

Perception of Work Life Balance-An Investigation of Education Sector of East and West

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Abstract: The external environment of the organization is in a continuous state of flux. Organizations have to be vigilant for this and must ensure that they adjust themselves in such a way that organization conforms to the requirements of the environment. The challenges faced by the organization are resulting in lot of pressure on the employees at the functional level. As a consequence, organizations have to demand their employees to work hard. A field study was carried out to evaluate the perceptions of people who were working in education sector of United Kingdom and Kuwait. It was found that perception of the people who had been working in Kuwait differs from those who had been working in the education sector of United Kingdom. It was found that people who had been working in the education sector were more concerned about their health as the work-life-balance was causing pressure on their health. Likewise, people who had been working in the education sector of Kuwait also showed their concern about their career progression. Moreover, employees working in Kuwait also showed their concern that they have been asked to work on weekends which is not a pleasant thing for them. It was also found that for employees it is not desired by employees that they have to work while taking time out of their normal routines and organization contact them after office hours. Likewise, it was reported by employees who were working in the education sector of United Kingdom that employees are happy that their organization and managers are concerned about their family issues which arise from work life balance. Based on the findings that originated from this survey, it is suggested by researcher that in both Kuwait and United Kingdom, educational institutes should launch a comprehensive work life balance support as inn both countries employees who were working in education sector had been facing associated challenges. Organizations should ensure that extra work should not be associated with the career progression. If in any situation, an organization wishes that it's employees work more than the normal circumstances, then organization should communicate this to employee in advance so that employee can manage his routine accordingly.

Keywords: Employees wellness, external environment, Kuwait, work life balance

INTRODUCTION

The external environment of the organization is in a continuous state of flux (Scase, 1999; Amburgey *et al.*, 1993) exerted that organizations should be vigilant for this and must ensure that they adjust organization in such a way that organization conforms to the requirements of the environment. Burke and Litwin (2008) highlighted that such change has significantly influenced the way organizations are doing business. In this regard, significant transformation has been observed in the human resource management function of the organization. At functional level of the organization, part-time work, multi-shifting, HR contracting out, complex performance appraisal system, career breaks and varying employer-employee relationships are observed. One such area is Work-Life-Balance (WLB). According to Jacobs *et al.* (2008), WLB deals with creating harmony in the working life of the people in such a way that their personal and work life does not get influence from each other. In one's professional life, several moments arise where personal and professional lives have conflicting demands. In

such circumstances, when an employee attempts to fulfill the requirements of one area, this may create pressure on the other area.

According to Risti *et al.* (2009), the changed work pattern has resulted in significant pressures on social as well as family lives of the people. Organizations are now working round the clock throughout the week. Now-a-days, employees have to work in shifts, both in the morning as well as in the evening. This created the issue of work-life-balance. Williams (2008) highlighted that as the age of the population is also increasing, the issue of work life balance is also increasing. The demanding work life is hampering the health of the employees. Matjasko and Feldman (2006) and Halpern (2005) suggested that issue of WLB exaggerate if both husband and wife work. Matjasko and Feldman (2006) further highlighted that "dual-earner" families can be witnessed across the globe.

Education sector is one of the most important sectors of a country and is directly linked with economic wellbeing of the country and the people who live in that country. Considerable evidence is available in research literature which affirms that countries which

have developed education sector are also either developed or developing with high economic growth rate. Moreover, if a country wants to get immediate benefit from the education sector, then the country should invest in the tertiary education sector of the country. This will ensure that in few years people would graduate from colleges or universities and would become contributing employees for the country. The education sector of UK is one of the most vibrant sectors of the country. Every year, more than one million people from across the world come to UK and get admission in various colleges and universities. Similarly, the education sector of Middle East is also developing. Previously, lot of students go to western countries for the college and university level education yet over the period of time, lot of universities are now opened in the middle east which ensures that the provision of education in the Middle East. In case of UK, since there is lot of people who are coming to these colleges and universities, so demand for education in these colleges and universities is very high. This poses pressure on existing staff to work for extended hours and this poses a threat to their work life balance. Further to this, in Middle East, colleges and universities are not very old and they have yet to prove themselves as worthy institution of higher education and learning. This requires that people who are working in the education sector of Middle East has to work hard so as to achieve high level of performance.

From the discussion carried above, it can be deduced that Work Life Balance (WLB) is an important area which is to be ensured by an organization. If an organization ensures good WLB, it would be a step towards employees' wellbeing. Consequently, employees can focus more on job. This results in high level of organizational performance. Based on the discussion carried out above, overall aim of the research was decided. Specifically, the aim of this research is to investigate perception of work life balance among the lecturers of colleges and universities of United Kingdom and Middle East.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risti *et al.* (2009) urged that changing workplace situations is creating pressures on the organization and its members. Employees have to work long hours which may influence their family lives. Williams (2008) put forth the case of banking organizations and suggested that now banks have to work for extended hours. Now-a-days, in many parts of the world, both husbands and wives are working for extended hours. This also creates issue of WLB as both of them do not have time for each other. Further to this, Guest (2001) embarked that issue of WLB also covers those situation in which an organization requires from an employee to work for extended hour in such a way that organization gets work from the people yet organization does not pay for

those hours. Jacobs *et al.* (2008) suggested that WLB also becomes an issue when an employee wishes to spend time on leisure activities but organizational commitment does not allow employee to do so. Donald and Linington (2007) explained reasons for causing work life balance as in most of the cases; demands of job and personal lives are conflicting as well as mutually exclusive. This means that if employees fulfill one of these demands, then employee has to leave the other. Perrons *et al.* (2005) highlighted the underlying problems associated with WLB (including physical and mental stress) and suggested that this issue has to be addressed at organizational level. They further highlighted that as participation of women in jobs have been increasing, it is not possible for women to cope their family responsibilities which raises pressure on them causing job stress. Moreover, at a later stage in life, when women decide to go for nesting, then in most of the situations, they have to sacrifice their career over it. This also exerts pressure on them as they have to spend time with family and are, thus, unable to meet work related duties and priorities which would further hamper their lives.

Mageni and Slabbert (2005) suggested that with the increase in technology, employees have started working from home. They further highlighted situations in which employees takes office work to their home. In these situations, after working hours, employee stays at home yet he does not spend time with family. This also causes certain imbalance in work and family lives. Earlier, Zedeck and Mosier (1990) put forth the case of dual-career couples who find problems in maintaining their relations. According to Zedeck and Mosier (1990), there are situations where these people have to work hard and they are unable to meet each other as they both have work commitments. Such situation initiate family tensions and ends up in break up between the two. According to Marks *et al.* (2001), if one spends more time on job, then he does not have time to be spent with family whereas if one spends more time with family, then one does not have time, to be spent on job. These conflicting demands have an adverse influence on mental state of employee.

There are number of advantages of ensuring WLB. According to Taylor (2001), a good WLB ensures gives benefits to society as a whole. If an organization ensures WLB of its employees, then organization would be discharging its corporate social responsibility. As a matter of fact, when employee reaches his home, he can spent time with his family which will enhance family dynamics (McDowell, 2004). Further to this, Byrne (2005) suggested that people who have righteous WLB gives due priorities to their family members, personal health, friends and cliques along with spiritual lives. Ensuring these will make sure mental and physical health of the employees. This will ensure that employees have sufficient time to discharge their religious obligations. According to Hogarth *et al.*

(2001), if WLB is achieved, then employees will spend a happy life, achieve success in handling workload and enjoy better health. Crompton and Lyonette (2006) and Kinman *et al.* (2004) further highlighted that if a person have WLB, then it would reduce job and non-job related stress.

Fagnani and Letablier (2004) also reported number of advantages of WLB to the employees. According to them, if an employee is enjoying good WLB, then they can better take care of their families. Such employers also become loyal with the organization. WLB also ensures that employee stay with the organization and they do not have to look for some other job. In such situations, employee can spend more time on their family commitments. They can spend time with their families and this would facilitate employees in discharging their family values and ties. Bloom *et al.* (2009) suggested that if an employee is enjoying positive work life balance, then employee would be in a position to exert high level of effort which will ensure that he would produce more. Such high level of productivity will lead to more salaries.

In the last few years, significant amount of research has been carried out on WLB. Organizations are now taking is more seriously and are devising various policies to correct the imbalance (Burke, 2000). In an attempt to do so, organizations are identifying all those factors which are causing dissatisfaction to the employees. Eradication of these factors will lead to good WLB and both employers and employees will benefit from this. It is imperative now that organizations should move a step forward and ensure that their employees are having balance between their work and personal life. Such a balance would be detrimental for the organization as it will lead to job burnout and employee would start behaving irrationally at job leading to lower performance, absenteeism and job turnover. Hyman and Summers (2004) observed various organizational efforts which are directed towards achieving work life balance. It was observed by them that various organizations have now started offering flexible working hours, long weekends, career breaks, telecommuting, etc. All of these things support employees in giving proper care to their families as well as work. Earlier, it was highlighted by Brown *et al.* (2001) that this issue has now being recognized at Governmental level and significant amount of legislation have been developed in this area. In various parts of the world, people are developing legislation on this and are trying to incorporate this in various forms. Furthermore, an important guidance in this area has been received from Nickson *et al.* (2004), who suggested that it is not the ultimate solution that reduction in number of hours for which employee stays in the organization is not the ultimate solution. The important thing is whether employee can justify with both work and personal life. A contrasting idea was contributed by Schneider *et al.* (2006) who suggested

that it is not possible for the organization to offer such luxury to the employees unless all members of the industry does not do so. In the wake of fierce competition, organizations are trying to adopt such production system which are cost efficient and in an attempt to do so, organization try to get maximum output from their employees. In this regard, organizations require its employees to stay at work for extended hours. This is a righteous decision as it is the responsibility of the managers that they should achieve efficiency from the employees.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve above stated aim, a field survey was carried out in United Kingdom and Middle East. In case of Middle East, data was collected from Kuwait. The population for this research comprised of teachers who were working in colleges and universities. The targeted population for this research was the lecturers who were working in tertiary education sector of UK and Middle East. A sample of 200 teachers (100 each from UK and Middle East) was selected from two countries. The researcher use non-probability based snow ball sampling technique to identify and contact the sampling elements and sample members. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire using a communication approach. The questionnaire was pre-printed and was handed over to selected sample members in their actual routine. The questionnaire was divided in to two sections. Section one aimed at collecting general demographic information about the respondents where as section two was aimed at collecting information related to perception of employees about work life balance. The questionnaire had variety of scales including nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio.

As envisaged, researcher conducted a descriptive research and collected data from a cross-section of employees using pre-printed structured questionnaire by employing communication methodology. The senior management of selected educational institutions was contacted and was requested to participate in the research. Upon receiving their consent, the softcopy of questionnaire was sent to them through email. The concerned officials generated a hard copy of the same and distributed among the employees. It was found that during research, out of 200 people, 17 people were not available during the data collection phase so it was not possible to collect data from them. The non-contact rate of the research, thus, remained on 8.5%. Out of 183 respondents, 24 did not agree to participate in the research so the non-response rate of this research remained at around 13.11%. Out of 159 questionnaires which were received, 13 questionnaires were rejected as it was felt that those questionnaires were not properly responded. Finally, researcher had 146 questionnaires which were used in this research. Out of these, 81 questionnaires were from people from Kuwait and 65

questionnaires were from people from United Kingdom.

It is important to highlight here that current research was an ex post facto study and participants did not observe any deviation as the data was collected from actual routine. Moreover, statistical program for social sciences was used to analyze the collected data. Specifically, researcher used factor analysis for extracting factors which were relatively parsimonious as compared to each variable/dimension explored in questionnaire. Factor analysis is a multivariate data analysis technique which is used for data reduction. The researcher also calculated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS). These two techniques were two assumptions of factor analysis. The research also calculated arithmetic mean and standard deviation for conducting descriptive analysis of data. While conducting this research, the issues related to reliability and validity were also kept in mind. In this regard, researcher calculated Cronbach's Alpha (CA) for analysis reliability of the findings. Moreover, external and internal validity of findings were also evaluated. Further to this, the required values of KMO, BTS and CA were close of 0.7, less than 0.005 and close to 0.7 respectively (McDaniel and Gates, 2007).

RESULTS

In order to ensure the reliability of the findings, researcher calculated Cronbach's alpha. The value of alphas was computed and is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 showed that the value of alpha matched to the required values so it was plausible to proceed further with analysis. It was mentioned in the methodology section that value of alpha should be close to 0.7. In the Table 1, it was shown that value of alpha was close to 0.67 so it was acceptable. So, researcher decided to proceed further with analysis.

Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents who participated in research.

It was found in table that majority of the people who participated in this research were from males. Although the sample selected for this research was also convenience based yet the gender percentage of the people who were selected in this research also showed similar percentage in the population. Further to this, researcher also asserts that findings of this research should be interpreted in a way that majority of the respondents for this research were males.

Table 3 given below shows the education of the respondents who participated in research.

The table shows that majority of the respondents who participated in this research were graduates. There was a significant portion of people who had completed their PhD programs. In addition to this, there were others who have done some form of professional qualification in the industry.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Number of variables	Alpha value
36	0.67

Table 2: Gender of the respondent

	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
Male	103	70.5	70.50
Female	43	29.5	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

Table 3: Education of the respondent

	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
Graduate	86	58.9	58.9
Ph.D.	24	16.4	75.3
Professional qualification	14	9.60	84.9
Others	22	15.1	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

Table 4: Age of the respondent

	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
Less than 30	33	22.6	22.6
31-40	90	61.6	84.2
41-50	18	12.3	96.6
51 and above	5	3.40	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

Table 5: Country of respondents

	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
Kuwait	81	55.5	55.50
United kingdom	65	44.5	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

Table 6: Please indicate your overall satisfaction with your work life balance

	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
Very dissatisfied	34	23.3	23.3
Dissatisfied	62	42.5	65.8
Normal	24	16.4	82.2
Satisfied	17	11.6	93.8
Very satisfied	9	6.20	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

Table 7: KMO and Bartlett's test^a

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.636
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square
	Df
	Sig.

^a: Country of Respondents = Kuwait

Table 4 given the age of the respondents who participated in research.

The people who participate in this research were from different age groups. This can be asserted from the above table that findings that originated in this research came from people who are educated and had been working in these academic institutions.

Table 5 the country of residence of the respondents who participated in research.

The Table 5 showed that 55.5% of the respondents who participated in this research were from Kuwait and there were around 44.5% respondent was from United

Table 8: Total variance explained^a

Component	Initial eigen values			Rotation S.S. loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	7.851	21.810	21.810	5.607	15.576	15.576
2	5.522	15.338	37.148	5.023	13.952	29.528
3	3.806	10.573	47.721	4.912	13.644	43.172
4	3.076	8.5450	56.266	3.800	10.555	53.727
5	2.163	6.0080	62.274	3.077	8.5470	62.274

Extraction method: Principal component analysis; ^a: Country of respondents = Kuwait

Table 9: Rotated component matrix^{a,b}

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
It's normal and expected for people here to work for long hours.				-0.644	
I often work at the weekends.			0.702		
I am often contacted about work issues out of hours.				-0.732	0.616
I feel my work is having a negative effect on my health.					
I think my career would suffer if I opted to reduce my standard hours or work from home.				-0.760	

Extraction method: Principal component analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; ^a: Country of Respondents = Kuwait

Table 10: KMO and Bartlett's test^a

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.622
Bartlett's test of sphericity	
Approx. chi-square	2.311
Df	630
Sig.	0.000

^a: Country of respondents = United Kingdom

Kingdom. This was an important dimension of the research as the researcher wished to investigate the impact of these factors on overall satisfaction regarding work life balance. At the start of the research, it was decided that researcher will have an equal size of people from both countries yet because of non-response and the impact rate, the actual percentages were different.

Table 6 the overall satisfaction of the respondents from work life balance.

The above table represents the sentiments of the respondents from both Kuwait and United Kingdom. It shows that more than 65% of the respondents were dissatisfied from their work life balance. Moreover, there were around 18% who were satisfied from their work life balance. This shows high level of work life imbalance among people who participated in this research.

Work life balance among employees in Kuwait: In this section, an account of work life balance among employees who were working in education sector of Kuwait will be presented.

Table 7 presents the value of KMO and Bartlett's test.

The value given in the Table 7 is as per the requirement so researcher feels that it is possible for researcher to proceed further with analysis. Further to this, Table 8 give below is associated with presenting total variance for the research.

The Table 9 shows that five factors were extracted when researcher applied factor analysis on 36 statements. These 36 statements were used in the

questionnaire and were aimed at analyzing the work life balance among employees. This is important to mention that while conducting factor analysis, it was decided by the researcher that only five most important factors are to be selected. The above table shows that selected five factors explained around 63% variance. This is quite a good amount of variance and researcher was comfortable with this percentage of variance.

The above table shows that the first factor that was extracted by the researcher was negative influence of work pressure on the health of employees (rotation value = 0.732), second factor that was extracted in this regard was fear of career progression (rotation value = 0.760), third factor that was extracted was working on weekends (extraction value = 0.702). Similarly fourth and fifth factor were perception of employees that working extra hours is a normal routine of life and contact being made to employees after the usual working hours.

Work life balance among employees in United Kingdom: In this section, an account of work life balance among employees who were working in education sector of United Kingdom will be presented. Table 10 presents the value of KMO and Bartlett's test.

The value given in the Table 10 is as per the requirement so researcher feels that it is possible for researcher to proceed further with analysis. Further to this, Table 11 give below is associated with presenting total variance for the research.

The Table 12 shows that five factors were extracted when researcher applied factor analysis on 36 statements. These 36 statements were used in the questionnaire and were aimed at analyzing the work life balance among employees. This is important to mention that while conducting factor analysis, it was decided by the researcher that only five most important factors are to be selected. The above table shows that selected five factors explained around 62% variance. This is quite a

Table 11: Total variance explained^a

Component	Initial eigen values			Rotation S.S. loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	7.680	21.333	21.333	5.607	15.576	15.576
2	5.404	15.012	36.345	4.514	12.539	28.116
3	3.674	10.206	46.551	4.410	12.249	40.365
4	2.985	8.2930	54.844	3.965	11.014	51.379
5	2.559	7.1070	61.951	3.806	10.571	61.951

Extraction method: Principal component analysis; ^a: Country of respondents = United Kingdom

Table 12: Rotated component matrix^{a,b}

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
My manager is supportive when I have domestic needs to take care of.	0.807				0.606
I often feel I cannot cope with my work load.				0.581	
This company puts customer needs before those of employees.					
During the past three months I have had to miss at least one event in my personal life to meet a work need.			0.698		
During the past three months I have argued with my spouse or partner as a result of work pressure.					0.876

Extraction method: Principal component analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; ^a: Country of respondents = United Kingdom; ^b: Rotation converged in 17 iterations

good amount of variance and researcher was comfortable with this percentage of variance.

The above table shows that the first factor that was extracted by the researcher was support from manager in coping with domestic needs (rotation value = 0.807), second factor that was extracted in this regard was missing family events in the recent past (rotation value = 0.698), third factor that was extracted was working company giving priority to customers' needs and wants (extraction value = 0.581). Similarly fourth and fifth factor were employees unable to cope with job pressure and fight/argument with spouse during recent past.

The results mentioned in the above tables shows that perception of the people who were working in education sector of United Kingdom and Kuwait differ from each other based on their perception about work life balance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The external environment of the organization is in a continuous state of flux. Organizations have to be vigilant for this and must ensure that they adjust themselves in such a way that organization conforms to the requirements of the environment. The challenges faced by the organization are resulting in lot of pressure on the employees at the functional level. As a consequence, organizations have to demand their employees to work hard. A field study was carried out to evaluate the perceptions of people who were working in education sector of United Kingdom and Kuwait. It was found that perception of the people who had been working in Kuwait differs from those who had been working in the education sector of United Kingdom. It was found that people who had been working in the education sector were more concerned about their health as the work-life-balance was causing pressure on

their health. Likewise, people who had been working in the education sector of Kuwait also showed their concern about their career progression. Moreover, employees working in Kuwait also showed their concern that they have been asked to work on weekends which is not a pleasant thing for them. Further to this, it was also found that for employees it is not desired by employees that they have to work while taking time out of their normal routines and organization contact them after office hours. Likewise, it was reported by employees who were working in the education sector of United Kingdom that employees are happy that their organization and managers are concerned about their family issues which arise from work life balance. It was also observed that in United Kingdom, employees have to sacrifice their family commitments which were because of the fact that they were facing work life balance issue. Likewise, it was reported by employees that organization is happier in providing benefits to customers as compared to employees. It was also reported that employees are facing problems in coping pressures that arise from work-life-balance issues and they had family problems in their family.

Based on the findings that originated from this survey, it is suggested by researcher that in both Kuwait and United Kingdom, educational institutes should launch a comprehensive work life balance support as in both countries employees who were working in education sector had been facing associated challenges. An important feature of this program should be the provision of support in maintaining health. In addition, the organizations should ensure that extra work should not be associated with the career progression. If in any situation, an organization wishes that its employees work more than the normal circumstances, then organization should communicate this to employee in advance so that employee can manage his routine

accordingly. As it was reported that work life balance is creating pressure on employees, so it is advised that if an educational institutions wishes that their employees go beyond their normal routine and work extra hour, then it should be carried out in such a way that it should not harm the family life of employees. This will also reduce pressure on employees and they can work more willingly.

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