Work Life Balance a Contemporary Topic: How do Marketing Practitioners Deal with Organizational Support Issues?

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Men and women are both faced with daily decisions that affect both their families and their work. This paper will look at the overall satisfaction of employees as it relates to work/life conflict. The concept has expanded as there are more responsibilities outside of the job setting that include, volunteer commitments, personal development, home life and elder care. Since lifestyles have changed and there are significant pressures that all employees are facing, work/life has become a significant benefit issue. Family friendly policies may help organizations to assist employees with balancing work and family. Conflict roles can spillover from the work domain to the family domain and from the family domain to the work domain. Time and technical connectivity are factors in work overload. Supporting employees could contribute to job satisfaction by offering alternative work schedules and family friendly benefits. Organizations that offer flexible alternatives can engage employees and decrease job turnover.

Understanding Work Life Balance

Work and family are two important domains for those who are employed. Researchers have found significant interdependence in the roles that each requires. Work-family conflict arises when an imbalance exists between the two roles. One role in a domain may demand more time or more responsibilities than the role in the other, thus causing the responsibilities in one domain to suffer.

Men have traditionally been the primary breadwinners in most households; however, this role distinction has dramatically changed in industrialized countries (Skitmore & Ahmad, 2003). Research has found, not surprisingly, that women spend more time working in the household than men (Brough & Kelling, 2002; Hochschild, 1997; Skitmore & Ahmad, 2003). Women are still largely responsible for maintaining the household, through tasks which include doing the laundry, shopping, food preparation, paying bills, etc., even though employed and spending forty hours a week in the workplace (O'Kelly, 2002). This fact suggests that women should be experiencing more work life conflict than men. It is further purported that women with younger children would face more inner conflict than those with older children (Ayree & Luk, 1996; Brough & Kelling, 2002; Noor, 2002).

Lilly, Duffy & Virick, 2006 suggest that men and women have different expectations for work and home. Men generally have a higher need of affiliation than women and find that family experiences interfere with work. Understanding the roles of men and women in the workplace has to include norms dictated by society. Women are expected to be more family focused than men, while men who are considered providers are more career conscious than women. Typically, men spend more time at the office seeking career advancement while women are doing both, spending too much time at the office while trying to maintain the family household. (Hochschild, 1997 & Lilly, et al., 2006)

Men generally feel less pressured by societal expectations with respect to issues associated with family conflict; the male is expected to be the primary breadwinner. Women, conversely, allow society to create cultural pressures to stay home, raise children and take care of the household (O'Conner, 2005). According to Hochschild (1997) men accomplish one-third of daily home activities; while women perform two-thirds. Therefore, if there is a family conflict and woman are earning less than their husbands; the woman would be more likely to leave the workplace. In society, a man's success is generally associated with his work. Some want to become more involved at home, but men are less likely to utilize family friendly policies over a long period (O'Conner, 2005). Working under these pressures has caused an increase in work family conflict that has contributed to the growth of burnout, adverse attitudes, job dissatisfaction, decreased quality family time and workplace violence (Geenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Lilly, et al, 2006; Noor, 2002).

Extended work hours and excessive workloads can influence work-family conflict and is the direct antecedent to work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Spector, et al, 2007). Researchers have also found support for Greenhaus et al. (1985) three major components of work family conflict: time based, strain based and behavior based (Brough & Kelling, 2002; Pleck, Staines & Lang, 1980; Skitmore & Ahmad, 2003).

Time based conflict is the inability to accomplish tasks in a given role due to the demands of another role. These demands can contribute to absenteeism from the workplace. For example, the number of hours worked in a week, shift changes, overtime and inflexible schedules.

Strain based conflict is existing conditions of one role that can cause stress in achieving the goals of a subsequent role. This conflict can lead to anxiety and spillover to the work sphere causing low productivity and poor performance. Actors of strain based conflict are tension, irritability, fatigue, apathy and depression. Behavior based conflict exist when behaviors in one role are incompatible with other behaviors in another role causing inconsistencies in the expectations of dissimilar roles.

In essence, inter role conflict occurs when demands transpire in both domains that are not complementary. For example, a doctor in an emergency room might be expected to be assertive, unemotional, and hard-driving, but similar behaviors in the family domain would likely lead to conflict with family members.

Family-friendly policies were created to provide employees flexibility between work and family. This enables employees to meet commitments in both domains without having to choose one over the other. Organizations that provide flexible work schedules allow parents to care for their families while meeting work obligations during a given work cycle. For example, an employee may change work hours to meet with teachers, take their children or parents to the doctor (Halpern, 2005). Flexible work hours are designed to keep employees motivated in a competitive business environment (Kropf, 1996; Hyland, Rowsome & Rowsome, 2005). There are also programs that provide a family friendly environment: job sharing, elder care benefits, healthcare programs and onsite day care (Sands & Harper, 2007).

According to the type of provisions offered employees, there may be a combination of both work spillover and home spillover (Hyland, et al, 2005). Research has been done on the spillover effect determining if work and home roles should be integrated or segmented. Nontraditional working arrangements have been introduced by many corporations such as job

sharing, telecommuting, and compressed work weeks to ensure flexibility for employees (Duxbury & Haines, 1991; Hyland et al., 2005; Milliken, Martins & Morgan ,1998).

Definitions:

Boundary: A designated area that is limited by borders (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001).
Domain: a distinctive group of individuals with the same shared interest (Geenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Embeddedness: the more a person is connected to an organization and community the greater their intent will be to stay with the organization (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

Family: a group of legally related individuals (Aryee & Luk, 1996).

Job Satisfaction: the level of contentment that results from employees' positive and negative feelings towards their work (Saltzstein & Saltzstein, 2001).

Organization Commitment: the degree of corporate loyalty and psychological attachment to an organization (Geenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Retention: the amount of time a worker stays on a job (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001).

Role: a set of expected behavior patterns attributed to someone occupying a given position in a social unit (Robbins, 2005).

Role Conflict: occurs when individuals are forced to take on competing role demands in their lives and when role obligations are incompatible (Mathew & Rodin, 1981).

Spillover Effect: looks at the behaviors and attitudes in one domain and how it may affect the behaviors and attitudes in another domain (Brough & Kelling, 2002).

Work Life Balance: describes the balance between an individual's work and his or her personal life (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001).

Need for Study

Whittard and Burgess (2007) and Brunton (2006) explain that effective work-life programs such as flexible work schedules, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, job sharing and onsite child care facilitates provide benefits to both the employer and the employee. Employees that can better manage both work and family should be more satisfied, which, in turn, can result in higher productivity, job satisfaction, commitment, job retention, and organizational loyalty. If employees are satisfied, job turnover and absenteeism should be reduced. There also

might be increased job performance and financial gains resulting in such things as reduced training costs (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001; Joshi, Leichne, Melanson, Pruna, Sager, Story & Williams, 2002).

Rosabeth Kanter (1977) argued that work and family should be interwoven and not portrayed in two independent domains. Researchers such as Steers and Mowday (1981) started to examine non work issues that affect job satisfaction including family responsibilities, family interaction and family conflict. Research has gravitated to spillover models that explain how family and work life is comingled Quick, Saleh, Sime, Cooper, Quick& Mont (2006) addressed work/family conflict in terms of energy, attention and engagement rather than time, suggesting that time, transitioned to a mathematical proposition and energy to human concerns. Frone (2003) indicated there was a positive correlation between an employee's attitude and experiences in the work and family domains. The results of inter-role conflict can reduce job satisfaction and cause the family domain to become unsteady (Brough, O'Driscoll & Kalliath, 2005). Flexible work hours is attributed to reducing bidirectional inter-role conflict; however, may have more of an affect on family/work conflict rather than on work/family conflict (Brough, et al, 2005).

Work-life conflict is the responsibility of both the employer and employee. Employers can identify ways to reduce workloads, overtime and job related travel. Also, employers can reward overtime work, make alternative corporate work provisions available and implement career development and advancement programs (Quick, et al., 2006). The employee is responsible for limiting the amount of job related work at home, limiting the reliance on overtime hours, reducing business travel and becoming more knowledgeable about work-life policies (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001; Quick, et al).

A vast amount of research has focused on the general topic of work-life balance; however, very limited research has been directed toward the relationship between job satisfaction and family friendly policies. The focus of this study is to ascertain the effectiveness of these policies.

Literature Review

The literature suggests that a relationship exists between job satisfaction and work-family conflict. The literature also suggests that employee performance is impacted by the intrinsic or extrinsic rewards employees find in job satisfaction. While both statements might well be true, this study is concerned with the possible spillover effect on performance behavior when the boundaries are crossed either from home to work or work to home.

Work and family are two important domains for those who are employed. Researchers have found significant interdependence between the roles that each requires workers to perform (Higgins & Duxbury, 2001). Work-family conflict arises when balance cannot be achieved between the two roles. Either role may demand more time or more responsibilities, potentially leading to a reduction.

Significance of Study

There is agreement in the literature reviewed that work/life balance, family friendly policies and job satisfaction are significant in an organization's success. The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 created a shift in the way corporations responded to work family relationships. (Grover & Croker, 1995). Corporations that implement family friendly policies are thought to attract and retain a higher percentage of employees than those that have not introduced policies (Friedan, 1989). This study will examine the effect of family friendly policies on work/life balance and job satisfaction.

Background on work-life balance

The study of work-life balance began in the 1970s as concerns grew over quality childcare programs and proliferation of employee assistance programs (EAP) that provided benefits for stress, depression, and illnesses and employees with low productivity levels (Harrington, 2007). Introducing employee assistance programs (EAPs) are invaluable to

individuals who are experiencing family conflict. Integrated family and work assistance can be provided to the participant individually (Leiter & Durup, 1996).

Early researchers compared home relationships with those of work as they tried to determine the role of men in parenting. As the number of women increased in the workplace, organizations had to acknowledge the conflict experienced by women desiring to succeed professionally and desiring to have children (Harrington, 2007; Reed, Kratchman, & Strawser, 1994). Women are considered by society to be the primary caretaker of the family and may find it more difficult to balance family and professional demands (Reed, Kratchman, & Strawser 1994). Work-life balance involves individuals, employers, and society as a whole. Voydanoff (2001) sees community as a significant element in work-life balance studies. Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) further suggest that family commitment and work are not the only contributors to work-life balance. Outside work activities such as visiting friends and relatives, entertainment, creative activities are directly associated with maintaining work-life balance. The more balance between work and family, the more time can be spent reducing stress by pursuing personal interest activities (Hughes, Bozionelos, 2007; Vaydanoff, 2001).

Burke (2002) agrees that social class can have an effect on their response to certain parameters. Low income, when combined with physically demanding responsibilities result in greater work-life conflict and stress (Burke, 2002). Indeed women with greater work stressors and those who lacked job security reported less job satisfaction. Dixon and Sagas (2007) suggest that attitudes, values, perceptions, family dynamics, sex and coping strategies are associated with work-family conflict. Men and women with infants and toddlers have a significant higher incidence of imbalance of work conflict. Also, women have a tendency to experience more conflict, less family and work satisfaction (Frone & Cooper, 1992; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Kirkwood & Tootell (2008)). Age and education are other variables that are associated with work-family conflict (Dixon & Sagas, 2007).

Research on work-family balance over the last decade has been focused primarily on women with family obligations working in a corporate environment with family obligations. This focus has enabled organizations to develop and implement family-friendly policies (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). Some literature purports men may encounter lower work-life balance than women. Definitions of work-life balance have changed as studies have expanded to include: age, gender, non-work and work responsibilities (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). This leads to a significant area in the literature which focuses on family.

Work-life balance benefits include: increased employee retention, decreased absenteeism, fewer sick leave requests, job flexibility, increased productivity, reduced employee stress levels and an enhanced corporate culture. Costs associated with implementing family friendly policies are: direct costs (training and equipment for telecommuters), indirect costs (rethinking and organizing staff availability and flexibility) and costs associated with policy implementation (Yasbek, 2004)

Companies that are more focus on women tend to have more family friendly practices in place. It was also noted that those corporations that had higher productivity, had work balance policies in place. Research pursued by Galinksy and Bond (1998) revealed US corporations as having a larger percentage of women in senior management positions implementing family friendly work policies strategies (Yasbek, 2004).

There is limited research on family friendly benefits and a need to look at the present workforce and update benefits accordingly (Sands & Harper, 2007). In a study done in 2004 by Roberts, Gianakis, McCue and Wang, found that family friendly policies promote job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reduced job turnover. Using the winners of the best places to work in 2004 family friendly variables included: telecommuting, flextime, and job sharing and compressed work weeks. The variables were measured against the depth of company offerings and the extent the employees took advantage of the benefits. It was determined that benefits that are based more on work than on time may be more beneficial to an organization's

performance (Sands & Harper, 2007). Telecommuting particularly attracted new employees and was a key factor in job retention.

Breaugh & Frye (2007) studied the effects of a family friendly manager and the outcomes of work-life balance. The researchers found that having a supportive manager was positively associated with telecommuting, flextime and family leave and was negatively associated with work-family issues and was positively associated with job satisfaction (Breaugh & Frye, 2007).

Family-Friendly Policies

The area of family friendly policy studies is relatively new and lack conclusive research. Most researchers have classified work-life balance as work and unpaid time. Organizations are apprehensive about implementing various alternate work options and entitlement options because there is not a clear understanding of the total benefits (Bretherton, 2008). Corporations are facing criticisms for not changing their culture to include family-friendly policies and are considered "employee resistance'. Those that have embraced these policies are seen as supportive. Pocock and Masterman (2005) suggest work and family policy is a system of connected programs and policies.

Included in work-life balance policies are programs such as maternity leave, child and family care. These programs have significantly grown in the last decade. Hui-Yu (2008) studied the connection between work-life balance polices and job tenure of Japanese women employees. The results show that child and child care policies do not impact women's job tenure. However, maternity pay and flexible time arrangements were significant for higher tenure (Hui-Ya, 2008).

Job Satisfaction

Locke (1976) proposed that happy individuals were more satisfied at work and at home and that job and life satisfaction have a significant relationship. Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees like their work responsibilities and environment. Individuals have positive or

negative job perceptions. Research has been done on intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to determine which lends itself to job satisfaction (Ellickson 2002). Literature also relates career advancement and compensation as extrinsic rewards that lead to job satisfaction.

Research by Bass, Butler, Grzywacz,and Linney (2008) revealed that the greater the work-life conflict, the lower the day to day job satisfaction. Also, it was found that the higher the level of organizational supports for family friendly policies, the higher the level of job satisfaction. This study also determined that higher levels of financial success equates to reduced levels of family conflict and higher job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The target population of working individuals for this study will come from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, cultural and gender backgrounds. Participants will be asked to provide demographic information. A database has been procured for the targeted emails for survey respondents. A targeted number of respondents will be 400. The survey will be distributed via an online survey.

The research will explore family friendly policies as the dependent variable and work-life balance and job satisfaction as the independent variables. The dependent construct of job satisfaction is defined as dependent variables, general satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, the opportunity for growth, job security compensation, relationships with coworkers and the relationship with the supervisor (Hackman & Oldham, 1974).

The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman & Oldman, 1974) will be used to measure the extent of job satisfaction. The survey is a seven point Likert scale. The dependent variable constructs will be measured by using the Satisfaction with Work Flexibility instrument (Rothausen, 1994). The survey also includes questions as to the availability and use of various work-life programs.

General demographic questions of gender, age ethnicity, years at organization, supervisor's gender, marital status, dual earner household, number of household members, head of household, number of children, will be collected to allow survey results by discriminators and to determine relationships between work-life balance and family friendly policies (Day, 2005)

Research Question

Research Question: Is there a relationship between family friendly corporate policies and job satisfaction and work-life balance?

Instrument Rationale

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, et al. 1967) and the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1974) were considered for this study. The JDS measures the overall aspect of job satisfaction and was specially designed to test and expand Herzberg's hygiene-motivation theory (Day, 2005). The survey offers high levels of reliability and reliability over time with stability.

Researchers have reported in the past that there were some inconsistencies with the priori five-factor structure. The survey included a reverse survey question that negatively impacted the results. The JDS was updated to remove the reverse scoring to provide more accurate measures.

Five questions will be used in this study from the Satisfaction with Work Schedule Flexibility Inventory (Rothausen, 1994) to test the involvement of the respondents with family friendly policies. The following will be measured: flexibility in scheduling, part time or flextime work and work-life balance.

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After results are collected from the final survey a factor analysis will be performed to validate the dimensions of the job satisfaction construct. A comparison will be made with the JDS to ensure the dimensions are accurate and the survey is still reliable. Scaling will be done by categories related to specific dimensions. Cronbach's alpha will be computed to determine reliability, with .7000 being the minimum score accepted.

Reliability and Validity

The validity of the Satisfaction with Work Schedule Flexibility shows a positive correlation job satisfaction and supervisor support. There are many analysis of the JDS since its introduction as a measurement tool for job satisfaction. Fields (2002) analysis of survey results found that coefficient alpha for measure encompassing general satisfaction, internal work motivation, and growth satisfaction ranged from .55 to.92 (Mannheim, Baruch, & Tai, 1997; Netemeyer, Johnston, & Burton, 1990).

General satisfaction had a coefficient alpha of .77, internal work motivation .67, and growth satisfaction was .85 (Munz, et al, 1996). In 1998, Arcyee, Luk, and Stone reported a coefficient alpha of .79 for Satisfaction with Work Schedule Flexibility.

Conclusion

The 21st century employee will look differently than its predecessors of the late 20th century. As the workforce becomes older, employees are working longer and some entering the workforce later. A study of 3000 Australians confirms the major job attraction is work-life balance. Work life balance includes the following: family friendly policies, gender egalitarianism, justice and support for all industries. Spending quality time with family and friends was the number one response across workplace generations (Converge International, 2008).

Flexible work schedules are instrumental in work-life balance. There are several degrees to flexibility starting from none to very flexible. Work life balance does not dictate fewer hours but when and where the hour can be accomplished. Work life balance is not a gender, generation or care-giver issue. Most employees look at the number of hours, physical work appearances and not using policies as a sign of organizational commitment and may receive career advancement for those whose lives are more balanced.

It is reported that in 2020 the Australian population of Gen Y will be forty-two percent and employers will have a difficult attracting and maintaining them. Gen Y will be faced with a different set of parameters that includes taking care their parents, and children (sandwich generation) while trying to advance their careers (Converge International, 2008).

Future Research

Work life balance has become an issue over time as society and culture has changed. Past organization cultures were based on the number of hours worked and taking as little personal leave as possible. This forced individuals to make choices between work and family and caused conflict in one or both domains. It is suggested that as long as the work place continues to focus on the male as the breadwinner, dual income families will not have balance. Employees are looking for flexibility with job security. Most workers in the past have split their 24 hour day into 8 hour shifts: 8 for work (9-5), 8 hours for rest and downtime, and lastly 8 hours for play (entertainment). Flexible time arrangements include: part-time work, adjustable start and finish times, comp time, and a compressed work week (Converge International, 2008).

Various types of leaves that employees offer include: bereavement, family care, and leave without pay, sabbaticals and holiday purchase, along with maternity leave. The report states that 3 out of 5 workers are satisfied with work life balance. Forty-two percent are not satisfied, employees will leave the job because of communication issues, unrealistic expectations, work-life spillover, lack of career advancement, work life conflicts, not valued as an employee

and under paid (Converge International, 2008). The future workforce and marketplace will continue to depend on women with children and single parents raising children. Therefore, it will be more difficult to raise children that continue to model workforce strategies based on a male breadwinner status (McPherson, 2007).

Breaugh & Frye (2007) studied the effects of a family friendly manager and the outcomes of work-life balance. The researchers found that having a supportive manager was positively associated with telecommuting, flextime and family leave and was negatively associated with work-family issues and was positively associated with job satisfaction (Breaugh & Frye, 2007). Future research will be done to support Breaugh and Frye's (2007) research on job satisfaction and work life balance. Based on the information collected in this study the author will do further research to determine how to engage employees that have family friendly policies.

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