or facilities or the factors that directly affect the work. On the other hand Work life balance means the work life affecting personal life. Because of working life, if employees don't have enough time to spend with their family; to eat normally or they are not living their life usually because of work life, is work life balance.

Impact of Quality of Work Life on Women Employees

Quality of Working Life is not a unitary concept, but has been seen as incorporating a hierarchy of perspectives that not only include work-based factors such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and relationships with work colleagues, but also factors that broadly reflect life satisfaction and general feelings of well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999). More recently, work-related stress and the relationship between work and non-work life domains (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991) have also been identified as factors that should conceptually be included in Quality of Working Life. The major determinants of QWL include Decision Making, Authority, Growth and Development, Job Security, Organizational Prestige, Feeling of worthwhile accommodation, Pay and Allowance, Promotional Avenues, Recognition and Appreciation.

5

Traditionally female participation in labor force has been restricted by social, cultural and religious norms, but more and more females are now joining the organized sector. It is generally viewed that female employees are somewhat neglected in their work places, which in turn can lead to lower level of job satisfaction and employee productivity. The female employees are found in vulnerable positions at the work places and gender discrimination in terms of pay, promotion and other facilities is visible in many private industries. This scenario has created an urge to the policy makers to identify the underlying situations and reasons and brought them into consideration the quality of work life issue. Thus it is a necessity to evaluate the Quality of work life of the employees in the organized sector. Because if employees feel that quality of working life is not balanced, they may leave the job and seek a better Quality of work life. Various researches have consistently shown that employees with a better Quality of working life are happier, have less stress, are less likely to be absent and are more engaged at work.

Impact of Work Life Balance on Women Employees

Work life balance has a great impact on women employees. To begin with, women have entered the work life or employment area much later when compared to men. Therefore they took time to adjust with work and personal life. The impact of work life balance on women is such that, even the career oriented women tend to place their family first and would not mind considering change of job in order to get everything straight. Work life balance has become so important in case of women, as they were always looked up to as home makers. And hence they need to have a better work life balance. The relationship between the women employees and work life balance is such that it has a great impact on family life as well.

In a society wherein, a male can afford to work late nights and overtime, if a woman works at the same pace they might be termed as irresponsible towards the family. It has changed over the time. However, this approach still exists in the society. Therefore, women are forced to be choosy in regards to their job profile. This situation also increases women employee turnovers in many companies. If there is a proper work life balance, then the women workforce would start to play the driver's role in the organization. Many theories and researches have proved that work life balance for men and women are unequal. To sum it up, work life balance is very key for the women employees for their success and for a good and healthy family relationship.

Effect of Quality of Work Life on Work Life Balance

It stands tall and true that QWL plays a prominent role in deciding or judging the Work Life Balance. The quality of work clearly reflects on the personal life. The more satisfied you are with your work environment, the happier the personal life would be. An employee spends 8 to 10 hrs in the office, which is the major part of the active hours of a day. Hence one needs to understand the necessity of QWL. Even when an employee works overtime and is satisfied with the work environment, it would have a huge impact on personal life. But if the work environment is not comfortable, it would spoil the work life balance. The factors like job satisfaction, cleanliness, pay scale etc., would determine the Work Life Balance.

This relationship or effect of QWL on Work Life Balance is very clear in the day to day activities of the employees. All the 6 components of work life balance are closely related to QWL. The employee would be more willing to work and also would do their best to maintain WLB. As per the study by Kossek, Colquitt and Blum (2001), it was proved that the climate of sharing at the work place has a positive impact on personal lives and in turn, would improve WLB by a great extent. With experience, an employee working in a healthy competitive environment would learn to balance his work life in an effective way.

Quality of work life has direct impact on human outcomes and it significantly reduces absenteeism, minor accidents, grievances, and quits (Havlovic 1991). It is found that employee turnover can be minimized with better quality of work life. Thus it can be said that quality of work life can develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for the economic health of the organization (Kanagalakshmi and Devei 2003).

The advantage of being able to work anywhere and at anytime has blurred the boundaries of work and leisure hours. The threat of imbalance in work and non-work life has implications not only on the employees but also on organizations, government and society (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Swanson, Power and Simpson, 1998). This relationship is bi-directional because previous studies have indicated that less conducive environments in the workplace have a greater impact on home life than vice versa. Another important factor that creates an imbalance work condition was a commitment to the work activities. In an organized work sector work environment is widely assumed to be a high-commitment workplace that forces the organized sector employees to sacrifice their personal leisure hours to meet their work demand. Such a work arrangement demands the professionals to be committed with work whenever possible and hijack them from joining non work related activities.

The balance is important particularly among the women employees in order to nurture and develop the sustainable human resource practices in the organized work environment. Therefore, balance between work and non-work life is suggested as one of the measures of Quality of work life.

Conclusion

Life is like a game and an individual has to play with work, family, health, friends and spirit. Industries have realized the importance of the above. Indian Organizations are setting up policies for maintaining a work life balance; they are going in for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes office a better place to work and also positively impact productivity. These recommendations include the need for legislation on maximum as well as minimum working hours, good role models at the workplace, flexible working hours and arrangements. A life is very short and let us makes it sweet. Striking the right balance amongst the personal life, professional life and social life is essential.

The conclusion we can draw from the questionnaire is that; for unmarried women in work group between 25-35 yrs – the work life balance would be satisfactory if they were to be given a facility of job sharing and they are quite satisfied with the organization's policies of work life balance. Married women within the age of 25-35 yrs – they feel depressed often as they do not get enough time for themselves and they opted for more holidays and they also feel that they have missed on quality time with their family. For women between the age group 36-45 yrs – they do not have dependent children, hence they are able to concentrate on additional activities like meeting child's teacher etc., they also feel that job sharing and holidays along with flexible working hours would help them balance their lives thus giving them time for their health as well. And they feel that the meetings and trainings held after office hours hinder their work life balance. Overall, all the work groups are happy about their job but have a problem with unrealistic deadlines. They also wish to have flexible work hours- as they would have family and personal health responsibilities to be taken care of at a certain time of their life. The flexible work hours would help them to attend to themselves and serve the family's needs as well.

To sum up in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "When you play, play hard; when you work, don't play at all". The result of this study supports the proposition that the degree of satisfaction in Quality of Work Life is related to the degree to which the employees believes his or her success criteria have been met, especially if the individual places great importance on these criteria which include pay, respect, personal growth and family life balance. It can also be concluded from the data, that the employee's family life correlates significantly with his/her level of Quality of work life. This further suggests that a successful family life carries over into one's career and makes one more satisfied with personal achievements.

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