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A STUDY ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

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INTRODUCTION

The term "Work- life Balance (WLB)" was coined in 1986, although its usage in everyday language was being made for a number of years. Interestingly, work/life programs existed as early as the 1930s. The policies and procedures established by an organization with the goal to enable employees to efficiently do their jobs and at the same time provide flexibility to handle personal concerns or problems at their family front in fact; dual-wage-earning families in general are working longer hours. A balance work and life are supposed to exist when there is a proper functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict. Therefore, the incompatibility between the demands from the work and non-work domain give rise to conflict and consequently, people experience a lack of Work- life balance. There is confirmation of the fact that people entering the workforce today are laying emphasis on the importance of Work- life balance more than their predecessors. In spite of this, the extent to which this balance is being achieved is far less than what is desired. In fact, researches bring to mind that graduates are being drawn into situations where they have to work for progressively longer hours and so experience an increasingly unsatisfactory balance between home life and work-life.

Work and family life have been an integral part of a woman's life. These two together forms an integrated whole and therefore attracts a lot of attention. The need to study the inter- linkages becomes all the more important with the increasing number of women entering the formal labor market. Today, work is likely to invade our personal life and maintaining work-life balance is not so simple task. A decade back, employees used to have fixed working hours or rather a 9 to 5 job from Monday to Friday. The boundary between the work and home has disappeared with time. The advent of globalization makes people work across countries as a result, concept of fixed working hours is fading away. Instead of just 7 or 8hours a day, people are spending as much as 12-16 hours every day in office. The technological blessings like e-mail, text messaging and cell phones which were thought of as tools to connect them to their work being away from their workplace, have actually integrated their personal and professional lives. Therefore, tension and work-related pressure, responsibilities at family makes an individual difficult to find balance between work and personal life. Professional working in BPO industries, top executives, doctors, nurses, bank employees, and IT professionals are the few examples who are facing the brunt of hazards constantly. Today, industries have realized the importance of the work life balance of their employees. Organizations are setting up policies for maintaining a work life balance. They are going in for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes office a better place to work and also positively impact productivity.

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Work-Life Balance is not a new concept. The change in the pattern of work and the concept of the workplace after the industrial revolution in the second half of the 18th century gave a new dimension to the concept of Work Life Balance. As time progressed, nuclear families increased. A later change was the fading away of the "ideal home" in which the earning member's spouse took care of the home. With improved education and employment opportunities today, most homes are ones in which both parents work because of necessity and the desire to augment incomes. The need to create congenial conditions in which employees can balance work with their personal needs and desires became a factor that companies had to take note of both to retain them as well as to improve productivity. It was a compulsion that they could not afford to ignore. Having realized that, companies started introducing schemes to attract and retain employees and improve their productivity. Work-life balance is the extent to which individuals are equally involved in and equally satisfied with their role and their family role.

Work-Family Expansion refers to the notion that simultaneously engaging in multiple work and family roles is beneficial for the physical and mental relationship health of individuals. The quality of the roles, rather than the number of roles occupied or the amount of time spent in a particular role; determine the degree to which individuals experience the positive effects of participating in multiple roles.

Work-Life and Family Relationships

The relationship between work and family roles through a variety of linking mechanisms like Work-family conflict or interference, Work – family accommodation, Work-life compensation, Work- family segmentation, Work-family enrichment. Edwards & Rothbard (2000).

Importance of Work life Balance

Work and family life share a direct relationship with each other. The study related the various aspects which is necessary to understand how one affects the other:

Work life can either enhance or detract from our family life. Our family life can have positive or negative influences on our work attitudes, behaviors and outcomes. For example, extensive and inflexible work hours, over-involvement in work and job stress may produce distress within the family domain, withdrawal from family responsibilities and adversely affect one's overall quality of life. Similarly, extensive care-giving responsibilities and intensive involvement with family activities can limit an individual's career choices and aspirations and negatively affect their work involvement, job satisfaction and intention to continue their employment. In contrast, there are various resources derived from one's work role such as income, job autonomy and social support from co-workers and/or supervisors that can positively influence one's experiences and well-being in the Human professionals, training and development personnel and other decision-makers can use these insights to design policies and programmes aimed at promoting a higher quality of life for employees.

Benefits of Work Life Balance to Individuals

The benefits of work life balance to individuals are Clear and optimistic approach, more clarity in Performance, Completion of work within the scheduled time, Lower level of Intra individual conflicts and Inter individual conflicts between work and family roles, Stress free and good quality of work life, Good in self management , Healthy family environment, Improved quality of work life, High morale, More work satisfaction, More satisfaction in personal life, Good Health(both Physical and Mental health).

Benefits of Work Life Balance to Organization

The benefits of work life balance to organisation that increase the productivity, reduction in the staff turnover rates, less reduction in knowledge workers, reduction in the costs associated with recruitment, training and turnover, increase in the rate of return on investment in training, because the employees are remain stable in the company, reduction in the absenteeism rate, good health and safety work environment, Greater employee loyalty, More commitment towards the job, reduction in the rate of sick leave, Good and improved corporate image and it leads to more sales, increase in stock price.

At the national, state/provincial and municipal levels of governments, numerous steps have been taken to implement the aforementioned ILO conventions and recommendations with varying degrees of commitment. Multinational corporations are usually considered to be the transmission belts of modern human resource policies. Several of them have adopted equal opportunity guidelines and implemented programs pertaining to child care/family services to enable women to return to their career after child birth/care. This legal framework and improved institutional support has facilitated a greater level of participation of women in the workforce and their quest to break the glass ceiling. As a result, more and more employers have started taking cues from the ILO Recommendation on workers with family responsibilities, thereby putting into place a variety of facilitation measures in the more progressive organizations.

RESEARCH GAP

A vast amount of research has been focused on the general topic of work life balance including work life conflicts and work life balance practices; however, very limited research has been directed towards the personal environment and work environment of an employee. The focus of this study is also to find out their expectations and satisfaction in both environments.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

For the past 15 years the contribution software industry in Indian economy is never ignorant in overall performance of Indian software export. The performance of the software industry depends only on the efficient employees,

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especially the knowledge of women software employees' women play a very vital part for the development of Indian software industry in global market. In the present scenario, most of the software employees are under the categories of women, the recent survey insist about quality of work life balance of women employees in software industry is steadily shows the decreasing trend from 85% to 52% in the last ten years and more over 80% of women employees in software industry have more health issues and they are also not in the position to balance their family as well as high pressure working environment even though the women employees contribution is constantly supporting for the development of software industry. Hence, the aim of the study is an attempt to analyze the work life balance of women software employees.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the influence of working environment towards work life balance.
2. To analyse the influence of personal environment towards work life balance.
3. To identify women employee's perception and satisfaction of work life balance.
4. To analyse the women employee's expectation of managing regular work life balance.

Hypothesis of the study

On the basis of the objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses were developed for the purpose of the present study:

- $H0_1$: There is no significant impact of microfinance services on the life of beneficiaries of SHG after getting micro finance.
- $H1_1$: There is a significant impact of micro finance services on the life of beneficiaries of SHG after getting micro finance.
- $H0_2$: There is no significant impact of microfinance on economic and social empowerment of women.
- $H1_2$: There is a significant impact of microfinance on economic and social empowerment of women.

Scope of the Study

The concept of work – life balance is gaining importance across IT organizations. This study aims at helping IT organizations build more effective policies with respect to of work – life balance, it also helps the organizations introduce new work – life balance programs and encourages sharing of best practices across IT organizations. Studies reviewed have revealed that as a consequence of work life balance among women employees in IT companies in Chennai may lead to frustration in the job, burnout, and dissatisfaction in the work and may give rise to health problems to the individuals. It may also have a negative impact on the family with lack of care to children and dependents, conflict with the spouse and dissatisfaction with life.

The present study is a serious attempt to understand and explore in the Indian IT context behavioral variations and their implications that these variables have on employees. The insight will contribute towards the basic understanding in IT organizations, and behavioral sciences with special reference to work life balance women employees in IT organizations. It is also an earnest attempt to bridge the gap especially in this area by highlighting the relevance and importance of work – life balance of individual and organizations and hoping this study will initiate a series of serious and productive discussion on the subject.

The influence of demographics on the work life balance of women employees in software companies in Chennai should be studied. The investigator has identified the work life balance among women employees in IT industry in Chennai owing to the extended hours of work and the pressure on the work to complete the projects in time. The long distance of travel to the offices which are located on the outskirts of the city also results in the work life conflict of women employees. The study of the work life balance of women employees will help the organization and the individual to pay attention to the needs and problems of women employees on whom the society at large depends for the future growth of the nation. The findings and outcome of this research will be beneficial to the IT organizations in India, which is a flourishing industry and contributes significantly to the GDP of the country and the talent pool of the world. The study will bring in sharp focus the major challenges encountered in these areas and the solutions that will aid IT organizations to deal more significantly in increasingly their effectiveness.

Findings of the study

If left unaddressed, work family and family work conflicts could adversely affect employee health (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). Family issues, including the increased incidence of divorce, are common where work-family conflicts escalate. Work Family Conflict can also have disastrous consequences on the organisation, both financial and non-financial-wise. Based on a study of 732 manufacturing firms in US, France, Germany and the UK, Bloom

and Van Reenen (2006) found that firms with better Work Life Balance practices enjoyed significantly higher productivity.

As far as the non- financial aspects of organizational performance are concerned, research has shown that firms that adopt more enlightened Work Life Balance policies can improve the level of job satisfaction and increase organisational commitment among their employees. For example, a survey of 1311 senior executives worldwide conducted in May 2006 (Pratt, 2006) revealed that: 24% of those surveyed would refuse a promotion that would jeopardize WLB,56% indicated that they would "seriously consider refusing a promotion" that would jeopardize WLB; and 87% affirmed that WLB is pivotal to their decision to join and/or remain in an organisation.

Thus, WLB is no longer a personal issue but a strategic business concern. In other words, there is a business and economic imperative to enable and facilitate employees to attain greater WLB as it can affect a company's bottom-line. As such, governments, employers, individuals and society, as a whole, have to address and undertake concerted measures to reduce WFC and advance WFF/FWF to deal with family work conflict.

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