

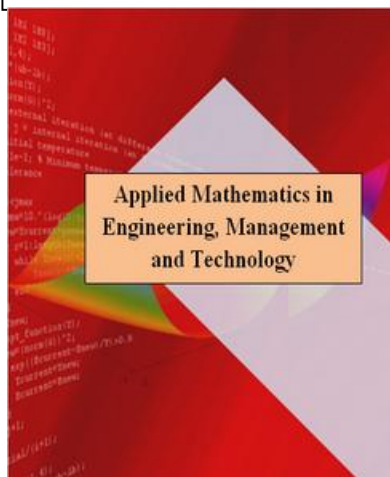
PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN THE PVT SECTOR TOWARDS “EMPLOYEE WELFARE PROGRAMS” FOR MAINTAINING WORK LIFE BALANCE

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ABSTRACT:

The increasing number of women in the labor market and the rise in dual career couples has prompted many organizations to introduce programs that help their employees balance their work and personal lives. Positive employee's perceptions of such initiatives have tended to be assumed rather than demonstrated. This study examines how a proposal for a work life balance program is actually viewed by women employees. Based on survey data from 300 women employees in a shopping centre in Pune city, the study finds evidence of a range of perceptions towards childcare welfare programs provided by their employers. The perceptions of women employees are influenced by various criteria such as:

Women's existing and potential constraints in managing work and childcare; Benefits women employees receive from child care welfare programs; Attitude towards their employer. Perceptions towards the provision of child care welfare programs are particularly positive when these programs help to resolve their difficulties of balancing work and childcare.

Keywords: Women's employees, women's attitude, day care for children, work organization, work life balance.

1. Introduction

The task of balancing work and personal life is coming more challenging in many countries as a result of the changing nature of work by including workplace recognitions, technological developments, and an expansion of spaces and times pertaining to where and when paid work can occur (Lewiset at 2007). Such challenges are increasingly evident when placed in the background of increasing number of women in labour markets, the rise of dual career couples, higher divorce statistics, the frequency of single-parent families, and ageing population. These broader social trends make many employees to request new solution for combining work with their personal and family life. In India business firms can also develop proposal plan to help their work and personnel life (Davis and Kalleberg 2006), even if some employers might view them as disturbing (den Dulu and de Ruijter 2008). These employer based proposals, which to date have generally come under the term of 'Family-friendly' practices. Many are grouped according to their categories: a) flexible work policies b) paid holidays or vacations c) assistance with child care and family health care.

It is with last category of practices, specially the provision of employer. Sponsored child care services. There might be a number of factors which motivate employers to promote such services including straitening the image and communication of corporate values, along with the desire to moderate absenteeism, encourage employees

involvement and loyalty, and facilitate future recruitment. Nonetheless the real impact of company and human resource initiatives in this area is less than evident. Some studies have observed a reduction in turn over and turn over intentions (Milkovich and Gomez 1976, Grover and Crooker 1995) or an increase in satisfaction (Kosser and Nichol 1992, Ezra and Deckman 1996) where as other resources did not observe these effects (Miller 1984, Goffetal 1990) what is even less well known is how employees regard the provision of child care arrangements by their organizations. Because of the supposed benefits they provide in helping to reduce work family conflicts, it might be generally assumed that childcare is universally desirable and welcome from an employee perspective. However, this claim has not always been evaluated in empirical terms (for an exception, see Haar and Spell 2004) therefore the major contribution of the paper is to investigate the views of employee attitudes headed for employer pay for child care arrangements. This study poses the following two major questions. First is there a relationship between work – family conflict and a positive view of employer- driven child care initiatives? A related question is what role do organizational and personal situations play in explaining this conflict and do the sources of work family conflict, help to inform employees views of employer sponsored child care.

In order to better understand the reactions of employees during the development of a work life balance programme, a survey was conducted at a large shopping centre (involving many small business) in Pune that had introduced a proposal for the joint financing of a child care centre. The national setting is one of the established state authority and intervention in work regulations, including state infrastructure and support for childcare and the 35 hrs working week. However such public interventions do not necessarily mean that work life conflicts are eliminated as the traditional domestic division of labor in Pune remains strong. (Windebanh 2001.) and the situation of fewer work hours is not always improved for those who might work 'unsocial or flexible hours of work in exchange of the reduction of their working time.' Thus it is precisely in such locations and balance issues are more likely to be exacerbated because of the nature of operations with their extended day and hours of business.

2. Literature review

To date many studies (e.g. Duxbury et al. 1994, Saltzstein et al. 2001, McManus et al. 2002) have confirmed a relationship between a high work-family conflict and a positive reception towards childcare proposals. This means that employees who face considerable difficulties in balancing their work and personal lives would view such a proposal in favourable terms. Evidence from previous research further suggests that employees who feel overwhelmed and unable to find the time for their different activities will appreciate any kind and supportive signal from their supervisor (Anderson et al. 2002, McManus et al. 2002.) thus a positive response by supervisors or managers towards supporting greater work life balance among their workforces will be welcomed by employees.

To understand the change women undergo in becoming empowered we look at two sets of literature: behavior change and women's empowerment. In the first set of literature we review what leads to successful change, and in the second set of literature we review what is understood as empowerment for women.

2.1. Behavior change

We first start with a review of the self-efficacy literature and focus on the criteria for successful behavior change. Bandura (1986) suggests that a person's self-expectations determine whether or not certain behavior will be undertaken, the extent of effort expended by the individual, and whether the individual can persist in the face of challenges encountered. This notion of self-efficacy is mediated by a person's beliefs or expectations about his/her ability to achieve certain tasks effectively or exhibit certain behaviors (Hackett and Betz 1981). For example, individuals with low self-efficacy regarding their behavior limit their participation when making difficult behavior changes and are more likely to give up when faced with obstacles. Their efficacy beliefs about themselves serve as barriers to change, and in this case, their own empowerment (Hackett and Betz 1981). Furthermore, these authors state that self-efficacy is not necessarily an in-born trait and can be acquired and nurtured. This fact makes these

concepts particularly relevant to our study. Bandura (1986) identifies four ways in which self-efficacy and self-efficacy expectations are acquired.

Performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physical/affective status. Performance accomplishments are beliefs that stem from the reactions with which individual accomplishments are greeted. A negative assessment can lower confidence and self-efficacy beliefs; conversely a positive assessment encourages self-efficacy beliefs and the self-efficacy expectations that similar behaviors will be well received in the future. Vicarious learning results in beliefs that are acquired by observing modeling behaviors. When the modeling behavior is undertaken within similar contexts⁵ such as gender, economic and social class it presents a realistic option. Thus, one of the most effective strategies for enhancing self-efficacy beliefs and self-efficacy expectations is that modeling behavior is context specific. It is of little use for a woman of low social class to observe the success of an entrepreneurial woman born to a family of high social standing with access to resources that are unavailable to the poor woman. Other ways such as 'verbal persuasion' and 'affective status'⁶ encourage self efficacy. Persuading women to attempt positive behavior change and providing a supportive environment in which women can attempt change, further enhances self-efficacy. Changes based on verbal persuasion, affective status and modeling behavior can lead to significant changes in self-beliefs and self-expectation. These 'personal factors' according to Bandura⁵ In India, where this research is based, we include caste as a determinant of class for successful modeling behaviors⁶ 'Affective status' suggests that people learn best in a supportive environment, people do not easily learn in high stress situations, such as criticism (1986) and Pajares (1996), from an integral part of a triadic relationship necessary for change. They suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between 'personal factors', 'behavior' and 'environmental factors', which result in social change. Changes in personal factors (such as self efficacy) can affect an individuals' behavior (willingness to take risks), which can impact on environmental factors (family and society). These relationships are reciprocal and reinforce each other. This suggests that strategies purposefully introduced in order to enhance women's personal factors (self efficacy) can lead to reinforcing behaviors (such as self assertive behavior) which in turn can impact and reinforce environmental factors (such as alteration of familial relations). The interaction and reciprocity of the triadic relationship can result in a positive and significant change for women.

2.2. Women's Empowerment

Although the notion of women's empowerment has long been legitimized by international development agencies⁷, what actually comprises empowerment, and how it is measured, is debated in the development literature. Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002 provide an excellent review of this debate. They review the many ways that empowerment can be measured and suggest that researchers pay attention to the process in which empowerment occurs. The frequently used Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite measure of gender inequality in three key areas: Political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making and power over economic resources (HDR: 2003). It is an aggregate index for a population and does not measure Empowerment on an individual basis. It is made up of two dimensions: Economic participation and decision-making (measured by the percentage of female administrators and managers, and professional and technical

A number of studies have shown that women may be empowered in one area of life while not in others (Malhotra and Mather 1997; Kishor 1995 and 2000b; Hashemi et al. 1996; Beegle et al. 1998). While we do not attempt to resolve this debate, we take the position, that women's empowerment can be measured by factors contributing to each of the following: their personal, economic, familial, and political empowerment. We make a point to include household and interfamilial relations as we believe is a central locus of women's disempowerment in India. And by including the political, we posit that women's empowerment measures should include women's participation in systemic transformation by engaging in political action (Batliwala 1994; Bisnath and Elson 1999; Kabeer 2001; Narasimhan, 1999; and Sen and Grown 1987; Amin, Becker and Bayes (1998) split the concept of women's empowerment into three components each measured separately: Inter-spouse consultation index, which seeks to represent the extent to which husbands consult their wives in household affairs; Individual autonomy

indexes which represents women's self-reported autonomy of physical movement outside the house and in matters of spending money; and the Authority index, which report on actual decision-making power (which is traditionally in the hands of the patriarch of the family). These indices are similar to those of used by Balk in her 1994 study. Comparable components of empowerment are included in the eight indicators by Hashemi (1996): mobility, economic security, ability to make a small purchases, ability to make larger purchases, involvement in major decisions, relative freedom from domination by the family, political and legal awareness, and involvement in political campaigning and protests.

3. Proposed Design

Need for the present study for organizations and women employees especially in Pune City in Maharashtra region:

The focus of the present study will be state of Maharashtra but more importantly in Pune region, particularly in view of the Governmental support and the infrastructure development which is gradually evolving in this part. With more investment in and around Pune, it is expected that Pune region of the state of Maharashtra will hold place of dominance in the country.

Today, the number of working women in various fields is on the rise. This has resulted in work family conflict. So, this study is done to explain firstly, what role do organizational and personnel situations play in explaining the work family conflict and do the sources of work family conflict affect employee perception? Secondly, what other variables, independent of the work family conflict, create a perception among women employees towards their employers.

Objectives considering for research work:

1. To study the positive perception of work life balance proposal.
2. To find out evidence of a range of attitudes.
3. To study the possibility of the employees benefiting from childcare as well as their views concerning the role of the organization.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1a).

Women employees with young children or employees who are single parents experience the strongest work – family conflict.

Hypothesis 1b):

Women employees with young children or employees who are single parents have a more positive perception of the work life balance proposal.

Hypothesis 2): The stronger is the work family conflict, the more positive is the perception of a work life balance proposal.

Hypothesis 3a) : The perception of spending too much time at work, a lack of consideration of personnel constraints by the immediate supervisor or manager and unpredictable work schedules increases the work family conflict.

Hypothesis 3b): The perception of spending too much time at work a lack of consideration of personnel constrains by the immediate supervisor or manager and unpredictable work schedule increases the positive perception of the work life balance proposal.

Standard Data Base and Time Span: The database includes information from 300 women employees of different shopping centers at Pune (Maharashtra, India). The completion of research at Pune was covered in the period of January 2013 to June 2013 (6 Months).

4. Research methodology

In order to achieve the identified objective pertaining to priorities and preferences, views of 300 women employees were taken randomly from different shoppingcenters at Pune city. Pretested questioner was administrated to the women employees through personnel interviews.

Besides, personnel observation was conducted in the city and questioner was improved in light. A structured questioner was used as statistical judgment; sampling was restored to for the purpose of study. The survey was conducted during January 2013 to June 2013 among 300 employees which spread in different shoppingcenters over the city.

Tools and Techniques used:

Tables chart and structures are used in explanation to bring out the points more clearly. Tabulation of the primary data was done. On the basis of these tables observations come out more visible, other statistical technique used in cumulative techniques (percentage method). It shows the trend of the variables.

5. Data Collection

a) Primary sources of data collection: - The tools used to collect this data were structured questionnaire, observation method, cumulative techniques and personal interviews.

b) Secondary sources of data collection: - The tools used to collect this data were literature review done from various books, national and international journals, concerned websites etc.

5.1. Sampling technique

The sampling technique used for this research work was convenient sampling.

Sample size: The sample used to collect the data was from different shoppingcenters in pune city. Size of the respondents was 300 from various shoppingcenters.

Scope: the respondents will workingwomen's. Which area covered by myself indifferent shoppingcenters at pune city (Maharashtra)

5.2. Impact of the research work

This research helps those family members who survive different problems in their married life and help them to know the causes, so that they can improve their thinking and take responsibility of child care seriously. As the result of this study, employer and women employees are aware of the benefits offered by child care program and have a positive perception towards Of Women employees in the Pvt Sector towards “Employee welfare programs” for maintaining work life balance. (A study of Pune city, Maharashtra)

6. Result analysis

Hypothesis 1a) & 1b) :

Table 1

Work and organizational constraints, impact of work family conflict on perception of the child care proposal.

It is normal for places in a child care financed by organizations be assigned to employees.	Degree of satisfaction in the search for work life – personnel life balance.
Yes	2.68
No	2.44
Total	2.65

(p<0.05) (p- Personnel life- work life)

Influence of individual and family constraints.

The table 1 shows the findings do not support hypothesis 2, which posited that the stronger the work family conflict, the more positively the child care proposal is viewed. On the contrary workers who adapted a positive view of the child care facility were on average more satisfied in the research for life personal life balance.

Hypothesis 2:

Table 2

Preferences in child care assistance services

Preferences	Frequency (%)
Child care centre financed by employees	30
People that could visit the home if necessary	30
Legal and financial services	25
Messenger services (delivery)	10
Laundry services(dry cleaning)	5
Total	100

Interpretation

Of the 300 respondents , we found that 88% considered it ‘normal’ that place in an employer – sponsored childcare proposal be given to employees (rather than the direct public)moreover the service preferences expressed by employees indicate that the main expectations concern assistanceservices for daily child care or for occasional support to care for sick children (table 2). And legal and financial services, these constituted over three quarters (77%) of employee preferences. The lack of interest in messenger and laundry services can be explained by the fact that the shopping center already offered practical solution in both areas.

Hypothesis 3a) and 3b)

Impact of consideration of personnel constraints on perception of the child care proposal (unpredictable work schedule)

It is normal for places in a child care centre financed by organizations assigned to employees	Degree of satisfaction in the search for work life-personnel life balance.
Yes	2.58
No	1.89

($p < 0.01$)

Interpretation:

The table 3 shows that the perception of the unpredictable work schedule is more positive.

Hypothesis 3b) :

Table 4.

It is normal for places in a child care centre financed by organizations be assigned to employees	Degree of satisfaction in the research for work life – personnel life balance.
Yes	2.86
No	2.67
Total	2.84

($p < 0.21$)

Therefore hypothesis 3b), which stated that the perception of the work – life balance program is more positive among employees facing organizational sources of work family conflict, was not supported.

On the contrary, consideration of employee's personnel constraints by supervisors and managers increased the positive attitude towards the proposal child care center.

7. Conclusion

The study has found that if range of personnel constraints can influence work-family conflict. They do not guarantee the positive attitude among women employees towards work-life balance programs.

Women Employee's vision of proposed assignment of child care places in a Pune shopping center founded by employers depends not only on individual and family constraints but also on their own personnel plans, their perception of the work organization and their concept of the employing organization.

The work –life balance program must be tailored to the real needs of the employees and the organization. A program must be designed to directly address the aspirations of the largest number of its employees.

The work life balance program must be consistent with the organization of work that defends fundamental rights of employees and takes in to account their personnel constraints as much as possible.

Business would only seem to benefit from offering priority place since a child care centre to their employees as part of an integration response if they first emphasize respect, and take in to account the day-to-day personnel circumstances of their employees.

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