Life beyond Pay

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The world is in the midst of the most dramatic transformation in the nature of work and family since the Industrial Revolution. The traditional way of seeing women as the "grateful slaves" started during the Industrial Revolution with the separation of the public and private domains. The revolution saw work and family roles being defined by gender, where men were drawn to the public domain to earn money while the women remained within the private domain as care takers of home and children. Women became minimally the vehicles of bearing sons and had to obey her authoritarian and dominating husband, regard him as her master and serve him faithfully. As for the women describing this time period, they too accepted without question the notion of men earning and women caring. This resulted in the cultural assumption that men have the right to work and women have the right to be the care takers to the household, thus becoming the "grateful slaves".

Gradually the advent of globalization, urbanization and secularization brought about socio psychological changes in attitudes and values of people. The male breadwinner/female home-carer model no longer dominates. At the present time, the culture with regard to career development of women has undergone rapid changes. The opportunity of entering the professional labor market in large numbers has offered women the chance to participate as never before in the most profound social, economic and political re-structure in last 50 years. Women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. Their exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago. The thoroughly domesticated women who could not think beyond the welfare of their families have now awakened to action. They have a fierce desire to succeed, which is the awakening of their dormant individuality. This has opened new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth.

Despite being a relatively new body of thought, the existence of various studies on work life balance (WLB) is broad. Today WLB has become an increasingly pervasive concern for employers as well as employees. WLB is the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal demands of both paid work and family responsibilities. It is about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments, which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity.

WLB is an issue of paramount importance to individuals, families, organizations, government and society. It has come to the fore due to multitude of changes in the work place, in employee demographics and in the family sphere. A lot has happened over the course of the past decade e.g., demographic changes, economic factors, technological advances, impact of generational cohort on work values. Families today look very different than in the past. They are smaller; more complex; more diverse in terms of structure, patterns of functioning and heritage; less stable; less likely to have as much free time; and more likely to break up.

There is a renewed interest in personal lives and family values. There are also now more dual-income families, working women of all ages, working mothers, women with direct responsibility for family care, workers caring for elderly parents or relatives, a young work force with generation 'Y' employees/Millennials (born between early 1980s to the early 2000s) who stress more on WLB and care less about salaries. Millennials are tech savvy, ambitious, team players, demand more

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responsibility and are family oriented as well. They want to spend more time with and be more available to their families.

Today's work culture is characterized by long and odd working hours, night shifts, rigorous tasks, pressing deadlines and heavy work load. Global labor market is also becoming highly competitive as a consequence, the employees feel impelled to put in longer hours to achieve and possibly exceed the employers' expectations in order to secure their jobs. Technological advances that began several decades ago have exacerbated many of these issues by allowing people to work "anytime, anywhere." Thus, the work has become more taxing and burdensome.

Stakeholder involvement such as government, unions, shareholders and society at large also has an impact on WLB practices. Various Acts have been passed from time to time such as National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935, The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993.

Today's workers have many competing responsibilities which places stress on individuals, families and the communities in which they reside. Workers are now seen as being neither separate from family at work, nor separate from work when with the family. Both the worlds of work and family overlap and influence one another greatly. These changes have caused workers to face conflicts between their work and their personal lives. Inter role conflict (work-family or family-work role conflict) is a serious problem that arises because individual has a limited amount of resources in time and energy and it impacts workers, their employers and communities. The inter role conflict occurs when the employees extend their efforts to satisfy their work demands at the expense of their family demands or vice versa. Work family conflict is primarily caused by excessive work demands and predicts negative family outcomes, whereas family-work conflict is primarily determined by family demands and predicts negative work outcomes.

Career success today is defined not only in terms of promotions and lucrative assignments but also the ability to balance between work and non-work life. Organizations are expected to be respectful of families and they need to come up with family-responsive policies. Now the organizations are forced to look beyond the ordinary HR interventions and execute initiatives such as flexible working hours, alternative work arrangements, leave policies in lieu of family care responsibilities and employee assistance programs.

Availability and use of WLB practices such as telecommuting, part-time working, annualized hours, job sharing, career breaks, flexi time, shift working, onsite child care, voluntary time, term-time working, and compressed hours etc when provided in the context of supervisor and organizational support can reduce role conflict and increase positive appraisals of one's organization. The results are: reduced absenteeism, lower turnover intentions, improved employee morale, higher job and family satisfaction, lower recruitment and training costs, lower job stress levels, lessened inter role conflict, increased productivity, increased organizational commitment and loyalty, and higher levels of overall organizational performance.

An imbalance between work and family domains appears to have negative outcomes for individuals (e.g., depression, anxiety, and poor health), for interrelationships (e.g., increase in interrelationship conflict, and divorce), and for organizations (e.g., absenteeism, decrease in productivity, and increase in turnover). These problems are all-too familiar in today's overbooked, overworked world. Indeed, they seem practically inevitable in a culture that defines success as "having it all." This has created a need and desire for more flexibility in the workplace.

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Hence, organizations today are bound to require different kind of policies and regulations such as focus on work design, share control and responsibility with employees, organize for work and family, move more women into high-level positions, engage unions and professional associations and build lasting coalitions with other actors because of the prevalence of non-traditional, non-standard and atypical employment patterns and practices. Therefore, it has become all the more important to encompass policies and provisions beyond mere welfare facilities to tackle with the growing problems of WLB among the new economy organizations.

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