

WORK LIFE BALANCE – NEED OF AN HOUR

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ABSTRACT

Work life conflict is not confined to any gender. With the passage of time the scenario has witnessed so many changes. The breakdown of traditional culture that was only restricted to men has now relegated the blurred boundaries with the tremendous contribution of women in every field of life and thus has given birth to the concept of work- life balance. Work life balance refers to the balancing between professional and personal life. The study of work life balance has been a matter of strategic importance to study. As the imbalance between these two factors work and life poses serious threats for both career progressions as well as for personal life. Work life conflict is not only hazardous to an employee but also affects the organization in a negative manner. Organization also has to face so many consequences like absenteeism, burnouts, turnover etc. while on the other hand, individual has to face problems like stress, conflicts with the family, health issues. This paper is an attempt to study the factors responsible for imbalance between work and life. In this paper, an effort has been made to analyze the consequences of work life imbalance to both an employer and employee. Initiative has also been made to quote some examples of companies who have initiated programmes for fostering work life balance.

KEYWORDS: work life balance, imbalance, personal and professional life

INTRODUCTION

Work life balance has emerged as a heated debatable topic in the last few years. Changed working conditions and the race to come forward has created a lot of disturbance between the personal and professional lives of employees. A competent employee is not at all happy with its current situation as the edifice of their lives is shattering. Besides of their best efforts they are unable to give their 100% neither to the family nor to their career. There always seems to be an unseen chaos between the two and all this leads to health problems, stress and degradation. The employee is the only victim for both employer and family. Overall work life conflict creates an environment of annoyance and resentment for all the three: employer, employee and the family.

There are so many determinants which are responsible for the nightmares of the work life imbalance such as excessive work load, temptation to be a winner, desire to maintain high standard of living and the influence of western culture as well. Therefore, it has become essential for every organization to inculcate work life balance programs in their companies' policies if they want their long term survival in the economy or the competition.

The deadly consequences of these factors have affected both the organization as well as the employee in negative manner likewise, high rate absenteeism, poor productivity, high rate of turnover etc and depression, vision impairment, aloofness from family members respectively. Many companies such as Nokia, HUL, Colgate Palmolive etc have initiated to take a proactive approach in implementing practices that enable employees to cope up with the work life imbalance issues and to strike a balanced approach between personal and professional life.

The problem of work life imbalance has become terrible monster in present times but it's not as such as it seems because it can easily overcome by the liaison between both the affected parties either be it an employer or an employee. Both the parties should be very much dedicated and supportive to each other. If the employer is putting forward his hand by offering medical assurance, maternity and paternity leaves, paid leaves for personal occasions such as birthdays, anniversary etc, and work from home facility, then the employee must come forward with his /her dedicated work.

This paper is an endeavor to fulfill the wish for better work life balance as its one of the emerging concerns in the contemporary society. The basic study that revolves around this paper is to study the factors and the consequences of work life imbalance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the concept of work life imbalance.
- To comprehend the determinants responsible for workaholic culture.
- To analyze the consequences those are faced by both the employer and employee.
- To give some suggestions to foster better work life balance and strive a balance between personal and professional life.
- To quote some examples of companies who have inculcated the work life balance in their policies and practices.

REASEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term research refers to a search for knowledge. The research may be defined as a scientific and systematic search for relevant and appropriate information on a definite topic. Infact well organized investigation is known as research. While conducting study, it's required to quote as to what procedures and techniques have been adopted. Keeping in view, this section is inculcated in this paper. The basis of research methodology of this research on work life balance is a theoretical analysis. This paper is basically a conceptual one whose basic information has been taken from various secondary sources such as;

- Research articles and journals
- Books
- Published and unpublished scholarly papers
- Local national and international journals.
- Academic websites etc.

DETERMINANTS RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKLIFE IMBALANCE

Although the desire to be at the forefront in the race of this competitive world is the solely major factor which contributes to work life disequilibrium even though some of the reasons have been recognized with the passage of time that has also influenced the balance between work and life. Some are as follows:

- **Excessive work load**: Many companies don't consider their workforce as their assets rather they only treat men as machines and force them to work beyond their capacity and potential. This excessive pressure from their jobs compels them to increase their working hours and to reduce the time for family which disturbs the work life balance.

- **Desire to maintain high standard of living:** These days everyone is in the race of being a highest earner and due to this, people wish to work 24*7 at any cost. This mania of work at any cost never leaves a person in the comfort zone.
- **Influence of western culture:** There are no such traditions prevalent in the western culture due to this foreign people are able to devote their maximum time on their work as such there is absence of family culture also. Influenced by the western norms Indian people are trying to avoid their traditional and cultural practices, family values and this factor has made them workaholic. This workaholic attitude has proven to be a disturbing factor in misbalancing the work and life.
- **Temptation to be winner:** In order to be at the forefront of every aspect of life whether it is career or social work etc., every person feel defeated with the responsibilities of work and life and this dilemma takes a person to the threshold of work life imbalance.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORK LIFE IMBALANCE

The consequences of work life imbalance are deterrent for both employers as well as to employee. Both have to face so many problems on their own level.

<u>Consequences of work life imbalance</u>	
<u>To employees</u>	<u>To employer</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress • Physical problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision impairment - Headache - Obesity - Hearing disability • Detachment from family • Poor personal habits • Behavioral problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absenteeism • Poor productivity • High turnover rate • Disputes • Low efficiency • High training cost • Mismanagement in affairs • Black dot to reputation

CONSEQUENCES TO EMPLOYEES

- **Stress**: The biggest challenge that work life imbalance creates is stress. This problem created by work life imbalance has taken over the lives of employees as well as families. The tension to be the best in every field of life has made an employee worst to tackle his own self. This stress leads to so many physical and mental problems and many times, may force a person to quit his/her job.
- **Physical problems** : Excessive work load also generates so many health issues such as :
 - **Vision impairment**: Constant working without break has poor and bad impact on the eye sight of employees. This affect may range from minor eye problems to complete blindness.
 - **Headache**: More than enough hours of working in front of system and stress of excessive work load normally leads to headache.
 - **Obesity**: Jobs in the corporate world are basically sitting jobs which don't demand any physical movements and this factor has become the reason for more obese people.
 - **Hearing disability**: The employees working basically in the call centers are the victim of hearing disability.
- **Detachment from family**: In the race of being high earner and in an aspiration to maintain high standard of living people used to spend more and more hours on work. They just wish to work 24*7. This leads disengagement with the family members. They don't give much time to their family members. Many of the cases have been seen where the work life imbalance was the only reason for divorce among the married couples.
- **Poor personal habits**: To overcome with the workload and to get relaxed from the work load, employees basically engage themselves in poor habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, use of drugs etc.
- **Negative behavioral changes**: The situation of work life imbalance has made an employee just like scapegoat. He is neither in a position to quench the thirst of his employer nor of his family members. Due to this, several negative behavioral changes have been witnessed such as mood swinging, irritative behavior, short tempered nature etc.

CONSEQUENCES TO EMPLOYER

- **High rate of absenteeism and turnover**: Work life imbalance reduces the potentialities and capabilities of an employee. This thing leads to high rate of absenteeism and high rate of turnover which negatively affect the organizational productivity.
- **Poor productivity**: Due to long seating hours, the efficiency of the employees keep on reducing and he/she even don't get the chance to rejuvenate his brain and skills, this ultimately become big hurdle in the success of organization.

- **Negative impact on company reputation**: Some employees quit the job due to the harassment given by the employer to take excessive work load. When they get out, the negative word of mouth by those employees adversely impact the company's reputation.
- **Poor results and high training costs**: High turnover due to excessive work life imbalance leads to new recruitments in the company. Large amount spent by the companies on the orientation and the training of new employee adds to the costs of company.

MEASURES TO OVERCOME WORK LIFE IMBALANCE

At the organizational level so many efforts can be taken to overcome these work life imbalance related problems. Some are as follows:

- **Maternity leaves**: To avoid the situation of work life imbalance government institutions are already providing maternity leaves, child care leaves to the women employees. Now, the private organizations have also initiated the concept of maternity leaves to the corporate women. At present, MNCs have announced to provide 180 days maternity leaves instead of 90 days.
- **Paternity leaves**: The next initiative that can be taken by the organization to include the clause of paternity leaves. Such leaves can be provided to the would be fathers and also to fathers of newly born.
- **Medical safety**: Medical assurance to employees will help them to overcome the anxiety of medical issues related to himself or his family members. For this, there is already a provision of medical leaves about which the employees should be made aware and be benefitted.
- **Work from home**: To reduce the stress of work life imbalance the corporate should be more flexible in their working style. There should not be any physical boundaries for their work.
- **Paid leaves for personal occasions**: Some corporate have a provision of paid leave for personal days of employees like birthdays and anniversaries. This is one of the most prominent steps that have been taken by companies for fostering the work life balance. And the time has come that this applaudable step should be copied by all others.
- **Stress counseling**: There must be separate section for stress counseling of the employee so that the employees may get relaxed from the overburdened work and can go home with full zeal and enthusiasm.

EXAMPLES OF COMPANIES FOR CONQUERING WORK LIFE IMBALANCE

- Colgate Palmolive is one of the best example of the company who have inculcated so many programs in their work culture so as to promote the work life balance of their employees. According to them "Colgate people are their greatest asset". And the success of their company is possible only with the help of dedicated work force. They have initiated a program "live better" under which they provide variety of services to foster greater work life balance such as nutrition guidance, wellness sessions, financial seminars, employee networking groups.

- HUL, the largest FMCG Company is not far behind to come a step forward to promote work life balance among its employees. They do respect their human force and regard them as value creation asset. HUL believes in creating an atmosphere of working with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints. They persuade all the work force to work any time and from anywhere as long as the no compromise is made. Here, the performance is judged by the results not by the time or attendance.
- LG has its own style of promoting the work life balance of its employees. LG has initiated so many programs for work life balance such as leisure activities, childbirth and maternity protection, housing and stable living, medical and health programs, educational facilities.
- Chevron Philips chemical company does realize the necessity of work life balance initiatives. Their policies help their employees to strike a balance between the demand at work place and at home by providing them flexible work schedule, personal leaves etc.

CONCLUSION

High work load and excessive working hours is the primary demand of any organization in India which leads to the problem of disequilibrium between professional and personal life and the person only duped is the employee. Therefore, it is highly demanded to create equilibrium between the two. Work life balance is necessary for the happy and healthy living of the employees as well as for the future progress of the organization. The imbalance between these two factors poses serious threats for both career progression as well as personal life. Thus, it's the need of an hour to imbibe work life balance programs and policies as a part of their personnel/human resource strategy to tackle work life imbalance. It is also essential for the corporate for the retention of the top talent, attraction of new talent and for healthy and contented atmosphere in the organization. This environment of contentment will lead to fewer turnovers, absenteeism and more satisfied employees, employee engagement etc. In this way, by adoption of work life balance programs a company builds its own future. On the other hand, the employees are also pleased with their jobs and their family members are pleased with them which ultimately lead to increased efficiency of the employees. In nutshell, it will prove a privilege to both employer and employee.

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