

Employee Motivation: The Need for Organizational Support to Foster Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

Purpose: This article aims to link two pivotal concepts, namely employee motivation and work-life balance to accentuate the need for organizations to implement adequate work-life balance policies in order to maximize employee satisfaction and optimize their performance.

Methodology: An exploratory research method has been undertaken within the field of work-life balance and well-renowned motivational theories. A comprehensive review of classic and contemporary theories of motivation has been undertaken in order to justify the need for employees' work-life balance.

Findings: By delving into the existing literature, it has been realized that organizational support in the form of flexibility can generate remarkable outcomes inside organizations since all the well-renowned motivational theories have been found to augment the significance of work-life balance to uplift motivation for and satisfaction with work. Nevertheless, proper controlling mechanisms need to be incorporated by managers for preventing misuse of granted flexibility.

Research Limitation: This study has been conducted solely based on secondary sources and it does not distinguish the differences in perception of work-life balance and its relation to the motivational theories on the basis of gender or culture.

Contribution of the paper: The theories of motivation and its connection with employees' work-life balance have been assessed based on scholarly articles and research works done in the relevant arenas. Hence, it stands out as an original piece of work by aligning with its subject and is expected to contribute academically for obtaining a better understanding of work-life balance and its impact on motivation levels to improve job performance. Additionally, it might provide meaningful insights to the organizational administrators for incorporating appropriate mechanism to enhance employee motivation.

Keywords: Work-life Balance, Employee Motivation, Flexibility, Organizational Support.

Background and Aims

Historically, it's observed that employees in certain organizations are more satisfied with their work and contribute greatly to the success of their organizations, unlike those who fail to perform as a result of not being satisfied with their work. While there can be lots of factors influencing the satisfaction levels of employees, such as salary, opportunity for growth, adequate training & development, fair policies & practice, lower levels of job stress, clear communication system and so on (Hee et al., 2108; Abuhashesh et al. 2019), one of the important underlying factors that many organizations fail to recognize is the work-life balance that employees get while working for them. Work-life balance is the extent to which an individual is involved in and satisfies with their career and personal life roles (Saikia, 2011). On the other hand, Hill et al. (2001, p. 49), defined work-family balance as the "degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities." In other words, a person experiences a 'negative work-life balance' if he/she cannot strike a balance between work and personal life (Clark, 2000). Due to the rising tendency towards achievement, the business environment is intensifying the competitiveness among the firms across diversified industries especially in the private sector. It has been found in several studies that this ever-increasing desire towards achieving more lead firms to make extra efforts that increase the workload of their employees and they suffer from a loss of work-life balance. However, these extreme efforts might fail to bring desired results if the employees ultimately suffer from a reduction of job satisfaction due to increased level of stress (Beehr & Newman,

1978). Since, integrating work-life balance into the employees' lives is the current need of the hour (Mukthar, 2012); it is deemed necessary that companies need to make policies and programs for employees on work-life balance and managers should opt for effective leadership styles and enhance the satisfaction level of employees in order to achieve business goals (Rani et al., 2011).

It is generally known that managing people is an integral part of the overall management process (Tella et al., 2007). In order to ensure effective and efficient employee performance, managers at all levels must not forget the key factor driving their performances, i.e., employee motivation (Geomani, 2012). Motivation is a psychological process like perception, personality, attitude and it includes anything that affects the direction & the rate of individual's behavior towards commitment (Aborisade & Obioha, 2009). According to Warsi et al. (2009), there are multiple researches focusing on work motivation and organizational commitment, as well as, it is recommended that organizations should strive to motivate its employees in order to thrive in the dynamic business environment (Mohsan et al., 2004). Therefore, it can be deduced that organizational support is an important element to raise the motivational levels of professionals. Organizations can play a supportive role by promoting work-life balance, thus escalating the motivational levels among the employees. Although several studies have been done to examine the relationship between work-life balance and employee satisfaction/performance (Bataineh, 2019; Rahman, 2019; Bharathi & Mala, 2016) there is very little academic evidence to justify organizations' support to foster work-life balance by understanding its significance in the context of well-renowned motivational theories proposed by famous psychologists and professors. The current paper is mainly expected to theoretically augment the research within work-life balance principles and to understand why it is important for the firms in this contemporary era to be more supportive towards the employees and provide them with opportunities to enjoy a greater work-life balance. Additionally, this study is aimed to review the relevant classic and modern theories of motivation and link those to the principles of work-life balance to justify organizational support for the betterment of both the employees, who work for long hours at office, as well as, their employers who want to make optimal use of their valuable human resources. Staying aligned with the aim of the study the paper is going to accentuate the following areas:

- Importance of work-life balance for employees
- Need for managers at all levels to play a supportive role towards employees' well-being for attaining organizational goals
- Review of renowned classic and contemporary theories of motivation to validate the need to foster work-life balance.

1. Significance of the Study

It is widely known that employees are one of the primary stakeholders of an organization and that organizations can succeed in important facets only if they can retain their talented and valuable employees (Benn et al., 2016; Yener 2002). The study might be significant from a theoretical perspective as it has been performed by going thorough ample scholarly articles and research works related to the paradigm of this article. It is expected to contribute academically for acquiring better understandings of employee work-life balance and its impact on motivation levels to improve job performance, as well as, it is anticipated to provide meaningful insights to the organizational administrators who can adopt the apt mechanisms to optimize the performances of their key assets, i.e., human resources through enhanced motivation levels. Additionally, individuals may also identify the importance of a balance in their work and family responsibilities and seek to enrich their quality of work and family lives to boost up their motivation levels.

2. Methodology

The aim of the paper mainly is to connect the concept of work-life balance to relevant content and process motivational theories in order to increase the awareness of organizations and their efforts towards promoting work-life balance of employees. Before reviewing the theories of motivation, it is important to understand the need of work-life balance along with its consequences which has been discussed in the following segment of

the paper. The latter segment focuses on reviewing the theories of motivation and based on that emphasizing the need for organizational support towards improved work-life balance. An exploratory research method has been followed to write the paper. The study is conducted mainly based on secondary sources by accumulating data from existing literature found in journals, publications and research papers in the arenas of work-life balance, motivation, job satisfaction and organizational support. The article has aimed at validity and reliability by collecting data from research papers which have been published in national and international peer reviewed journals or presented at conferences. The list of all the references used is provided in the bibliography part of the paper.

3. Work-life Balance and its consequences

Work-life balance has generated rising interest in the field of research in Human Resource Management among those who are concerned about the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). The growing diversity of family structures represented in the workforce, has heightened the need of work-life balance for a significant portion of employees (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2003). Employees across a number of organizations complain that they suffer from an imbalance between their work and family lives. According to a study by Rutgers University and the University of Connecticut in 2001, 90% of the working adults said that they do not get adequate time to spend with their families (Lockwood, 2003). According to Korabik et al. (2003), employees are increasingly suffering from strain-based conflict which is an outcome when stress related to one role interferes with a person's ability to perform another role. Furthermore, there have been severe cases, where employees ended up committing suicide due to failing to balance work and life; after the suicide case of a Japanese employee Matsuri Takahashi, the Japanese government passed a bill imposing a limit on overtime work in 2018 (The Japan Times, 2018). When an employee fails to allocate enough time for familial issues, he/she experiences despair in life domain which is carried forward the next day into work resulting in a lack of motivation (Kumar & Janakiram, 2017). Since work-life balance has become a pre-dominant issue among the personnel, what are the factors, which, if present, can stimulate the balance between the professional and familial lives of employees? Organizations can play an active role here, since employees' perception regarding organizational support is one of the most vital factors to promote enhanced work-life balance among the employees, so, they should try to incorporate plans to augment the work-life balance of their employees' well-being (Agarwal 2018; Thakur & Kumar, 2015; Kossek et al., 2011).

Apart from addressing employee well-being, motivation and satisfaction, organizations should try to promote a greater flexibility in work since work-life balance can bring about numerous benefits for the organizations, notably reduced absenteeism and turnover, better recruitment, increased productivity and customer satisfaction which ultimately have a positive influence on the organizational profit levels (Clutterbuck, 2003; Mayberry, 2006; Morgan, 2009; Michie & Williams, 2003). According to some research, some of the common work-life balance programs that firms might opt to implement include flextime, job sharing, telecommuting, parental leave compressed workweek, childcare and eldercare facilities (Beauregard, 2011; Fitzer, 1997; Bharathi et al., 2015; Pinsonneault & Boisvert, 2001). However, too much flexibility makes it difficult for the management to ensure attainment of desired performances and goals, so, proper controlling mechanisms are needed to prevent irregularities at work (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). In accordance to the study of Downes & Koekemoer (2011), some participants reported that unavailability of colleagues is a big problem since certain employees tend to misuse the flexibility given to them. Hence, flextime should be allowed with due care only after ensuring that employees have ingrained the adequate professional maturity which they require to perform their work. Furthermore, supportive nature of boss and co-workers can also shape the employee attitude towards work (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Michie, 2002), hence, managers at every level must pay attention towards improving the relationships within the company.

4. Theories of Motivation and the need to foster Work-life Balance

5.1. Work-life Balance and Need's Hierarchy Theory:

One of the most renowned classic theories of human motivation was synthesized by Abraham Maslow in 1943 which comprises of a five-tier model of human needs depicted within a pyramid which include physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs, in order. According to Maslow, needs lower down the pyramid must be mastered before an individual seeks to fulfill higher order needs (McLeod, 2018; Griffin, 2017).

From the context of work-life balance, family time, which is an interpersonal need, can be categorized into the third level of needs, i.e., belongingness and love. Now, if we want to link the concept of work-life balance to need's hierarchy theory, an individual should be content with and must get adequate time to spend on personal life activities before he/she gets motivated to get more engaged to work and achieve growth. Hence, work-life balance can be presumed to have a mediating effect in order to motivate employees for higher job engagement. Organizations, as a result, must understand the factors underlying employee motivation and play a moderating role by designing policies in a way that allow employees to satisfy their needs (in order); as a result, they can work more effectively and efficiently towards achieving organizational goals. On the basis of the existing literature and above discussion, the following illustration has been done to depict the predicted relationship between work-life balance and employees' propensity to become more devoted towards work:

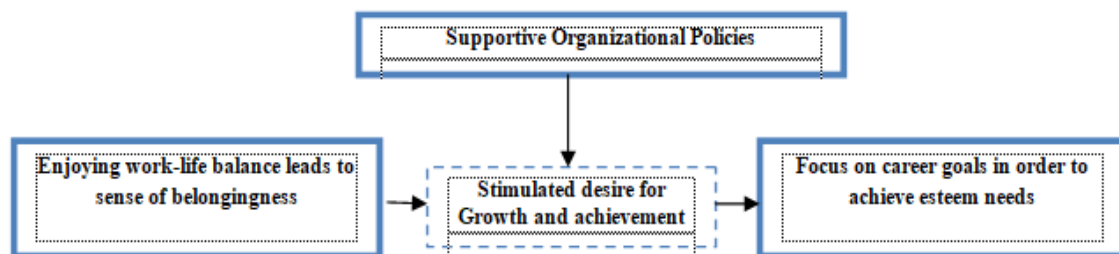


Figure1: The relationship between work-life balance and increased propensity to fulfill career goals in relationship to the need's hierarchy theory

5.2. Work-life Balance and Two-factor Theory:

The two-factor theory, alternatively known as motivation-hygiene theory synthesized by Frederick Herzberg relates intrinsic factors to employee job satisfaction and extrinsic factors to job dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg, two separate sets of factors are responsible for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, i.e., eliminating dissatisfying factors does not lead to job suggesting that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction (Robbins & Judge, 2013). It is also recommended that managers must at first emphasize on hygiene factors and then on the motivating factors for desired positive changes.

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) are one of the common trends in improving work-life balance and a study of the Government of South Australia (2012), revealed that such arrangements lead to improve employee-child relationships and increase employees' satisfaction with their lives. 73% of the respondents in a study revealed that flexible work arrangements have a positive impact on motivation levels ("Flexible Working Practices | Factsheets | CIPD", 2019). According to the article of Murinova & Sinovsky (2018), flexible work arrangements/working time arrangements-any kind of work arrangement that varies from the traditional 8 hours work, although part of hygiene factor, can have influence on motivation. Less rigid supervision, less hours of overtime, greater interval in working hours balancing are part of hygiene factors that help to eliminate dissatisfaction, whereas perceived sense of greater trust and responsibility from management, and ability to work overcoming own obstacles are issues related to flexible work arrangement which can influence motivation of workers. Also, if possible, employers could opt for Agile working which is a way of empowering employees, enabling them to choose when, where and how to work. If organizations are geared up with communications and information technology, agile working can overcome the traditional obstructions of the working contexts ("Agile working | ENEI", 2017).

Since the needs and preferences of employees might vary, the best results can be achieved if managers understand their employees individually, come up with feasible working time arrangements and approach the employees equitably. Based on the above discussion and existing literature, the following figure helps to illustrate the relationship between flexible work arrangements and two-factor theory:

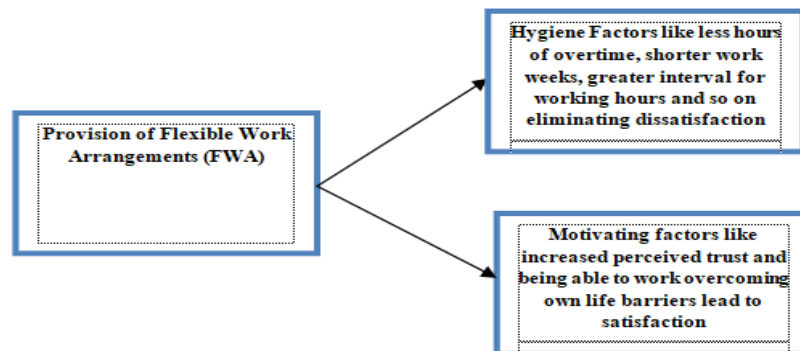


Figure 2: The impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Hygiene and Motivating factors

5.3. Work-life Balance and Theory Y:

An American psychologist, Douglas McGregor proposed two distinct views of employee motivation; one basically negative and labeled it Theory X, and the other mainly positive which was labeled Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). Under theory X, managers assume that employees are inherently lazy and dislike their work, so, they need to be pushed and strictly supervised, whereas under Theory Y, it is assumed that employees view work as natural as rest or play, they are self-motivated, tend to seek responsibilities and exercise self-direction, autonomy and empowerment (Robbins & Judge, 2013.). There have also been several anecdotal claims in favor of Theory Y, but so far there is no empirical evidence that confirms that either set of assumptions will lead to maximize employee motivation (Arslan & Staub, 2013). Nevertheless, McGregor himself believed that the assumptions of Theory Y were more valid than that of Theory X and proposed ideas to maximize employees' job satisfaction accordingly (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

From the assumptions of Theory Y such as self-motivated, self-directed and tendency to seek empowerment, we can assume that work-life balance and flexibility are important elements to maximize employees' job satisfaction. Peterson (2007) and Kopelman et al. (2008) have also accentuated on the fact that managers should be more flexible and develop trust in their employees in order to enhance their motivation levels. Hence, it is recommended that organizations provide employees with greater autonomy and responsibility for their work. When workers exercise greater autonomy over their work, they themselves will be able to better understand their priorities and schedule their work in a manner that let them strike a better balance between professional and personal lives, leading to increased performance at and satisfaction with work. The finding of a study performed by Saragih (2011) also supports the evidence that job autonomy is positively correlated to job performance and satisfaction. On the basis of existing and above discussion, the following illustration is done to show the relationship between work-life balance and assumptions of Theory Y:

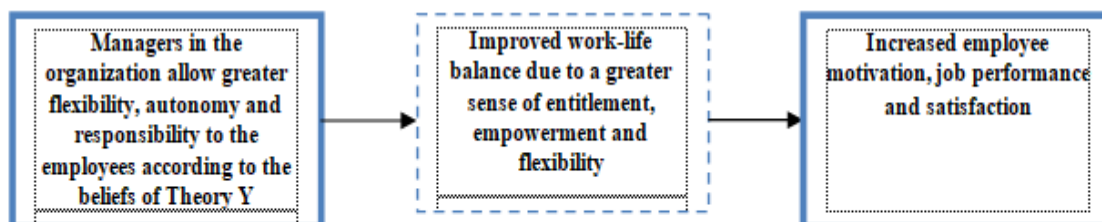


Figure 3: The relationship between Theory Y and increased employee motivation to perform through increased provision of work-life balance

5.4. Work-life Balance and Self-determination theory:

Self-determination Theory (SDT) was developed from the research of Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan that links personality, motivation, and optimal functioning. The theory and supporting research posit that three components- autonomy, competence and relatedness are required for proper functioning and motivation of human beings (McCarthy, 2012). Furthermore, it is suggested that there are two types of motivation-intrinsic and extrinsic that shape who we are and how we behave (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Extrinsic motivation is a drive to behave in a specific manner due to external factors, i.e., behavior is contingent upon certain external outcomes, whereas intrinsic motivation comes from within, i.e., people behave in a certain manner because they find it inherently satisfying (Legault, 2017).

If we try to link work-life balance to self-determination theory, out of the three components discussed earlier, 'autonomy' can be comparatively pertinent. Autonomy is the internal need to be more empowered and self-directed as opposed to feeling externally controlled or constrained. According to Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), which is a mini theory of SDT, when external, social and internal conditions assist one's need for autonomy and competence, their intrinsic motivation towards performing an activity rises, conversely, if autonomy is not addressed due to controlling events such as bribery, deadlines, pressure to work, intrinsic motivation to perform a certain task diminishes (Amabile et al. 1976; Deci 1971), which means intrinsic motivation can be altered depending on the extent to which external factors such affect one's perception towards autonomy and competence. The need for work-life balance has already been discussed in the earlier segments and from the study of Walia (2014), task autonomy-the freedom of an employee to decide how to do the job, is a work domain variable that has been found to affect work-life balance positively. From this discussion, it is presumed that if organizations are more supportive towards their employees and try to manage them in a way that give them more control over their job, for example by incorporating Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), their perceived work-life balance will be enhanced and their intrinsic motivation to perform their tasks will increase. This could possibly be the reason why several renowned employers like IBM and Netflix are very flexible in terms of allowing vacations to their employees as long as they deliver desired results (McCarthy, 2012). Based on the existing literature and above discussion, the following illustration is done to show the how greater autonomy can lead to better performance:

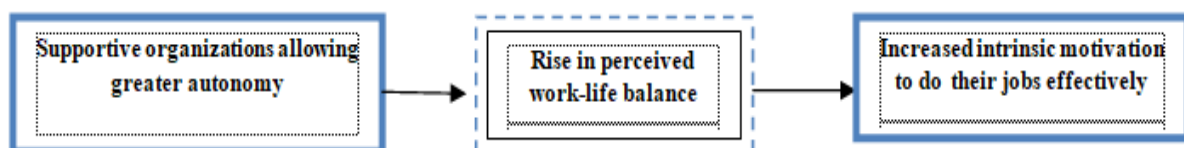


Figure 4: The relationship between higher autonomy and increased motivation through the rise in perceived work-life balance

5.5. Work-life Balance and Equity Theory/Organizational Justice:

Adams' (1965) equity theory proposes that, individuals tend to compare their job inputs and outcomes with that of others and if there is an inequality, they tend to eliminate it. When employees feel that they are not treated fairly, they will look for restitution. The comparison can be made on any outcomes that employees receive, including provision of work-life balance they get to avail. Therefore, just like other imperative factors, like pay and compensation, management should pay attention to develop adequate work-life balance policies. According to the book, Organizational Behavior by Robbins & Judge (2013), equity theory's propositions served as a foundation to the study of organizational justice, which deals with

employees' perception on how they are treated by their authorities. Perceived organizational justice depends mainly on three dimensions-distributive justice (the perceived fairness of an outcome), procedural justice (the perceived fairness of the organization's process for making decisions on outcomes), and interactional justice (the perceived degree of being treated with respect and being informed about organizational policies).

If we try to link the theory to work-life balance, when employees are not content with their work-life balance or convinced with their authority's process for implementing work-life balance programs or if they do not have a comprehensive knowledge regarding the authority's plans and actions regarding improving work-life balance, they will develop negative emotions causing behavioral strains, such as increasing avoidable absences, reducing efficiency or adopting other counterproductive behavior at work (Beauregard, 2014); in this study 12 out of the 35 interviewees alleged that they do not have a clear idea regarding the full range of organizational work-life balance initiatives and the procedure of implementing them. Hence, it is not sufficient for organizations to merely develop work-life balance policies, rather managers at every level need to be trained on how to implement organizational policies fairly and persistently so that employees perceive that they are being treated with equity, conversely, if they feel that they have been treated unjustly, they should be able to report it through a structured grievance procedure. While the previously discussed theories emphasized mainly on the need for work-life balance, equity theory/organizational justice stresses on the employees' 'perception of fairness' regarding work-life balance initiatives taken by organizations. However, since preferences vary across cultures (Wilken & Miyamoto, 2011), international managers must identify what is being perceived as 'fair' in a particular context. On the basis of the above discussion, the following illustration has been done to show the link between equity theory and perceived work-life balance:

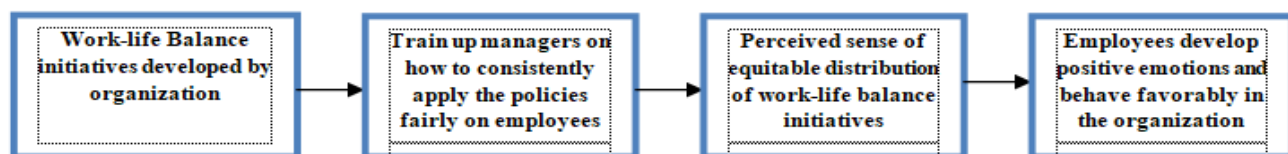


Figure 5: The impact of work-life balance on employee motivation in relation to the equity theory

5. Conclusion and implications for future research:

Employee motivation has always been an imperative factor behind an organization's success and work-life balance has gained mounting interest among those who are interested about quality of working life and its relation to other aspects of life (Guest, 2002). This article has tried to connect these two crucial facets for organizations from a theoretical perspective by delving into existing literature from numerous secondary sources. Several familiar classic and contemporary theories of motivation have been used and are found to complement the implementation of work-life balance policies by organizations. Based on the findings, it is recommended that organizations show empathy towards their employees and support them to strike a better balance between their professional and personal lives in order to stay motivated at the workplace. However, managers must carefully decide on the degree of flexibility provided and undertake proper controlling mechanisms so that few employees do not misuse the facilities provided to them and the main effectiveness of flexible working practices largely lies in the ability of the human resources practitioners to address the challenges and generate a supportive organizational culture for the employees in terms of work-life balance (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011). Technology can at times make lives difficult if not handled properly, hence, before implementation of flexible working practices employees need to be trained on how to be well organized. This study has been conducted based on secondary sources; however, future research in this field may be supported by empirical evidence to establish the need of work-life balance in relation to the theories of motivation by performing comparative analysis on the basis of gender or culture. This might help to generate meaningful insights on whether or not work-life balance has the same impact on men and women or on employees across individualistic and collectivist cultures, by examining them in the context of these well-renowned theories of motivation. Consequently, this might help the organizations develop work-life balance policies with better understandings of the employee preferences and situational factors.

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