



Link between work-life balance practices and performance: A critical review

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Abstract

In the present scenario of ongoing businesses, work-life balance practices in organisations, relied on attracting better employees and plummeting work-life conflict among existing employees in order to enhance organizational performance. This review of the literature provides a critical review and examination of factors playing a prominent role in keeping a positive link between work life and employee performance. It revealed that several factors were found to have a significant bearing on maintaining a balance between the lives of an employee in both the scenarios. It has been posited that the businesses may therefore need to be modified to reflect the number of additional routes by which work-life balance practices can influence organizational performance.

Keywords: work-life balance, work-life conflict, performance, job commitment

Introduction

Work-life conflict is considered as a topic of academic and practitioner debate and its mounting role in organizations and personal life has gained some serious interest around the world (Kersley *et al.*, 2005; US Bureau of Labor, 2007) ^[33, 52]. Work-life balance important impact on the lives of employee. It has significant consequences for employee towards their respective organisations as well as their personal lives.

In recent years, Competing demands between work and personal life have assumed increased bearing for employee performance. It might due to several reasons like demographic and workplace changes. It has been reported that employees create conflict in responses to these changes due which lead to an increased pressure on organizations to implement work practices that help an employee to keep balance between employment related and personal life related issues (Rapoport *et al.*, 2002). Also in turn, employees believe that their job has a significant bearing on work-life balance will be related to a global belief about the extent to which their organisation cares about employee well-being. Hence, this perception of employees leads to a desire among employees to reciprocate towards the organisation in the form of positive attitudes and behaviour. Such reverse positive behaviour implies positive outcomes both for employees (*e.g.* employee satisfaction) and employers (*e.g.* organisational commitment and intention to remain with the organisation).

The paper will focus on individual-level explanations for the variables affecting work-life practices and organizational performance. Work-life conflict, job-related attitudes and use of practices were found to be prominent in explaining the organizational performance along with balancing responsibilities at home. The literature's major findings will be discussed as key implications. The paper concludes by giving motion for future research regarding work-life balance practices.

Literature Review

Work-life balance practices are premeditated organizational steps and programs or culture of an organisation that are designed to lessen work-life conflict. Hence, enabling employees to be more effective at work and in roles related to their personal lives. The process of viewing work-life balance practices individually as a way of accommodating individual employees with care giving responsibilities to recognizing their contribution to organizational performance. This process of maintaining a balance is an important paradigm that is still very much accepted globally and is continuously upgrading.

Work-Life Balance

There has been growing attention in the troubles involved in combining work and family. It can also be said in broader terms as integrating working life and private life. Research shows that employees who face problems in balancing work and personal life showed less productivity or perform less effectively. The term 'work-life balance' is widely used in the press, in public discussion, and by organisations attempting to be 'family friendly' (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). For many authors, the term Work- Life balance refers to a harmonizing interface between the two domains of life (Frone, 2003) ^[15]. The most common definition is

'a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles' (Frone, 2003: 145) ^[15].

There is a large body of literature examining the predictors and outcomes of work-family conflict based on the definition given by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985: 77)

'a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect'.

This definition emphasizes the bidirectional relationship. Family can interfere with work and work can interfere with

family. Recently, work-family enrichment and work-life facilitation

concepts have frizzled positive interdependencies, pointing that work can also benefit private life and vice versa (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000) ^[21, 24, 26].

Work-life balance is critically linked with the employee attitudes and behaviours; their wellbeing and organizational effectiveness (Eby *et al.*, 2005) ^[13]. Changing organizational patterns and competitiveness has led organizations to introduce balancing processes which can act as interventions in helping employees to manage the competing demands of family and work. Some of these balancing techniques are: re-designing of jobs to provide employees more autonomy and variety which is called as job characteristics and providing flexi-time benefits and policies. Moreover, social support and support of the support are also treated as the part of those interventions by developing a family-friendly organizational culture (work-family culture). This balancing process in the literature has shown positive benefits on outcomes of productivity and job satisfactions. Positive effect of the interventions were also reported on individual's degree of commitment and engagement in organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Kopelman *et al.*, 2006; Lambert, 2000; Thompson *et al.*, 1999; Allen, 2001; Gordon *et al.*, 2007; Thomas and Ganster, 1995; Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Meyer and Allen, 1997) ^[36, 35, 37, 51, 1, 28, 41]. However, these findings are evidenced mostly in Western literature. Since, in recent years, organizations in emerging economies too have started introducing such interventions to deal with employee work-life balance issues (Poster, 2005), it is imperative to further examine the relationships between such interventions and job outcomes in developing economies.

Work-Life Conflict

Researchers have posited that interference between work and non-work responsibilities has a number of non-productive results and are well established in the literature. Work-life conflict tend to exhibit reduced of job satisfaction and performance (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) ^[8, 36]. These outcomes are related to job attitudes of employees do conflict. Outcomes of work-life conflict include a reduction in effort and performance hence increased absenteeism and turnover (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Aryee, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004) ^[3, 4, 20, 53]. Researchers have also explored the role of work-life conflict towards increased stress and burnout (Anderson *et al.*, 2002; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998) ^[3, 34], cognitive aberrations such as staying awake, be deficient in concentration (MacEwen & Barling, 1994) ^[37] which results into reduced levels of overall health of employee (Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996) ^[16]. While, a vast body of research is available on work-life balance mainly focuses on employees' family responsibilities, there are also various studies that recognize commitments to friends and social groups, expanding the affected population to virtually all employees (Beauregard, 2006; Hamilton, Gordon, & Whelan-Berry, 2006; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001) ^[6, 30, 49]. Hence, it can be concluded from the implications that work-life conflict can

have negative repercussions for employee performance. However, these damages to the organization and employee can be managed by implementing programs to help employees handle their work-life conflict (European Network for Workplace Health Promotion, 2006; Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2006). Vast literature is available on work-family conflict, which suggest about the incongruity between work and family and their unconstructive consequences on health of an Individual and organizational performance (Eby *et al.*, 2005) ^[13]. For the same reason researchers have tried to examine the work-family enrichment where positive impact of work-family interface was investigated (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Carlson *et al.*, 2006) ^[21, 10]. Also positive spillover (Allis and O'Driscoll, 2008; Hammer *et al.*, 2005) ^[2, 31], work-family facilitation (Rotondo and Kincaid, 2008) or work-family synergy (Beutell and Wittig-Berman, 2008) ^[7] on individual's attitude and behaviour were also checjed. Greenhaus and Powell (2006, p. 6) ^[21] define work-family enrichment as "the extent to which experience in one role improves the quality of life namely performance or affect, in the other role". Work-family enrichment is well thought-out as one of the significant measure of work-life balance (Frone, 2003) ^[15]. It focuses on the bidirectional effects of work on family life (work-to-family enrichment) and family on the work life (family-to-work enrichment). Bothwork-to-family enrichment and family-to-work enrichment have been found to bepositively related to individual's mental health (Allis and O'Driscoll, 2008; Grzywaczand Bass, 2003) ^[2, 25], family functioning (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000) ^[24, 26] and job outcomes such as job satisfaction (Beutell and Wittig-Berman, 2008) ^[7] and organizational commitment (Wayne *et al.*, 2004; 2006) ^[10, 53, 54].

Job-related attitudes

Satisfaction with work schedule flexibility in terms of job attitude has been associated with increased organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Halpern, 2005) ^[29]. Variables like voluntary reduced hours have been reported as determinants of job satisfaction, loyalty, and organizational commitment (Williams, Ford, Dohring, Lee, & MacDermid, 2000) ^[55]. Researchers have argued that employees who benefit from childcare centres, referral services and other family-supportive practices report higher levels of commitment to the organization (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Orthner & Pittman, 1986) ^[23, 43]. A meta-analysis revealed that found that flexible work schedules had positive effects on both job satisfaction and satisfaction with flexibility of work schedule (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, and Neuman, 1999) ^[5]. Location and timing of their work were also reported as antecedents to job satisfaction (Callentine, 1995) ^[9].

Work-life balance practices

Work-life balance practices seem to produce similarly positive results as produced by work-related attitudes. For instance, flexible work hours, has been reported as an explanatory link to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for women. Moreover it has been found to be linked for all employees with family responsibilities, regardless of whether or not these resources are being used (Scandura & Lankau, 1997) ^[47]. A

study of a sample size of 3,381 American workers revealed that the presence of flexible time policies and childcare assistance was coupled with loyalty of employee having family responsibilities (Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001)^[45]. Increased affective commitment and reduced turnover can also be managed by work-life balance practices (Chiu & Ng, 1999; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999; Wood & de Menezes, 2008)^[12, 51, 56]. Grover and Crooker (1995)^[23] found that affective commitment among all employees can be facilitated through facilities like parental leave; childcare information and referral, flexible work hours, and financial assistance with childcare.

Discussion

As mentioned effects of work-life conflict are prominent but work-life balance practices are believed to be positively and significantly associated with performance of employee in a particular organization. Work-life balance practices give organizations opportunities in terms of improving perceptions of job seekers (Casper & Buffardi, 2004). Work-life balance practices also enhance job-related attitudes of employees in a positive manner, increase work effort and contextual behaviours. These values are pertinent as they are considered to be the symbols of organizational concern for employees. Work-life balance practices promote employee interest and make them believe that they are the stakeholders to the organization (Pfeffer, 1981)^[44].

Employees may work longer hours because flexible planning increases their availability for work and reduce their commuting time, or because they are exchanging leisure time for flexibility (Golden, 2001; Meyer *et al.*, 2001)^[18, 40]. They may prefer to work during their peak hours in terms of personal productivity (Shepard *et al.*, 1996), or can go for overtime during the organization's peak times in exchange for flexibility at other times (McDonald *et al.*, 2005). They may also increase their capacity and effort in order to avoid losing a job that offers them the flexibility they desire (Shepard *et al.*, 1996).

Future research directions

Future research may further explore the effects of work-life practices on performance with the use of more complex models incorporating maximum number of variables and relationships. There is a need to examine how work-life balance practices increase productivity. This can be done with the help of longitudinal studies. It may take time and incur cost but they can be fruitful in the context of work-life conflict and employee performance.

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