Review Study on Work Life Balance Practices & Employee’s Turnover Intention in an Organization

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Abstract
Work life balance is an important concept in the employee-employer literature and is relevant from the point of increasing employee satisfaction with their company. Every person wants to maintain equilibrium between their work and family spheres so that they can lead a balanced life. This is the reason that employees now look for or prefer companies that offer exclusive and attractive work life balance policies. In this paper a review of studies has been done to know about the prominent areas that exist in the employee employer literature pertaining to work life balance practices. Work life balance practices have been seen affecting the employer’s brand experience, organizational commitment of the employees and the intention to turnover. On the other hand, it was found that the turnover intents of the employees are affected by the organizational commitment levels and employer branding in addition to the work life balance practices. Moreover, inter-relationship between employer brand and organizational commitment has also been found.

Keywords
Work Life Balance, Employer Brand Experience, Organizational Commitment, Intention to Turnover, Human Resource Management

I. Introduction
Work-life balance has been referred to as work-family balance in the past. There are two aspects of an employee’s life, that of the work-life, i.e. time spent at performing activities for the employer, and the personal life, i.e. time spent at performing the responsibilities towards family. Oxford Dictionaries define Work as “activities involving mental of physical effort in order to achieve a result as a means of earning income”. Referring to Maslow’s pyramid (Figure 1), the primary goal of work is to fulfil Physiological and Safety needs via compensation and benefits received in exchange of contributions to the employer. However, work may also fulfil the Social, Esteem and Self-actualization needs of an employee through interface with people at work, recognition for contributions at work, challenging work and opportunities for growth.

The attrition rate in India is all time high in last decade. In 2013, India topped the chart of highest attrition rate for employees which was as high as 26.9% i.e. almost one of every four employees wants to change his job especially in Information Technology, Insurance and Pharmaceutical sector (Biswa, 2013). Figure 2 shows the attrition rate comparison of top 5 countries in the world. One of the reasons found for high attrition rate is low work life balance which leads to higher intention to turnover (Mumbai Mirror, 2015). This makes the study of work life balance practices and work life balance satisfaction even more important in terms of employee retention strategies.

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](image-url)
The personal life has been dominated by the concept of family. Family as a unit is a group of people connected through blood or marriage. While most literature on this subject has focussed on the notion of employees’ responsibilities towards their family as the non-work life; recent literature has used “life” as the notion encompassing the larger perspective of an individual having a life- aspirations, hobbies, etc. beyond the responsibilities towards their family.

Hudson (2005: p3) define work-life balance as a “satisfactory level of involvement or “fit” between the multiple roles in a person’s life”. They also note Clarke, Koch & Hill’s (2004) observation that “although definitions and explanations vary, work/life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life”. Essentially, the study of work-life balance involves evaluation of people’s ability to manage the multi-faceted demands of life simultaneously and with satisfaction (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001).

While the traditional view of work-life balance involves a perception of equal time distribution between paid work and non-work roles, the recent research points to a more comprehensive view of the concept. Additional components have been added to the factor of time to give a wholesome view of the concept. Several studies back the model given by Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003), who explored and measured three aspects of work/life balance; time, involvement and satisfaction.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety defines Work/life balance initiatives or practices as “any benefits, policies, or programs that help create a better balance between the demands of the job and the healthy management (and enjoyment) of life outside work”. The work-life initiatives were initially introduced to cope with the rising number of female workforce and dual earner couples. These initiatives were essentially targeted to reduce the interference of family life on the life at work. These measures were often short term ones like maternity breaks and breaks for illness and were developed as a reactive way to cope with the family responsibilities of the employees.

However, many organizations are recognizing that the employees have a life beyond the life at work and that a sense of satisfaction at minimizing conflict between these two aspects could help the employees to perform freely and thus better at work. The efficiency of an employee can go a long way in lowering overheads and improving organizational performance. Organizations today are proactive and have implemented or are in the process of implementing programs or policies which are specially designed to address the needs of today’s diverse workforce (Lobel&Kossek, 1996).

While the main focus of these practices is on gender, HR managers have started shifting to a more encompassing work-life benefit strategy in the face of the diverse characteristics of the current generation workforce. Over the past half century, work-life balance practices have evolved from being...
a provision for better child-care options for working mothers to concepts of work-family balance, work-life enrichment, etc, encompassing all i.e. the male, female and aging workforce. Organizations today, offer a variety of family-friendly benefits to its employee base. While some of these benefits may not be expensive for an organization to implement, other initiatives may be more costly, such as the provision of an on-site day-care for employees’ child care or eldercare requirements. Research suggests that the most requested benefit is flexibility in work schedules (Solomon 1994). Liddicoat (2003) has compiled a list of family-friendly initiatives that an organization can implement to assist its employees to better balance their work and family responsibilities. Though the term of Work-Life balance has evolved to be accepted by Human Resource professionals, however, its use as an HR tool is yet to get whole-hearted support and acceptance by the decision-makers. Research conducted by popular press has note that it is in the employers’ interest to invest in work-life balance initiatives to reduce the conflict and create a strong internal brand through providing a positive experience for its employees, motivating them to remain with the organization.

The purpose of this study is to review the empirical evidences present in context to the Work Life Balance practices (WLBPS) and related concepts like Organizational commitment (OC), Intention to Turnover (ITT) and Employer Brand Experience (EBE). This will help the research community in understanding the status of empirically tested relationships and how these relationships varies across different sectors and industries in India. Also, information on various methodologies has been recorded with respect to research studies in this area. This paper has been organized into 5 major sections comprising of Introduction, Methodology – which illustrates the selection criteria for the previous papers, Review Analysis – which divides the studies in different themes, Discussion – which elaborates on the methodologies and sectors studied by previous authors, and Conclusion – which concludes the direction for the research work w.r.t. Work life balance.

II. Methodology

The current paper is a review study in nature. It inherits the concepts and frameworks given in prominent databases having human resource journals listed. The data used is all secondary and no experimental/survey work has been carried out for this study. Rather, carefully selected articles around the concepts of Work life balance and related concepts of Employer Brand Experience, Organizational commitment and Intention to turnover have been used. The selection criteria for the article include its empirical nature for the testing of relationships between different variables and article source being from a refereed journal. Both qualitative and quantitative studies have been included however stress has been laid more on the studies written in Indian/Asian context.

III. Review Analysis

The review conducted in the field of work life balance practices and related concepts has been divided into six broad themes. The summary of these six themes is shown in Table 1 followed by explanation of papers under the selected themes.

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Author &amp; Year</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
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Theme 1: WLBPS & ITT
Batt & Valcour (2003) have carried out tests to check the relationship between work-family conflict, the control of the employee of work & family balance and their turnover intentions. The study was conducted on 557 dual-earner white collar employees and the sample was non-random. The results of the study showed that better is the work life balance practices at the workplace like access to flexible scheduling practices etc. lesser are the chances of intentions to turnover of the employees.
Lochhead & Stephens (2004) have studied the practices that can be and have been adopted by the plastic industries in Canada through case study research. Among others, policies guaranteeing work life balance have been found as prominent ways to ensure employee retention.
Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne (2007) applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the relationship in between a number of variables. The study was conducted on 25 different organizational units situated in New Zealand and a total of 1187 employees were selected. The indirect impact of perceptions about work life balance practices was seen on the Intentions to Turnover of the employees through the variable of Job satisfaction. It was found that whereas perceptions of employees about work life balance practices have a positive impact on the job satisfaction levels it in turn affects the leaving intentions negatively. Therefore it can be concluded that perceptions that employees hold about the work life balance practices at their workplace decreases their leaving intentions.
Cook (2009) has indirectly tested the relationship between availability of work-family policies and the intention to turnover. Tests were done on sample accessed from 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) consisting of wage and salaried personnels supposedly representing the US workforce. The results obtained through correlation analysis showed that the relationship between the two variables is negative and significant. However, when modeling was done considering the mediating variables, both the variables i.e. family supportive organization perceptions & supervisory support perceptions were found to be partially mediating.

Theme 2: WLBPS & EBE
Moroko & Uncles (2008) have aimed to know the characteristic of a successful employer brand though their study. They have collected data from industry experts through in-depth interviews from varied fields of the industry like human resources, marketing, branding, communications etc. The major finding of the study is that a brand is successful only if it is portrayed efficiently. Moreover, it has also been found that work-life balance practices and culture and policies of the organization also hold importance. The employment experience of the employee is considered as an essential element which can in turn be ensured through the deployment of efficient employee friendly policies. Lesser empirical evidences but more theoretical evidences were found under this theme. Dawn & Biswas (2010) conducted a study on the Indian companies and brought forward the positive effect that work-life balance practices have on the employer’s brand. Ollier-Malaterre (2010) also showed the similar impact of WLBPS on Employer Brand. Even Liddicoat (2003) had somewhat similar findings based on the Work Life Balance practices.

Theme 3: WLBPS & OC
Ollier-Malaterre (2010) has studied the impact of work life resilience practices on the employee commitment. All the 73 in-depth interviews that were conducted to assess the views of employees of a multinational pharmaceutical company about this relationship supplied varied results. Majority of the respondents were found giving positive feedbacks. These practices were seen encouraging the feelings of loyalty and pride amongst the employees but certain respondents also faced disappointment.
Tayfun & Çatir (2014) aimed at looking through the relationship between work life balance practices and organizational commitment. The study was conducted on nurses and 391 questionnaires were used as to deduce the results. The findings showed that there is a positive relationship of work life balance with two of the components of organizational commitment namely, affective commitment and normative commitment. However, the relationship of work life balance with continuance commitment was found to be negative.
Theme 4: EBE & OC
Vaijayanthi et al (2011) has conducted a study on the manufacturing and service sector units to know the relationship between employer branding and organizational commitment. Tests were conducted to know the relevance of the former as an antecedent of the latter. The results indicated that the out of the four components that were considered for measuring employer brand, none was found to be highly correlated with the components of organizational commitment. Similar concepts of relationship between Employer Brand and Employee’s Organization commitment were studied by Grigg& Da Silva (2008) and Davies (2008).

Theme 5: EBE & ITT
Sokro (2012) is a study done on a mix of junior and senior employees employed I the banking sector in Ghana. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied on the data collected through questionnaires. The results suggested that the not only the employers were found using techniques for employer branding in their organizations but it was also seen having an impact. The employees were seen grounding their decisions of joining and staying in an organization on the brand of the employer.Eisenberger et al. (2001) and Fornes et al (2008) also showed a negative relationship between brand experience and intention to turnover of the employees.

Theme 6: OC & ITT
Shore & Martin (1989) have seen the comparative impact of Organizational Commitment and Job Performance on the Intent of the employees to leave. The study was done on a sample of bank tellers and hospital professionals. The results based on correlation analysis showed that both the variables had a positive effect on intention to stay of the employee however, the variable of organizational commitment had a stronger relation compared to the variable of job performance. Regression analysis also showed a greater contribution of organizational commitment than job performance in affecting staying intention.

Allen et al (2003) have tested two samples to see the relationships between various variables. The samples were each sourced from beauty & cosmetic areas and a national insurance company respectively. The results of both the tests showed a strong negative relationship between the variable of organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Thus it was concluded as a result of the study that greater the commitment of employees towards the organization, lower is their intent to turnover.

The results of the study by Tett& Meyer (1993) have compared the effect of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on the intention to turnover. The effect of each of the two variables was found to be unique in their own manner however former was found having a lesser impact than the latter. The difference of the impact was though pretty less.

Chen (2006) performed a study on a sampled staff of a Taiwanese airline company, their attendants in particular. The technique of logistic regression was applied to know the individual impact of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on the intentions to turnover of the employees. The results of the study showed that both the variables have significantly negative impact on the turnover intentions.

Angle & Perry (1981) have studied the impact of organizational commitment on the effectiveness of the organization on the basis of various parameters. The study was focused primarily on lower-level employees. Both the measures of turnover namely separation rate & intent to quit, were found to be significantly related with the variables of organizational commitment. The study also considered two scales under commitment, the commitment to stay and the value commitment. Turnover was found to be more intensely correlated with the former than the latter.

Tnay et al (2013) have studied the intentions to turnover of employees in a production industry and the corresponding impact of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the same. A total of 85 questionnaires were collected from the selected organization. The results showed that whereas the job satisfaction had a negative relationship with the intent of employees to turnover; organizational commitment was seen having no relationship.

IV. Discussion
The issue of creating a balance between an individual’s professional and personal life has gained immense importance in the recent past. More and more organizations have realised the potential role of
work-life balance practices in creating a more efficient and effective workforce. The work-life balance practices were initially introduced in the workplace in view of the growing numbers of females in the workforce with a focus towards reducing life-to-work conflict. However, with the changing lifestyles, family structures, proliferation of technology in our lives and changing demographics in the workforce, there has been an increased attention to the kind of practices being offered to the employees. Today, HR professionals are hard pressed to offer their diverse employees innovative practices to better manage their work and family lives.

Previous studies have proven that the presence of facilities and benefits alone has little effect on the attitudes and perceptions of the employees; however, perception of usage of these practices has been noted to effect employees’ perceptions of their employers. Various researchers have differentiated between availability of work-life balance practices to employees and the usage of these practices by employees. Also, the overall review of various studies indicates that the employees’ satisfaction with work-life balance practices has important outcomes for an organization. While previous studies link the presence of work-life balance benefits to commitment and turnover, there are many upcoming studies that establish satisfaction with the usage of work-life balance practices which in turn creates an enhanced brand experience for the employees. This experience translates into enhanced organizational commitment of an employee and reduces their intentions to quit, thus translating into successful retention.

The studies that have been reviewed for knowing about the relationships under various themes range over different industries like pharmaceutical, healthcare, manufacturing, aviation, services and other such industries have been covered under these studies. Views of the employees of these industries have been examined to know about the relationships in between the turnover intention and other variables. Studies have been conducted ranging from lower-level employees to white-collar employees and other salaried & wage employees. But one can say that service sector employees are being researched upon more as compared to manufacturing sector.

A diversity of methods has been deployed in the reviewed studies to know about the relationships. The data has been collected through both primary (questionnaire & in-depth interviews) and secondary methods (case studies and databases). The statistical techniques of correlation, regression, logistic regression, structural equation modelling (SEM), case study analysis and interview analysis have been deployed to interpret results from the collected data. No specific choice of method has emerged from the review but rather flexibility of research design and methodology seem to exist in the literature.

V. Conclusion

Work-life balance practices have a potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times. In the current scenario, where companies are ‘going global’, while trying to reduce costs, the responsibility of the human resource professionals towards employees’ needs for work-life balance is significant more than ever. Investing in these practices can save organizations from losing critical knowledge when employees leave organizations for other opportunities.

The review conducted in this study shows that research in the area of work life balance practices is picking up the momentum and various service sectors affected from high attrition must incorporate some of the suggestions given in these studies. The major focus areas for the organizations can be providing adequate work life balance to the various employees which can in turn impact employer brand experience, makes the employees more committed towards the organization and finally reduces the intention to turnover. Researchers can formally test these variables for positive or negative relationships within Indian context for different industries so as to understand and analyse the need of every industry separately.

References


