Work life Imbalance- Its Causes & Impacts: An Overview

*Dr. Monika Khatri
**Sonia Shungloo

Abstract

Work life balance refers to how people combine work with life's other responsibilities. This issue is important both for organizations & employees. This issue has emerged due to variety of changes in the work place, in employee demographics and in the family sphere. Issues related to work life balance constitute an area of human resource management where the employer's twin goals of a productive organization and a highly motivated staff and the government's dual policy objectives for a high value added, high employment economy and a fair and just society, confront each other.

The paper reviews progress from the literature published concerning the impacts and causes of work family conflict and its organizational and individual perspective. From the comprehensive review presented here, it is concluded that work family conflict has not left anyone untouched be it a male or female. But studies revealed that females are much prone to conflict as they have dual roles to play. However, variables and dimensions proposed up to now present various limitations that restrict their application in practical approach. The review process was adopted by surveying the research in last 20 years related to 2 sub issues on the basis of individual and organizational level. The 30 research articles were reviewed to cover the impact & causes of Work life Imbalance. A number of individual variable, Family related variables & work related variables have been studied. The research concluded that there are several variables involved which are linked to each other with some moderators and further research shows the scope for the further study in the topic.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Work to Family Conflict, Family to work interference,

Research Methodology

The data is collected through vigorous reviewing the literature available on the studies on Work Life Balance in various countries. A secondary data was collected from journals, articles, books on reliable websites. This study is descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Review Literature of the Study

This review offered the concepts related to studies that have been done under the impacts and causes

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of Work Life imbalance, on individuals & organizations. The term work family conflict comprises of interference of workplace in family issues and family interference in work issues.

Models on the basis of conflict propose that (a) work in family disturbances arises as and when demands of work and family are not compatible with each other and (b) this conflict have significant effect on the quality of work life quality and quality of family life.

These demands makes the role of an individual more difficult as equal participation is needed in both the roles. Accordingly, the imbalance occurs at workplace and life of the family members. Studying the conflict between work & family is very important for organizations and people because it is linked to harmful consequences. For example, imbalance between work & family is associated with increased occupational burnout, intentions to quit the job, stress in job and detoriated health and job performance. The studies were done for people working in different departments in different industries. The main focus in the review was on working women as they play a dual role and responsibilities are much for them in every corner of the world.

Family and Individual Related Variables & Work Family Conflict

Telecommuters with greater job discretion and/or higher scheduling of work experience reduced WFC at almost all levels of telecommuting [1].

The conflicts of work-family predicts for affective commitment and the employee's wish to leave the organisation. Relationship between WFC and affective commitment does not show that it is effected anyhow by supervisor help[2].

The male and female face increased level of WFC than family- work conflict. The males are more susceptible to family pressure than the females, and the females have high endurance[3].

Perception of work life balance of Kuwait employees depended on work pressure on the health of employees, fear of career progression, working on weekends, perception of employees that working extra hours is a normal routine of life and contact being made to employees after the usual working hours. Perception of work life balance of UK employees depended on support from manager in coping with domestic needs, missing family events in the recent past, giving priority to company's customers' needs & wants, ability to cope with job pressure and fight/argument with spouse during recent past[4].

Leadership, boss/supervisor recognition, help and moral support for individuals and their needs, are the major determinants for work-life balance[5].

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All males and females are making different choices at the work-place which means that conventional jobs are fading away as both genders aim to maintain the balance in their both roles at work-family in general.[6]

Single and young people were able to overcome the stress as compared to married and middle aged people. Time being, a major factor in work life as if duty hours were more than 8, then the employees suffer from imbalance.[7]

Leaders with high level of expressive ties shows increased supervisory support. Leaders with advanced level of instrumental ties with subordinates tend to show lower levels of support. The level of emotional intelligence of a any employee who has leadership traits is independent of the fact that the help is extended by the supervisor or not. [8]

Supervisor and spousal support can lead to increased levels of balance in both workplace and family. Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction was partially responsible for peer relationship to WFC and FWC fully effected peer relationship to WFF and FWF.[9]

Informal managerial work to family support impacted much of the outcomes related to work in some ways through the moderator of WFC and WFE. This support given by the moderator was done through by following ways: Firstly, time demands & career consequences impact turnover intention indirectly by the mediator of WFC (completely mediator); Second, supportive supervisors and supportive colleagues impact job satisfaction indirectly through the mediator of WFE, and they can finally impact turnover intention, too. Besides, supportive supervisors can also impact turnover intention directly.[10]

Female IT professionals have been found to be benefiting from their level of EI in getting a work family life balance and experiencing a higher Quality of Work Life and experiencing an enhanced level of happiness.[11]

Work-family conflict was a significant precursor to judge about clinicians' burnout. W-FC can positively predict emotional exhaustion and de-personalization. And F-WC can positively predict all three components of burnout. Both supervisor support and colleague support can help clinicians to mitigate their work-family conflict and burnout. Besides, colleague support can also moderate the relationship between F-WC and burnout.[12]

Social support (SS) moderates the relationship between personal financial constraints (PFC) and job stress (JS).[13]

Female university teachers feel the biggest pressure is professional development then is workload

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and pressure while the pressure from the environmental factors is low.[14]

In Nigerian family culture, more value is placed on caring for members of one's family than being more committed to one's job duties.[15]

Higher levels of work interfering with family predicted lower levels of family emotional and instrumental support. The relationship between work & family can be simultaneously characterized by conflict and support.[16]

Strategies can be adopted to moderate the effects of professional women's work family conflict respectively from perspectives of society, professional women as well as their families and organizations.[17]

Family-friendly benefits can effectively alleviate teachers' conflicts between work and family interface. The difference is that the impact of work-family conflict on job satisfaction is stronger than family-work conflict's. Supervisory support has an alternate impact on teachers' work-family conflict and family-work conflict in China.[18]

Organisation/Work Related Variables & Work Family Conflict

Job autonomy and work exhaustion, were found to be related with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was also found to have an indirect effect on turnover intention through organizational commitment. Virtual workers are better able to control work-family conflict and workload and hence these factors don't effect job satisfaction for them. Organizational commitment and turnover intention was not dependent on Work exhaustion.[19]

When leisure levels were greater than 40% of total work hours it decreases the productivity of the work. The presence of an superior authority effects the correlation between leisure and work behavior positively.[20]

Gender can moderate the relationship between work interference with family and job satisfaction in USA, but it can't be a moderator of relationship between work interference with family job satisfactions in China. [21]

The level of "work to family conflict in nursing staff is higher than that of "family to work " conflict. A degree of "family to work" conflict has an inverse influence on job performance. Four sources of social support all have positive influences on job performance; "Friend support" will strengthen the negative effect on "family to work" conflict to job performance. "Co-worker support" has a moderate effect on the relationship in "work to family" conflict and job performance. [22]

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Supervision, growth and development, pay and benefits, physical environment, Participation and workplace integration were studied to have a positive relationship with affective, normative & Continuance commitment. Supervision has a direct relationship with normative commitment. Physical environment and pay and benefits have a noteworthy positive relationship with continuance commitment. [23]

This study provided indication that an individual with higher levels of WFC are more likely to experience lower level of satisfaction towards wellbeing, family & job.[24]

The results showed supervisor support which most predicted reduced work-to-family conflict than peer support and organizational policies. The study conducted linked work support with turnover of organisation & compared the mediating role of work-to-family conflict and facilitation. [25]

Majority of respondents were government employees and the advanced levels of WLB among job satisfaction was Motivation. While the moderate level of WLB among management staff's satisfaction is the culture of the workplace and social support is the lowest level of WLB. [26]

Workplace flexibility reduces work-life conflict (personal/family benefit) enabling workers to work longer hours before perceiving work-life conflict (business benefit). Workplace flexibility is usually beneficial to both individuals and organization around the world, though cultural differences exist. Work-at-home, work-Schedule flexibility, reduces an individual's WFC, and increases his or her capacity to work. [27]

Maximum conflicts should be solved by first line managers, or, if the conflict is significant, then on the middle level of management. All managerial levels have a responsibility for good organizational communication and conflict management. [28]

Self-efficacy has main effect on both kinds of conflicts. The study also showed that self-efficacy moderated the association between working hours and WIPL. Increased Self-efficacy also reported slightly increased WIPL under conditions of high working hours, the rise in WIPL was clearly high among low self-efficacy employees. [29]

Scope of study

The main focus of the paper was to find out what researchers think about the work life balance, what are the major factors that affect work life balance and what research work has been done till date on the factors related to work life imbalances. The coverage of this study is upto the organizational and individual related variables of work life imbalances. The study consists of research done on the topic in various geographical locations, in various cultures and working environment.

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Limitations

The sample used in the studies was restricted to a specific working environment, and that the profile of the participants differed in terms of age, social class, race, educational level, number of years of work experience, and marital status. The studies, therefore, had certain shortcomings, for example, its findings could not be applied to other industries and people from different demographics. In most of the studies sample size was so small so that the results from the studies cannot be generalised for all. Work Life balance or work family conflict has wider dimensions and any of the studies did not cover all the aspects, some or the other variable which can affect the results drastically was left. Reliability and validity of questionnaires used and responses given by the respondents were also the major issue in the study. The present Covid Situation has limited sources available, so the study can be conducted later with more vigorous study on the topic.

Conclusion and Further research

On the basis of review of literature, the major conclusions that can be drawn are as follows. Work to family conflict is more common as compared to family to work conflict. No definite conclusions can be drawn related to gender differences for the imbalances in work and family life. However, on the basis of the studies which reported gender differences, it can be concluded that women experience more work family conflict. Emotional intelligence has been found to be directly proportionate to work life balance. The higher the importance accorded to work in life, the higher is the work family conflict. Job related variables (task autonomy and work schedule flexibility) have been found to be positively related to work life balance. Supervisor Support marks a positive influence on employees and help them to overcome conflict. Working hours is a major factor affecting work life balance. Culture also helps in setting the priorities towards work or family and hence the role conflict. Since the approach of work life balance was initially conceived in terms of work family conflict / work family balance, and work life balance concept has come to the fore recently, hence much research is focused on work family conflict rather than work life balance which is a broader term and includes work and rest of the life (including family). Secondly, much emphasis has been laid on studying the outcomes of work family conflict or work life balance as compared to the antecedents especially in the context of work life balance. Again, the researchers who studied the antecedents focused mainly on the work or family related variables; and have not taken specifically individual related variables into account. There are hardly any studies to be found in the Indian context, and hence the issue of work life balance is wide open for research in India. Moreover, many industries has not been studied specifically; and each industry has peculiar work demands which make it imperative to study the issue of work life balance in the context of these industries differently. Hence, the further research will be an effort to fill these gaps.

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*Associate Professor
**Research Scholar
Department of Management
Poornima University
Jaipur (Raj.)

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