

The Significance of Work-Life Balance in Driving Employee Engagement in India

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ABSTRACT

The topic of work-life balance in India is frequently discussed, as individuals are expected to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. However, work stress can affect the well-being of employees and their relationships with their family, organization, and society. High-pressure professions and factors such as shrinking incomes, economic instability, and uncontrolled layoffs can contribute to this stress. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of accommodation for work-life balance, especially for working women who are primary caretakers for their families. This leads to stressed employees who are more prone to mistakes, injuries, and absenteeism, which can negatively impact an organization's productivity. To address this issue, this exploratory research aims to examine work-life balance policies and practices, employee engagement, and workplace culture in various industries in India. By doing so, this paper aims to increase productivity and retain employees for longer periods. It will also explore the challenges that employees face due to work pressure and propose solutions for them. In India, where family is a top priority, it is essential to address work-life balance to allow employees to spend sufficient time with their loved ones.

Keywords: Inflation, exchange rate, Indian rupee

INTRODUCTION

The concept of work-life balance is commonly discussed in various industries such as BPOs, IT, and hospitality. To effectively address issues related to work-life balance, it is important to understand the theoretical framework underlying this concept. Today's employees increasingly desire a better balance between their work and personal lives, and this has become a growing concern in contemporary society. To address this concern, organizations must incorporate work-life balance strategies into

their job design and employment policies. Identifying the benefits of work-life balance is essential before designing and implementing any work-life balance program. This understanding can help organizations realize the importance of incorporating work-life balance strategies into their employment policies, leading to effective work-life balance programs in the workplace. When work and personal responsibilities become incompatible, a conflict arises, making it difficult to complete tasks. Work-life balance involves adjusting working patterns so that

employees can combine their work with other responsibilities, such as caring for children or elderly relatives. Employees in today's knowledge-based economy seek opportunities to learn, improve their skills, and express their creativity. They appreciate when senior management takes an interest in their well-being and prefer to work for employers with a good reputation. Organizations that provide a workplace culture with the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability are more likely to retain engaged employees. Work-life balance is critical to employee engagement and retention. HR can better understand the challenges of increased diversity in the workforce by recognizing individual differences within diverse groups and designing work-life balance policies and practices to engage them. During uncertain economic times, businesses are increasingly concerned with increasing employee engagement. By introducing appropriate employment practices that help employees achieve a better work-life balance, tangible benefits can be achieved, including increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and a less stressed workforce. This paper explores how to promote good work-life balance in the workplace, highlights its benefits in business, and outlines work-life policies and practices adopted by organizations to engage employees.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adams et al. (1996) found that relationships between work and family can have an

important effect on job and life satisfaction and the level of involvement the worker assigns to work and family roles is associated with this relationship. Duxbury and Higgins (2001) examined the effects of three types of work family conflict – role overload (having too much to do), work to family interference and family to work interference on the organizational performance and quality of life of employees. It was found that work-life conflict had a negative impact on organizational performance and on employees. Employees who are overloaded or whose work interfered with family (vice-versa) were highly stressed, experienced burnout, expressed dissatisfaction with life, and were in poor mental/ physical health.

Work schedule flexibility has been found to be negatively associated with work life balance / work family conflict. Higher the flexibility lower is the work family conflict. In other words, higher the work schedule flexibility, higher is the work life balance. Loscocco (1997) examined how people with considerable control over their work lives construct and experience work family connections. The data was collected through in-depth interviews of 30 self-employed people. The results showed that self-employed people had considerable control over their work lives and this helped them to curb the intrusion of work into family life. However, women emphasized the importance of flexibility more than men. Hammer et al. (1997) reported that higher levels of perceived work schedule flexibility

were related to lower levels of work family conflict.

Macky and Boxall (2008) reported that employees working longer hours are more likely to report a greater imbalance in the work life relationship. The five high involvement variables (i.e. power to make decision and act autonomously, information provision, rewards, knowledge of the job and team working) were found to be negatively correlated to work life imbalance. It was also found that increasing the availability of work life balance policies for employees did not improve the relationships when pressure to work longer hours was higher, and employees felt greater work life imbalance.

Across industries, engagement is substantially higher in the non-profit sector than in every other sector looked at by Towers Perrin (2003). This would appear logical, given that people tend to be drawn to this sector through a sense of mission, rather than from any prospect of high pay or wealth accumulation. This finding is also consistent

with the numerous definitions and views surrounding engagement, which identifies a “passion for work” as being a key component factor (Truss et al 2006, Brim 2002 and Holbeche and Springett 2003). Indeed, the fact that the sector is traditionally not a high-paying one, relative to the others studied, emphasizes the fact that it is not possible to “buy” engagement in the conventional sense by offering better than average monetary awards. Conversely, in another study comparing the public and

private sectors, Truss et al (2006) found that group in the public sector had a more negative experience of work, they reported more bullying and harassment than those in the private sector, and were less satisfied with the opportunities they had to use their abilities. This reinforces the findings of previous studies and underlines the scale of the challenge facing public sector managers in particular, and the negative impact that bullying and harassment have on employees and their levels of engagement (Emmott 2006).

According to Robinson (2006), employee engagement can be achieved through the creation of an organizational environment where positive emotions such as involvement and pride are encouraged, resulting in improved organizational performance, lower employee turnover and better health. Individuals adopt strategies such as accommodation, negotiation to enhance their work life balance or reduce work family conflict. Singh (2001) in his qualitative study used work/life border theory to explore how British and Swedish managers dealt with competing commitments. A sample of 35 managers (18 Swedish, 17 British; 18 males and 17 females) ranging from directors to project managers, aged between 28 to 59 years, was taken and semi-structured interviews were held on site in UK and Sweden. The study showed a tension between manager’s own needs for more balanced work lives and corporate attitudes to balance – seekers and career choices. Findings suggested that four

kinds of strategies were used by the managers for maintaining work life balance. These included accommodating family terms, negotiating with the family, accommodating the organization and staggering commitments. The study showed that managers enact their work life balance strategies with both their employer and their family, particularly their partner, who also enacts boundaries between home and employer, so there are four parties to the negotiation or accommodation of needs. Some managers use their own views as reference points for dealing with subordinates' need for work life balance.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the work-life balance study is to understand the benefits of improved work-life balance. Factors affecting work-life balance issues, leading to work-life imbalance, and suitable measures for perfect equilibrium are studied. Poor work-life balance can be indicated by high overtime, absenteeism, staff sickness, turnover, and employee stress. Health problems, detachment from family, and behavioral issues can arise due to work-life imbalance and stress at the workplace. Counseling and continuous education can help mitigate such problems. Initiatives like "work from home" and flexi-work have not been successful, leading to marginalization and exclusion of those who choose them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE WORK LIFE

Set boundaries: It's important to set boundaries between work and personal life. This can be done by creating a routine and sticking to it, not checking work emails outside of work hours, and not bringing work home.

Take breaks: Taking breaks throughout the workday can help to reduce stress and increase productivity. Encourage employees to take regular breaks and provide a designated space for them to relax and recharge.

Encourage communication: Encourage open communication between employees and management. Employees should feel comfortable discussing any work-life balance concerns or challenges they may be facing.

Provide support: Consider offering employee assistance programs (EAPs) or wellness programs that can help employees manage stress, improve their mental health, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Lead by example: As a leader, it's important to set an example for your employees. Prioritize your own work-life balance and encourage others to do the same.

Foster a positive workplace culture: Create a workplace culture that values work-life balance and recognizes the importance of employee well-being. This can be done by

providing opportunities for professional development, offering flexible working arrangements, and recognizing employee achievements.

Regularly review and evaluate policies: Regularly review and evaluate your work-life balance policies to ensure that they are effective and meeting the needs of your employees. Solicit feedback from employees and adjust policies as necessary.

CONCLUSION

Some possible reasons for work-life balance issues in the workplace include:

Long working hours and high workload: This can cause stress and fatigue, leaving employees with little energy or time to pursue their personal interests or spend time with their families.

Lack of flexibility: When employees are not able to adjust their work schedule or work remotely, it can be difficult for them to balance work and personal responsibilities.

Poor communication and support: If employees don't feel comfortable communicating their needs to their managers or feel unsupported by their colleagues or organization, it can be difficult for them to achieve work-life balance.

Cultural expectations: In some workplaces, there may be a culture of long working hours or a belief that employees need to be always available, which can make it difficult

for employees to prioritize their personal lives.

To address these issues, organizations can take steps such as:

Promoting a culture of work-life balance: This can include setting policies and expectations around working hours and availability, promoting flexible work arrangements, and encouraging open communication about work and personal needs.

Providing resources and support: This can include offering employee assistance programs, providing opportunities for professional development, and promoting health and wellness initiatives.

Empowering employees: Organizations can encourage employees to take ownership of their own work-life balance by providing them with tools and resources for time management and prioritization, and encouraging them to take breaks and time off when needed.

Overall, creating a culture of work-life balance requires a holistic approach that involves all levels of the organization and takes into account the unique needs and circumstances of each employee.

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