Impact of Demographic Variables on Work Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

Stress at work is serious litigation for all employers, employees and organization. Dealing with stress related claims takes lot of time of managers. But the question arises how to manage stress pertaining to workplace. The main objective of this paper is to identify the factors pertaining to work life balance in an organization. The present paper uses regression to identify the impact of different factors on maintaining balance between work and personal life. This methodology provides insights into the intensity of impact of certain demographic factors on work life balance which will help in better human resource management at workplace.

Keywords: Work life balance, ethical tactics, workplace behavior.

INTRODUCTION:

Work and life are two essentials for human beings. Managing work life balance is all about how the values, ethics and moral principles are essential for sound decision making. In research, it was found that organizations do have values, ethics and moral principles; Since 1960s studies have proliferated (Lewis and Cooper, 2005, p. 9) on the linkages between work and family roles, originally concerned mainly with women and work–family stress. New concepts emerged, such as work–family conflict or interference, work–family accommodation, work–family compensation, work–family segmentation, work– family enrichment, work–family expansion and, of course, work–family balance This concept preceded that of work–life balance and implies 'the extent to which individuals are equally involved in- and equally satisfied with — their work role and family role' (Greenhaus and Singh, 2003, p. 2), thus suggesting that by giving equal priority to both roles, work–family conflict — mutually incompatible pressures from the two domains — could be rapidly resolved. By focusing on employees with family responsibilities, however, the notion of work–family balance was considered in practice as triggering off a backlash in the workplace among non-parents (Haar and Spell, 2003). The term 'work–life balance' enabled a wider understanding of non-work concerns to be encompassed in employment research. Felstead et al., 2002, mentioned that work–life balance can be defined 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 labour markets'. While it would be ingenuous to think that work family balance within an organization can be changed simply by posting a list of high valued principles, it is equally naïve to imagine that the ethics of an organization engulf itself into the culture of the organization. Behavior to manage work and family balance in organizations can be encouraged in a number of ways by Human Resource manager through training, communication and discipline.

With an increasing level of competition in the market employers expect their employees to perform better than their competitors. These increasing pressures can lead to distortions in work life balance.

It is an inescapable part of workplace (Wan Hussin,2003) but the ethical responsibility of the employer lies on developing and implementing the strategies which can reduce work family conflict of its employees. To the organization, one of the employees off sick with stress creates ripples of consequences like a pebble thrown in a pond. Employees can realize their potential to the full extent only when they are not stressed about any sort of conflicts primarily, role-family conflict.. Organizations can not completely eliminate the stress level pertaining out of it of its employees. But they must be taught to be resilient and laced with the picture of success.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Work life balance brings greater effectiveness to all aspects of life. Employees are likely to work better when they do make time for family and personal interests. Thus, the issue has become pertinent not only in India but has become major issue of concern for all kinds of industry worldwide. Lot of work has been done by the researchers in order to explore the ways to maintain equilibrium between work and life.

Voydanoff (2002) say work life interference is experienced by the individuals generally as a consequence when there are too many obligations on the office fronts and in order to settle them down are required sale down their family time as the work schedules are tend to be less flexible than personal schedules. Coltrane (2000); Greenhaus & Parasuraman, (1999); Rothbard & Edwards, 2003 reported that female employees have typically been observed devoting a larger share of time on household obligations than their men counterparts. Further, it was added that this increased work at home front hampers the performance at work chores. According to Jacobs & Gerson (2000); Clarkberg & Moen (2001), investigated that mostly the married working women whose husbands work more numbers of working hours (45 hours or more a week), are more likely to work less. Marsden, Kalleberg, & Cook (1993); Cassirer & Reskin (2000); Bielby (1992) reported that in workplaces where gender discrimination and inequalities are the common practice, the female employees in such workplace are likely to be less committed and pay lesser importance to promotion and are also likely they will identify very less with their work as their central priority when compared with the male employees. Friedman & Greenhaus (2000) work family research has identified both team effort and understanding between the domains of work and home sphere. Humphreys (2000) in his research explores that work life balance issues must be immediately addressed. The problem of work life balance is similar across the globe. Zubrick et al. (2000) focused on the welfare of the employees with regard to social systems along with the families. It is quite likely that workers who have a partner who is employed may look forward for the options such as reduction in hours of work. Wentling (2003) has shown that multiple roles played by female employees may experience stress interference between work and life because of the social set-up in which she lives as her the society is still dominated by males. She has explained this in her study conducted upon the working women in Delhi, in which she finds classical autocratic set up of the families in hindu social structure remains to be the same.

While most of the work-life studies have focused on women (Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds, & Alldred, 2003; Farley-Lucas, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Perrons, 2003), Mumby (1998) argued that "men have gender, too". Kirby, et al. (2003) stated that in devaluing or ignoring men's experiences, scholars "continue to constrain the possibilities of change for women as we conflate women and gender…Masculinity and femininity must be explored as co-constructing and constraining discourses in relation to work-family issues". The work-life balance almost is a common issue irrespective of gender barriers. Although women are the ones who talk about work-life conflict more often, there is a ray of hope that in coming decades both men and women will have the equal share of the pie called "work life balance".

For decades now women have been calling for a better work-life balance to help them be the productive workers and good mothers that they want to be. But men have been excluded from this process. Now men too are calling for a fairer deal.

Nowadays there is a changing pattern in the working hours which is quite different from the standard one, which normally operates from 9 am to 5 pm (Bharat 2009). Sometimes they need to even work beyond the normal eight hours (Rai 2009).

Increasing workloads have pressurized employees to demonstrate their commitment to work in more obvious ways (Ishaya and Ayman 2008). Consequently, a larger part of them have tended to be present at their work place for longer periods of time, thereby reducing the time for which they are available at home. The internet and mobile phones have made it possible for the organizations to keep in constant touch with the employees both during the day and at night (Morgan 2003). This has further intensified the work demands on employees. Consequently, there are growing reports of stress and work imbalance (Bhagwagar 2009).

With the invention of latest technologies the employee is expected to be engaged on the job almost at all times. Simultaneously, family life is also becoming more complex.

The extended family, even in India, is slowly disappearing (Patel 2005). Small nuclear families have come to stay, where both the spouses go to work. These changes in working and family life demands a continuous attempt for balanced work and family life.

Most research has focused on how women (particularly women in high status jobs or in dual career families) have reconciled the worlds of family and employment (Guest, 2002). A small body of research has investigated how men perceive the connections between work and home life.

Research on work–life balance is complicated by the gender differences of the labour market. Some research

suggested that there are gender differences in coping with work and family issues. Women still primarily take care of domestic tasks, irrespective of their employment status. So, many women employees continue to face difficulties in balancing these two forces (Hyman and Summers 2004).

As far as balance is considered both women and men prefer working in organisations that support better work-life balance. Men appeared to benefit more than women (Burke 2002). Men feel more satisfied when they achieve more on the job even at the cost of ignoring the family. On the other hand, women stress that work and family are both equally important and both are the sources of their satisfaction.

Organizational studies have also found gender differences. Loscocco's (1997) study of small business owners in the USA found that men saw the flexibility of their working hours as a symbol of the control they had through being their own boss, but tended to use it only occasionally, while women used flexibility as a key resource in trying to achieve a work–life balance.

It has also been revealed that women employees encounter the problem of role interference, deviations in attitudes of males and females and gradually with the change in situation can facilitate in resolving their problem. Malik & Khan (2008) opined that lack of Goal Clarity attributes Work-Life Conflicts & High Goal Expectancy increases Work-Life Conflicts. Hyman & Summers (2004) found that women still primarily take care of domestic tasks, irrespective of their employment status, many women employees continue to face difficulties in balancing these two forces. Jane Sturges & David Guest (2004) explored relationships between work/life balance, work/non-work conflict, hours worked and organizational commitment among a sample of graduates in the early years of their career. It concludes that, although graduates seek work/life balance, their concern for career success draws them into a situation where they work increasingly long hours and experience an increasingly unsatisfactory relationship between home and work.

The major issues identified to combat the problems of work life balance are discussed below:

Long working hours and demand for high performance: Employees feel themselves forced to put in longer hours to achieve set targets so that they exceed the expectations their employers in order to protect their jobs. Consequently, the boundary between work and home tends to get blurred.

Market Competition: In span of competitive and dynamic organizations, employees have to work very hard for a longer span of time frames. They always need to keep a constant watch on market which includes not only competitors, customers, political environment and others.

Poor work environment: The socio-psychological characteristics of work settings are referred to as work environment. It includes relationship between the employee and the employer, requirements of job, need for social support and affiliation, recognition, motivation and advancement and so on. A poor work environment is associated with reduced job satisfaction, absenteeism and stress leading to imbalances in both work and life.

Inflexible working hours: Sometimes, employees feel that inflexible working hours is one of the main hindrances for them in achieving a fit between work and family life.

Workload: Heavy workload and time pressure of accomplishing the given task in stipulated time frame makes it difficult for an ordinary employee to finish the work on time. Thus, an employee cannot finish it on an ordinary work day and it becomes essential to put in more hours to work.

Target pressure: Employees find themselves compelled to achieve said targets in order to survive in their work environment and keep their jobs safe. They are required to put in more and more efforts, work overtime to meet the deadlines and complete the assigned target within due course of time, or else they have to face their boss with explanation stating the cause of not meeting the targets in due time frame. This causes the stress and employees feel victimized, when they are unable to meet the targets.

Technology: Employees believe that technology is a double-edged sword. On one side, it is advantageous whereas on other, it is increasing their workload. Furthermore, new stressors such as computer breakdowns, computer slowdowns and electronic performance monitoring etc. have resulted in increased human interaction with computers.

Public dealing: Dealing with Public is also very instrumental in creating stress among the employees of banking sector. It also depends upon the frequency and different kind of behaviors of customers who visited the bank on a particular day. A hard-won public dealing leads them in stress and decreases performance, when they come across some unpredictable situations.

Lack of managerial support and peer support: Unsupportive management and peers obstruct the employees performance leading to non-fulfillment of their responsibilities and demands of job placed on them. Moreover, it will create a tensed and depressed state of mind.

Intrusion of work stress in other domains: Work stress due to acute pressure and longer time frames leads to many conflicts with family, social responsibility and personal requirements which give birth to interferences among family members. Spending less time with family leads to conflict and consequently leads to work-life imbalance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The demographic changes in the form of an increased number of women in the workforce had laid an emphasis on work life balance issues. As many contemporary studies either ignore gender or take it for granted that only women has to struggle to maintain work life balance. The study made a comparative learning between work-family life balance of men and women in Delhi, NCR through quantitative data. Exploring the literature and identifying the factors and determining their impact on work life balance. This methodology provided insights into the factors which amend work life balance issues. Since the aim is to identify the impact of factors affecting work life balance on work life issues, the research design is causal research design. The research methodology used is regression analysis to predict the variability of different factors on work life balance. The sample size is taken to be 50 working professionals in Delhi-NCR.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

An analysis has been done using regression analysis initially to identify the predictability of gender on work stress and workload for working professionals. The results of regression analysis has been shown in the table below:

Table No.1: Regression Analysis for predictability

Summary output					
Regression Statistics					
Multiple R	0.156291539				
R Square	0.24427045				
Adjusted R Square	0.17086697				
Standard Error	0.814996861				
Observations	50				
ANOVA					
	df	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**Significance F**
Regression	2	0.781665	0.390833	0.588409	0.002477
Residual	47	31.21833	0.66422		
Total	**49**	**32**			

The above table depicts that gender can predict 17% (as shown by the value of R square) of work life balance issues. The results have been predicted at significance level of less than 5%. Another important analysis pertains to the impact of marital status of working professionals on work life balance. The findings have been shown in table no.2 shown below:

Table No 2: Predictability of Marital Status on Work Life Balance

Summary Output					
Regression Statistics					
Multiple R	0.042107596				
R Square	0.00177305				
Adjusted R Square	0.019023345				
Standard Error	0.815772415				
Observations	50				
ANOVA					
	df	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**Significance F**
Regression	1	0.056738	0.056738	0.085258	0.771553
Residual	48	31.94326	0.665485		
Total	**49**	**32**			

The results revealed an interesting fact that marital status has very less predictability on work life balance issues. Moreover, the difference does not exist even at significance level. Therefore, we can reject the hypothesis that there is significant impact of marital status on work life balance issues.

Another important hypothesis was tested against age. The hypothesis is to examine the significant association between age and work life balance issues. The results have been shown in table no. 3 below:

Table No 3: Predictability of Age on work life balance issues

Summary Output					
Regression Statistics					
Multiple R	0.011180061				
R Square	0.310124994				
Adjusted R Square	0.207057355				
Standard Error	0.816445551				
Observations	50				
ANOVA					
	df	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**Significance F**
Regression	1	0.004	0.004	0.006	0.008578
Residual	48	31.996	0.666583		
Total	**49**	**32**			

The results of regression analysis on the above table reveal that there is significant association between age and work life balance issues. So it can be inferred that with age an individual may better comprehend work life balance issues since the predictability is 20% at significance level of 0.08.

DISCUSSION:

The analysis of demographic data to predict work life balance issues highlights interesting things. As against the popular belief that married people have more work life balance issues, the study revealed that marital status has no significant impact on work life balance issues. Rather, age has a significant role to play to deal with work life balance issues. It can be interpreted that with age an individual may gain experience to deal with work life balance issues. Also gender role has significant impact on work life balance issues. This result may depend on the cultural context for in India, gender roles are more defined as compared to other cultures. Thus, the study of demographic variables such as gender, age and marital status can help the employers devise policies for maintaining effective work life balance for their employers. These variables depend on the psychology of the employees. Different individuals have different intrinsic reasons concerning demographic variables. Further the sense of work life balance conflict in employees will depend on the job profile of the employees and family situations of the employees and so on. Therefore, an employer needs to understand the hierarchy of the factors along with the impact of demographic variables which can manage work and family hampering employee's productivity.

CONCLUSION:

The current study attempts to see the predictability of work life balance issues using demographic variables such as gender differences, age difference and difference in marital status and it is directed at narrowing the existing research gap in this context. Surprisingly, the literature review did not reveal any study of this nature in India.

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