

An overview of Work life balance amongst the Women and its impact on Work culture

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Abstract: Today we see women working in almost all types of professions demonstrating that there is no gender difference in work. In fact many organizations say that women are playing a vital role in uplifting the organization. The pressures of the work or personal life can lead to stress and it poorly affects the work culture of an organization. This study is based on secondary data. The main objective of the research paper is to study the work life balance amongst the working women and its impact on work culture. The study found that for an organizational work culture, Work-life balance of employees will be an important input in designing appropriate policies for employees to address work -life balance issues. Work-life balance initiatives should be designed to help employees to balance their work and personal life.

Keywords: Work life balance, work culture, working women, environment, organization etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

When an association or society is formed where people interact, in such cases there arises certain rules or norms, which define the behavior of the individual. Although the cultural cores of many companies have been eroded by radical shifts in the environment or the actions of management, those that survive continue to perpetuate corporate and individual wellbeing. It has been often noticed that such shift brings about minimal changes in the organization, but we are bound to put on our thinking cap to assess the reason behind such minimum change.

The minimization of any radical change is because of the culture that is there in the organization. The impact of organizational culture- beliefs, attitudes, values and expectations shared by most organization members brings about stability. If we analyze the conditions it is often noticed that if such stability is there in an organization it acts as a positive force and contributes towards the betterment of the organization. It is often found that the organizational culture once established remains the same unless a major change comes up. And if at all such a change takes place it has its impact on all areas of the organization.

Due to changes in the labor market and the changing nature of work, work-life balance is now at the top of the agenda for government and Private bodies. It is known that work- life balance can lead ultimately to productivity gains through increased retention and helps organizations to respond to customer needs more effectively. In any business and industrial activities it is of utmost importance to have well trained, well groomed and emotionally balanced workers available to take up employment challenges. This highlights the necessity among the companies to pay satisfactory attention to the work life balance of the employees. The arrival of globalization makes the people working across countries; as a result, concept of fixed working hours is vanishing away. Instead of just 7 or 8 a day, people are spending as much as 12-16 hours every day in office. Therefore, tension and work related pressure, responsibilities at family makes an individual difficult to find balance between work and personal life. Proficient working in BPO business, top executives, nurses, bank employees, doctors and IT professionals are the few cases who are facing the problem of work life imbalance 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 announcing innovative means to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes workplace a better place to work and also influence positively on productivity. This write up tries to fetch out the meaning of work life balance, their roots, their effects on organizations and the methods, systems and processes to reduce the impact of work life imbalance.

2. WORK CULTURE

When a person does not interact with anyone else he is keeping his thoughts, views or ideas to himself. We live in a society where we have certain social obligations we need to talk to other people, maintain the existing relations and create new ones. Thus we end up sharing our views with other people at the same time we come to know what the other person is feeling. This is how the identification process starts where the individual likes the person who has the same values and beliefs that he has, and chain forms and a culture evolves.

Organizations too have a distinct culture that is the result of the interaction that employees have. An organizations current customs traditions and general way of doing things are largely due to what it has done before and the degree of success it has had with those endeavors. This leads us to the ultimate source of an organization culture- the founders. But this is not the only contributor towards the emergence of culture. There are three factors that lead to formation of culture in an organization namely

- Founders
- External environment
- Employees – their working relations

Firstly organizational culture evolves because of the people who set up the business. They have a vision of what the organization should be. They are unconstrained by previous customs or ideologies. These people often have strong feelings for certain beliefs or principles. While recruiting employees for the firm, the workers who share similar beliefs are selected. Apart from this factor they indoctrinate and socialize these employees to their way of thinking and feeling. And finally the founders own behavior acts as a role model that encourages employees, to identify with them and thereby internalize their beliefs, values and assumptions. Due to this process the owner's ideas are readily accepted and a culture comes up where the entire organization adheres to certain set of principles and they work for certain goals.

Secondly it is the external environment, which contributes towards the culture. For a business to survive it has to adapt itself to the environment. And in doing so it has to change some of its principles or at least it should be modified. Again the external variable like the political social economic technical demographic environment moulds the organizational culture.

Lastly coming to the main contributor that is the relations that the employees share. The work assigned to the employees, the dependency ratio, the problems that they have to face, the differences in the attitude of the people of a particular department and many other factors determines culture.

3. WHAT IS WORK LIFE BALANCE?

Work-life balance is used to describe the equilibrium between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside paid work; having a work-life balance means that this equilibrium is in the right position for the individual concerned. For some people it means spending more time in paid work and less time at home, while for others it means ensuring that paid work does not infringe on time needed for other responsibilities. It is about managing our work commitments with career goals, and our responsibilities at home and the wider community. Work life and personal life are inter-connected and interdependent. Work life and private life are the two phases of the same coin. People have to make tough choices even when their work and personal life is nowhere close to equilibrium.

4. DOES WORK LIFE BALANCE MATTERS TO EMPLOYERS AND WOMEN EMPLOYEES?

Work-life balance policies and practices are becomes important to employers even in bank because employee's motivation and satisfaction, profitability and productivity and recruitment and retention policies can be improved by adopting flexible working arrangements. Companies have to attract and retain the best employees to remain competitive. A study conducted by (Dexand Smith, 2002) shows that

- (A) There are positive effects on employee commitment from having family friendly policies.
- (B) Approximately nine out of every ten establishments with some experience of these policies found them cost effective.
- (C) Increase in performance was associated with having one or other family friendly policy in the case of five out of six performance indicators.

5. IMPACT OF WORK LIFE BALANCE ON WORK CULTURE:

The working sphere of Women in India is changing at incredible pace due to, progressive reduction in trade barriers, modern innovation in technologies, globally interconnected market place, cut throat competition and business rivalry and changing family and population patterns. By family pattern we mean the changing family structure from joint family to nuclear family, altered family value systems, and diminished quality time for self and children, increase in time spent on internet and altered social exchanges and communications. These factors bring out tense anxiety into the life of the women and then it is magnified many times if both the husband-wife work and they have children of growing age and old age parents. This constant worry can cause disorder on the psychological comfort of the women due to a feeling of diminished control over one's life and a hopeless perception that there is never enough time to have a sensible stability and balance in life.

This mental stress for women lead to physical stress and cause ill health, headache, gastritis, body ache etc. or lead to long term cardiac problems, high blood pressure, diabetes or other psychiatric problems. All these problems generate Work life conflict especially for women employees, which results in:

- Increased Absenteeism
- Increased Employee Turnover
- Reduced Productivity
- Reduced Job Satisfaction
- Increased Managerial Stress
- Damage Family and Social relationship

Work life imbalance causes relationship degradation for women employees because working too much may cause women to miss family interactions as well as important events. Relationships require nurturing, time and ongoing attention. Once damage is done, it is often more difficult and time consuming to repair than if appropriate time and focus had occurred all along

6. EFFECTS OF POOR WORK LIFE BALANCE ON THE WORK CULTURE OF AN ORGANIZATION.

- Workers Punctuality, Teamwork, Customer service, work supervision responsibility,
- Group behavior, peer interaction and leadership initiative by workers are reduced due to lowered self-worth and morale in workers due to conflict in work life balance.
- Creativity, new job-expertise learning and innovation of worker is grossly undermined due to lowering of work related enthusiasm among workers.
- Workers having problem balancing work roles and family roles set bad standard in the company work setting and often upset the friendly work ambience.
- Workers problems get reflected negatively on company's turnover, operating profit and balance sheet.
- Substantial increase in the cases of workers being absent on the job and in extreme cases leaving the job.

7. SOME CHALLENGES TO WORK LIFE BALANCE:

There is still however an uneven dissemination of work-family life policies among employers that causes future challenges as follows

7.1 Employers do not adequately and clearly communicate about work-life balance:

Poor communication results in lower levels of awareness. This can lead to employees doubting the reliability of senior management as they feel that communication is vague. The factors contributing to this challenge include:

- Organizational culture
- Lack of interest about changing the status quo
- Reluctance and fear around how to manage a flood of requests if work-life balance initiatives were better communicated (risk management).

7.2 Employers are pursuing improper work-life balance arrangements:

There is a disparity between what employers offer and what members want. The key factors contributing to this are:

- Employers take the easy route with a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Organizational size tends to restrict imagination and result in limited thinking.

7.3 There are high levels of unmet demand for some work life balance options that go beyond the current 'family friendly' approach.

➤ Particular demand for the opportunity to work in flexible hours and to have time off to care for children was found unmet demands. The key factors contributing to this are:

1. A lack of gratitude of the wants and needs of employees who have responsibilities for children.
2. No clear legislation that these employees can rely on to coerces employers.

7.4 Managers act as barriers to employees achieving appropriate work-life balance

Managerial behavior and attitudes are both influenced by and are influences on organizational culture. Although research has revealed that management role modeling of worthy work-life balance performances is an enabler in helping staff manage home and work. Various studies have also shown that line managers having major influence on employee satisfaction. The key factors contributing to this are:

- Lots of line managers have lack of sufficient decision-making power to grant authority and enable changes to working arrangements.
- The hierarchy and processes inherent in most large organizations mean that there are no incentives for

managers to act differently or to think creatively about changing working provision.

7.5 Self-esteem of Employees during the work

Positively contributes to work-life balance. Doctors (particularly surgeons, gynecologists) don't really have a work-life balance. A great part of them have a very low time balance but a very high satisfaction balance and their self-esteem is very high. A study on gynecologists showed that their satisfaction balance was really high because of the satisfaction of creating a new life, which was reward enough for any kind of time imbalance.

8. CONCLUSION:

Nowadays we see women working in almost all types of professions representing that there is no gender disparity in work. In fact many organizations say that women are playing a vital role in uplifting the organization. This is a positive development that women are making their presence in different walks of life. On the other hand, for every woman there is one more background to manage, which is home and personal life.

Today with growing demands at work place, the line between work life and personal life assumed significance which stresses more attention. The pressures of the work and personal life can lead to stress and it poorly affects the work culture of an organization. According to studies, it has been found that such situation affects person's health both physiologically and psychologically.

Therefore, it is important for employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and their personal lives.

For an organizational work culture, Work-life balance of employees will be an important input in designing appropriate policies for employees to address work -life balance issues. Work-life balance initiatives should be designed to help employees to balance their work and personal life.

9. SUGGESTIONS:

The organizations should take the initiative to encourage the employees to overcome their resistance so that there is a positive growth in the work culture. The management is always geared up for the change but the policies fail for want of strong leader. The change techniques that are selected should be proper and at the same time a person who exerts a strong influence should properly implement it.

- The security in the work environment is more if the senior management confide with the workers about the implications of the policies. The workers will make provision for the future changes if the information is communicated to them in time.
- A Company should clearly indicate the values and ethics that the organization should have. A clear idea should be given as to the kind of behavior that will be tolerated and those, which will be punished.
- Although the female respondents agreed with banks Work Life Balance policies but they disagreed with overall Work Life Balance. So the female employees should be given the facilities like flexi time; job sharing; creche facilities, and necessary breaks so that they feel that the organization is helping them in coordinating the family and work life.
- In well-managed firms, the hours worked by both managerial and non-managerial staff are not significantly higher than those in badly run firms. This again confirms that working smarter not harder is the key determinant to successful management. Hence there should be well designed flexible working hours.
- Work Life Balance improve the productivity and eliminate job stress, employers can also make efforts to know the workload and job demands.
- Employer need to observe employee training, communication, remuneration system, co-worker relationship and work environment.
- If the employees are given freedom to choose their own work schedules; quality and productivity of the work increases. Because of this opportunity given to the employee will also bring to the responsibility for finishing work within specified time.
- Nonfinancial rewards often have more impact than financial reorganization in attaining job satisfaction and managing life.
- Contemplate the implications for work-life balance in relation to assignments and work outside conventional hours.
- Specific Counselling programs on Work Life Balance and Family welfare programs and family counseling programs can be conducted.
- Employees' social gathering programs and public contact programs will be the better option to reduce the mental pressure in the work place as the study reveals more mental pressure for the Women employees.
- More and more career and advancement opportunities should be provided to the young employees for professional as well as personal growth.
- Managerial people should feel that if they support the executives and non-executives wholeheartedly the

achievement of the mission of the organization be facilitated and compensation should be providing on the basis of team performance. So that no one feel jealousy with respect to Work Life Balance policies.

- As it shows that different age groups have different perceptions regarding Work Life Balance, so work should be distributed according to the age and qualification. It will improve the employee's dedication and satisfaction level along with productivity and profitability.

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