Research Paper

A STUDY ON WORK – LIFE BALANCE (WLB) THEORIES, FRAMEWORK AND MEASURES - A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract
Organizations are in urge of sustainable remedial theories & frameworks for their concurrent and future oriented challenges day by day. Benchmark companies always a leap ahead in terms of being learning organizations. The informational era which began approximately 1980s created undeniable changes in every business domains and brought limitless effects over work spheres all over the world. Simultaneously the interface between work & life been very much narrowed down over the decades. In this study, numerous studies are considered in order to create a collective understanding of WLB theories and measures practiced all over the world. The roles of Work Life Balance measures having very influential roles in business organizations, workforce and society at large in western nations as these are proved practices and mandate / legitimate framework in most of the developed nations. To be frank, among Indian MNCs, at present WLB measures are voluntarily practiced based upon their suitability/prudential and match without legitimate/ compliance role by government. So more such studies would ideally accelerate the momentum of early adaptation of WLB measures and may blossom WLB measure as legitimate/ compliance mandate in near future. The details given in this study may have to be seen as a extended view on WLB concepts.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Work Life Conflict & Theories and Measures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the social, political and economic fabric of societies have influenced and continue to influence both the nature of employment and its relationship to life outside work. Work-life balance has emerged as a hot topic in recent decades and fuelled by changing trends in workforce multi domain roles. The changing economic conditions and social demands have changed the nature of work throughout the world. The concept of Work life balance is becoming more and more relevant in an ever dynamic working environment.

Kirchmeyer (2000) views living a balanced life as ''achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so require personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains'. The New Zealand Department of Labour (2004) defines work–life balance in terms of creating a productive work culture where the potential for tensions between work and other parts of people's lives is minimized. Qualitative research suggests that employees see work–life balance in terms of achieving integration between paid work, unpaid work and personal time.[1]

Work-life balance has become a subject of concern for both research scholars and business leaders in view of the contemporary demographic, technological, market, and organizational changes associated with it. Considering wide range of horizon of various industrial perspectives, it would be hilly task to come with a concrete recommendation for all issues at large and overall. Now especially corporate companies those who exert naturally on 'dying for targets'   should tailor its work/life policies to suit their own business needs and corporate culture. This 'best fit' must emerge as bi party outcome between employer and workforce. As with other health and safety programs, for work/life initiatives to be successful and sustainable, both employers and employees must take responsibility for making the program work effectively.

It is very important to remember that for many workers balancing work/life demands are just one of the many challenges they face on a regular basis as there is no single recipe for all. Therefore a good work/life balance seeks to find a balance between an individual's work and their life outside work. An ideal WLB programmed truly empowers beneficiaries, employer & employee; for long term and sustainable achievements regardless of rollercoaster nature of competitive business environment. Work-life balance is about people having a measure of

control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.[2]

Nancy Lockwood (2012), in her study, revealed three macro factors, 'global competition, personal lives/family values, and an aging workforce' present challenges that exacerbate work/life balance. Considering the situational needs, human resource professionals can assist their companies to capitalize on these factors by using work/life initiatives to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Work/life programs have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times.[3]

2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE
2.1 Work and Life - Clarified
Work–life balance is the proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. In order to find the remedy, addressing both the concepts of work life balance and work life balance practices becomes need of the hour.[4]

This balance should aim at three levels, personal, professional & social domains which also includes achievement inside work and personal enjoyment outside work. Keeping the present scenario of the fast growing, work minded, career oriented and highly competitive environment leads invariably to prove the need for framework for WLB measures.[5]

2.2 Triad of 'Work – Life Balance, Job & Life Satisfaction and Job &Life Interference
Adams & Thomas studied the interrelationship of interference and satisfaction between life and job, based upon the value attainment has given better introspection about the dynamics of all the variables, in detail in the given below picture. They positively and negatively pay off towards workforce and organizations.[6]
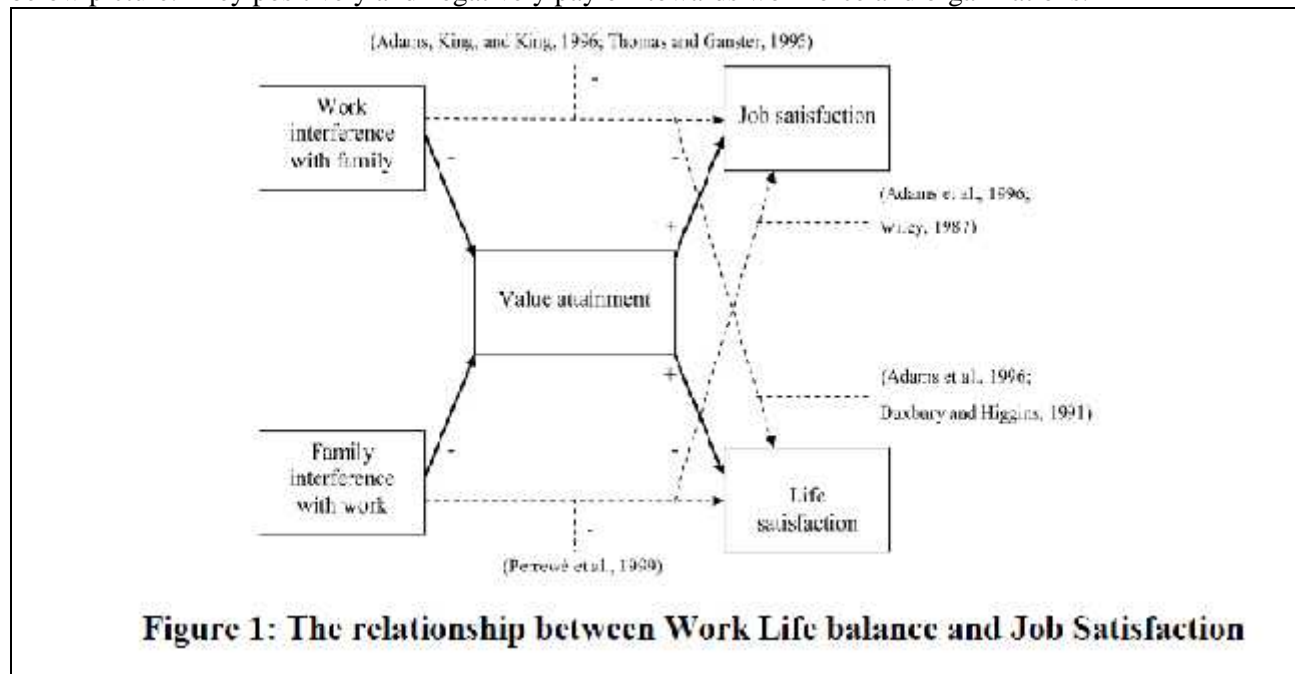

Figure 1: The relationship between Work Life balance and Job Satisfaction

2.3 Women are serious victims then men: WLB outlook to have gender dimension too
Janeen Baxters and Jenny Chesters examined whether women's perceptions of work- family balance are affected by access to and use of a range of family-friendly work entitlements including part-time employment, subsidized child care, various types of leave, control over rosters and variations in weekly employment hours. Our findings indicate that negative perceptions of work-family balance are linked to long work hours, having to work extra

hours and unpredictable work hours. This suggests that what women need most is control over the length and scheduling of their working hours.[7]

2.4 Theories of WLB
### 2.4.1 Balance Theory of WLB measures

While understanding the spheres of WLB concepts various subject matters to be considered between 'work & life'. According to Greenhaus.et al (2003), the recent explosion of interest in the work–family interface has produced a number of concepts to explain the relation between these two dominant spheres of life: accommodation, compensation, resource drain, segmentation, spillover, work–family conflict, work–family enrichment, and work–family integration. Nevertheless, the definitions of balance are not entirely consistent with one another, the measurement of balance is problematic, and the impact of work–family balance on individual well-being has not been firmly established. Positive balance suggests an equally high level of attention, time, involvement, or commitment, whereas negative balance refers to an equally low level of attention, time, involvement, or commitment.

Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, in their study, gave broad enough framework to include positive balance and negative balance of work - life. Role engagement can be further divided into elements of time and psychological involvement; they have proposed three components of work–family balance:

• Time balance: an equal amount of time devoted to work and family roles.
• Involvement balance: an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles.
• Satisfaction balance: an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles.

Each component of work–family balance can represent positive balance or negative balance depending on whether the levels of time, involvement, or satisfaction are equally high or equally low.[8]

2.4.2 Border theory of WLB Measures
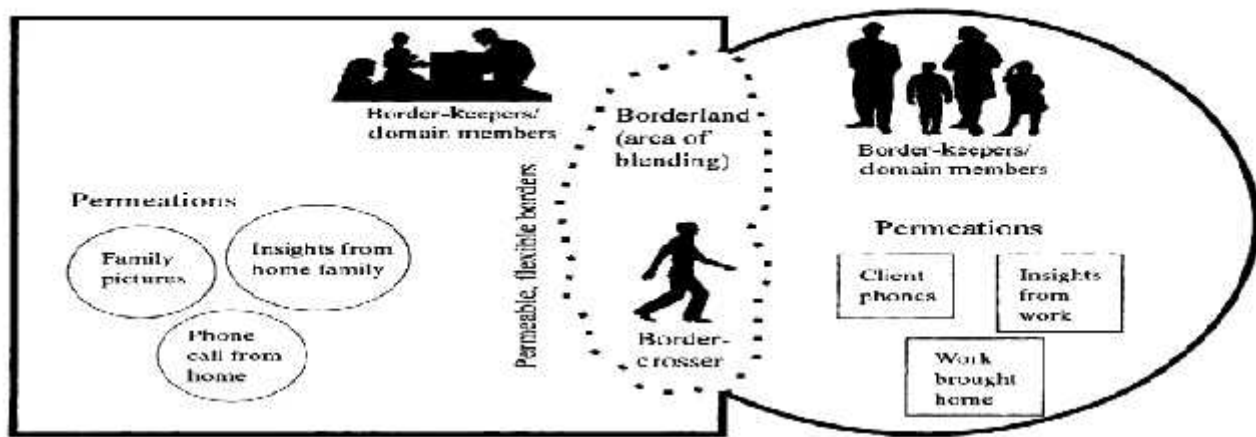
Domains

extent of segmentation and integration
overlap of valued means and ends
overlap of cultures

Borders

border strength
permeability
flexibility
blending

Border-crossers

peripheral vs. central domain membership
identification
influence

Border-keepers & other domain members

other-domain awareness
commitment to border-crossers

Border Theory by Clark

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This theory addresses how domain integration and segmentation, border creation and management, border – crosser participation and relationships between borders – crossers and others at work and home influence work/family balance.[9]

2.4.4 Hypothesis theory of WLB Measures
Goode and Marks, recommended 'Hypothesis' theory model of work life balance. According to the conflict hypothesis, multiple roles with infinite demands are likely to cause role strain and conflict for individuals because the resources they have to meet these demands are finite and scarce (Goode, 1960). The core statement of the enhancement hypothesis, in turn, is that multiple roles provide benefits in the form of privileges, status security, psychological energy and personal growth which expand individual resources and facilitate role performance (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974).

2.4.5 Conflict Vs Enhancement theory of WLB Measures
The relational relationship of 'Conflict vs Enhancement' has been found by Tiedje and colleagues (1990). They regarded role conflict and role enhancement as independent dimensions, and therefore they argued that it is possible to experience simultaneously either (a) high conflict and low enhancement, (b) high enhancement and low conflict, (c) low conflict and low enhancement, or (d) high conflict and high enhancement.

		Enhancement	
		Low	High
High	C o N F L I C T	HC / LE	HC/ HE
Low		LC / LE	LC / HE

2.4.6 Role Balance theory of WLB Measures
In this study, 'Positive role balance & Negative role balance' concepts are introduced engaging any tasks. According to Marks and MacDermid (1996) there are two ways to engage multiple roles; as either positive or negative role balance. Positive role balance, in Marks and McDermid's theory (Barnett and Baruch, 1985), refers to the tendency to engage in every role with equally high effort, devotion, attention and care, whereas negative role balance refers to the tendency to engage in roles with apathy, cynicism, low effort and low attentiveness.

2.4.7 Personality Type theory: Workaholic vs Over Worker
Scot et al, described 3 types of personality with reference to WLB concepts are, 1. Achivment oriented (Workaholics), 2. The Perfectionist and 3. Compulsive Dependant (Over Worker). As per this theory, Workaholics grave for more work hours in order fulfill their identity or challenge needs, in which they are positively tuned. They count monetarily or otherwise rewards as priority. In case of Over Worker, they do work more time /hours where they are forced and not voluntarily or willingly. Even returns are not eagerly minded as the work is forced upon them.[10]

2.5 Personal Indicators / Parameters of Work –Life balance
Clarke et al, in their study, given a list of parameters being indicators for a collective understanding the effects of Work- Life balance in every employee's career. An individual's psychological well-being, and that high self-esteem, satisfaction and overall sense of harmony in life can be regarded as indicators of a successful balance between work and family roles (Clark, 2000; Clarke et al., 2004; Marks and MacDiarmid, 1996).

2.6 Challenges emerges out of Work – Life Conflict
Linda, Christopher & Donna, in their study revealed in detail about the challenges faced by work – life conflict at organizational, work life interface and individual / family levels. As a follow up, strategic recommendations as larger consideration also given below. [11]

Challenges Faced by Workforce		
At Organizational Level	At Work Life Interface	At Individual & Family level
- Work loads - Non supportive management - Organizational culture - Conflict between balance and career advancement - Policies - Too much change makes balance more difficult - Imposed Temporary & Part time work - Work related travel increases stress - Specific challenges	- Role Overload - Role Interference - Specific Challenges	- Personal problems - Challenges at home - Childcare & Eldercare - Financial strains

Recommendations at organizational policy level
- Improve benefits
- Increase flexibility with respect to hours of work
- Enhance leave (i.e. maternity, paternity, family days, sick days, special leave)
- Reduce the amount of time employees are expected to spend in work
- Support the traditional family structure

2.7 Personal Resource Allocation (APA) framework for WLB
4 areas have been identified as a dynamic & evolving framework for WLB, which highlights the concept of resource allocation. They are 1. Personal resource supply, 2. Demands on Resources, 3. Resource allocation and 4. Individual outcomes. All the given 4 areas are continuously guided by 'Influencing Factors'. [12]

PRA (Personal Resource Allocation) Framework by Matthew & Larissa.

2.8 Evaluation Approach of WLB Measures
Overall appraisal approach refers to an individual's general assessment concerning the entirety of his or her life situation. For example, work-family balance has been defined as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and home, with a minimum of role conflict" (Clark, 2000, p. 751), "equilibrium or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life" (Clarke et al., 2004, p. 121), and "global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains" (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 825).

A components approach to work-life balance emphasizes balance as a direct formative latent construct (Edwards and Bagozzi, 2000), which means that work-family balance consists of multiple facets that precede balance and give meaning to it (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007). The advantage of the components approach over the overall appraisals approach to work-life balance is that one can use conceptually based measures of balance that tap into the different aspects of work-life balance.[13]

2.9 WLB Solutions
2.9.1 Family – Friendly Practices are not one Stop Solutions
Some organizations introduced ``bundles'' of family-friendly practices into their organizational practices. At larger picture, they have not yielded significant result in corporate performance and achievements. So what would be ideal is to consider large picture of including SHRM and Organization along with family-friendly practices. Perry-Smith and Blum (2000) report a US study on ``bundles'' of family-friendly practices and corporate performance. They found, in line with other research on human resource management (HRM), that isolated family-friendly practices will have little impact but that a comprehensive bundle of practices is associated with superior ratings of corporate performance. Research has concentrated on the demands of work rather than home. However, in this context some of the work of Hochschild (1997) is revealing in suggesting that the use of progressive human resource practices to generate commitment to work can risk making work almost too attractive.[14]

2.9.2 Holistic - Three Dimensional Solutions for an ideal WLB Measures
Work–life interface in terms of three issues: Time management; inter-role conflict (role overload and interference) and care arrangements for dependents. Work–life balance priorities are considered to fall within three general categories: working time arrangements (total working hours and flexibility); and, for those with parenting or other care responsibilities, parental leave entitlements (maternity, paternity, parental and carers); and childcare (subsidies or direct provision) (McDonald et al., 2005; Thornthwaite, 2004).[15]

Collette Fagan & Mark Smith (2011) clearly emphasize the seriousness and significance of numerous leave arrangements, policies, measures and recommendations in their report towards International Labour Organizations (ILO). In their report, job sharing, flexi time, part time, parental leaves, carer's leave, home working, domestic computing and much more are discussed in detail which precisely points out the pivotal importance as recommendation in International Labour Organization.[16]

Raju (2012), In his study, given a list of core and add on areas of recommendations on WLB measures which may be addressing 3 dimensions essentially and extended benefits makes WLB programmes more tailor made and offers prudential comfort zone for both companies and workforce.[17 & 18.]

Core Areas			Add on Areas
Flexible work options	**Specialized leave policies**	**Dependent care benefits**	**Extended Benefits**
▪ Compressed work week ▪ Job sharing ▪ Flexi-Time ▪ Home Tele Commuting ▪ Work at home	▪ Paid maternity leave ▪ Paid Paternity leave ▪ Carer's leave ▪ Dependants' breakdown leave ▪ Study / training leave ▪ Career breaks	▪Onsite / near site company childcare ▪Company referral system for childcare ▪Onsite / near site company elderly care ▪Program for emergency	▪ Re-Entry scheme ▪ Phased retirement ▪ Professional counseling ▪ Subsidized fitness facilities / centers ▪ Relocation assistance

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programmes ▪ Part time work ▪ Shorter work days for parents	▪ Bereavement leave ▪ Cultural / Religious leave ▪ Sabbatical leave ▪ Pooling of leave entitlements	care for ill dependants ▪Childcare programs during vacations ▪Life skill programs	▪ Work family resource kit & library

3.CONCLUSION

The intension of this study to search and provide a relatively wider perspective of Work Life Balance measures from the aspects of definition, factors / variables involved, theoretical framework, challenges emerge from work life conflict which in turn lead to WLB measures are discussed. Considering narrow outlook may lead ineffectiveness / less impact in launching of such measures in organizations. Like discussed in PDA framework, WLB measures to always be considered in dynamic scenario to reap the desired benefits. Rather strategic than tactical might be an ideal choice for long term and sustainable outcomes.

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