

Work life Balance & Employee Engagement- Concepts revisited

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Abstract:

The main goal of this paper is to understand the relationship between work life balance & Employee Engagement. Further this paper highlights contextual factors affecting Employee Engagement and Work Life Balance.

This paper is built on relevant literature and recent studies on Work Life Balance & Employee Engagement.

Also, the results of the study show inverse relationship between pleasure & work. Further, it examines the effect of change in work interference on personal life on Employee Engagement. It also aims to derive an ideal situation of equilibrium between pleasure & work termed as Work life Balance (WLB).

Keywords: *Work life balance, Employee Engagement, Work interference on personal life.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been a growing interest in the Fields of Work life balance & Employee Engagement triggered mainly due to prominent changes in the socio-economic setup over the period of time.

The social set up is also changing from the joint family setup to nuclear family, which demands equal attention to the family obligations & work. In order to handle the work pressure & family pressure equilibrium is required & the same can be made available by efforts from both employer & employee.

In view of expansion in the opportunities for the talent work force it is required by the employers to go that extra mile for taking various initiatives enabling minimal work-family conflict in the lives of employees.

Both the concepts work life balance & employee engagement have almost been for 1 ½ decade now & results from various research have proved beyond reasonable doubt that Work life balance factors are being considered by employees while deciding to work for a particular company.

Now we have awards for the best employer category in various Industry segments being conferred by various consultants, news agency, industry associations, academic body, govt which shows the implications of branding as a best employer.

Business leaders of the world are aware of the fact that keeping their teams engaged can mean difference between business success and failure. Organisations are not build overnight it is the people working in these organisations who build them hence the foremost responsibility as an employer should be to keep its employees engaged.

HR professionals know that the way to get the most from an organization is to bring out the best in its people. And that path includes a flexible workplace where workers have a sense of pride, connection and passion.

Employees have become the area of focus with the change in dynamics of competitive global world so now the mantra is

“Love them or lose them”. Today Engagement is HRM’s ‘new best friend’ since companies are competing for retaining talented work force.

II. WORK LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The concept of work life balance & Employee engagement has got tremendous attention while drafting various HR policies by the corporate world. The entire jargon of working environment is changing in view of flexible working hours providing competitive edge for luring the best talent available in the industry.

a) *Work Life balance:*

“You will never feel truly satisfied by work until you are satisfied by life.”—Heather Schuck

WLB primarily connotes healthy balance between paid work and unpaid work. WLB is about creating a productive work culture minimizing potential conflicts & tensions between employer-employee, coworkers.

Kossek & Ozeki (1998) stated “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”. Ensuring appropriate WLB is about creating acceptable combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions), and other aspects of their lives.

The concept of WLB seems to be tilting more towards the work sphere & may therefore be defined in terms of number of hours spent at work vis-à-vis family. However, optimum balance varies from person to person as the concept itself is subjective & depends upon a lot many variables & individuals perception to such variables. In this regard, Dex (2004) stated that WLB policies may be segmented into five broad categories like flexi time work schedules, flexi place or

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telecommuting, job-sharing, part-time flexi place, sabbaticals or career breaks.

Study shows Emirate women working in private & public sector had more difficulties in dealing with WLB due to longer working hours, shorter holidays and work pressures leading to a high attrition rate Forster, Ebrahim & Ibrahim (2013). In another such study majority of the women experienced job spill to their homes, such an imbalance has resulted into stress and anxiety, disharmony at home, job burnout and inability to realize full potential, so for overcoming this Sundaresan .S (2014) suggested two models for maintaining WLB (Role-analysis model and three factor model) for resolving the conflict caused due to imbalance.

b) Employee Engagement:

"Building a visionary company requires 1% Vision & 99 % alignment" - Collins & Porras

Engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn (1990) "The harnessing of organization members themselves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances"

Study shows that for maintaining pool of engaged workforce, organizations need to implement innovative strategies for building a positive and healthy work environment, augmenting appropriate resources and keeping ambiguity at bay so as to enable a productive workforce for building sustainable organization Bhuvanaiah .T & Raya .R.P (2014). Study also shows that degree of engagement determines people's productivity and their willingness to stay with organization Myilswamy & Gayatri (2014), therefore, employee engagement drives effectiveness in an organization by improving retention, customer loyalty, productivity, safety and ultimately, profitability.

c) Recent developments:

Today corporate world is focusing on optimum WLB for ensuring employee commitment, engagement, Retention, Mental health & productivity. It is pertinent to mention that study on WLB has grown leaps & bounds in recent years due to higher employee expectations, attritions, innovations, industrialization yet presently there is no conceptual scale for the measurement of WLB directly.

In today's era another important dimension of WLB is gender equality. This was highlighted by Anne-Marie Slaughter, the head of think tank New America Foundation & the author of the viral Atlantic story *"Why Women Still Can't Have It All,"* stated women's movement must be a men's movement as "You can't have half of a gender revolution."

NZICA's Remuneration and Employment survey 2012, showed that non-financial motivators are often extremely effective in building long-term employee satisfaction and engagement. The survey found that chartered accountants placed very high importance on having work/life balance and that this was a key consideration when thinking about changing jobs. When asked what work/life balance meant to them, those surveyed highlighted "flexible working hours" and "not letting stress affect home life" as the most important factors.

Washington University started community engagement program 2014, The Whole U program focused on six pillars i.e staying healthy, being active, eating well, recognizing family life events, volunteering and engaging personal interest. The program envisaged recreation as part of an overall healthy lifestyle, both on the job and in employees' personal lives. They broke the record for the largest kettle bell [workout].

Global survey conducted by Ernst & Young from November 2014 to January 2015 about work-life balance with 9,700 full-time employees across eight countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, China, Japan and India revealed one-third of professionals saying that work-life balance is harder to find. Long working hours, increased work responsibility, excessive overtime hours, non-encouraging work environment and limited work flexibility are some of the commonly cited reasons.

Recently, Facebook and Apple announced that they would pick up the tab if female employees opted to get their eggs frozen for future use. The move, though, has received mixed responses was focused to facilitate work life balance.

III. WORK INTERFERENCE ON PERSONAL LIFE

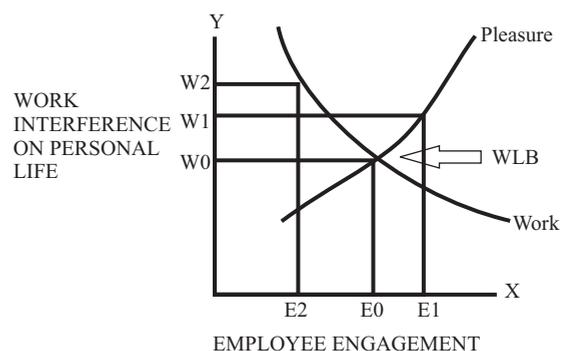
Quantum of work which affects the personal lives of employee differs from individual to individual & organization to organization. Analysis of contextual factors leading to interference would help us evolve timely interventions.

Study shows that the Work-life balance practices are correlated to subscales of engagement (Schilling. K (2014). Also, study shows that there is a positive correlation between the individual factors, organisational factors and group factors Anand & Vijayabanu (2014). Further, Chandhok & Bhavet (2014) evolved an equation Employee engagement = Job satisfaction + Job contribution i.e Employee engagement is a function of Attrition, productivity & profitability.

IV. GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Equilibrium is an ideal situation, any shift in the equilibrium will tend to impact the willingness of individuals regarding their intentions to remain or quit with their employer.

Following is an attempt to reconstruct the relationship between pleasure & work.



The above diagram shows an inverse relationship between pleasure & work. It also explains the effect of work interference on personal life on Employee engagement. The point of equilibrium called WLB is where you can draw maximum Engagement at given work interference on personal life.

V. CONCLUSION

It is no more just cash benefits rather an umbrella of non-cash benefits comprising elder care, child care, sabbaticals, compressed work week, flexible scheduling, job sharing, Work from home is required in various combinations for effectively managing the talented work force. The concept of CTC has also come up due to such needs of employees where they look for the overall package & benefits offered by the corporate world. It is more like cost benefit analysis for the employer to keep their work force engaged.

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