

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND LIFE BALANCE AMONG HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

BALAJI SWAMINATHAN *

Research Scholar, School Of Management Studies St. Josephs College, (Autonomous) Tiruchirappalli,
Tamilnadu, India. *Corresponding Author

Dr. J. VINCENT XAVIER

Assistant professor, School Of Management Studies St. Josephs College, (Autonomous) Tiruchirappalli,
Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract

Background: Work-life balance is a central issue affecting the health of employees. The success of a person as an employee as well as a social being is determined by his/her work-life balance. Work-life balance and occupational health issues are two major concerns for researchers due to their impact on the stress level, quality of life, productivity, and turnover of employees. **Aim & Objectives:** To explore the challenges faced by employees in a service organization about maintaining work-life balance and give suggestions for the same. **Methods:** A descriptive research design was utilized for the study. The essential information was gathered through an organized survey. A sample of 150 representatives of the health care profession of Government medical college & hospital Cuddalore was chosen for the research in the year 2022. Data was collected through a convenient sampling method. The questions focused on various facilities available in the organization to balance work and family life and the effective usage of such facilities. Work-life balance was assessed based on work-family conflict and family work conflict. **Results:** Occupational health issues were assessed based on two factors i.e., psychological and physical health issues. The result shows that employees face issues in balancing their work and family life. The need for childcare facilities and financial support for elderly care are highlighted in the study. This study reveals that respondents have work-life balance issues where work-family conflict was found to be higher than family-work conflict. **Conclusion:** Physical health issues are a major concern for them than psychological health issues. This study also reveals that there was an association between work-life balance and psychological health issues.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Work-family Conflict, Family work Conflict, Occupational Health, Physical health, and psychological health.

INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever before, there is an increased concern about the relationship between work and family life and the impact each has on the other. Research about this area has begun way back in the early nineteenth century. The world of work – employment, the nature, the demands, and employee-employer relations, has changed greatly over the years. [1] This has seen a related change in the amount of time that an employee can exclusively devote to his family. Increased expectations of the job, the quantity of time at the workplace, rising competition, lifestyle, and demographic factors, and increased employment rate of women have all contributed to the growing need for a defined policy and well-designed policies to ensure balance in work and life. [2]

The concept of a single male breadwinner has changed and we can see a paradigm shift in the definition of family itself. This shift has been defined by a rise in the number of dual-earner couples, single parents, commuter marriages, and the breakdown of the joint family concept in Asian countries.[3] While organizations are expecting employees to be more flexible and productive, employees too have exceeding expectations about their work life. The earlier concept of “lifetime employment” has vanished. It has been ravaged by uncertain and volatile economic conditions leading to unemployment and job insecurity. [4]This has led to a change in the employees’ perspectives and expectations about work. Work-life balance requires creating and nurturing a supportive and healthy work environment, which allows employees to maintain an equilibrium balance between their work and personal responsibilities.

This in turn leads to improved employee loyalty and productivity. The employee of today plays several roles as a parent, as a spouse, as a responsible son/daughter, and as a conscious citizen along with his role at the workplace. [5]These responsibilities consume a lot of his time and productive energy as well as commitment. Initially, work-life balance was generally understood as an important issue for working mothers. Gradually there is a growing realization that it concerns all employees, which can be observed in various literature available.[6] The employee of today has several responsibilities towards the family, towards the organization, towards their social interest, and society as well. In the entire cycle sometimes, employees forget or lose the responsibility they have towards themselves. [7] However, the organizational perspective of work-life balance is very different. It is difficult to establish the right balance between work and family in the healthcare sector. This is because most services by nature are perishable and have to be utilized instantly, which means that the employee has to be physically present to serve at the time the service is required. For employees working in hospitals, it is all the more difficult to get that balance right. [8]Work-life balance requires managing the demands of the workplace with the expectations from family, friends, and one’s personal life. The employee of today wants more involvement and control in the responsibilities allotted to him so that he can manage his personal life in a better manner.

A study published in the Business Information review indicates that in the quest for work-life balance, employees look for various ways to manage their work and personal life so that they can prioritize their physiological and sociological demands. However, the age of the employee, technological advances, workplace changes, and ineffective management of organizations may act as barriers in such a prioritization process. [9, 10]

OBJECTIVES

- To identify factors influencing work-life balance in Health Care sectors
- To analyze the relationship between the working environment and employee relationship.
- To study the need for work-life balance in Health Care sectors.
- To study the effectiveness of the work-life balance process in Health Care Sectors.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Primary information: The essential realities are gathered utilizing a survey and the conversation with the organization staff. It is additionally called new information.

- Questionnaire
- Interview
- Observation

Effects of Poor Work-Life Balance on the Organisation [9, 10, 11]

Research has proven that poor work-life balance leads to: Increasing issues related to time and punctuality starting from late coming, constant requests for leave, constant distraction when at work because of phone calls, etc., leading to low productivity and efficiency.

- The immediate spillover of poor punctuality is absenteeism and in some cases could lead to the employee quitting his/her job.
- Due to the conflict in his personal and professional life, the employee's performance gets affected which in turn has a cyclical effect: poor acceptance by the team, increased supervision, low morale, and a feeling of being neglected by peers/colleagues.
- The reduced enthusiasm of the worker and as a consequence his creative streak, capacity to learn new things and innovate gets adversely affected.

Challenges in Maintaining Work-Life Balance in Health Care Sector [7, 12, 19]

Many doctors and nurses and paramedical staff are required to work long hours, night shifts and this causes a conflict between their personal and professional roles. The natures of work at hospitals demand that the doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff are present at the workplace at odd hours. This also has a toll on the employee's ability to take care of his health; the employee is constantly juggling to ensure a balance between the care he gives to his patients and the care he gives to himself and his family.

According to Sara Hedderwick, a consultant in infectious diseases at Belfast, there is no limit to what one wants to do to help patients get better, but to do that, healthcare professionals must ensure that they remain healthy too. Trying to achieve this fine balance between personal and professional commitments is very difficult, particularly for those who have families and dependents.

This struggle often leads to stress in the employees' life. Hospitals today are managed like a business and are no longer dull and morose places. However, this hasn't taken away the critical importance of dedicated medical and paramedical professionals. Neither has it made any change in the stress that this category of employees faces because of the long and unearthly hours they have to put in. This is especially true for the nursing staff.

ANALYSIS

Table 1: Factor Analysis Test Component Matrix

	Components		
	1	2	3
Working environment	.083	.704	.559
Workload	.579	-.011	-.456
Overtime	.589	.589	-.066
Work on holidays	-.520	.302	-.323
Family support	.674	-.314	.051
Management support	.082	-.372	.662

Analysis and Interpretation

The table presented above this is found that employees working in Health Care sectors, give importance to the following three important factors for their work-life balance are as follows family support with 0.674, overtime with 0.589, workload with 0.579, working environment with 0.083, management support with 0.082 which are arranged in ascending order.

Suggestions

1. Identify the departments where work is more stressful and develop healthy HR practices to reduce burnout and stress, e.g. small rest breaks in between work, better changing rooms, water, and coffee dispensers. Periodically the employees can have some fun at work activities – like solving puzzles, birthday celebrations, and so on to feel more relaxed.
2. Though the concept of flexible working hours may be very difficult in service organizations, it could be explored in certain departments.
3. Departments could be developed into self-managed teams, so that there would be a greater sense of belongingness to the team, generating a better team spirit. When employees require leave or an urgent few hours off, other employees could pitch in for them. This would not happen if teams are managed like traditional departments.
4. Regular health check-ups and short rejuvenating programs for mental and physical health could go a long way in easing stress.
5. Celebrate important events in employees' lives like anniversaries, graduation of children, and the academic success of kids at the workplace also so that, even if he has missed out on an important event at home, he can make up for it by this celebration.
6. Incentivizing extra hours put in by employees with a well-designed reward system.
7. To ensure the families of the employees are happy, an annual gathering with family must be organized. The company could involve the employees and their families in their CSR activities.

CONCLUSION

Corporatization of healthcare services in our country has seen the growth of new jobs like Marketing Executives, Public Relations Officers, Medical Transcriptionists, etc. They have to compete with the hospitals which are started by corporates backed by global collaborations and partnerships. Hence, organizations in the healthcare industry must realize the implications that globalization has had on the way business operates and that they must adapt practices to match the challenges induced by global change.

The key to this lies in the effective management of human resources - developing them through interactive and interesting training and development interventions, incentivizing extra effort and time through innovative schemes, and employee engagement initiatives. Good work-life balance is directly related to a work-related attitude.

Even if we ignore the benefits that a healthy work-life balance brings to the organization, we cannot be blind to the fact that conflict in work and family life always results in a demotivated and stressed employee who would be less productive.

Organizations must make available various resources like better restrooms, and flexible work hours since these have been directly linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for all employees who have family responsibilities. Organizations must invest and innovate to develop practices that make the employee feel engaged and to feel that he is a vital part of the organization.

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