



A STUDY ON EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCE ON LEAVE POLICY/ARRANGEMENT ASPECTS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE MEASURES AMONG IT WORKFORCE AT BANGALORE

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Abstract

The informational era which began approximately 1980s created undeniable changes in every business domains and brought limitless effects over work spheres all over the world. Simultaneously the interface between work & life been very much narrowed down over the decades. Even though Work Life Balance (WLB) measures relatively well realized and incorporated into the practices of corporate in western countries, developing nations are on long way to realize strategic roles of governing bodies about prudential benefits of WLB measures towards implementation. By considering growth and change in paradigm of MNCs governance and work climate in Indian terrain gave the scope and interest for taking up of this research work. To be frank, among Indian MNCs, at present WLB measures are voluntarily practiced based upon their suitability/prudential and match without legitimate/ compliance role by government. So more such studies would ideally accelerate the momentum of early adaptation of WLB measures and may blossom WLB measure as legitimate/ compliance mandate in near future.

This study revealed workforce perception and preference over WLB among operational level workers of IT industry in Bangalore. The sample size of 75, i.e., N=75, has been collected with data through survey/ questionnaire method proves significant with the results and support the hypothesis H_1 – there is a perceived preference for WLB measures among workforce. WLB measures proved to be a vital enhancer framework /concept which ensure Work – Life Balance restoration among work force. Ideal and congenial platforms like WLB measures may give high confidence, ideal lifestyle and high morale, workforce may perform more congruently in near future and as well as demanding situations of corporate companies.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Workforce Perception & Workforce Preference.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are arrays of definitions for 'Work – Life balance', but still they are not convincing enough for various clarifications bases upon occupational/professional aspects and to the emerging requirements. In determining the words like 'work', 'life' and 'balance' alone a challenging task defining with context of workforce and clubbing all into one naturally multiplies the burden of complexities. Clark (2000) defines balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict". As such, it is sometimes characterized by 'the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands' (Greenblatt, 2002: 179).¹

There is fair attempt by the government of New Zealand; Department of Labor (2004) defines work–life balance in terms of creating a productive work culture where the potential for tensions between work and other parts of people's lives is minimized. Qualitative research suggests that New Zealand employees see work–life balance in terms of achieving integration between paid work, unpaid work and personal time (New Zealand Department of Labor 2003b).²

Kirchmeyer (2000) views living a balanced life as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so require personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains". Work-life balance has become a subject of concern for both research scholars and business leaders in view of the contemporary demographic, technological, market, and organizational changes associated with it. Considering wide range of horizon of various industrial perspectives, it would be hilly task to come with a concrete recommendation for all issues at large and overall. However, there has been little academic attempt to provide a holistic picture of work-life balance benefits and programmes (WLBPs) offered by various organizations in India. Work–life balance is the proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. In order to find the remedy, addressing both the concepts of work life balance and work life balance practices becomes need of the hour.³

Now especially corporate companies those who exert naturally on 'dying for targets' should tailor its work/life policies to suit their own business needs and corporate culture. This 'best fit' must emerge as bi party outcome between employer and workforce. As with other health and safety programs, for work/life initiatives to be successful and sustainable, both employers and employees must take responsibility for making the program work effectively. It is very important to remember

that for many workers balancing work/life demands are just one of the many challenges they face on a regular basis as there is no single recipe for all. Therefore a good work/life balance seeks to find a balance between an individual's work and their life outside work. This balance should aim at three levels, personal, professional & social domains which also includes achievement inside work and personal enjoyment outside work. Keeping the present scenario of the fast growing, work minded, career oriented and highly competitive environment leads invariably to prove the need for framework for WLB measures.⁴

An ideal WLB programmed truly empowers beneficiaries, employer & employee; for long term and sustainable achievements regardless of rollercoaster nature of competitive business environment. Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.⁵

Nancy Lockwood (2012), in her study, revealed three macro factors, 'global competition, personal lives/family values, and an aging workforce' present challenges that exacerbate work/life balance. Considering the situational needs, human resource professionals can assist their companies to capitalize on these factors by using work/life initiatives to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Work/life programs have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times.⁶

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While understanding the spheres of WLB concepts various subject matters to be considered between 'work & life'. According to Greenhaus et al (2003), the recent explosion of interest in the work-family interface has produced a number of concepts to explain the relation between these two dominant spheres of life: accommodation, compensation, resource drain, segmentation, spillover, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, and work-family integration. Nevertheless, the definitions of balance are not entirely consistent with one another, the measurement of balance is problematic, and the impact of work-family balance on individual well-being has not been firmly established. Positive balance suggests an equally high level of attention, time, involvement, or commitment, whereas negative balance refers to an equally low level of attention, time, involvement, or commitment.

Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, in their study, gave broad enough framework to include positive balance and negative balance of work - life. Role engagement can be further divided into elements of time and psychological involvement; they have proposed three components of work-family balance:

- Time balance: an equal amount of time devoted to work and family roles.
- Involvement balance: an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles.
- Satisfaction balance: an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles.

Each component of work-family balance can represent positive balance or negative balance depending on whether the levels of time, involvement, or satisfaction are equally high or equally low.⁷

Whenever professional and personal lives enrich each other where there is complete harmony in which ultimately work life balance is achieved. But these statements hardly survive as each live try to engulf the other life domain in most gruesome reality. Manisha Purohit(2013), in her study, work-life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "workaholics" (career and ambition) on the one hand and "lifestyle" (Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. It is the term used to describe practices in achieving a balance between the demands of employees family (life) and work lives. The increasing prevalence of work life conflicts and increasing concern about work life issues in the corporate arena present both a challenge and opportunity for Human Resource (HR) Professionals. Work-life balance initiatives designed to help employees balance their work and personal lives are not only an option, but also a necessity for many employers today.⁸

The relationship of job satisfaction and WLB has been well discussed by Jane & James (2014) in their study. Organizations are social systems where human resources are the most important factors for effectiveness and efficiency and need effective managers and employees to achieve their objectives. Organizations cannot succeed without their personnel efforts and commitment. Job satisfaction is critical to retaining and attracting well qualified personnel. Exceptional organizations have leaders that create work environments where people can achieve work life balance and wellbeing as they define it for themselves Spinks (2004). A satisfied work force is essential for the success of organizations and their businesses. Dissatisfied employees make organizations dysfunctional, damaging their financial performance. Job satisfaction and work

life balance are more likely to drive employees to remain with their current employers than benefits and salary, according to a recent poll by the Washington based American Psychological Association.⁹

Collette Fagan & Mark Smith (2011) clearly emphasize the seriousness and significance of numerous leave arrangements, policies, measures and recommendations in their report towards International Labour Organizations (ILO). In their report, job sharing, flexi time, part time, parental leaves, carer's leave, home working, domestic computing and much more are discussed in detail which precisely points out the pivotal importance as recommendation in International Labour Organization.¹⁰

III. RESEARCH METHODS & MATERIALS

a. Objectives

1. To find out perception over leave policy/arrangement aspects of Work Life Balance measures by operational level IT workforce.
2. To find out preference levels over leave policy aspects of Work Life Balance measures by operational level IT workforce.
3. To make possible suggestions/ recommendations on leave policy aspects of WLB measures, if, there is an inadequate policy implementations.

b. Hypothesis

H₁: There is significant existence of low awareness/ perception and high preference on leave policy aspects of WLB measures.

H₀: There is no significant existence of low awareness/ perception and high preference on leave policy aspects of WLB measures .

c. Research Design

Nature: Descriptive Research.

d. Sampling: Convenient Sampling method has been chosen through e-mail survey by obtaining written consent from concerned HR authorities.

e. Data Collection Method: Primary data collection methods are chosen. 83 subjects are taken through survey/questionnaire method. 8 samples are dropped due to invalid / inappropriate completion of questionnaire. So, sample size N=75. The geographical research area has been restricted to ORRCA IT Park zone of Bangalore.

f. Tool Used: 'Better Work Life Balance Survey by University of Queensland and Dept of Industrial Relations', an internationally standardized questionnaire.¹¹ Survey has been restricted leave policy alone with combination of an ordinal scale (yes, no & don't know) and nominal scale, i.e., Likert's five point scale has been used from very unimportant to very important.

IV. Results and Discussion

HR managers of various corporate IT companies in ORRCA IT Park, Bangalore are contacted through e-mail and taken consent from them as formal procedure for proceeding towards research work. WLB measures in concurrent practices are taken into the consideration. Better Work Life Balance questionnaire of University of Queensland and Dept. of Industrial Relations has been administered. The results obtained are given below.

List of Leave Arrangements Existing

| Mean Values | |
|-------------|--------|
| Don't Know | 19.574 |
| No | 35.4 |
| Yes | 20.028 |

The above given table and bar chart reveal the relationship of awareness/ existing leave arrangement practices of Work Life Balance measures in their organizations. Considering Don't Know – Category with the mean value of 19. 574 and No – Category with the mean value of 35.4 becomes the predominant scores collectively which leads to the understanding no awareness / no existence of such policies in their organization. Yes – Category with the mean value of 20.02 becomes the scarce score shows the existence of leave policy oriented WLB measures are practiced with less popularly.

Preferences on Leave Arrangements of WLB Measures

| | Mean Value |
|------------------|------------|
| Very Important | 17.657 |
| Important | 29.314 |
| Don't Know | 12.085 |
| Unimportant | 7.657 |
| Very Unimportant | 7.828 |

The above given bar chart and table gives the insights of workforce perceived preference is more towards 'important and very important' consideration whether these policies are existing or non-existing (in that case, it would be of future preference) in their organizations. Mean values scores of 'important and very important' collectively exceeds 46.96 which is more than two third average of survey population. Unimportant domain scores possibly the lack of realization or may be lack of optimism of such realities.

V. SUGGESTIONS

Based upon the results, it has been proved that leave policy/ arrangements of WLB measures are having significant role among the workforce.

- In case, nonexistence, it would be ideal to launch such measures in organizations may boost employees overall contribution and performance.
- Work force preferences are clearly highlighted based upon the results and would be natural recommendations for the concerned HR managers.

VI. CONCLUSION

Bangalore being the IT capital of India and by witnessing the long work hours & exhaustive nature of work schedules among corporate workforce, this study has been executed to reveal workforce perception and preference WLB measures in pertain to leave arrangements and policies. It would be ideal to do intensive study/consultations towards launching leave policy and arrangement related WLB measure as a mandate framework in near future.

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