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REVIEW ARTICLE

WORK LIFE BALANCE

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ABSTRACT

Work life balance has recently taken the attention of both researchers and executives. This subject interests almost everyone with a professional career. This widespread interest is partly due to its reflection on all aspects of life. For those who think that the main objective in life is to work, their career becomes the core of life. However, people have limited time and therefore have to perform many other activities other than their jobs. Without a balance between the two, many mishaps can be experienced in both. In this study work –life balance is analyzed from organizational context. This study has the potential to enable the working people to consider their stand point in terms of work –life balance and the executives to gain new perspective in order to cope with such a problem.

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INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance is defined here as an individual's ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities. Work life balance, in addition to the relations between work and family functions, also involves other roles in other areas of life. In this study, due to its more extensive associations, the concept of work–life balance is preferred. Work-life balance has been defined differently by different scholars. In order to broaden our perspectives, some definitions will be presented. Greenhaus (2002) defined work –life balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.

Felstead *et al.* (2002) defines work-life balance as the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labor markets. Aycan *et al.* (2007) confined the subject only with work and family and put forward the concept of “life balance” with a more whole perspective. Scholars defined life balance as fulfilling the demands satisfactorily in the three basic areas of life; namely, work, family and private. Work demands work hours, work intensity and proportion of working hours spent in work. Additional work hours subtract from home time, while high work intensity or work pressure may result in fatigue, anxiety or other adverse physiological consequences that affect the quality of home and family life (White *et al.*, 2003). Family demands include such subjects as the roles

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of the individuals (e.g. Father, mother, etc.,) family responsibilities (e.g childcare, house chores, etc) looking after the old members, children. Besides this, there are some other demands in work life balance than family and work live relaxation, vacation, sports and personal development programmes. Work –life balance is not the allocation of time equally among work, family and personal demands. In literature, it is also emphasized that work-life balance is subjective phenomenon that changes from person to person. In this regard, work-life balance should be regarded as allocating the available resources like time, thought and labor wisely among the elements of life. While some adopt the philosophy of ‘working to live’ and sees work as the objective, others consider “living to work” and situated work into the centre of life.

DETERMINANTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Many things in life are the determinants of work life balance. The subjects in the literature that are related the most with work life balance are grouped here.

INDIVIDUAL

An individual is the most important determinant of work –life balance. Two American cardiologists Rosenman and Friedman determined two different types of personality depending on heart disorders and individual behaviours: type A and type B. Type A expresses someone who is more active, more work oriented, more passionate and competitive, while Type B is calm, patient, balanced and right minded. It can be argued that since type A is more work oriented, there will be a negative reflection of it to work –life balance. Yet work holism, which is considered as an obsessive behavior, is another thing that destroys work-life balance. When work holism connotes over addiction to work, being at work for a very long time, overworking and busy with work at times out of work. Since life is not only about work, workaholics suffer from alienation, family problems and some health problems. Porter (1996) states that alcoholics, workaholics neglect their

families, friends, relations and other social responsibilities.

FAMILY

The demands that one experience in family life and that have effects on life balance can be given as the demand of workload and time, role expectations in family and support to be given to the spouse. It is also included in the literature that such variances as marriage, child rising, caring of the elderly at home have effect on work-life balance since they demand more family responsibilities. Those who have to look after a child or the elderly might sometimes have to risk their career by shortening their working hours, which becomes a source of stress for them. On the other hand, those without children or any elderly to look after at home experience less work-life imbalance.

WORK AND ORGANISATION

Work environment is more effective in work-life imbalance than the family environment. The job and the institution one works in both demands on his time, efforts and mental capacity. Among the efforts to increase organizational efficiency, one of the subjects managers focus on is to raise the organizational efficiency, one of the subjects managers focus on is to raise the organizational loyalty of the staff.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Another determinant of work-life balance is social environment. Especially in countries that stand out with their culturally collectivist characteristics, an individual also has responsibilities towards certain social groups he belongs.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE

The stress – based conflict occurs when one of the roles of the individual at work or in the family causes stress on the individual and this stress affects the other roles of the individual. The behavior stress occurs when the behavior at work and out of work are dissonant and conflicting.

PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS

According to Lowe (2005), work life imbalance affects the overall well-being of the individual causing such problems as dissatisfaction from life, prolonged sadness, using drugs or alcohol.

FAMILY IMPLICATIONS

Organization expects from individual to allocate more time for their work while at the same time the family want him to perform his responsibilities too. Those who can't sustain work-life balance are bound to experience many problems in their families such as lower family satisfaction, decreased involvement in family roles etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

Those whose demands of the family and one's social interest are not met duly naturally prefer sacrificing his working hours, and carry out their personal needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to decrease the negative consequences of work- family conflict on working individuals, family friendly organizational culture and human resources applications have recently been in agenda of executive. The components of the organizational strategy are flexible working hours , child care and elderly care scheme, home working ,job sharing. Supportive programmes for the family life of employees in an organization contribute to providing work –life balance. Thanks to these programmes, the employees will be encouraged, their attendance will be supported and their efficiency will increase. Flexible working hours is one of the methods used to maintain work-life balance. For example employees with flexi-time will have to fulfill certain amount of time weekly. Other thing which can be done is to allow employees to work at home away from traditional work environment.

Conclusion

If one has managed to allocate the required time for every aspect of life duly and not to reflect the problems in one part of life to another it means that

he has been able to achieve work-family balance. Life as a whole is composed of many other aspects along with work. Those who have achieved a balance among these aspects are sure to achieve the life balance, which does away with any imbalance.

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