Introduction:

Changing trends in the current era of cut throat competition, employers are pressurized to re-think their people related practices. It is the right time now to re-design organizational strategy focusing the quality of work life. Similarly, a strategic focus is required for work life balance in the public policy. The challenges like, aging workforce increasingly competitive labour market, popularity of information technology and rising benefit costs create new possibilities for employers to achieve organizational performance goals while simultaneously meeting workers’ personal aspirations. At the same time, numerous employees are experiencing a reduced quality of work-life. This is reflected most prominently in work-life imbalance and job stress. With families becoming common, work-life balance has more women employed than ever before and dual-earner converting into an ongoing quest. Furthermore, there are many signs that job performance expectations have been improving up since the 1990s. Thus, with both employers and employees under pressure to find ways to improve the quality of work life and through this, enabling employees to contribute their best efforts surely there is common ground for action. People want meaningful work that enhances their overall well-being. Yet for some groups of workers, achieving wellbeing through work is not easy. While the average length of the workweek has been stable for decades, more employees are working longer (more than 40 hours per week). Managers and professionals, in particular, have experienced increasing work hours while less-skilled workers have had a decline. The paradox is that managers and professionals in knowledge intensive industries whom analyst calls the ‘Creative Class’ may work the longest hours and experience high stress levels, but they are among the best paid and have the most job autonomy than that of any other workers. Attempts to recruit and retain knowledge workers will increasingly depend on finding the right quality of work life equation.

WORK LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT: TWO SIDES OF A SINGLE COIN..!

Sharad R. Kulkarni
ATS, Sanjay Bhokare Group of Institutes, Faculty of Management, Tilaknagar, Wanlesswadi, India

Sharwari S. Kulkarni
Department of Business Management, Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Shivajinagar, India

ABSTRACT

Few years ago, there was a pessimistic debate about the future of work. Grim scenarios predicted rising joblessness and economic insecurity. Scholars predicted the ‘end of work’ resulting from organizational downsizing, industrial restructuring, and new technology. Employees were treated as dispensable costs. Now, employees’ quality of work-life is becoming a business issue. For a growing number of employers, human resource challenges are at the biggest concern. Successful employers are recognizing that positive work-life outcomes for employees from achieving work-life balance to the satisfactions of challenging work and career development are key ingredients of a successful business strategy. In practice, improving the quality of work life remains a tough task. Many managers see the important links between the quality of work life and organizational performance. Yet they face constraints in progress. So it is essential to update the case for taking action to improve the quality of jobs and work environments. This study presents findings from a survey which collected the views of 20 employers and over 200 workers on key quality of work life trends. The survey findings have action implications for managers, HR and OD practitioners, health and wellness professionals, employees and policy makers. While work-life imbalance and job stress are not new problems, they have received more attention in this decade than ever before. Together, these two problems affects to workers’ well-being as well as to organizational performance. In designing an effective solution, decision-makers require sound base on the scope and nature of the problems faced by them.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Employee Stres, Stress Management
affect workers. Stress and work-life conflict are interlinked, and the work-life balance has been documented as both a cause and an outcome of job stress. Stress is one of the more commonly documented outcomes of demanding work. Job stress is increasingly recognized as a determinant of employee health and productivity. The experience of chronic stressors (or strain) is used in theoretical models as a predictor of increased risk of mental and physical health problems, including chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, migraines, and ulcers

**Literature Review:***

**A. Work-life Balance: Definitions and Key Terms**

Work-life balance is the term used in the literature to refer to policies that strive to achieve greater complementarities and balance between work and home responsibilities. These policies apply to all workers, particularly in judging their own ability to combine both work and family life. Some of the terms used in the literature on work-life balance are not commonly used or may be unfamiliar, thus explanations and definitions are given below:

1. **WL:B:** (Work-life Balance), also referred to as family friendly work arrangements (FFWA), and, in international literature, as alternative work arrangements (AWA).
2. **V-Time:** this is voluntary overtime to meet production needs; extra hours are 'banked' and taken as time off or as extra pay. It differs from flexi time where starting and finishing times are staggered, and can mean reduced or increased weekly working hours over a period of time.
3. **Zero hours contract:** this is a flexible contract that does not specify the amount of time a worker will spend per year on their employment, leaving it open to meet demand.
4. **E-working:** the term used to describe flexible working that can be done from any location using technologies such as laptops, wireless internet connection and mobile phones.
5. **Teleworking:** this is where the location is flexible by using technologies to complete work - this allows work to be done from home; also known as e-working.

**Other forms of flexible working conditions include:**

- part-time working
- job sharing
- flexitime
- shift working
- annualized hours
- career breaks
- compressed hours
- home working
- career breaks
- study leave.

The literature on work-life balance includes surveys of provision of work-life balance policies, as well as attitudes to them, from the perspective of both employers and employees.

**B. Work-force Participation Rates And Work-life Balance**

Labour-force participation rates highlight trends in economic activity as well as people’s engagement in different forms of employment. This data is useful because it is generally gender disaggregated, which means that specific knowledge on male and female economic activity can be known. It is necessary to briefly outline the characteristics of the workforce, so as to highlight current trends of flexible working. The increased participation of women in the labour force has been a key factor in the development of work-life balance policies. Currently women represent over 40% of the global labour force, with approximately 70% of women in developed countries, and 60% in developing countries, engaged in paid employment (International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2005)). They are congregated at lower levels of employment, particularly in the developing countries, where they are often in the informal economy only. In terms of their access to positions of power, the ILO estimates that globally women hold between 1% and 3% of executive jobs in the largest corporations. Cross-national quantitative data illustrates working trends on a wider scale, and highlights comparative and/or different trends across nations.

**Work Challenges In Twenty-First Century:**

Following are major challenges to be faced in twenty-first century. Aging Workforce: One-third of the workforce is between the age of 45 and 64 years, and the choices these older workers make will redefine retirement. With fewer younger workers, many employers are facing a talent crunch.

1. **Labour Market:** Workforce demographics have combined with a strong economy to create the most competitive labour market in a generation, adding to labour and skill shortages.
2. **Technology:** Workers and employers alike are coming to terms with the new possibilities information technology is opening up everywhere we work.
3. **Benefit costs:** Rising pension and health benefit costs are putting pressure on employers to find creative solutions without jeopardizing employee recruitment, retention and engagement goals.

**Methodology of Study:**

This study presents findings from a survey which had collected the views of 20 employers and over 200 workers on key quality issues of work life trends. The survey findings have action implications for managers, HR and OD practitioners, health and wellness professionals, employees and policy makers. While work-life imbalance and job stress are not new problems, they have received more attention in this decade than ever before. Together, these two problems affects to workers’ well-being as well...
as to organizational performance. In designing an effective solution, decision-makers require sound base on the scope and nature of the problems faced by them. Considering the importance and correlation between work life balance and job stress, questionnaires were prepared for employers and employees. The respondents (50 employees and 05 employers each) were selected randomly from agriculture, manufacturing, textile and service sectors. The collected data was further analysed as described below.

Results and Discussions:

The current study has undertaken views of employers and employees about the concept of work life balance and corresponding experiences. For this objective, different questions were asked and data was collected. Findings with analysis are described below.

1. Major workforce challenges experienced by employers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Description of Challenge</th>
<th>Response Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employee Stress</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Employee Retention</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study

The disequilibrium between work and life has been experienced as the most serious challenge before the employers. The response for this challenge was maximum. It was followed by stress, retention, job satisfaction and employee engagement related difficulties. Only 14 % respondent employer observed the labour absenteeism as the major workforce challenge.

2. Whether balancing the work and personal life has been getting easier in recent past!

Table 2: Changes in Work Life Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Employer Response</th>
<th>Employee Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>More Easier</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not Easier</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More Difficult</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 20 100 200 100

Source: Field Study

According to 45 percent of both employees and employers, exercise of work life balance has become more difficult in recent past. About 40 % employers and 35 % employees found the task not easier. In addition, 20 % employees and 15 % employers were in position to maintain the balance between work and life in recent past.

In what extent, there is relationship between work life balance and job stress?
Table 3: Relation between WLB & Job Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>No Relation</th>
<th>Some times</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agri.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mfg.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Text.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4 Relation between WLB & Job Stress

Which methods result into good work life balance?

Table 4: Measures for Good WLB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Agri</th>
<th>Mfg</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Ser</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manageable Workload</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexitime Work</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Freedom at Work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion:

Employees’ quality of work-life is becoming a business issue. Now employers are recognizing that positive work-life outcomes for employees are key ingredients of a successful business strategy. Quality of work-life issues can’t effectively be addressed unless there is a commitment from both employers and employees. The findings further highlight the need to move upwards to address the root causes of stress and work life imbalance. Organizations which are larger in size and better managed provide a better work-life balance for their employees. According to the findings of this study, it is more important to sustain in the tough market competition. It is possible through improved management practices without any detrimental impact on work-life balance. Simultaneously, it was found that, there was no direct relation between good practices on work-life balance, like, shorter work hours, flexible work environment, family-friendly policies, etc. and higher productivity. Only there was a need to have better control for better management in general.

References:

[9] www.mitsloan.edu

Fig. 3 Measures for Good WLB

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