

THE NOTION OF WORK LIFE BALANCE, DETERMINING FACTORS, ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

In the present age of cut-throat competition, organization need to emphasis on offering job that facilitates a better scope for development of employee's potential as well as organization scope. The world is changing fast and so do the expectations of managing the work-life balance is undergoing a major change. Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal. In recent society is totally full of conflicting responsibilities and commitments; work-life balance has become an important issue in the workplace. Work Life Balance (WLB) refers to the effective management of multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in the other aspects of life. It is an issue that is important for both employee and organization. Work Life Balance has emerged as a major theme during the last two decades, which witnessed a significant increase of work caused by economic uncertainty, organizational restructuring, and increase in business competition. Composition of work and family life spheres has significantly changed over a period of time. Today's working male and female face a broad set of daily challenges which many times create imbalance between their working (professional) life and personal/family life. Lack of work-life balance thus influences working individual's performance at workplace as well as in personal life. There are various factors of work life balance which influences individual's personal and work life. A number of antecedents and consequences of WLB has been found in literature. The present research paper is theoretical and descriptive in nature and describes the various Work Life Balance (WLB) factors, theories, antecedents and consequences with the help of appropriate literatures and previous studies relating this area.

Keywords: Work Life Balance (WLB), Work Family Conflict, Employee, Flexibility, Job Satisfaction.

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE

Work Life Balance (WLB) is a wide concept which includes appropriate equilibrium between career and aspiration on one hand, compared with pleasure, vacation, and family life on the other. Long working hours, strength and intensity of work have consistently emerged as two top most concerns of workers. Work life balance was initially visualized in terms of work family conflict, defined role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the

other (Kahn et al., 1964). Composition of work and family life spheres has significantly changed over a period of time. Today's working male and female face a broad set of daily challenges which sometimes create imbalance between their working life and personal/family life. Work-family conflicts as a condition that arises when participation in either role is incompatible with participation in the other role (Lobel, 1991). Lack of work-life balance thus influences working individual's performance at workplace as well as in personal life. An employee with better work-life balance can contribute more significantly towards the organizational growth and success.

Work Life Balance (WLB): Prominent Scholars View

The literature indicates a number of Work Life Balance (WLB) definitions delivered by various prominent scholars of this area. There are different beliefs on how work-life balance should be defined, measured and researched (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Different terms are also used by different researchers while referring to 'work-life balance'. Work life balance was initially conceived in terms of work family conflict, defined role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other (Kahn et al., 1964). Clarke et al., (2004) state that Work Life Balance (WLB) is an "equilibrium or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life". Clark (2000) describes Work Life Balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict". Frone (2003), and Greenhaus et al. (2003) refer the term Work Life Balance as 'work-family balance'; Clark et al. (2004) refer this as 'work-family fit'; Burke (2000) refers to 'work-personal life balance'; and Grady et al. (2008) refer it as 'work-life balance'. Definition proposed by Grady et al. (2008) state that the term 'work-life balance' which is more comprehensive and it includes "family, community, recreation and personal time". Duxbury (2004) had defined work life balance as a combination of role overload, work to family interference and family to work interference. Greenhaus and Allen (2006) defined work-family balance as the degree to which an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in the roles of work and family domain are well-matched with the individual's life priorities. Hill, et al. (2001) defined, work-life balance as the extent to which a person can concurrently balance the emotional, behavioral and time demands of both paid work, personal and family responsibilities. In their study Bailyn et al., (2001) defined work -life balance as harmonious and holistic integration of work and non-work, so that men and women can achieve their potential across the domains in which they play out their life roles. Manfredi & Holliday (2004) describes Work Life Balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life. Byrne (2005) has highlighted the concept of the work-life balance as a means of tackling the problem of increasing amounts of stress in the work-place and suggested eight important sections of life as the eight spokes in a wheel. The sections are work, finances, spiritual, hobbies, self, social, family and health. Swami (2007) defined work life balance as a practice that is concerned with providing scope for employees to balance their work with the responsibilities and interests they have outside work. Clark (2000) defined work-family balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict. A work-life balance is defined as satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means (Clark, 2000). Work-family balance was defined as the extent to which individuals are equally engaged and equally satisfied with work and family roles (Kirchmeyer, 2000).

Factors Determining Individual's Work Life Balance:

Emotional attachment to the organization is an important factor because it binds an individual to an organization (Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004). Mathew & Panchantham (2011) revealed that role overload, dependent care issues, quality of health, problems in time management and lack of proper support are the major factors influencing the work-life balance of women entrepreneur in India. According to Frone (2003), the measurable four components of work-life balance are work-to-family/non-work conflict, family/non-work-to-work conflict, work-to-family/ non-work enhancement, and family/non-work-to-work enhancement. Trust has also been identified as a distinguishing characteristic of managers in "successfully flexible organisations" (Quijada, 2005). Many individuals found that they were increasingly isolated from family and leisure activities in an ever-increasing climate of long work hours and intensity (Haworth & Lewis, 2005). Spillover between activities can create real time allocation challenges for dual career households. It increases stress, especially where difficulties are faced in combining work, unpaid housework, and work-related travel (MacDonald et al., 2005). Low and Schulenburg (2006) recommended a supportive work environment and management, flexible work arrangements as work life conflict moderator. Family responsibilities such as household time demands, family responsibility level, household income, spousal support and life course stage have been found to be sources of work-life stress (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Nathani and Jha (2009) has grouped factors influencing work and family life spheres into three namely, family and personal life related factors, work related factors and others. Working hours has major influence over managing both the work and life dimensions. In a study of Macky and Boxall (2008) reported that employees working longer hours are slightly more likely to report a greater imbalance in the work life relationship. The study of Steiber (2009) found that time-based work demands were strongly associated with the experience of work-family conflict among women and men. Long working hours, or at weekends and having to work overtime at short notice showed an aggravating affect on conflict them to strain based conflict. Deery and Jago (2009) in their study asserted that greater use of flexible work practices such as flexible scheduling, working from home and having access to both paid and unpaid leave and job sharing are some of the strategies that can positive effect on Work Life Balance. Ghalawat & Dahiya (2010) concluded that the most critical factors related to work life balance are multi roles, long work hours, peers pressure, headcount reduction measures etc.

Theories of Work Life Balance

Several theories have been proposed to enlighten the concept of Work LifeBalance (WLB). These include Compensation, Spillover and the Border theory.

The Compensation Theory

The Compensation theory proposed that workers try to compensate for the lack of satisfaction in one domain (work or home) by trying to find more satisfaction in the other (Lambert, 1990). Piotrkowski (1979) also concluded that men "look to their homes as havens, look to their families as sources of satisfaction lacking in the occupational sphere". Two forms of compensation have been distinguished in the literature (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). First, a person may decrease involvement in the dissatisfying domain and increase involvement in a potentially satisfying domain (Lambert, 1990). Second, the person may respond to dissatisfaction in one domain by pursuing rewards in the other domain (Champoux, 1978).

The latter form of compensation can be either supplemental or reactive in nature (Zedeck, 1992).

The Spillover Theory

The most admired view of relationship between work and family was put forth by Spillover theory. Several researchers suggested that workers carry the emotions, attitudes, skills and behaviors that they establish at work into their family life (Belsky et al., 1985; Kelly and Voydanoff, 1985; Piotrkowski, 1979; Piotrkowski and Crits- Christoph, 1981) and vice-versa (Belsky et al., 1985; Crouter, 1984). Spillover can be positive or negative. Positive spillover refers to fact that satisfaction and achievement in one domain may bring along satisfaction and achievement in another domain. Negative spillover refers to the fact that difficulties and depression in one domain may bring along the same emotion in another domain (Xu, 2009).

The Work/Family Border Theory

Clark (2000) presented a work/family border theory, a new theory about work family balance. According to this theory, each of person's roles takes place within a specific domain of life, and these domains are separated by borders that may be physical, temporal, or psychological. The theory addresses the issue of "crossing borders" between domains of life, especially the domains of home and work. According to the theory, the flexibility and permeability of the boundaries between people's work and family lives will affect the level of integration, the ease of transitions, and the level of conflict between these domains. Boundaries that are flexible and permeable facilitate integration between work and home domains. When domains are relatively integrated, transition is easier, but work family conflict is more likely. Conversely, when these domains are segmented, transition is more effortful, but work family conflict is less likely (Bellavia and Frone, 2005).

Antecedents of Work Life Balance

New working practices and rapid technological advances are changing the nature of many jobs Cooper, (1999). Karatepe and Tekinkus (2006) found that work family conflict increased emotional exhaustion and decrease job satisfaction. The nature of employment has changed, increasing the emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, team-working and individual responsibility, in both the private and public sectors (Wheatley et al., 2008). Singh and Sahgal (1995) found that overall men with double career had maximum level of stress, followed by single women with career, followed by women with no career and minimum stress was found in the category with men whose wives were homemakers. When work interferes with family life it also reduces the satisfaction from job and from life as a whole (Adams et al., 1996). Technological advancement is seen in increased reliance on and use of internet and telecommunication. As a result, many employees are taking work outside office, which has blurred the boundary between work and family (Cooper, 1998).

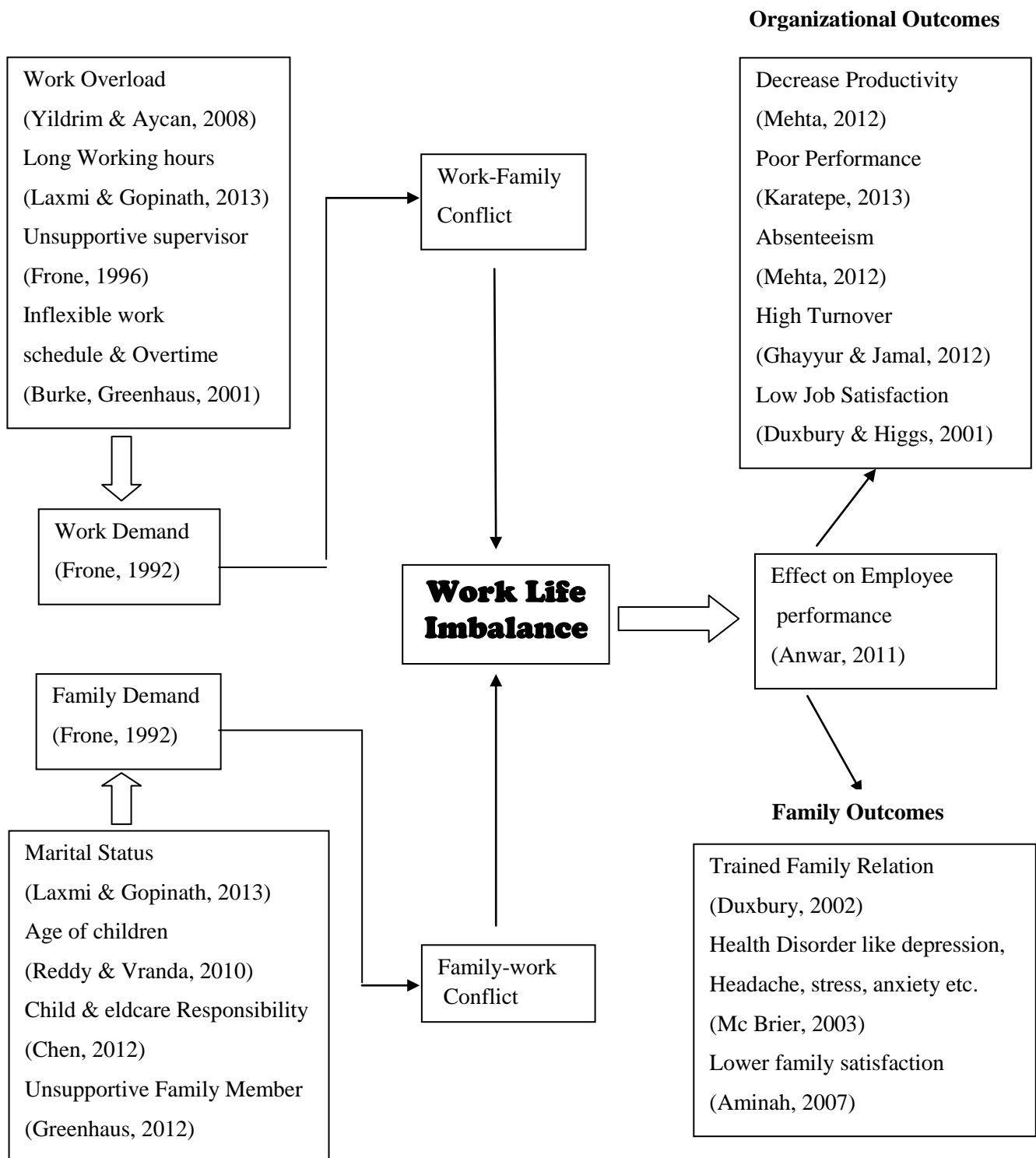


Figure 1: Antecedents and Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance

Source: Nayak & Pandey (2015)

Negative spillover from work to non-work life i.e., emotional exhaustion, has been shown to adversely affect organizations in the form of low commitment and high turnover (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). Senecal et al., (2002) demonstrated that for both men and women low level of motivation towards work and family led by family alienation. This alienation then predicted work family conflict, which lead to emotional exhaustion. Erdwins et al., (2001)

also noted spousal and supervisor's support responsible for significant variations in the work family conflict. An inability to create a balance between work and personal life could influence employees' effectiveness and productivity in the workplace (Elloy & Smith, 2003). Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) observed that work-life imbalance was not only a source of concern, but also that it was the major source of dissatisfaction for participants; the problem of WLB is clearly linked with withdrawal behavior, including turnover and non –genuine sick absence. In a national study on work life conflict in Canada, in 2001, one in four Canadians reported that their work responsibilities interfered with their ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003).

Consequences of Work Life Balance

Scholarios and Marks (2004) suggested that WLB has important consequences for employee attitudes towards their organizations as well as for the lives of employees. Roehling et al., (2001) suggested that there is a direct relationship between WLB programs and retention. Burke & Collinson (2004) indicated that professionals viewed flexible workplace schedules as key to employee retention and placed this working condition in the top three ways for achieving employee retention. Wilkinson (2008) concluded that the consequences of an imbalance between work and personal or family life is emotional exhaustion, cynicism and burnout. Perry-Smith et al., (2000) suggest that organization with more extensive work–family policies have higher perceived firm level performance. Roehling et al., (2001) suggested that there is a direct relationship between WLB programs and retention. Therefore, it is important for employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and their private lives. Santhi & Sundar (2012) concluded that work-life programmes implemented by IT firms satisfy different categories of employees differently. The overall satisfaction of the respondents across the various work life balancing parameters points to the fact that 55% of the employees are highly satisfied with the current work life initiatives. Bloom and Van Reenen (2006) found that firm with better WLB practices enjoyed significantly higher productivity. A supportive culture has also been shown to enhance the perception that an organization cares about its employees (Lambert, 2000). Kanwar et al., (2009) found that WLB and job satisfaction were positively related to each other. Baral (2009) found that family significantly contributes to work in terms of enhancing performance and positive emotions at the workplace. Availability of healthy Work Life Balance Policies (WLBP) reduces employee absenteeism (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). To reduce the work-family conflict and efficient in improving attitudes, work-life programs are found to be more effective (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). Tausig and Fenwick (2001) measured perceived work-life balance using two items: the extent to which workers feel successful in balancing work and personal life, and the amount of conflict they face in balancing work and personal life. Employees have an increased concern about balancing their work and personal lives (Grant-Vallone and Donaldson, 2001). A successful work life balance strategy reduces stress levels and raises job satisfaction of the employee while increasing productivity and health care costs for the employer (Thompson, Andreassi, & Prottas, 2003). Eaton (2003) suggested that family supportive practices involving flexibility increase commitment on the part of the workers increasing productivity and reducing turnover. Research conducted by Clark (2000) found that workplace flexibility has a positive impact on employees' wellbeing and Work Life Balance. Employees with flexible work schedules achieve better work life balance, which results in higher job satisfaction, higher home activity satisfaction, and lower role conflict (Clark, 2000). work-life balance policies can enhance productivity; reduce cost by improving staff retention rates, decrease negative spill-overs, reduce extended hours and fatigue to reduce negative effect on productivity which further minimizes stress and

contribute to a safer and healthier workplace (Ratzon et al., 2011). In New Zealand, a Department of Labour (2006) survey of employees found a strong relationship between employees' ratings of productivity practices in the workplace and their own work-life balance. Reduced related stress outcomes due to work-life balance practices have been observed in many research studies (Johnson, 1995). Carlson and Perrewe (1999) have demonstrated that a supportive culture at work can reduce the degree of work/family conflict individual experience. Research findings show that better Work Life Balance Policies (WLBP) help employees manage their work and family better (Thomas and Gangster, 1995) and enhance their attitudes and behaviors such as organizational attachment (Grover & Crooker, 1995), job satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998) and intention to stay (Lobel and Kossek, 1996). Availability of good WLBP reduced employee absenteeism (Dex and Scheibl, 1999) and enhanced organization's productivity (Sands and Harper, 2007). These practices are increasingly being considered as strategic, innovative, crucial and progressive (Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000) worldwide. However, there is lesser evidence of the status and impact of these practices in Indian organization (Poster, 2005; Wang, Lawler, Shi, Walumbwa & Piao, 2008). Roehling et al., (2001) suggested that there is a direct relationship between WLB programs and retention. Therefore, it is important for employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and their private lives. Thiede and Ganster (1995) inferred that supportive practices, especially flexible scheduling and supportive supervisors had direct positive effects on employee perceptions of control over work and family matters. Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996) found that employees experience less stress when they have more control over their schedule, which suggests that they may also perceive less work-family conflict.

CONCLUSION

Work Life Balance (WLB) is concerned as a vital issue nowadays for individual and also for organizations. Work Life Balance has been defined and elaborated by various prominent scholars relating this issue in different ways. A number of factors are involved in determining the Work Life Balance and Imbalance of any individual which plays a critical role in his/her personal and professional life. It is clear from above literature survey that a plenty of antecedents of Work Life Balance are found in many studies carried out in this area. It has been also explained that a better Work Life Balance creates a number of positive consequences whereas imbalance between work and family of an individual holds a negative effect which is responsible for some serious issue for individual as well as for the organizations.

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