THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON THE WELLBEING OFFILIPINO EXPATRIATES

Dr. Christopher M. Panganiban, Department of Business and Management Studies, Gulf College, Maabella Oman

Dr. Irene P. Villareal, Department of Foundation Studies, Gulf College, Maabella Oman

Abstract: *Work-life balance is essential in both expert business practice and academic research. The literature displays that work-life balance is a dominant issue distressing wellbeing, as family and work are the most important elements in everyone's life. This study aimed to explore the work and family life balance experiences of Filipino expatriates in selected companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Descriptive – exploratory method of research was used by the researchers to obtain the needed data for the study using questionnaire and interview as instruments in securing necessary information from the respondents. Two hundred seven (207) Filipino expatriates from selected companies were respondents of the study using purposive sampling technique. This research also inveterate the undesirable effects of poor WLB due to high levels of work-family conflict on work satisfaction and psychological health. To ensure valid, reliable, and scientific presentation analysis, and interpretation of data, the following statistical tools were utilized in this study: simple frequency, percentage, and weighted mean. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 20. The findings and conclusion obtained from the respondents have good perceptions of work-life balance though work gets much everything from them in many ways. The study cannot be used as a general concept to refer to another organization as the focus is only on work-life balance.*

Keywords: Family Satisfaction, Psychological Distress, Job Satisfaction, Work-family Conflict, Working Hours

INTRODUCTION

The role of work has changed throughout the world due to economic condition and composition of the social workforce. Today, work still is a necessity but it should be a source of personal satisfaction as well. One of the vehicles to help provide attainment of personal and professional goals is work-life benefits and programs. The majority of research on the

correlation between work and family life refers to WLBand organization policies, WLB and organization culture, WLB and HR management, WLB and work commitment, WLB and absenteeism, WLB and gender equality, WLB and family life, and many more (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood & Lambert, 2007). There are a number of studies examining WLB and workers' wellbeing.

For many professionals, the boundary that separates work from non-work is increasingly blurry and permeable. Recent changes in society, organizations, and personal work and non-work roles have contributed to an increasing recognition of work-life balance challenges for working individuals. Globalization has led to increased communication demands for clients and colleagues who operate in distant locations. This, in addition to available mobile technologies, has created a situation in which many information technology (IT) professionals essentially have a never-ending, 24-hour, seven day per week job. For employees who work in organizations that require such long hours, the challenge of maintaining some semblance of balance between work and non-work roles demands is very real. This is particularly the case in dual-earner and single parent households. According to Jim Bird (2003), work-life balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life. The primary way companies can help facilitate work-life balance for their employee is through work-life programs and trainings. Achievement and enjoyment at work is a critical part of anyone's work-life balance. Furthermore, achievement and enjoyment in the other three quadrants of one's life (e.g. family, friends and self) is critical as well (Worklifebalance.com).

In response to shifts in the labor market and the changing nature of work, work-life balance is now at the top of the agenda for government and business. While work-life balance traditionally focused on family-friendly workplaces – essentially concerned with enabling mothers to balance work and childcare responsibilities – there is an increasing recognition from organizations that work-life balance is more than about families. It is a great to employees to have access to working arrangements that are compatible with their other responsibilities, lifestyles and work. It is also recognized that work-life balance can lead indirectly to productivity gains through retention and helps organizations to respond to customer needs more effectively.

Nowadays, the demand for work-life-balance solutions by employees and managers is

expanding at an unprecedented rate. And over the coming decade it will be one of the most important issues that executives and human resource professionals will be expected to manage. As a result, work-life balance is an increasingly top agenda for government and business in boardrooms and government halls in the different parts of the world and this does not exclude private companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Bahrain islands lie some 15 miles off the northeast coast of Saudi Arabia and 13 miles to the northwest of the Qatar peninsula. Connected by causeway to Saudi Arabia, Al-Awal, the largest, is 27 miles by 10 miles. The total land area of the country, 213 square miles, in 2001 supported a population of 650,600. Manama is the capital and largest city. In 2010, it has estimated population of 738,004.

The predominant industry is the financial sector where over 400 banks are licensed, although only about 30 can accept deposits from retail customers the rest are basically investment houses. The construction industry is also finding takers in Bahrain. Large commercial and residential building complexes are coming up. Bahrain has a various number of expatriates and they make up almost 30% of the population and among them are Filipinos.

Many Filipino expatriates working in private and public companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Their lives are becoming more consumed with a host of work and families as well as other personal responsibilities and interests. It is therefore increasingly important to explore for organizations that recognize this balance hence this particular study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to explore the work and family life balance experiences of Filipino expatriates in selected companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents with regards to the following?

    1.1 age

    1.2 gender

    1.3 marital status

    1.4 educational attainment

    1.5 occupation

    1.6 monthly salary

2. What is the work life of the respondents in terms of the following:

   2.1 working hours

   2.2 psychological distresses

   2.3 work satisfaction

3. What is the family life of the respondents in terms of the following?

   3.1 family satisfactions

   3.2 work-family conflict

4. What is the perception of the respondents on work-life balance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance can be broadly defined as existing when people experience a lack of conflict between the demands of work and nonwork roles. This can also be thought of as, "meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four quadrants of life-work, family, friends and self" (Shree & Jyothi, 2012, p. 36). An important feature of work-life role interrelationships is that they operate bidirectionally: work can interfere with nonwork life and nonwork life can interfere with work. There are other aspects to work-life balance that also deserve mention. In particular, it is the notion of work/nonwork facilitation, which is also called the work/nonwork enhancement or positive work/nonwork spillover (Frone, 2003). This related phenomenon occurs when one's experiences and skills developed in one role, help in the successful meeting of demands in the other role.

The scale looks at the general mental health of individuals, which was defined by Whaley et.al. (2005) as a state of wellbeing where people are able to lead a fulfilling life. The scale measures participants' wellbeing through assessing the appearance of distress.

Work-family conflict occurs when work activities interfere with family activities, and in contrast, family-work conflict occurs when family activities interfere with work activities (Breaugh & Frye, 2007; Hill, 2005). The literature indicates various definitions of work-family conflict and family-work conflict. These conflicts occur bi-directionally, which means that a negative experience at work can affect employees' family life, and vice versa (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson & Kacmar, 2007; Yang, 2005). This happens because work-family conflict is negatively related to family life satisfaction, whereas family-work conflict is connected to lower work satisfaction.

Hill (2005) argues that family satisfaction plays an important role in individuals' wellbeing, and can influence employees' work performance. This occurs because family and work lives are the most important domains in everyone's life (Clark, 2000), family and work satisfaction are positively related (Frone et al., 1992); hence higher levels of family satisfaction can lead to higher levels of work satisfaction, organizational commitment and improved productivity (Hill, 2005).

In their highly acclaimed book, Work and Family—Allies or Enemies, Friedman and Greenhaus (2000), two leaders in work/life balance, bring forth new evidence to help people understand choices they make as employers and individuals regarding work and family. This pioneering study of more than 800 business professionals considered values, work, and family lives and found that "work and family, the dominant life roles for most employed women and men in contemporary society, can either help or hurt each other. To handle work/life balance, they emphasize that working adults learn to build networks of support at home, at work, and in the community. Conflict between work and family has real consequences and significantly affects quality of family life and career attainment of both men and women.

Several theories have been proposed by researchers to explain WLB. Clark (2000) presented a border theory according to which family and work domains are separated by borders which could be physical, temporal or psychological. When introduced in a regular work schedule, breaks involving "mindless work" that are low in cognitive effort and performance pressure can lead to improved job performance and enhance creativity. It has also been shown that taking periodic breaks to focus on family, hobby, and interests can increase productivity, creativity and satisfaction (Buck, Lee, MacDermid, & Smith, 2000).
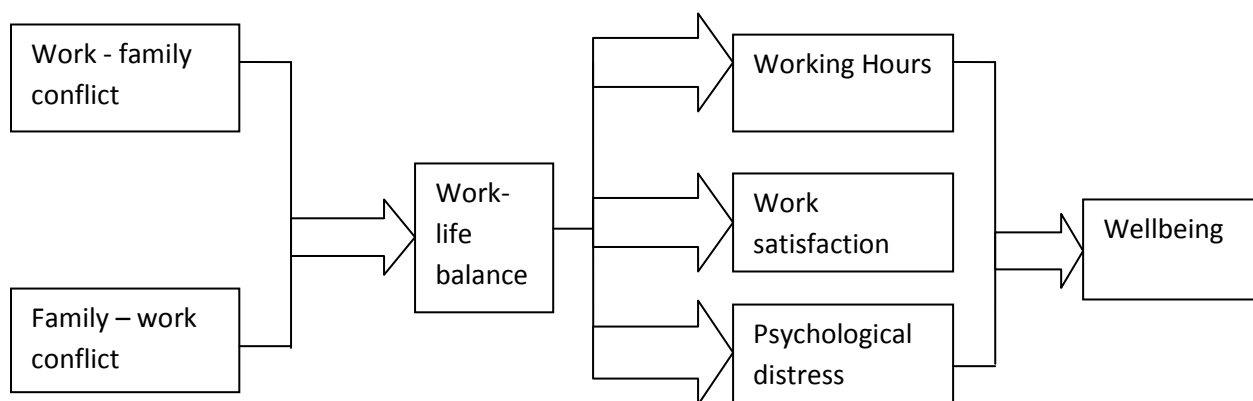

Figure 1: Research variables

The literature indicates positive relationships between WLB and workers' wellbeing, and their outcomes affecting organizations performance. Moorman (1993, p.759) argues that "one of the most widely believed maxims of management is that a happy worker is a productive worker". This research should benefit individuals and organizations in terms of a deeper understanding of the importance of a healthy balance between work and family demands and their effects on people's wellbeing and organizations' performance. From employees' perspective, a better understanding of the importance of balancing work and family demands should help in recognizing the areas that negatively affect their wellbeing, and allow addressing these issues by seeking access to the family-friendly initiatives that would improve their work and family satisfaction and overall wellbeing. From an organization's point of view, this paper should give managers better insights regarding connections between WLB and employees' wellbeing, and their impacts on employees' commitment, absenteeism, turnover, productivity and overall performance. This information may be useful to organizations in developing and implementing WLB policies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive – exploratory method of research was used in this study. Creswell (1994) described descriptive research as type of research that is mainly concerned with describing the nature or condition and the degree in detail of the present situation. This method was used to describe the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of particular a phenomenon. The aim of descriptive research is to obtain an accurate profile of the people, events or situations. This research type was essential that the researchers already had a clear view or picture of the phenomena being investigated before the data collection procedure was carried out so as to formulate rational and sound conclusions and recommendations for the study.

Shajahan (2005) described exploratory study as valuable means of finding out what is happening; to seek new insights and to assess phenomena in a new light.

In this study, the descriptive – exploratory research method was more appropriate to use since the purpose of this study was to explore the work and life balance experiences of Filipino expats in selected private companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

STATISTICAL TREATMENT OF DATA

To ensure valid, reliable, and scientific presentation analysis, and interpretation of data, the following statistical measures were utilized in this study: simple frequency, percentage, and weighted mean.

Percentage. This was to used show the proportions of the respondents who had the attributes compared to the total number of respondents. The formula is

$$P = f/n * 100$$

Where: P = percentage

F= frequency

N = population/total number of respondents

Simple frequency. The number of each item tallied and added.

Weighted mean. This was used to determine the quantitative average of the responses to items in the questionnaire. The formula is:

$$Wm = Sum \ X/n$$

Where:

Wm = mean of the sum of the products of the frequencies and variables

Sum X = the sum of frequencies of the total number of respondents

N = number of respondents

Mean Distribution of Respondents as to their Perception of Work-life Balance

Perception on Work-life Balance	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Family life is more important than career progression	4.37	Agree
2.People work best when they have work-life balance	4.49	Agree
3. Staff with work-life balance provide better services	4.56	Strongly Agree
4. Good work-life balance is beneficial to employer	4.52	Strongly Agree
5. Work-life balance is for those who don't take career seriously	3.02	Moderately Agree
Total Mean	4.19	Agree

As revealed from the table, the respondents strongly agree that staff with work-life balance provide better services (4.56) and good work-life balance is beneficial to employers (4.52). Meanwhile, the respondents agree that people work best when they have work- life balance

(4.49), family life is more important than career progression (4.37) and moderately agree that work-life balance is for those who do not take career seriously (3.02). With a total mean of 4.19, this implies that the respondents have good perceptions of work-life balance though work gets much everything from them in many ways.

CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents belong to age bracket 26-30 years old, male , married, college graduate, perform clerical jobs, receive a monthly salary ranges from BD 100 to 199 and have been working in the Kingdom of Bahrain fro 2-3 years.

Most of the respondents spend less than 2 hours for their family, sometimes miss out quality time but still they feel happy with the amount of time they spent for their family. Consequently they also spend 3 to 4 hours on their pleasure activities like attending to religious activities, going to mall and do spiritual meditations. Lastly, they usually spend their pleasure activities in the church / parish, in their friend's places and in their own residences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees should practice an effective time management by concentrating on the tasks that add value to the achievement of a sustainable work-life balance.

For work and life to be more balanced, they should make some adjustments on the amount of weight given to the their work so they could take some leave or day off to spend more and quality hours bonding with their family and enjoying fully their pleasure activities   with their parents, relatives and friends.

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