

Exploring the Role of Human Resource Management in Enhancing Organizational Productivity by Offering Professional Support to Employees to Achieve Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Work and life are two important concepts in every individual's life. For the survival, every individual is required to work and concept of life is associated with personal family or social life. A significant body of research have identified the importance of work-life balance on employee performance. However, this research will focus that how providing work-life balance to employees could work as the best practice human resource model. **METHODOLOGY:** This research has adopted the secondary research approach, in which evidences are collected from the existing body of literature. Secondary research is conducted to collect evidences from peer reviewed paper, text books, government documents and other published academic papers. **RESULTS:** Findings of this research suggest that work-life balance is being identified as an important HR practice and strategy to enhance employee performance, productivity and commitment. Work-life balance must be considered from organizational and individual perspective, as the well-being of employees directly influences the well-being and productivity of organisation. **CONCLUSION:** This research concludes that role of HR in organisation is very essential and significant in terms of developing and implementing policies that could be aligned with the goals, missions and values of organisation. Therefore, the adoption of a comprehensive work-life balance policy is also significant for effective HR practices.

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for Research:

Human resources are identified as most unique and most significant assets for any organisation [Noe, Raymond, 2015]. This is the reason that human resource management is gaining more and more significance in global business environment. Human Resource Management (HRM) has also become a major concern for public and private sector organizations in order to maintain their business performance and productivity [Buller, 2012]. Therefore, it has also become significant for the managers of organizations to place greater importance over efficiency of Human Resource policies and practices that could help in retaining employees and positively influencing their performance [Tyson, 2014]. Managing work-life balance has become an important concept in modern business activities, which has also gained the attention of various scholars and researchers. This research will focus on collecting evidences that could inform that allowing employees to maintain work-life balance is an important best practice model for human resource management.

Study Aims and Objectives:

The main aim of this study is to conduct the review of primary data from literature to understand importance of effective Human Resource (HR) policies and strategies in

helping employees to manage work-life balance. The main objectives that this research would focus on achieving are-

- To access the importance of the concept of work-life balance.
- To understand significance of work-life balance strategy in HRM practices.
- To understand positive outcomes of work-life balance in business.

Research Question:

“How Human Resource Management can increase organizational productivity by providing the professional support to employees for achieving work-life balance?”

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on desk based secondary research method, which is a qualitative approach of collecting evidences from existing literature. The purpose of secondary researches is to identify, summarize and collate the existing evidences in order to enhance the quality of available data and to enhance effectiveness of research [Hewson, 2014]. Secondary research includes data from already published peer reviewed studies, books, government reports and similar documents. It has been identified that secondary research methods are more time saving and cost-effective than primary researches [Goodwin,

2012]. However, for ensuring the quality of findings, it is significant to assess the validity and reliability of evidences. The most significant purpose of secondary research in business is that it provides organizations and managers with evidences related to best possible professional practices [McDaniel, 2013]. Therefore, this research adopts the secondary research design.

UNDERSTANDING CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance is an important concept that has gained a significant attention in human resource management research. Like many other business concepts and theories, researchers have identified that work-life balance also lacks a commonly accepted definition. For example, some of the theorists and researchers have identified that work-life balance is the concept that allow an individual to maintain balance between their professional and personal life, while other identify that work-life balance is associate with achieving satisfaction within one's life [Jones, et al., 2013]. The term "work-life balance" was firstly coined in the year 1986 as the response to the growing concern towards the negative impact of work pressure affecting the quality of life of individuals and therefore, giving rise to "work-life conflict" [Chandra, 2012]. A study conducted by Gregory et al. (2013: 3) defined work-life balance as the concept that includes "employees time management, inter-role conflict (role overload and interference) and care arrangements for dependents" [Gregory, 2013].

Work-life balance could also be defined as the perception of achieving satisfaction and good functioning both at work as well as at home with minimum conflicts in both roles [Yadav, 2015]. A study define that "Work-life balance is about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments, which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity" [S. Pattu Meenakshi, 2013]. Other studies have also confirmed that work-life balance is about eliminating any form of work interferences in family and family interference at work [Kim, 2014]. Quality of personal and family life is very important for the proper mental and emotional functioning of an individual. Managing the work-life balance has also become important for modern organizations, where the employees experience higher level of work pressure, which demands more time and energy [Shagvaliyeva, 2014].

ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE IN OFFERING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Studies have identified that role of HRM is important in managing external and internal work practices. HR professionals are required to develop and implement policies that could support employees in development, growth and that could also enhance their job satisfaction. Wayne F Cascio identified in his research that work life programs that are specifically and carefully designed to support work life balance

of employees are effective in reducing work-family conflicts and positively influence employee performance. Last decade has witnessed a dramatic change in HRM practices as the role of Human resource management has shifted from micro level organizational policies to macro and strategic level policies and strategies [Cascio, 2015].

Strategic role of HR requires developing and implement 'family-friendly' polices in order to enhance employee's satisfaction with quality of life and work [Yuile, 2012]. A wide body of literature has also focused on discussing various consequences of poor work-life balance. Studies have identified that inability to manage a balance between work and family life can result in increasing the psychological or mental stress, thus affecting employee performance. Other studies have also argued that problem with maintaining such balance can increase the chances of various personal and social consequences that may also indirectly affect business performance [Mendis, 2014]. Some of the studies have also reported that poor work-life balance can increase absenteeism, reduce productivity and can also reduce organizational commitment [Fayyazi, 2015].

In the current setting, business are operating in highly dynamic and uncertain environment, which has also resulted in increasing the need of being more responsive and efficient in order to maintain competitive advantage. Employees are the most important asset through which organizations can maintain and gain competitive advantage over their competitors. Human resource management plays the most significant role in this aspect, as they have the techniques and strategies to motivate and encourage employees to display better commitment and productivity [Singh, Satinder, 2013]. HRM policies and strategies that are more flexible and responsive toward the personal life need and preferences of employees are more likely to promote work-life balance and improved employee performance [Cegarra, 2012].

Some of the studies have included the social exchange theory for understanding the role of HR in providing work-life balance. Social exchange theory informs that social exchange includes the intrinsic and extrinsic elements under which a social exchange becomes an act that is required to be returned [Beauregard, 2014]. Social exchange is specifically based on the concept of trust, for example, the benefit offered by employers to employees with be exchanged in form of another benefit from employees. A study conducted by Jessica Bagger and Andrew Li has also argued the importance of social exchange in context of providing family support and receiving positive work behavior from employees [Bagger, 2014].

Therefore, HRM policies and strategies related to providing flexibility in working time and support in maintain work-life balance to employees can be identified as best practice model to enhance employee performance and commitment.

BENEFITS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR ORGANISATION AND EMPLOYEES

Benefits of providing supportive HR policies and programme can enhance employee performance, their level of job satisfaction and level of their commitment towards organisation. Nasrin and Damiri espoused in their study that stress and pressure related to job can reduce employee performance and can increase turnover intentions [Arshadi, 2013].

The direct and indirect cost of turnover, employee absenteeism and employee's poor performance could be very high and may affect organizational productivity. Therefore, the work-life balance policies must be applied as necessary organizational policies that can improve employee motivation and performance, reduce employee turnover, increase employee retention and enhances employee's loyalty and commitment towards organisation [Qureshi, 2013].

HR policies and practices related to work-life balance also enhance employee's level of confidence, self-esteem and trust in organizations. Studies have also reported that employees are likely to stay committed towards organizations that allow work-life balance. Reduced stress and work-life conflict also enhance concentration towards work [Ahmad, 2013].

Studies have further identified that work-life balance programs implemented by HR not only enhance productivity but also provide better return on investment. Companies and HR professionals who have dedicated towards resolving the work-life balance issues in professional way are likely to have more committed and loyal workforce [Yadav, 2014]. Implementation of the family life supportive policies specifically designed to reduce work-family conflict are not just important from organizational perspective, but also from individual perspective. Providing employees with supportive environment and flexibility in working hours is most essential for supporting employees in managing their work-life balance.

Some of the studies have also identified that developing and implementing work-life balance policies could be also be challenging for HR professionals, because of the unrealistic demands that some employees have towards managing this balance, lack of resources and human capital, or organizational time expectations can restrict implementation of flexi-time schedules. HR policies are required to overcome such challenges in order to provide better and supportive work environment for employees.

RESULTS

Content of this paper includes the evidences from literature gathered, analyzed and synthesized in the form of secondary research. This paper throws light on significance of work-life balance in improving employee performance,

commitment and productivity and role of HRM in supporting and promoting work-life balance strategies.

Findings of this research informed that role of HRM is very crucial in success and effectiveness of business performance and organizational productivity. HR professionals have the responsibility of managing human capital, which is the most important asset for any business. Organizations are experiencing more and more pressure of presenting higher level of performance and competitiveness in order to sustain in dynamic business environment. The increasing work demands can also result in increasing work stress and pressure on employees and can result in work-family conflict. Therefore, this study suggests that HR can play an important role in developing and implementing strategic policies and approaches through which employees could be able to achieve better work-life balance and organizational productivity can also be improved.

The findings of this study suggest that there is a gap in literature towards understanding the impact of work-life conflict on employee performance and overall organizational productivity. Balancing work pressure and family demands is important for employees in order to continuously display high level performance and for aligning their personal goals to organizational goals.

This research also identified that work-life conflict can result in creating stress and anxiety among employees, due to which employees fail to perform effectively. Organizations may have to bear huge financial cost of employee stress, poor performance and reduced efficiency. Therefore, human resource management practices that are meant to manage human capital can be significant in helping employees to cope with work life conflict. This research significantly contributes towards understanding the role of human resource management practices in improving organizational productivity.

This research also provides the scope for future research, which may focus on conducting the empirical study with larger sample size in order to conduct an in-depth analysis of employee expectations towards work-life balance policies. Further research can also be conducted in understanding the strategies to be included in work-life balance policies and role of employee awareness training towards work-life balance.

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