

Work-Life Balance of Employees in a Private Higher Education Institution: Basis for Institutional Policy Reformulation

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Abstract – The study presupposes that workers must deal with often challenging demands as they confer between spheres of “life” and work. The study determines the current Work Life Balance (WLB) practices and policies as a basis for institutional policy reformulation in a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI). Specifically, the study seeks to describe the work-life related activities of employees; impacts of work-life balance related activities; and the related policies of the institution in terms of leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy, work arrangements, additional work provisions, and experience in the organization. The researchers utilized the descriptive cross-sectional design of research to obtain information concerning the analysis of the work-life balance of employees using survey-questionnaire at a given time in an academic year. The participants of the study were the school administrators and faculty members in one private higher education institution in the Philippines with full-time status during the Academic Year 2015-2016. The survey-questionnaire for work-life balance (WBL) was modified from “Better Work Life Balance Survey-Employees” of the University of Queensland. Spreadsheet software was used for more efficient, effective and accurate treatment of data. The work-life balance related activities of employees are sometimes at risk. Work-life related policies are viewed by the employees in various ways. Leave arrangements are being viewed by employees in various ways in the organization. Moreover, parenting and pregnancy related policies are also evident in the organization. Furthermore, various work arrangements related policies are also enjoyed by the employees. Additional provisions regarding work are also evident. There is a moderate impact work related activities and policies on the personal life of employees.

Keywords – Higher education, work-life balance, employees, policy reformulation, descriptive-cross-sectional design, PHEI, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

In a state of equilibrium, the weight of both a person’s job and personal life is equal [1]. Thus, numerous theories have been proposed by researchers to explain WLB. The border theory explains that a family and work domain is separated by borders which could be physical, temporal or psychological. Some researchers referred to the compensation theory according to which workers try to find more satisfaction in one domain to compensate for the lack of satisfaction in the other domain [2]. Others refer to spill-over theory according to which any feelings, emotions, attitudes and behaviors generated in one domain can be transferred or ‘spilled over’ into the other domain [3]. Thus, the focus on the domains of work and family is essential, as family and work are the most important elements of everyone’s life. Any competing demands of work and family life will cause conflict and negatively affect the wellbeing of workers. Another measurable four aspects of the balance between work and family roles are work-family conflict; family-work conflict; work-family enhancement; and family-work enhancement. As these components have bi-directional effects on work and family domains, participation in the work role may interfere or enhance the performance in the family role, and vice versa, participation in the family role may interfere or enhance performance in the work role.

Institutional policies have been proven to reduce absenteeism and positively impact employees’ job satisfaction, productivity and retention. Thus, there is necessary for organizations to implement WLB initiatives. These initiatives include flexible working hours, temporal agreements, childcare facilities, and supports such as counseling. Educational institutions providing such benefits seem to understand the relationship between greater WLB and retention of a competent workforce, and its effect on organizational commitment and profitability. Those with a high WLB culture are more likely to retain individuals who prioritize WLB. In contrast, when WLB priorities differ between employers and employees, then work-family conflict occurs. This can result in staff deciding to leave an organization and to look for work in organizations where WLB cultures are superior. This means workers with flexible work schedules achieve better WLB, which results in higher job satisfaction, higher home activity satisfaction, and lower role conflict. Moreover, work is regarded as a social group comprising two or more persons sharing an organizational affiliation such as members of a profession or department. Workgroup may also consist of persons belonging to a

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vocation or any other means of livelihood. On the other hand, family is also regarded as a social group consisting of persons connected by common ancestry, adoption or marriage or any other social or legal unions.

Work-life balance (WBL) is one of the most central issues and concerns for 21st century societies, and according to the American Psychological Association balancing work and family is one of the major challenges for the current generation of workers [4]. Helping employees balance their work and family life is viewed as a social and business imperative since work-life imbalance experienced by workers negatively impacts on employers and society as a whole [5]. Evidence from a study of international employers indicates significant increases in the implementation and use of workplace flexibility, more commonly known as flexitime, as a work-life balance policy [6]. Thus, there is increasing interest in how people manage the multiple demands of paid work, home and personal life, and the consequences that failure to achieve 'balance' between these domains may have on health.

Furthermore, transforming the work place pro-actively using a condition of well- designed quality work-life initiatives for the employees will yield a competitive advantage as it will increase employee job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Therefore, work-life balance initiatives and practices can be seen as strategic human resource management decisions that can translate into improved individual and organizational performance. In addition, flexible working hours are becoming important to the workplaces, wherein lot of organizations offers flexible working hours to employees for the benefits of higher productivity, higher organization profitability, promotion work-life balance, reduction of stress and increasing employee wellbeing [7] and another reason for conducting such study is that work-life balance programs could help improve organizational culture and employee overall performance, and it can contribute to social change by preparing employers for success while simultaneously positioning individual employees to attain optimum balance between work and life responsibilities [8].

Moreover, researchers have suggested that work and non-work domains (family and personal life) are the primary domains for an individual, and the challenge of balancing work and non-work demands is a major concern for employees [9]. Having work-life balance means finding a way to strike a balance between fulfilling both work commitments and care responsibilities and other activities that are important in order to the individual. People invest in other activities, because they consider them beneficial to their health and well-being. For many workers, work satisfies many of their needs, such as financial needs, interpersonal needs (social support from supervisors and co- workers), and power and status [10]. Performing a meaningful job that is aligned with an individual's skill, values, and interests can promote overall well-being and satisfaction with life [11]. Therefore, if an individual experiences balance between their work and non-work domains, their well- being is improved [12].

Thus, the present study contributes to both scholarly and practical endeavors. From a theoretical standpoint, this study is the first of its kind to examine the construct of work life

balance as it pertains to the pivotal role of academic workers in a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI) in the Philippines. Additionally, this study will help explain if the factors influence academic staffs work life balance. Much of the existing literature explored the idea of work life balance in various settings; however, there is a scarcity of literature and studies explaining the phenomenon through quantitative analyses in the academe. This study aids in understanding the factors that impact work life balance. Thereby serves as a basis for institutional and administrative policy revisit and reformulation. Thus, the present study serves to expand role theory by providing a broader and more encompassing context [13].

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study determines the current Work Life Balance (WLB) practices and policies as a basis for institutional policy reformulation in a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI). Specifically, the study seeks to describe: the work-life related activities of employees; impacts of work-life balance related activities; and the related policies of the institution in terms of leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy, work arrangements, additional work provisions, and experience in the organization.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilized the descriptive cross-sectional design of research to obtain information concerning the analysis of the work-life balance of employees in a PHEI. It is part of the common study designs to assess the WLB using survey-questionnaire at a given time in an academic year.

The participants of the study were the school administrators and faculty members in one private higher education institution in the Philippines with full time status during the Academic Year 2015-2016.

The survey- questionnaire for work-life balance (WBL) was modified from "Better Work Life Balance Survey-Employees" of the University of Queensland. Part 1 solicited how the participants describe their work-life balance related activities. Part 2 gathered information on the impacts of work-life related activities on employees. Part 3 delved on the school's policies on leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy, work arrangements, additional work provisions and experience in the organization. The instrument used the 5 point Likert scale with the corresponding descriptive ratings: (1) Related Activities of Employees: (5) 5.00-4.20= Always (A); (4) 4.19-3.40= Oftentimes (O); (3) 3.39-2.60= Sometimes (So); (2) 2.59-1.80= Seldom (Se); (1) 1.79-1.00= Never (N); and (2) Related Policies: (5) 5.00-4.20= Strongly Agree (SA); (4) 4.19-3.40= Agree (A); (3) 3.39-2.60= Moderately Agree (MA); (2) 2.59-1.80= Disagree (DA); (1) 1.79-1.00= Strongly Disagree (SD). These criteria were subjected to face and construct validity by the administrators and faculty members in a sister PHEI and graduate education professors and experts after taking into consideration the existing constructs from previous literature and studies. The evaluators of the constructs used the same descriptive ratings and analysis clearly indicated in the instrument. The results of

the average computed mean of the juries were 4.71 (Related Activities) interpreted as “always”, and 4.68 (Related Policies) interpreted as “strongly agree”. After the validation of the instrument, reliability test was conducted to determine the consistency of the scores using the instrument measuring the same set of factors with similar type of study was established. In this study, the Test-Retest Method was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. The validated instrument underwent pilot testing to a select group of administrators and faculty members. After one month, the same questionnaire was administered to the same group. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was used to correlate data gathered. The computed coefficient of correlation was 0.87 (Very High). Thus, the computed correlation value indicated that the instrument was reliable. The importance of the internal validity and reliability of a questionnaire allows collecting data that measures the investigated concepts; whereas a reliable questionnaire allows the data to be collected consistently. Because for reliable responses in research the minimum internal consistency threshold of Cronbach’s alpha of 0.7 is required.

After subjecting the questionnaire to validity and reliability tests, a letter of request to the Office of the President endorsed by the Vice President for Academics and Students Services (VP-AASS) was properly secured in the conduct of survey to the participants. Data were gathered towards the end of the Academic Year 2015-2016. The Research and Publications Office (RPO) director conducted face-to-face and personal assessment using the instrument. Each participant was formally introduced to the purposes of the study and assured of the strict confidentiality of the data gathered.

All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. Partakers were also promised that their own identity together with the name of the departments they work for will remain confidential. It was discussed to participants that the questionnaire is completely anonymous and does not include questions asking for any personal details, such as names of participants or names of department head. Names of the departments that the authors approached may only be revealed, if necessary, to examiners during the presentation of the paper to the administration; other than this, information will not be revealed to anyone else, it will not be available to the public and will not be stated in this paper. Also, all participants were advised that they will be provided with a copy of the collected results on request.

Before processing the responses, the completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. The questionnaires were then coded to enable responses to be grouped into various categories. The researchers mainly used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to examine data. The data gathered were collated, treated and analyzed in accordance with the objective of the study. Spreadsheet software was used only for more efficient, effective and accurate treatment of data. The WLB of the administrators and faculty members relative to the specific factors was considered.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The work-life balance related activities of employees are sometimes at risk. The employees oftentimes work on days off; carry a cell phone to work so they can be reached after normal business hours; work during vacations; go into the office before normal business hours; volunteers for special projects in addition to the normal job duties; rearrange or alter personal plans because of work; and participate in community activities for the benefit of the organization. The employees sometimes bring things home to work on; take work related phone calls at home; check e-mail or voice mail from home; stay at work after normal business hours; work late into the night at home; attend work related functions on personal time; and travel whenever the school asks them to, even though technically they don’t have to; and check back to the office even when they are on vacation. The overall X is 3.34 (sometimes).

Work-life related policies are viewed by the workers in various ways. Leave arrangements are being viewed by workers in various ways in the organization. The staffs strongly agree that there is bereavement leave (employees are allowed to take a leave upon the death of a family member). The employees simply agree about the carer’s leave (employees are allowed to take time off to support a sick family member); opportunity for leave if care arrangements for children or other dependents break down (employees are allowed to take a leave to care for their child if the nanny gets sick); study / training leave (employees are allowed to take time off for study or training.); career breaks (employees are allowed to negotiate affixed period of up to several years away from work to undertake study, while keeping a job at the end of the term.); cultural/religious leave (employees are allowed to take time off for cultural / religious reasons (Fiesta); and pooling of leave entitlements (employees are allowed to avail all leaves if they need it for family reasons). Generally, they simply agree with the mentioned work-life related policies on leave as reflected by the computed of 4.07.

Moreover, parenting and pregnancy related policies are also evident in the organization. The employees strongly agree that they are enjoying the policies in relation to paid maternity and paternity leaves, and have the opportunity to return to the same job after maternity/ paternity/ adoption leave. Moreover, they agree that there are policies related to safety at work during pregnancy (changing the work of a pregnant employee to avoid periods of standing or lifting heavy objects); pre-natal Leave (time for pregnant women or their partner to attend medical appointments during working hours either using additional leave or sick leave); staggered return to work after pregnancy (allows employees to negotiate a temporary reduction in hours of work when they return to work); breastfeeding room (space at work to offer privacy for an employee to breastfeed and provide refrigeration facilities); and bringing children to work in case of emergencies (provision for a safe location where employees can carry out their regular work duties while caring for dependents until other arrangements can be made). The overall computed X is 4.04 (Agree).

Furthermore, various work arrangements related policies are also enjoyed by the employees. They agree that there are

policies related to opportunity to negotiate part-time work for full time employees (allows employees to work part-time if a family situation changes dramatically); time off in lieu of rostered days off (allows employees to take time off for overtime they have worked with pay); and self-rostering and/or staggered start and finish (picking your own start and finish times and/or days as long as you work on an agreed number of hours work). However, they moderately agree that job sharing (one or more people share one full-time job); telecommuting (where an employee can work from home or outside of the workplace using his/her own or the school's equipment such as laptop); cap on overtime (a limit on the number of overtime hours that can be worked); and gradual retirement (allows employees to gradually reduce the number of working hours or duties over an extended period of time, up to several years, prior to retirement) are not clearly available. The overall X is 3.37 (Moderately Agree).

Additional provisions regarding work are also evident. The employees agree that there are additional provisions related to work regarding telephone for personal use (allowing employees to contact family members if needed); counseling services for employees (availability for counseling services for employees experiencing among others work/family stress); health programs (quit smoking programs, flu vaccination on site, dietary advice program, etc); exercise Facilities (the organization provides onsite or subsidizes exercise facilities /gym memberships); and equal access to promotion, training and development (providing equal access to promotion, training and development by providing encouragement and assistance to those employees with family responsibilities). However, relocation assistance (where an employee has to move for work purposes, the organization helps the whole family adapt to the new environment) is moderately provided among the workers. The overall computed X is 3.81 (Agree).

There is a moderate impact work-related activities and policies on the personal life of workers. They express that they are satisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities. They moderately agree that their personal life suffers because of work; they put personal life on hold to work; miss personal activities due to work; and struggle to juggle work and non-work. They disagree that their job makes personal life difficult and neglect personal needs because of work. Thus, the computed overall x is 2.73, which mean "Moderately Agree".

The findings imply that work schedule flexibility as part of the organizational policy resulted to a positive correlation with overall job satisfaction. This means the lower satisfaction is systematically associated with lower productivity and the occurrence of the various forms of evidences, with corresponding strengths and weaknesses are consistent with the existence of a causal link between human well-being and human performance. Moreover, the results of the present study revealing the picture of difficulties faced in balancing the work demand and the life (family) responsibility, and the high correlation between the difficulties faced and the balancing act to be performed as reflected in the areas of career advancement factors, organizational support and Psychological factors towards human resources management interventions for better work

life balance, per se was supported. Furthermore, high correlation between workers' job satisfaction as affected by organizational commitment reinforced the findings of the present study. Researchers have established the level of agreement on various aspects of policies. Accordingly, employees experienced conflicts in schedule when it comes to family events and work. They further established that long daily working hours have caused conflicts between work and family, where employees were not given a chance to decide about the starting time, and were not provided technological resources to allow them to work at home. A study utilizing the existing database from the Iowa State University explored faculty work-life balance and job satisfaction among academic disciplines [14]. Thus, the findings of this study provide valuable insight for educators and policy makers who are interested in factors that contribute to work-life and overall job satisfaction among academic disciplines at a large research institution.

Although these studies insist that work life balance plays a significant role in employees' psychological well-being and behavioral performance [15], less attention has been focused on what affects work life balance has on employees' behaviors in the academic setting. Thus, the current study posited that work-life balance, along with employees' behavior, could affect performance improvement in the PHEI. The data in this study are collected from the private higher educational institution context where the interest in work-life balance has increased and the in-depth research on work-life balance is needed. Lastly, employee performance is a key determinant in the achievement of organizational goals, and every individual is an integral part of the family in particular and the organization in general. Thus, work life balance practice is an important factor in increasing employee performance [16]. The results further indicate that employee orientations on policies were highly correlated with organizational commitment, and mediated by job satisfaction. The findings provide substantial information regarding understanding individual-level value differences when examining the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of organizational policies and practices affecting WLB of employees. Consequently, processing of institutional policies affecting employee socialization in an ethical way will promote being a good citizenship and work effectiveness in the organizations. In other words, if the employees can be happy and successful at work, their work life balance can be positively and effectively managed [17], because this generation of employees are committed to their personal learning and development and this remains their first choice benefit from employers together with flexible working hours, and cash bonuses [18], the phenomenon of flexible working arrangements affected the well-being of employees as reiterated [19], and to ascertain and review the organizational policies to address improve work-life balance [20]. The results of a study suggest that there is a great deal of overlap in the factors responsible for the WLB experienced by those in the teaching fields to include hours worked, workload, work pace and spillover [21]. In summary, the presence of work life balance policies can lead to the organization being identified as an employer of choice, ensuring that the company will continuously attract employees [22].

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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The work-life balance related activities of employees are sometimes at risk. Work-life related policies are viewed by the employees in various ways. Leave arrangements are being viewed by employees in various ways in the organization. Moreover, parenting and pregnancy related policies are also evident in the organization. Furthermore, various work arrangements related policies are also enjoyed by the employees. Supplementary provisions regarding work are also evident. There is a moderate impact work-related activities and policies on the personal life of workers. This research has presented significant insights into the problems of combining family responsibilities with paid work in relation to policy relevant agendas. Work-life balance scales are problematic for many scholars and researchers because they conceptualize the work component more specifically than the life component, therefore what “life” means remains rather abstract apart from general references to the “home”, “housework, and “family responsibilities” [23]. Thus, the findings of the study suggest the need to frame policies that would minimize the work load of academic employees without affecting the productivity of the institution, for achieving successful work-life balance. Moreover, several practices have already been explored related to WLB to promote the value of human resource management in organizations. HR functions are now considered as strategic tool in the formulation policies to attain its objectives. The function of work before which was a matter of necessity and survival has evolved encouraging organizations to create and reformulate new policies and standards that will encourage employee retention and personal satisfaction. It is therefore significant for all educational leaders to understand and give due magnitude to the different human resource policies and practices in the institution of higher learning. Reformulated policies concerned with attracting, managing, motivating and developing and retaining employees for the benefit of the well-balance work-life and the entire organization. WLB is a challenging issue for educational leaders, managers and has also attracted the attention of researchers. Work/life balance is described as a satisfactory level of involvement or ‘fit’ between the multiple roles in employees’ life. Managing the boundary between home and work is now becoming more challenging. Educational institutions need to ensure effective balancing act between workable work/life balance policy, benefiting and meeting the needs of both the organization and its employees. An organization not providing real opportunity for employees work/life balance is opening them up to increasing numbers of dissatisfied and unproductive employees and hence increased attrition rates. Merely creating a work/life policy framework is not enough; fostering an organizational culture that supports the use of available policies is also of great importance. Furthermore, there is a need for employers and employees alike to find flexible and innovative solutions that maximize productivity without damaging employees well – being, their family relationships and other aspects of life.

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