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BALANCING THE SCALE OF WORK AND LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a term that describes the process of achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life. According to Lockwood (2003), WLB refers to the condition where employees strike a balance between both professional and personal obligations. A good WLB creates a productive and healthy environments both at work and at home. The context of a person's personal life may include time spent developing relationships and performing non-job duties, as well as time spent pursuing personal interests.

Due to the diversity of the workforce and the changing realities of many companies, it is critical to maintain a WLB among employees in order to keep them productive, happy, and engaged. If employees perceive their company as helping them in balancing work and family life, the company may gain a competitive advantage in terms of hiring, retention and productivity. It is also remarked by Feeney and Stritch (2017) that companies with access to family-friendly policies encourage employees to work in a healthy environment and achieve favourable job outcomes.

On the other hand, WLB issues would have adverse effects on both the personal and professional life of an employee. Poor WLB could result in mental and physical stress, and can negatively impact job performance in the professional or work life. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the importance of striking a balance in the scale of work and personal life.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

A healthy WLB is essential to develop a conducive, supportive, and healthy working environment. It allows employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal or family responsibilities that are commensurate with their level of job productivity and commitment. WLB is relatively a new concept in the eastern countries, Pakistan for an example, even though it has gained broader recognition and acceptance in the western countries (Ansari et al., 2015). Numerous large and successful organizations have incorporated and practiced healthy WLB into their organizational culture as a means to stimulate employee job satisfaction and motivation. Studies have found that healthy practices of WLB can result in many benefits to an employee, and therefore to the company as well. For instance, the effectiveness of WLB practices could result in an employee's good performance. In comparison to an unhappy employee who strives to strike the right balance between work, family, and self, a happy employee will be self-driven to work (Ansari et al., 2015).

However, balancing work and family life poses a significant challenge for both employees and employers. Therefore, the employees themselves must also strive to balance work and family commitments. In the cases where it becomes unmanageable, it will affect employee productivity, work performance, and well-being. For instance, Lowe (2005) states that one (1) in four (4) employees experiences a high level of conflict between work and family as a result of work-to-family interference and caregiver strain. He further remarks that 60 percent of employees, especially in managerial and professional levels, have experienced work-family conflicts.

Recently, in the context of Malaysia, the mounting pressure of work demand is expected to negatively influence the employee's life domain (Sharmila, Lee & Khairuddin, 2021).

The efficacy and effectiveness of WLB management are essential in today's working environment because WLB is also associated with occupational health and psychological outcomes. WLB determines whether or not the employees have improved health and well-being in their life after working in a company. According to Wang et al. (2008), the imbalance between work and family life is a more potent risk factor than work stress for causing mental disorders among employees and adversely impacting their physical health. Work environments with high psychological demands and low job control have also been reported to harm employee's health and well-being, as well as positively cause work-family conflict (Amstad et al., 2011). Therefore, organizations or companies need to design engaging WLB programs to reduce stress and prevent burnout amongst employees.

For example, companies can improve WLB among their employees by using innovation and utilizing technology to manage both work and personal responsibilities (Alegre & Pasama, 2018). Additionally, they suggest that work-related motivation, engagement, and creativity could balance the scale of WLB. It is also supported by Pandita and Singhal (2017) that companies can encourage work-life balance by offering flexible timing, leave policies, and compensation, among other benefits.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, ensuring WLB among employees is one of the important strategies to enhance their quality of work while also supporting and balancing their personal lives. It is pertinent that companies advocate for practical implementations of WLB towards their employees to reap long-term benefits for both parties. As WLB is an essential aspect for organizations and individual employees, commitment and effort from both parties are required.

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