



Impact of Organizational Culture on Work –Life - Balance

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity is common nowadays as a result of globalization. There are differences in race, language, nationality socio economic status, gender etc. within a same group. Work-life balance is considered to be crucial for employee's well-being in an organisation. Difference in cultural dimensions causes impact on work related variables. Previous studies have shown that culture has a moderating role on human resource practices regarding work-life balance have on employees' well-being at work. Previous researches have indicated that all employees do not react similarly to the same incentive since they have different values which affect their behaviour. Thus, in the current paper researcher has done review of impact of culture on work-life balance of employees. The study will be based on Hofstede framework of cultural dimensions. From the review the researcher attempts to identify key areas and research gap for future studies. This review of past findings potentially offers two main contributions to the literature. It can advance our understanding of the Work-life balance and cross cultural management. It will also help to apply suitable work-life balance practices in the organisations.

Introduction:

There are dramatic changes in the labour market and the family structure such as increase in the number of dual earning couples and increased participation of mothers. These trends have raised concerns about the potential for increased stress among employees imposed by multiple roles and long working hours (particularly of fathers) (Lewis, 1996; Ferri and Smith, 1996). Previous researches have clearly indicated that Organisational culture have significant impact on work life balance. Thus in any organisation culture should work life balance of employees. Number of negative outcomes arising from work-life conflict has been identified such as decreased psychological well-being and increased sickness absence (Evans and Steptoe, 2002), marital problems and family relationships (MacEwen and Barling, 1994; Crouter, *et al.*, 2001) psychological and physical health of employees partners (Westman, 2001); job and life satisfaction (Kossek). Thus, organisation should have policies and practices that address work-life issues.

Objectives:

The objective of the paper is to study the interrelation of the work culture and work-life policies in the organisation. The study will focus on various elements of the organisation culture and its effect on work life balance of employees.

There are various components of organisation culture which affect the effectiveness of work life balance policies being carried out in any organisation. An employer offering benefits as telecommuting and flexible hours may not be sufficient (Allen, 2001) For example, A case study of 80 major U.S. companies in which "less than 2% of the employees participated in work-family programs" (Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness, 1999). According to this study workers may not take advantage of family-friendly policies because they perceive that doing so will have negative career consequences. A study by Judieschs and Lyness (1999) supports this perception. These authors found that workers who had taken a leave of absence received fewer promotions and smaller salary increases in subsequent years. In summary, it appears it is not sufficient for an organization to offer family-friendly benefits; an employee's work environment must support their use. Recently, three studies have examined the effects of working in a supportive environment. Thomas and Ganster (1995) conducted one of the first studies to examine the effects of providing family-friendly benefits (i.e., flexible schedules, dependent care, information and referral services) and reporting to a supportive supervisor (e.g., a person who changed work schedules to accommodate family responsibilities) on work-family conflict. For their sample of healthcare professionals, Thomas and Ganster found that providing

family-friendly benefits was not associated with reports of work-family conflict. However, they did find that reporting to a supportive supervisor was associated with less work-family conflict ($r^2=.35$), which in turn was associated with such outcome variables as job satisfaction ($r^2=.46$). Given their belief that simply offering family-friendly benefits is insufficient, Thompson, et al. (1999) examined whether benefit use was related to three aspects of work-family culture. The relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction was correlated and incorporated into (Kossek and Ozeki's, 1998) meta-analysis ranged from near .00 to .50. After this Kossek and Ozeki concluded that "despite widespread usage of organizational policies designed to help employees integrate work and family roles individual work family conflict do not reduce necessarily (Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990).

These three aspects were managerial support (i.e., is one's manager willing to accommodate family needs?), career consequences (i.e., is the use of work-family benefits perceived as negatively affecting one's career?), and organizational time demands (i.e., does the job require long hours?). For their sample of alumni of business programs, Thompson et al. found that all three aspects of culture were associated with benefit use (correlations ranged from .30 to .17). They also found the three aspects of culture were correlated with each other (correlations ranged from .63 to .50) and they were negatively associated with reports of work-family conflict (correlations ranged from .52 to .43). Thompson et al. also found that work-family conflict was linked to family benefit use ($r^2=.12$) and benefit availability ($r^2=.21$).

A study by Allen (2001) highlighted the importance of having a family-supportive work environment. Using a sample of workers in a variety of settings, she distinguished between an employee's perceptions that his/her supervisor was supportive and that the organization in general was supportive. Allen also examined the relationships between several components of a causal model (e.g., benefits being offered, benefits being used, organizational and supervisor support for their use, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction). In this study, reports of organizational support and supervisor support were highly correlated ($r^2=.62$). Allen found that reports of work-family conflict were correlated with reports of organizational support ($r^2=.47$) and supervisor support ($r^2=.30$). Reports of benefits being used were associated with organizational support ($r^2=.18$) and supervisor support ($r^2=.17$).

In summary, research has shown (a) employees are more likely to make use of available benefits when they work in a family-supportive Flexible work schedules is directly related to work-life balance which is clearly stated in the meta-analysis conducted by Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, and Neuman (1999)

Literature Review:

Employees with heavy job demands experience greater work-life conflict. Saltsztein, *et al.*, (2001) developed a measure of job demands and found that higher job demands were related to reduce satisfaction with work-family balance. Thompson, *et al.* (1999) and Campbell and Clark (2001) found longer working hours associated work-to-family conflict, greater role conflict, whereas Saltsztein, *et al.*, (2001) reported that those who work in part-time schedules more likely to report improved satisfaction with work-family balance.

One group of employees who have experienced intensification of their work over the last few years is managers (Worrell and Cooper, 2001). The same study also reports managers experiencing problems in managing their work-life balance.

Better work-life arrangement availability will reduce work-life conflict. There is an implicit assumption in many of the government initiatives in this area that better work-life arrangements will reduce work-life conflict for employees, and thus also result in better performance outcomes for companies. It is not evident if actual provision of formal arrangements has a significant impact on the work-life conflict experienced by employees. While some research has found provision to be associated with some reduction in work-family conflict (Thomas and Gangster, 1996; Thompson, *et al.*, 1999), others have not found a significant relationship (Galinsky and Bond, 1999).

Work place culture: assistance with child care and elderly care help employees to stick to normative working hours. Initiative such as part time working hours or reduced working hours, employment benefits, job sharing, compressed, work weeks, voluntary reduced time, flexible work schedules and working from home have the potential to challenge the traditional paths. Organisational culture refer to deep level of shared beliefs and assumptions which often operate unconsciously, are developed over time embedded in an organisation's historical experiences (Pemberton, 1995).

Discussion:

With the growing number of dual career couples and the corresponding increase in work-family and family-work conflict, research in this domain is of considerable importance. During the last few years, research has advanced our understanding of the causes and consequences of work-family conflict and, to a lesser extent, family-work conflict. The study reported in this paper was designed to replicate a number of previous findings results provide clear evidence that the use of family-friendly benefits and reporting to a supportive supervisor in future research, investigators may want to more directly ask about the use of such policies. Despite these limitations, we believe our study has important implications for both practice and research. With regard to practice, our results show that the use of family-friendly practices is associated with reports of less work-family conflict. With regard to supportive supervision, our results show that such supervision is related to both less work-family conflict and less family-work conflict. Taken together, these findings suggest that employers are wise to offer family-friendly benefits. However, firms need to

ensure that employees feel comfortable using such benefits. In this regard, reporting to a supportive supervisor appears to be important. In terms of organizational actions, it is likely that training will make supervisors more aware of the benefits associated with reducing work-family and family-work conflict. Conceivably, an organization could provide incentives for supervisors who are supportive of the use of such family-friendly practices. With regard to the relationship we documented between having childcare responsibility and family-work conflict, there is not too much that an employer can do to affect the childcare responsibility of its employees. In contrast, with regard to the relationship we found between the number of hours worked and work-family conflict, in some situations, an organization may be able to influence this relationship (e.g., being open to part-time work or job sharing). We believe that our findings suggest that a continued emphasis on the supportiveness of the work climate is merited. Given we found that supervisor support and the use of family-friendly policies were related to both work-family conflict and family-work conflict, we believe our results suggest that future research should not focus so heavily upon work-related variables while ignoring family-domain variables as has commonly been done in the past.

Questions arise about the effectiveness of encouraging work-life balance policies without reference to the wider company cultures. These findings suggest that the provision of arrangements in them may not be enough to improve work-life balance for employees but it requires a supportive work-life culture. Simply providing formal policies was not enough to promote more fundamental culture change which would challenge established notions of the 'ideal worker'. Indeed, Organisational change needs to be part of a broader societal change 'Organisational change does not take place in a vacuum, and wider social norms can and do impact on workplace cultures' (Lewis, 2001:28). Research reported by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2001a) found that the Working Time Regulations 1998 which implemented a maximum 48-hour working week, has had limited impact on working hours. This was largely due to the use of the 'opt-out' clause by employers (Goss and Smith, 2001). The finding that managers experience greater work-life conflict suggests implications for those wishing to advance their careers into management, in that higher status jobs may tend to carry greater job demands. Lineham and Walsh (2000) found that work-life conflict prevented female managers from progressing to senior management. For those who value on-work life, the greater chance of work-life conflict associated with a more senior position, may limit their career opportunities. 'Male' constructions of work where 'a model of employment is perpetuated in which the 'best' jobs also happened to be those least compatible with employment and caring' (Crompton and Birkelund, 2000:349) still perpetuate and there is much work to do in challenging these structures. Increased take-up of work-life policies was associated with increased work-life conflict. This issue needs to be explored in more depth to fully understand the nature of take-up and its impact on employees. This finding may indicate that policy provision is not adequate enough to alleviate work-life conflict since even where take-up of provision is good, work-life conflict is still experienced. Access to work-life balance policies would appear to be important in mitigating against additional work-life conflict but it is often those who are in most need of being able to access arrangements (e.g. those with caring responsibilities) who are often the least able to do so (Lewis and Taylor, 1996).

Those who used paid holidays to cover for a care responsibility experienced greater work-life conflict. The statutory unpaid right to time off for dependants (usually around two days) may not be sufficient to deal with all the emergencies and other commitments that parents have to deal with. In any case, it is unpaid (although two of the case study companies did claim to pay the time off) and employees may be unwilling to use it for this reason. Being refused time off or an arrangement had the greatest impact on work-life balance of the variables measuring access and there is clearly a need for requests to be given serious consideration. The new right for parents of children under six to ask to change working hours (DTI, 2001) may force employers to consider a request more carefully, although business needs justifications can still be 'manipulated into a business case reason for refusal' (Wise, 2002:11). All of the limited access variables were, to a small extent, moderated by work-life Organisational culture suggesting that a positive culture may offset the negative experiences of limited access.

Being male and being a parent were both associated with increases in work-life conflict but these effects were moderated by other variables. This would suggest that fathers may be more likely to experience the greatest work-life conflict. Previous research has tended to find mothers experience greater conflict than fathers, but perhaps as British men face new pressures to become more involved fathers (Gerson, 2002; Ranson, 2001; Lewis, 2001) while at the same time working the longest hours in Europe (Moss, 1996) they are also increasingly feeling greater conflict between work and home. The government's work-life balance campaign has rather unquestioningly promoted work-life balance policies to improve the lives of employees and the business outcomes of organisations. However, if the findings from this research are replicated in other sectors and companies, then this would challenge this simplistic notion. The Campaign needs to address the cultural dimensions of work-life balance and to emphasize the importance of Organisational change for organisations seeking a work-life balance approach. Otherwise the actual impact on employees and on Organisational performance will be limited.

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