Importance of Work Life Balance: A Review

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Abstract: The research paper is a review on studies in the field of Work-Life Balance. In the modern era of 21st century, Work-life Balance is an issue of prime importance in today's working scenario for professionals who struggle to prioritize their personal and professional lives. This change in the overall work environment has impacted organizations in turn and how they manage their daily operations. Employee's expectations and behaviour towards work and home responsibilities have also changed. These changes have forced the organizations to launching of better working conditions and other benefits and policies for employees to manage a healthy work-life balance.
The achievement of healthy work-life balance is not a one-day activity; instead it is an on-going process which can be achieved by mutual efforts of both organization and employees. It is a battle of mutual compromise where there is a win-win situation.

Keywords: Work Life Balance

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, the parameters of performance, expectations from self and those at a workplace has been redefined. At one end this has made individuals more competitive, and focused; at another the level of workplace stress has increased exponentially. Emergence of women in higher hierarchy within the workplace, workplace diversity, and interpersonal workplace conflicts are becoming the reality of any modern workspace (Cho, 2018);(Zheng, 2015).Technological advancements, global competition and increased consumerism has increased pressure on the organizations, as well as on individual employees. In these changing times, employees are expected to be more flexible, available and ready to balance the skill shortage prospects of the aging workforce (Pansiora, 2013).

Whilst the external environment impacts the employee productivity, they are also placed with the burden of appeasing the management, maintaining professional relationships, and proving themselves as a team player (Cho, 2018). Amidst such workplace challenges, employees realize that their personal life is compromised, which impacts their overall performance. The changing family dynamics and a zeal to have a better quality of life, more and more employees are focusing towards achieving a sense of balance between their work and personal life (Rehman, 2012) Workplace settings are changing today, whilst this increases competitions, employees also have an advantage of choosing their working realm. The advancement of technology has allowed an individual to work from anywhere in the world. Increased focus towards leading a better quality of life has led many individuals to choose more flexible organizations. As a result, organizations are now more pressured to realize the relevance of work-life balance within their environment, or risk losing out on competition(Michel, 2018). In the spirit of sustainability, and increased attrition rate; the companies are now forced to acknowledge the level of satisfaction of their employees. More and more organizations are maximizing employee productivity through innovation. As per (Mohanty, 2017), Many organizations recognize the relevance of creating a stress free and flexible workplace environment for employees, where they remain motivated. Since, the concept of work-life balance focuses on balancing the needs of the employer, and employee. This part will focus on further understanding the relevance, background, critical realism and the best practices for adopting work-life-balancepolicies within organizations.

II. BACKGROUND: WORK LIFE BALANCE

With reference to Work Life Balance(Pasamer, 2013) noted that an organization has to evolve their business practices based on the economic and business environment. During the financial crisis, companies focused on improving their outputs, and the needs of the employees was not a big concern. However, amidst the changing environments, workplace diversity and international workplace practices, the work environment expectations are once again evolving. Even as a lot of companies struggle to find the right balance between keeping employees satisfied, and maintaining a competitive edge. It cannot be

denied that a higher women workforce, aging population, employees with dual jobs, or single parents amongst others, have different needs and conceptions of work-life balance. In an attempt to understand work-life balance and its relevance in any organization, it is important to first understand the concept. As per, (Greenhaus, 1985), human beings work best in a state of harmony. If their personal life is turbulent, its impact will be evident in their work, and vice-a-versa. Challenges such as role-pressure incompatibility, time variants or higher expectations in either domains, can impact the productivity of an individual (Greenhaus, 1985). (McMIllan, 2007), notes that even as balance remains the key to any work-life policy, the triad of satisfaction, high performance and involvement remains a critical challenge for the organizations in effectively enabling work-life balance policies. As a result, the study of work-life balance entails examining employee' ability to manage their demands, and then simultaneously defining employment policies, whilst increasing output for the management. For a long time, human beings have tried to focus on only one aspect of their lives. However, the turn of the century has brought forth a new respect for life in human beings. Today' individual are more resourceful, committed, and eager to have it all in life. As a result, more and more employees are striving to balance both personal and professional aspects of their lives. While it is common to focus on work and personal life balance while studying, work-life balance. It should be noted that the focus of these policies is employee satisfaction and happiness. Thus, it is important to discuss the management of healthy workplace dynamics within a workplace.

III.   RELEVANCE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

While at homefront, happiness and personal harmony are sought by an individual. A sense of appreciation, social contact, dependency and reliability are amongst the few expectations of an employee from their team members. The absence of the same, can impact the stress level of an individual, which in turn can impact their work-life balance (Cegarra-Leiva D, 2012). In their study, (Greenhaus, 1985), argues a need to enable minimum conflict between varied roles of an individual to achieve work-life-balance. As per (Ong, 2014), an individual who has a sense of harmony in their work and personal lives are more likely to be creative, innovative and resourceful. As a result, they become excellent negotiators, critical thinkers and problem solvers. In a competitive environment, such traits are sought after in a workplace. Since, motivation has an important role in the employee attrition rate, the comprehensive satisfaction of an employee has to be discussed while enabling work-life balance in a workplace as well. Studies note that overworked, stressed and unhappy employees are the main problem in the organization. Employees expect their employers to note that whilst work is important, it is a means to an end for their other responsibilities. It shouldn't be concluded that the need for competitive advantages, growth and appreciation is subjugated in such employees. Yet, innovative and employee centric work policies create a sense of balance for the organizations, which in turn improves their performance. As per, (Zheng, 2015), varied work life balance policies such as job sharing, remote working, flexible hours amongst others have increased job satisfaction, and employee morale. Such practices have also been associated with increased organizational pride, higher employee turnover, better return of investment on employee training and development(Marta Mas-Machuca, 2016). As per a study by(Taşdelen Karçkay, 2017), increased professionalism, reduced absenteeism, and higher productivity has been associated with improved work-life balance policies within the workplace. (Grant, 2013),Even as companies offer remote working opportunities and flexible work schedules, this does not mean that work-life balance is achieved for such employees. Instead, a lot of remote workers complain about blurred boundaries between work and personal life in such scenarios. Whilst, companies struggle with enabling job effectiveness, employees have issues with autonomy, and enabling a balancing act (Christine et al. 2013). Amidst higher expectations to be professional, whilst still managing personal responsibilities, many employees face stress, which often reflects in their performance. As per (Grant, 2013), Individual competencies of an employee often play an important role in their performance as a remote worker. However, this raises concerns for organizations in enabling a generalized work-life balance policy such as flexible hours. (Grant, 2013)Further notes that,work -life balance does not necessarily entail a reduction of working hours for an individual. An individual, who works less, will not be able to attain a good salary, which will impact their personal life(Pasamer, 2013). However, the employees who worked too much have also been associated with poor social, mental and emotional health. Thus, there is a need to enable employees' autonomy, higher satisfaction, happiness, and a flexibility to maintain varied aspects of their lives (Rehman, 2012).(Grant, 2013)In their study further notes that many remote workers face challenges in productivity, consistency, social association and performance check. However, many employees especially those with families, or other personal needs are known to have a better sense of time, and balance owing to remote or alternate working practices (Rehman, 2012). Simultaneously, flexible working hours have

been known to provide better job handling and satisfaction in employees. Meanwhile, a lot of employees are contending with sick leaves, maternity or paternity leaves, travel-to-work, lunch breaks, and vacation time in terms of work-life-balance (Wheatley, 2012)). In their study, (Abubaker, 2016) notes that there is no singular way to achieve work-life-balance. Often organizations adopt financial incentives, better family benefits packages and higher growth opportunities in an attempt to reduce their attrition rate. Irrespective of the model adopted for work-life-balance the focus is to enable a happier, satisfied and motivated workforce that improves organizational performance.

IV.   CRITICAL REALISM OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Through the course of this review, it has been identified that employees irrespective of their demographics and organizational policies face work life imbalance at some or other point. It can be attributed to the varying challenges and increasing demands in their professional or personal lives, or both(Zheng, 2015). This brings forth a unique challenge for the organizations, in terms of enabling a work-life framework, which is ever evolving. Often the lack of support or predictability in the personal life can impact the professional performance of an employee. In such a scenario, an employee who was earlier able to achieve work life balance through remote working, or travel working amidst others, might face issues to maintain such commitment. In situations like these, the organizations are forced to evolve the options of work life balance for the said employees, which often requires resources, time and intricate management. While, it might be argued that the human resource management is supposed to manage such situations, yet it cannot be denied that the lack of consistency in the personal or professional lives of employees, often restricts an organization to enable a defined parameter for work-life balance. Conflicts between employees, strained office relationships and high levels of competition has also been associated with poor work life balance for employees. Many times, strained communication from the office can impact the personal productivity of an individual. This in turn, can create a sense of disharmony and stress in the household, which further impacts professional efficiency (Abubaker, 2016). Whether an individual is impacted by a professional or personal problem, it is reflected on their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Irrespective of demographics and emotional constituency, any individual exposed to an undetermined period of stress, remains at a risk of burnout. Often, such employees have low level of motivation, low morale, reduced productivity, poor job satisfaction, less sense of worth, have higher absenteeism and are more likely to be sick (Abubaker, 2016); (McMIllan, 2007); (Pasamer, 2013); (Taşdelen Karçkay, 2017); (Zheng, 2015) Consequences for women can further be evident in the form of severe professional stagnations, prejudice in the name of "conditioning", and often stunted worklife (Taşdelen Karçkay, 2017). In their personal lives as well, employees with high work stress face challenges with their marriages, or other committed relationships, child care, elderly care, compromised personal value system, substance abuse by spouse or self, adultery, abuse, burnout, other physical or emotional manifestations (Wheatley, 2012). Work-life imbalance often leads for an individual to make changes in their life, which invariably results in the leaving of the organization, or seeking a professional alternate pathway. This turnover rate, implicates a high resource and time waste for companies.. A loss of a talented employee can often result in the poor competitive output of any organization, thus despite the lack of defined pathway for work-life policies, it remains an important agenda for any effective human resource management. In this context, (Wheatley, 2012), argues a need for structured, individualistic and realistic work-life balance policies. Often organizations strive to enable a change in the workplace setting, such that the employees gain a sense of motivation and pride in being associated with the organization. As per, (Wilkinson K, 2017), the relevance of working with an employee centric company is noted even in the employees that do not have an intricate personal life. A sense of self, knowledge of being taken care of, and mutual respect is often noted as some common denominator for these employees. Work life balance has been associated with healthier lives of an individual, yet not all managers view this as an ultimate goal for their organization (Ong, 2014). In their study, (Purohit, 2013) noted that many organizations continue to note work life balance as an individual concern. (Greenhaus, 1985), further notes that organizations recognize such policies require massive culture shifts, which is not only hard to enable, but also time and resource consuming. Such endeavour requires a massive undertaking in the terms of assessment of individual employee needs, employee and manager training, planning to ensure that the work is not suffered and delegating responsibilities amongst others. As a result, for many organizations the ultimate question becomes whether the gains are worth it, in enabling work life policies (Purohit, 2013). Arguments can be further made that while work life balance policies create better work environments, it might not ensure desired monetary results for the organization. Thus, the policy making needs to be considered from both aspects, as the goal is mutually benefiting outcomes. Implementing work-life

balance Work life balance though an increasing necessity, is also a challenge for the organizations. As a result, many organizations have a range of policy choices to accommodate work life issues. As per (Purohit, 2013), more and more organizations are enabling a situational and engagement based framework, where the direct impact of work life policy on the organizational improvement is assessed. In many international organizations, code of conduct is enabled in the workplace, and a sense of respect for the women workforce is evident (Straub, 2007). In addition, many international organizations have enabled practices such as higher compensation for women during maternity leave, all in the attempt to improve their personal life. However, such practices have no evidence of improving work life balance. (Mohanty, 2017)Argued that there is a need to enable a culture of openness, authenticity, trust and collaboration within the workplace to reduce internal negative dynamics. It can be determined that improved professional appreciation, higher feedback exchange and improved interactions between employees and management can improve the trust and satisfaction for employees (Matilla-Santander, 2019); (Mohanty, 2017). Work life balance is not only about being considerate towards the needs of the employees. Rather it is about understanding the impacts of these actions on the team, assessment of its impact on the organization, and reflecting upon the long term impact of the actions (Jensenab, 2017). An effective work life balance can improve the working efficiency, happiness and commitment level of the employees. This in turn can make the tasks of the manager easy, and more goal retentive. It is for this reason, there are no set rules with these policies. Some of the characteristics of effective work life balance management includes: flexible time, maternity/parental leave, sick leave, vacation time, and flexible work environment (Jensenab, 2017); (Matilla-Santander, 2019); (Michel, 2018). Studies have shown that employees with work-life flexibility demonstrate stronger organizational commitments (Marta Mas-Machuca, 2016). Since, no organization or employee is the same, the interim to promote work life balance practices should be positive outcomes for both employees and employers (Purohit, 2013). As per, (Cho, 2018), there is a need to create a tailored environment for the needs of the varied employees. (Pansiora, 2013), it is important to become aware of the issues faced by employees, and then seek a mutually beneficial solution. (Zheng, 2015) mirrors this perspective, as they recount that employee centric policies, which assist them in striking a professional and personal balance, are needed in today' business environment.

V. Conclusion

Through this review, it is noted that most companies realise the relevance of work life balance within their framework. Obvious impacts such as increased employee commitment, satisfaction and creativity as well as their problem-solving skills has been well established through inclusion of these policies. Simultaneously increased individual happiness, has been associated with reduced stress level, and improved physical and mental wellbeing. Despite this, it cannot be denied that enabling work life balance within the workplace is challenging, particularly owing to the varying needs of the employees and the organization. Amidst these challenges, it is reflected that there is a need to understand the needs of the employees, create a framework of openness, trust, autonomy and interaction within the workplace. An employee centric open organization is more likely to integrate flexible solutions for the employees, which in turn can increase an individual's reliability and trust in the organization.

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