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Work Life Balance Policies, Practices and Its Impact on Organizations

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Abstract

Introduction: Work life balance refers to the equilibrium between the time and energy devoted to work and personal life. Achieving this balance is critical in maintaining overall well-being and productivity. Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual life; it does not mean a 50-50 situation. Work Life Balance has emerged as a hot topic in recent years and is a cycle rather than an achievement, a method which helps employees of an organization to balance their personal and professional lives.

Methodology: This paper helps us to understand how work life balance assists employees in balancing their personal life and work life, and provides an indication on how the policies could be improved by organizations and applied to all employees so as to effectively promote wellness and foster a culture where employee and organization performance is improved. The review of literature draws on Marzec (2023), whose study of innovative work-life balance post-COVID-19 among working parents in Poland collected primary data through a questionnaire of 37 mostly close-ended questions using a Likert scale

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distributed among 10,000 participants, and on Hebbar, C. K. (2022), who reviewed a variety of publications, research papers and journals to gain a deeper comprehension of the work-life balances of people employed in a variety of industries.

Results & Discussion: Work-life balance policies are grouped into three categories. Leave arrangement policies comprise career breaks ranging from a few months to a couple of years, career leaves or sabbaticals, study leave for further education, training leave for courses and workshops, and pooling of leave entitlement allowing employees to combine sick leave and carer's leave. Pregnancy and parenting policies comprise paid maternity leave, under which the Maternity Benefit Act mandates 26 weeks for the first two children and 12 weeks for subsequent children with eligibility requiring 80 days of service in the preceding 12 months, unpaid maternity and paternity leave, safety at work during pregnancy, the opportunity to return to the same job, staggered return to work, and lactation breaks. Flexible working policies comprise flextime, job sharing, part-time work, shift work, compressed hours such as four ten-hour days instead of five eight-hour days, mobile working and hot desking. Ten factors impacting work-life balance are identified, from family responsibilities and self-management skills to organizational support.

Conclusion: Work life balance practices benefit everyone: the business, through easier recruitment, improved retention and easier service delivery; the economy, as the labour market grows and skilled and experienced people are available to work; and parents and carers, who can spend quality time at home as well as providing financial support through work. This study has helped in understanding the different work life balance practices followed in organizations and the importance of those practices. By implementing work-life balance programs, employees can still have a life outside work with their families and social activities, creating a balance that makes employees happier and more satisfied to do their work better.

Keywords: Work Life Balance; Flexible Working; Flextime; Job Sharing; Maternity Leave; Career Break; Employee Well-Being; Job Satisfaction; Organizational Support; Burnout.

1. Introduction

Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual life. It doesn't mean a 50-50 situation or a balance between

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work life and personal life. Work Life Balance has emerged as a hot topic in the recent years. WLB is a cycle not an achievement. It is a method which helps employees of an organization to balance their personal and professional lives. Work is part of life. Now a days in organizations work is characterized by uncertainty and long working hours. Employees are facing scarcity of time to take care of their personal lives. This paper offers the scope that employees assist their companies to rationalize the factors by using work life initiatives to gain a competitive advantage. By implementing work-life balance programs in the organization, employees will not spend their time doing their works only. However, they can still have a life outside the works with their families, and their social works, therefore it creates a balance that will make employees happier and more satisfied to do their work better.

2. Review of Literature

Marzec, 2023: A study was conducted on innovative WLB post-COVID-19, focusing on working parents in Poland. The research involved collecting primary data through a questionnaire distributed among 10,000 participants. The questionnaire comprised 37 mostly close-ended questions, utilizing a Likert scale. The aim was to understand how working parents manage their personal and professional lives. The study revealed that working parents link their job satisfaction with the ability to balance work and personal life, striving to harmonize different aspects of their lives. While opinions on the feasibility of separating work and family life may vary among working parents, there is a consensus in the expectation of WLB measures. The pandemic highlighted that satisfaction with family and professional life is crucial for alleviating conflicts between work and home, promoting personal development among employees, and ultimately benefiting the organization.

Hebbar, C. K. (2022) includes a number of different research studies in order to get a better understanding of the work-life balance experienced by people working in a variety of industries. The author has reviewed a variety of publications, research papers, and journals that include similar studies in order to get a deeper comprehension of the work-life balances of people who are employed in a variety of industries. Employees in a wide variety of fields struggle with maintaining a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. There are many aspects of workers' lives outside of work that interact with their work lives.

3. Work Life Balance Policies and Practices

Work life balance policies give a clear idea on the policy statements that has to be followed and implemented by the employees of the organization. It also states about the organizational commitment in providing a flexible and convenient work life balance which results in the employees to balance their work and family responsibilities supported by policy guidelines. There are various number of policies provided by each and every organization. Few of them are discussed below.

3.1 Policies with Reference to Leave Arrangement

1. **Career breaks:** A career break is a period of time off from employment, typically for personal or professional development, ranging from a few months to a couple of years. Career breaks can offer opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and a change of pace, potentially leading to a more fulfilling and successful career path.
2. **Career leaves:** A "career leave," also known as a sabbatical, is a temporary period of time off from work, either paid or unpaid, for personal or professional reasons, with the intention of returning to the same or a similar role later. Career breaks can range

from a few weeks to several years, depending on the individual's needs and circumstances.

3. **Study leave:** A type of leave granted to employees to pursue further education or training relevant to their job, allowing them to enhance skills and career prospects without sacrificing employment. It can benefit both the employee and the employer, as it can enhance the employee's skills, motivation, and career prospects, and improve the employer's productivity, reputation, and retention.
4. **Training leave:** Training leave is a mechanism that allows employees to take time off to pursue courses, attend workshops, or engage in other learning activities that can enhance their skills and knowledge. Training leave allows employees to take temporary leave from work for learning purposes, whether through statutory rights or collective agreements, helping them balance work and education.
5. **Pooling of leave entitlement:** It allows employees to pool all entitlements like sick leave, carer's leave etc., giving employees a larger number of days if they need it for family reasons.

3.2 Policies with Reference to Pregnancy and Parenting

1. **Paid maternity leave:** Paid maternity leave is a period of time off from work, during which a new or expectant mother is legally entitled to receive wages or salary, to care for her newborn or to recover from childbirth. Maternity Benefit Act mandates 26 weeks of paid maternity leave for the first two children, and 12 weeks for subsequent children, with eligibility requiring 80 days of service in the preceding 12 months.
2. **Unpaid maternity/paternity leave:** Taking maternity and paternity leave provides a range of physical, emotional and social benefits for both parents and the child. This

leave is sometimes in the form of unpaid. Though it is unpaid but still it is important for the well-being of the parents but also for fostering healthy family dynamics.

3. **Safety at work during pregnancy:** To ensure safety at work during pregnancy, employers must assess the risks, potentially through modified duties, alternative work options, while pregnant workers should communicate about their concerns and utilize available resources and accommodations.
4. **Opportunity to return to same job after maternity leave:** The ideal scenario for women after maternity leave is returning to the exact same role; if the company has undergone significant changes that make that impossible, you are entitled to a job with similar duties and responsibilities.
5. **Staggered return to work after pregnancy:** After delivery this policy allows employees to negotiate a temporary reduction in hours of work when they return to work. Women employees have all the rights to put a request to the management and can ask for reduced working hours.
6. **Lactation breaks:** Women after maternity leave need time off to breast feed babies if needed. Because of this reason many women employees take a long leave. When organization provides break off for women in need it leads to efficiency and effectiveness of employee.

3.3 Policies with Reference to Flexible Working

1. **Flextime:** Flexible working hours can significantly improve work-life balance by allowing employees to customize their work schedules, potentially leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced stress. If maintained employees can better manage personal and professional commitments, leading to a more balanced lifestyle.

2. **Job sharing:** Job sharing, a flexible work arrangement where two or more employees share the responsibilities of a full-time role, can significantly contribute to work-life balance by offering employees more flexibility and control over their schedules. Job sharing allows employees to work part-time, providing more time for personal commitments, family responsibilities, and other interests. Working fewer hours and having a shared workload can lead to less stress and a lower risk of burnout, contributing to improved well-being.
3. **Part time work:** Part-time work can significantly improve work-life balance by offering flexibility and allowing for more time for personal pursuits, while also potentially enabling individuals to earn more income through multiple part-time jobs. Part-time roles often allow for more freedom in scheduling, enabling individuals to balance work with family, personal interests, and other commitments.
4. **Shift work:** Shift work can significantly impact work-life balance, requiring strategies to manage the unique challenges of non-traditional hours and maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. Shift work, especially night shifts, can disrupt the natural sleep-wake cycle, leading to fatigue, reduced productivity, and potential health issues. Shift work can make it challenging to balance work responsibilities with family obligations, childcare, and household tasks.
5. **Compressed hours:** Compressed working hours, where employees work the same weekly hours over fewer days (e.g., four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days), can improve work-life balance by offering extended weekends or other flexibility, but also require longer workdays, which may not suit everyone. Employees can better manage their personal and professional lives by having more free time during the week or on extended weekends.

6. **Mobile Working:** Mobile working offers women employees greater flexibility, potentially improving work-life balance by allowing them to manage caring responsibilities and reduce commute times, but it also presents challenges like blurred work boundaries and increased pressure to be constantly available.
7. **Hot desking:** Hot desking, where employees don't have fixed desks and choose available workspaces, can impact women's work-life balance positively or negatively, depending on how it's implemented and managed, potentially leading to both increased flexibility and potential challenges. Hot desking can encourage interaction and collaboration among employees from different departments or teams, potentially leading to a more dynamic and engaging work environment.

4. Factors Impacting Work Life Balance

1. **Family responsibilities:** Family commitments often require significant time dedicated to childcare, eldercare, household chores, and family activities, leaving less time for work or personal pursuits. Family responsibilities can significantly impact work-life balance, requiring individuals to juggle work demands with childcare, eldercare, household tasks, and family time, potentially leading to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction.
2. **Self management skills:** Self management skills like poor management, stress management etc., can lead to very poor work life balance. In organizations many of the employees lack these skills which lead to improper work.
3. **Personal commitments:** Personal commitments, encompassing family, relationships, hobbies, and personal goals, significantly impact work-life balance, potentially leading to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction if not managed effectively.

4. **Emotional Well-being:** Personal challenges, such as divorce, family issues, or health problems, can significantly impact emotional well-being, affecting one's ability to focus and perform at work.
5. **Personal Goals and Hobbies:** Individuals with strong personal goals or hobbies may find it difficult to dedicate sufficient time to work, potentially leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction.
6. **Boundaries:** Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Blurring these boundaries can lead to feeling constantly "on call" and unable to disconnect from work.
7. **Stress and Burnout:** An inability to balance work and personal commitments can lead to increased stress and burnout, impacting both work performance and personal well-being.
8. **Job Satisfaction:** A healthy work-life balance is often associated with higher job satisfaction and employee commitment.
9. **Health:** Physical and mental health issues can impact both work performance and personal life.
10. **Organizational Support:** Organizations that prioritize work-life balance and offer flexible work arrangements can help employees better manage their personal commitments and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be seen that work life balance practices benefits everyone, i.e. the business, through easier recruitment, improved retention and easier service delivery, the economy as the labour market grows skilled and experienced people are available to work, parents and carers that can spend quality time at home, as well as providing

financial support through work. This study basically made us to understand the different work life balance practices followed in the organization also helped us to understand the importance of the different practices followed in the organization.

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