Dynamics of the Work Life Balance at the Firm Level: Issues and Challenges

Sami A. Khan
King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Kakul Agha
Middle East College of Information Technology, Oman

We cannot ignore the realities of the workplace today, which have produced more stress and made the lives of individuals more complex, extending beyond the physical boundaries of the organization. There is a need to adopt a well thought out work life balance (WLB) initiative that should be strategic, credible, and coherent with the business and HR policy framework at the firm level. It will surely enhance the corporate image as well as help in institutionalising a performance-based culture in the firm. WLB is a growing cause of concern for all stakeholders and it should be pursued religiously in order to seek a mutually beneficial solution for the organizations and the employees in the long run.

INTRODUCTION

Life is becoming extremely challenging, and the social, economic, and technological changes have added much burden to the working class. Organizations are presenting an increasingly demanding work environment. Being responsive and dealing with global business are additional challenges that force employees to work longer hours in a more demanding environment. The greatest challenge for them is to strike a balance between the life at work and their personal lives. Consequently, organizations are striving to adopt more comprehensive approach towards the workforce management that would address the work-life needs of all employees (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). An expression of "work life balance (WLB)" is currently a topic of debate and discussion amongst employees, employers, academicians, researchers, government agencies, and the policy makers alike. The debate on adopting a work methodology that would help employees balance the life and work has intensified in recent times (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Lockwood, 2003). A lot of contemporary research focuses on the strategies of improving the WLB and discussions on how organizations should handle these issues in recent time across various sectors of business. WLB programs are being heralded as an enlightened yet strategic weapon, and many firms want to be seen as family-friendly organizations, as WLB programs enhance their organizational efforts to recruit, retain, and motivate their most valued employees (Nord et al., 2002). It should not be just part of the HR policies and programs; instead, it should form a part of the necessary cultural change and help change the way we view careers and work (Harrington & Ladge, 2009).

WORK LIFE BALANCE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

HRM and Work Life Balance

Human resource management (HRM) has become more proactive, strategic, and pervasive process dedicated to the management of people at workplace (Beaumont, 1993; Becker et al., 1997; Khan, 2000, 2007; Mabey & Salaman, 1998; Saini, 2000). Our society has evolved over time and with the emergence of the new knowledge and technology, it has taken a different shape. In modern times, organizations have become part of the larger society. As such, they must be attuned to the demands of the society. Organizations have also shown the capability to adapt to the demands of the emerging technologies by attuning their workforce capabilities to deal with the reality. The approach to managing people has also changed in response to other changes happening in our society and organizations at large. In managing people, the emphasis has changed from compliance to commitment and consequently, the focus on staffing, training, and work organization has undergone a transformation. Many developments are also visible because of the demographic changes at workplace and more women joining the workforce. The longevity of people has also added greater challenges for organizations, which are now able to employ older workers productively. Their training and re-training are also challenging for many organizations.

Other issues, like the rising education levels in the society, higher standards of living, attitudes towards the work, liberalization of the government policies to facilitate globalization, increasing competition, and the emergence of the innovative technology have made organizations vulnerable to the change in workplace. Consequently, the HR function had to integrate with the strategic demands of the organization. Organizations are forced to become more equitable and engage workers productively and satisfactorily. Going beyond childcare and employee assistant programs (EAP), the function of HR is supposed to incorporate a host of work-life programs, which include employee recruitment, total reward program, job design, diversity and inclusion, approaches to career advancement and leadership development, employee relocation and travel policies, leave policies and corporate social responsibility (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). In fact, HR has touched every aspect of a working person's life and forced organization to become more employees friendly and equitable. Malik et al. (2010) argued that WLB enables employees to manage their work and non-work activities better. Based on this background, the role of people management becomes paramount. The function of people management is to deal with these challenges and help organization adopt and pursue a comprehensive WLB policies and programs at the firm level, which can assist in creating and balancing the work and life domains of individuals, fostering growth and equity at workplace. Dealing with work/life issues and the inherent dichotomy goes beyond the workplace life.

What is Work Life Balance?

The editorial of *People Management* (2002) asserts that the WLB issues shall soon be part of the employment debates. The discussion on the WLB is heating up internationally to an extent that the organizations have initiated instituting policy on the balance of work and life. It appears that only two factors, work and life, need to be considered when building policy, with childcare being the focal point. However, is this true? Is this debate restricted to caring about the children and work only? Are the practitioners and academicians really being pragmatic and able to carry out the debate in the best direction? Is this discussion, so myopic as to suggest that a few policy changes will suffice? Alternatively, is this debate merely the tip of an iceberg, ready to unleash a greater societal phenomenon? These questions set out some of the premises to look at the dynamics of the WLB issue in the changing work scenario. Despite its vagueness, it is also true that firms are adopting QWL programs and initiatives to bolster their market image and encourage employee engagement. *Fortune* magazine has been identifying better places to work for, reporting that in 2011, the top five companies in US were SAS, Boston Consulting Groups, Wegmans Food Markets, Google, and NetApp. These companies were providing fat paychecks, sweet perks, fun colleagues, and many more, making them dream workplaces (CNN Money, 2011).

The term work-life balance in its present format was first coined in 1986, although work/life programs existed as early as in 1930s (Gambles et al., 2006). Kanter (1977) in his much acclaimed book, *"Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy,"* argued about the importance of the work and life balance issues in organizations and exhorted the academicians to further probe and research this topic to address the interests of the society at large. WLB debate has been global in nature. Critics disagree with claims that the WLB is a phenomenon observed in the United States only while the other parts of the world have declined to understand and accept this concept fully. In fact, the WLB is a global phenomenon and influences the organizations worldwide. Contemporary research has been carried out in the Europe and UK as well as other countries, which supports its global relevance. Gambles et al. (2006) included seven countries, including UK and USA, in their research on three different generations of women who showed signs of experiencing WLB challenges. The researchers suggested that difficulties men and women experience when combining paid work with other parts of life that can no longer be considered as purely personal, familial, employer-based, or even national issues, these are global in nature and attract global attention. Similarly, Fine-Davis et al. (2004) compiled a comparative data on the policies related to workplaces in France, Italy, Denmark, and Ireland (Fine-Davis et al., 2004). In a recent research conducted by Singh et al. (2012) on Indian Millennial and the meaning of workplace, the WLB was one of the five most important themes of the work attributes besides freedom to take initiative, experiment, and express views; performance-based recognition; equity and fairness; and learning and development among the new generation of the workforce. It is imperative to note that WLB is a global phenomenon experienced by all workers. It crosses the boundaries of age, gender, profession, job-grade, job-hierarchy, and leadership/supervision roles, and the like. In fact, it is another societal phenomenon representing the global workforce and encompassing people of all nations.

Work Life Balance and its Constituents

WLB has been referred to by many names, such as flexible working (Dex & Smith, 2002), family friendly policies (Dex, 2003; Roper et al., 2003; Bond et al., 2002, Lockwood, 2003), work-life reconciliation by the European Commission (*see also*, ECPESS, 2009), dependent care and employee assistant program (Harrington & Ladge, 2009), etc., and it seems its nomenclature has been evolving. Some researchers have taken a narrow view whereas others have considered a wider perspective. Work life balance includes flexible working schedules, based on Taylor's view (Taylor, 2005), whereas Latham (2006) covers under its umbrella the paid and unpaid-time off, health and well being, childcare, and even skill development and technology related issues. The initial research on the WLB focussed on building terminology that would explain the meaning of work and family. A host of definitions have provided various meanings of the WLB. Lockwood (2003) presented WLB as the "push and pull between work and family" and a situation of "conflict amongst two". He prescribed that employees are in a state of dilemma to manage the work and home responsibilities. Furthermore, the researcher is of the view that employers have addressed this issue by providing flexibility and autonomy at the workplace and by adopting family-friendly programs and policies in this regard (Lockwood, 2003).

Work Life Balance and Women Employees

As discussed earlier in this paper, women issues have always played a crucial role in the implementation of the WLB. Women have made significant contribution to WLB but their ratio in workforce has remained low; in addition, their male counterparts still occupy most management positions (Helfat et al., 2006; Powell, 1999). Researchers have concluded that the progression to senior positions is still difficult due to the invisible barrier termed as "glass ceiling" (Powell & Butterfield, 1994). Although several European companies have taken giant leaps to overcome the disasters of "glass ceiling" over the last decade (Staub, 2007), the male-effect of the glass ceiling is still visible in other parts of the world. Owing to the pressure from the public and other related organizations as well as due to the fear of missing the competitive edge that could be possibly gained by having women in the top managerial positions, many organizations have adopted the concept of the WLB. Burke (1994; 1994a) and Cassell (1997) informed that many companies in 1990s had launched the WLB programmes in order to promote the

career advancement of the female workforce. In fact, these days, a large number of organizations are using the WLB initiatives and programmes to attract, retain, and motivate talent at workplace.

Females are expected to possess nurturing, caring, and listening skills, taking up a mothering role (Maddock & Parkin, 1993). The debate has been heating up, as women are expected to take care of the household chores and children, as well as provide a comfortable and cosy homely environment. However, the males are expected to be independent to bear the lead roles in the family. Hence, a clear demarcation of skill requirements in the society is shown, resulting in a societal phenomenon of male dominated workplaces, with a large population of women not being the bread-winners, but alternatively taking up the household jobs (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Schlarlach, 2001). Plantenga and Hansen (1999) found that in European countries, women spend approximately four times as much time as men on tasks related to caring and nurturing. Additionally, Hakim (2003) suggested that some women are interested in retaining their primary responsibility in relation to the household and childcare. This conflict in itself leads to a self-directed debate on the strategies of gender-equity based workforce and varying roles and contribution of the males and the females at the workplace and home.

Williams (2002) described the "unbending" nature of the gender transformed into the family-work system for domesticity. This type of system requires undivided attention for the family responsibilities to develop "ideal type" of workers. This type of an idealised worker generally ends up with marginalisation problem in the market place, unable to commit completely to the workplace or family requirements (Appelbaum et al., 2002). Alternatively, Pleck (1997) argued that the women tend to juggle multiple work and family requirements and demands, even though at times this may intervene and affect their work life, whereas the men deal with the work related issues at the cost of family and personal lives. This implies that the women carry the ability to handle work and life issues in a far more balanced fashion in comparison to the men in the society. Or rather, it would be appropriate to say that most men tend to focus primarily on work and not on the other aspects of life. In this way, the stress related to these non-work aspects is lower for men compared to women. Moreover, more studies have addressed women issues in relation to the WLB and only few have focused on the men. Does this imply that the men do not need to balance their work and life in the organization? This statement may not successfully stand the test of time, as WLB is a phenomenon not confined to the bounds of gender and hence it is applicable to the working population. Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002) are of the view that no attempts have been made to understand the work life issues amongst single-earner mothers and fathers, childless employees, blended families, grandparents raising grandchildren and families with shared custody of children. It is important to consider all segments of the society who are part of the workforce in the contemporary time. The rise in the nuclear families and single parents in the society has helped escalate the need for the WLB discussions. The concentration of such families is going to be higher in time to come in modern day organization.

WORK LIFE BALANCE: NEED FOR A BROADER FRAMEWORK

We cannot ignore the realities of the workplace today, which has produced more stress and made the lives of individuals more complex, extending beyond the physical boundaries of the organizations. We are living in a virtual world today, and most organizations are becoming networked, global, and diverse. All these pursuits of organizations are throwing new challenges for its members. It warrants organizations to go beyond the traditional approach of the WLB and adopt a wider perspective. There are many other issues, which have also reinforced the WLB concept to make it more pervasive in that regard. Today, organizations consist of diverse employees belonging to the different age groups, genders, educational qualifications, cultures, nationalities, beliefs, and work experiences. There is a need to adopt WLB initiative, which is all-inclusive in its nature and consider all the stakeholders of the workplace. This kind of approach will be more relevant when addressing the concerns of the employees and employers alike, and it will help organization engage the employees more effectively.

Organizations need to play a positive and constructive role in reinforcing a healthy work climate devoid of role conflict or its lesser effect on their employees. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) argued that

the dominant work and life roles for most employed women and men in the contemporary society could either help or hurt each other's role. Thus, there is a strong need for the organizations to provide widespread WLB benefits to all instead of adopting a myopic approach for select segments of the workforce. Many changes have also happened in the perception of work amongst the existing workforce in the recent time. They measure work with the output and tend to depend on the technology. In the last decade, the importance of the family life and beyond-work social support groups has been on a rise. The onset of the internet and communication technologies has also accentuated the demand for the WLB issues. Many diverse skill sets, cultural differences, nationalities, and languages can be seen in a single organization of the cotemporary time. This is primarily due to the globalization and the internationalization of the workforce. It has also added creativity as well as conflict in the organization.

Diversity, as mentioned above, is a well-known management concept being studied and acknowledged as a factor that helps bring about the development of individuals and foster creativity at the workplace. Fineman (1999) found that the new social contract comprises diversity and work/life initiatives as core values in the organization today. This adds another dimension to the discussion on the WLB, implying that the WLB is no longer an individual phenomenon but is applicable to all people within the workforce in the organization. In order to get a win-win situation, a balance of the diverse workforce that promotes employee commitment, improves productivity, and reduces turnover, employee conflicts, and unethical business practices, needs to be sought. Hence, the concept and discussion on the WLB has come as a respite for managing the diversity of the workforce.

Flexibility at the workplace is an important issue when discussing the work life balance. Flexibility at the workplace definitely helps maintain the balance amongst people at the workplace. The Whitehall Study I and II (Council of Civil Services Union, 2004) attempted to investigate the relationship between work, stress, and health. The Whitehall Study II suggested that flexible work hours, better leave arrangements, and reduction in work-related commuting by encouraging work from home could help balance work and personal lives of the employees. This would be a worthwhile investment and have long-term implication for the organizational excellence. Galinsky et al. (2001) opined that the costs of creating WLB is increasing sharply for the employers in terms of providing health care, retention, productivity, safety, recruitment, and personal satisfaction. There is a commitment requirement on the part of the organization, and a long-term strategy needs to be drawn not a piecemeal approach to fully appreciate the efficacy of a WLB initiative.

People are working longer hours to survive the onslaught of globalization and to deal with the demands of the workplace. This trend is pervasive. Many have raised the concern about the working hours (Basso, 2003; Bunting, 2004; Schor, 1991). Schor (1991), in his book *The Overworked American* presented the state of the problem of the working class in the US, which is highly overworked. Bunting (2004) in his work *Willing Slaves* described the working realities in the UK and presented the view that the work in not just ruling but ruining the lives of the people. In fact, it has been a subject for many protests and campaigns against its evil effect. People are now talking about the quality of life and phrases like, "work less, live better" are doing the round. "Work less, live better" (Fagnani & Letablier, 2004) is the French campaign aimed at reducing the working time in the French organizations. It is widely believed that the reduction in time spent at the workplace can lead to a better balance in the work and life.

A convenient approach that has been widely practiced in this context is "flexible working arrangements". According to Pollitt (2003), the UK Building Society Nationwide and its employees recorded substantial benefits by using the concepts like job flexibility and the WLB initiatives. The company offers part time work, flexible hours, work from home policy, compressed workweek, job sharing, annualised hours, term time, and shift work. Employees can further buy one to five days of additional holidays. Leave policies have been framed to enable the employees to take time off for handling their personal responsibilities and other interests beyond work. Various policies related to the flexible working arrangements have been adopted and altered to suit the expectations of the employees. Home working policy also enables the employees to feel comfortable about the completion of work. Overall, a positive satisfaction was found amongst workers. Pollitt in his study found that over the past three years, statistical figures show that a substantial percentage of the employees have returned after the

maternity leave, approximately 93%. The turnover rate has gone down from 17% to 9.7%. The investigator also noted a 50% rise in the number of female part-time workers, 150% rise in home workers, 150% rise in term-time workers, and 200% rise in female employees working annualised hours (Pollitt, 2003). Thus, this study presents an overwhelming argument for adopting a flexible working arrangement in the organization today. Telecommuting is proving to be a successful tool to manage the work and life balance amongst the employees in this context, and many organizations are using the technology to enable to complete the work related tasks.

In another study conducted at Hertfordshire County Council, it was found that the employers have embedded the WLB issues in all their activities. Their strategy was based on four strands: LifeWISE, HealthWISE, CareWISE, and Options. LifeWISE centres on promoting the concept of employees having balanced lifestyles by incorporating flexibility at the workplace whereas HealthWISE focuses on helping the employees adopt healthier lifestyles, catering to the fitness and personal well-being. CareWISE looks into aiding the employees to maintain a balance in their parenting, caring, and work commitments whereas the "Options" offers varied choice and flexibility to the employees at the workplace (Ezzedeen & Swiercz, 2002). These trends are likely to be repeated in more organizations in time to come. Providing WLB at the workplace is also associated with the image branding in the organization. One survey conducted by a recruitment website for the UK Department of Trade and Industry found that the prospective employees prefer flexible working hours to a better cash, company car, or gymnasium facilities (Career Development International, 2003).

Going beyond the WLB concept, Ezzedeen and Swiercz (2002) coined an innovative term, CIW–Cognitive Intrusion of Work. They argued that the modern work has become knowledge based, fluid, and intellectual. It has crossed the workplace boundary and overworked people, as they think about the work most of the time and for many people, the work has become cognitively intrusive. The researchers advocate that "cognitive intrusion of work" (CIW) is a phenomenon that comes from the cognitive approach to the dynamics of work life. Overworked people think about their work and uncompleted tasks, which intrudes on the non-work timings and non-work settings. They argue that the WLB has a positive association with work-to-life conflict, work centrality, and burnout (Ezzedeen & Swiercz, 2002). In fact, the WLB has emerged as a movement (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). Thus, it is now seen as important to establish the work-life culture in organizations, which goes much beyond the typical WLB programs. Harrington and Ladge (2009) presented seven perspectives, which need to be addressed for institutionalising the work life culture in the organization. These are diversity and inclusion, health and wellness, talent management, employee relations, corporate citizenship, total reward, and cultural change. Thus, it is challenging for firms to benchmark and customize their WLB initiatives and efforts to get the better return on the investment in this regard.

DEVELOPING A WORK LIFE BALANCE AT THE FIRM LEVEL

Today, it is necessary for organization to adopt a comprehensive WLB program. If it is designed and adopted as part of the larger business strategy, it will add more value to the firm's competitiveness. In the past, firms have engaged in many discussions and initiatives to relate the quality of work life to the productivity. WLB must be pursued as a strategy to increase the productivity and the competitiveness of the firm. Providing WLB initiatives in an organized and strategic way can engage employees at a higher level and lead to the benefits, which cannot be achieved with the supervisory gimmicks and quick fixes. Organizations that want to use the WLB initiatives must attune their management philosophy and culture to attain their goals. The participation and involvement of all stakeholders is the key and there must be a consensus on the core issues needed to be addressed. Adopting a well thought out strategic WLB initiative at firm level needs a supportive ambience involving all stakeholders (Burstein, 1987; Hall, 1989; Harrington & Ladge, 2009; Nord et al., 2002). Taking a cue from the Burstein's (1987) work, a framework is being suggested for pursuing the WLB goals in tandem with the larger interest of the firm, which can serve as a blue print for adopting and pursuing a comprehensive WLB strategy integrated with the organizational goals and objectives of the firm. It can be summarised as follows:

- To develop a comprehensive WLB framework, it is mandatory to involve all stakeholders and integrate the WLB initiatives across the organization. It must form an essential part of the HR strategy being pursued in the organization. It can be linked with the employer branding and the recruitment and retaining strategy of the firm.
- It is essential to adopt the WLB initiatives, keeping in mind the organization culture and values of the organization so that it can fit the norms and practices of the organization. The change process must be smooth, consistent, and non-threatening.
- CEO and the top managers have to play important role in establishing the sense of seriousness and urgency for the WLB program. Involvement of line managers is the key and it is important to establish their acceptance and readiness.
- Organization must employ broad-based inclusion mechanisms to develop the efficacy of the WLB program. It is also important to allow some time so that the incongruent elements of the managerial culture can reach a state of readiness.
- It is mandatory to devise the responsibility mechanism for all stakeholders and develop a coordination mechanism to give the WLB program a forceful direction in the firm's strategic path.
- HR has to play a catalyst role as the elements of the WLB program are introduced.
- Communication is the key to engaging people effectively. It is highly recommended to publicize the progress and efforts of the WLB. It is also necessary to provide information and resources to create ownership for the success of the WLB among the employees.
- It is necessary to develop metrics and the firm must design a system for reviewing, evaluating, and updating its WLB initiative.
- The last and most important aspect of adopting a WLB program is to institutionalize the efforts and create an environment conducive to the WLB initiative. It is also recommended to revise the HR policies to facilitate the right reinforcement to achieve the WLB goals.

In recent time, CEOs and managers across the sectors and continents are of the view that the companies offering better WLB add value to the company. Most of the organizations are striving hard to attract and retain good employees and improve their image as a better employer. Bruce Chizen, ex CEO of Adobe Systems opined in one of his interviews that it is prestigious for the company to be named in the "Fortune's list of 100 Best companies to work for in America." Most of the CEOs are very proud, delighted, and pleased to be recognized in that category (Ballou & Godwin, 2007). They look at this investment as a wise investment, which is long term and adds value to their business strategies. Evidences suggest that creating a high quality of work life increases an organization's value and the market value associated with the intellectual capital. The perceived attractiveness of the companies to the market and its employees can lead to the higher stock prices, which cannot be achieved through increasing the productivity alone. Increasing the quality of work life increases the quality of investment for its stakeholders (Ballou & Godwin, 2007), which is beyond the limits.

There is no doubt that providing better WLB initiative reinforces the employee involvement and engagement at the workplace. Ballou and Godwin (2007) summed up a long list of common benefits provided by the Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For. These are child-care resources and referral, elder-care resource and referral, onsite ATM/Banking facilities, adoption aid, relocation services, assistance with purchasing home, subsidized cafeterias, take-home meals, on-site child care, career counselling, mentoring program, flextime, telecommuting, reduced hours of employment, 100 percent of tuition reimbursement, paid educational sabbaticals, unpaid educational sabbaticals, compressed workweek, job sharing, no-layoff policy, and stock options. The list can be of some help to the beginners; although, it is important to benchmark WLB policy keeping in mind the organizational realities and its environment.

Increasing evidence suggests that companies are attracting new employees by using the WLB as a recruitment strategy. Price Waterhouse-Coopers, USA, Work/Life Balance Inc. Australia, the Department

of Trade and Industry, Britain, and the Ministry of Social Development, Canada, have investigated the WLB issue for the past decade through many surveys and studies. It has been found that the WLB is a critical business issue for their client companies, and it has resulted in improved recruitment and retention of the employees, higher level of the customer service, improved workforce productivity, increased job satisfaction, and reduced employee absenteeism. Haley et al. (2005) found that the WLB serves as a recruitment strategy and help employees enjoy better working relationships and improved self-esteem and health. Employees find time to focus on what is important to them, and they have greater control over their personal and professional life (Haley et al., 2005). These factors improve employee performance and contribute to the production of better quality products and services in the firm.

It is quite evident that a sound WLB program reinforces a performance based work environment and engages employees at the highest level. As discussed above, it is important to establish a WLB agenda and reform that would be congruent with the interests of all stakeholders. Including them in the discussion adds to the ownership of such initiatives. WLB should not be treated as a fad; instead, it should be pursued as a strategy to build a positive work environment, which leverages the firm's performance and its image as an employer. To attract and retain employees, employer branding is a key issue today, and many companies are using the WLB policies as a recruitment strategy. Johnson & Johnson, SAP, and Whirlpool are some good examples in that regard (Haley et al., 2005). It is not surprising to note that the WLB program helps organization build a performance-oriented culture, but the challenge lies in designing a strategic and integrated WLB framework that would involve line managers and put in place a mechanism to deal with the dynamics of the WLB program. Institutionalising a program goes through many reforms and challenges, and the key managers have to take the responsibility to overcome the conflict to establish the primacy of the WLB initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Work life balance has achieved a central position in the debate concerning the human resource management and the management of people. It is not only the cause of concern for the organizations but for the employees as well. Providing a conducive and positive work environment is one of the challenges that the HR managers face these days. WLB is a growing cause of concern for all stakeholders and there is a need to pursue it more religiously at the firm level in order to seek a mutually beneficial solution for the organizations and the employees in the long run. The shift in the working patterns and changing attitudes of the workforce need an in-depth analysis to generate a thorough understanding of the concept and use of the WLB as a strategy so that does not pass like a fad but remain a constituent of the people management policy framework. Adopting a strategic WLB framework at the firm level, as suggested in this paper, will surely make the initiation of such effort in the right direction.

In today's world, innovative work plans are a necessity. It is true that the organizations are facing the fear of escalating costs related to the recruiting, training, developing, compensating, and retaining a motivated workforce. This is definitely a cause of worry for the employers. Despite that, the importance of the employees' well being in the organization cannot be denied. Organizations are aim to become a model employer by creating a workplace that would meet employees needs. In this kind of the organizational reality, every HR department of small or big firms needs to understand the importance of WLB and initiate a proactive approach towards institutionalizing a WLB program to increase the satisfaction and commitment among their employees. It must include those benefits in its program, which make the organization more attractive and help retain the most talented employees.

A comprehensive approach towards the workforce management and the WLB program that would help build an all inclusive workplace, and develop a high performing work system (HPWS) is required. Policy makers have to think more strategically in order to develop comprehensive, practical, and workable business strategies that favour the employees as well as benefit the organizations. *Ad-hoc* and quick fix solutions may trigger dissent, and backfire. There is a need for a well thought out, strategic, credible, and coherent WLB initiative that would be consistent with the business and HR policy framework adopted at the firm level. It will surely enhance the corporate image as well as help

institutionalise a performance-based culture in the firm. HR department has to be proactive in determining the efficacy of the WLB initiative by customizing the right fit and balance for their firms, which can attract and retain good employees, a challenge that most companies face these days. The role of CEOs and line managers is crucial for the success of any WLB/HR program. Garnering their support and institutionalising a WLB program at the firm level will surely lead to the positive organizational outcomes.

REFERENCES

Appelbaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P. & Kallenberg, A. (2002). Shared Work, Valued Care: New Norms for Organizing Market Work and Unpaid Care Work, available at: http://epi.3cdn.net/386a83d929667858a1_2lm6bnf0c.pdf (accessed on 5 September 2012).

Ballou, B. & Godwin, N. H. (2007). Quality of "Work Life": Have You Invested in Your Organization's Future? *Strategic Finance*, October: 41-45.

Basso, P. (2003). *Modern Times, Ancient Hours*. London: Verso.

Beaumont, P. B. (1993). *Human Resource Management*. London: Sage.

Becker, B. E., Huselid, M. A., Pickus, P. S. & Spratt, M. F. (1997). HR as a Source of Shareholder Value: Research and Recommendation, *Human Resource Management,* 36(1): 39-47.

Bond, S., Hyman, J., Summer, J. & Wise, S. (2002). *Family-friendly Working: Putting Policy into Practice*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Bunting, M. (2004). *Willing Slaves*. London: Harper Collins.

Burke, R. J. (1994). Women on Corporate Boards of Directors: Forces for Change? *Women in Management Review*, 9(1): 27-31.

Burke, R. J. (1994a). Women on Corporate Boards of Directors: Views of Canadian Chief Executive Officers, *Women in Management Review*, 9(5): 3-10.

Burstein, G. (1987). Enhancing the Quality of Work Life, *Business Forum,* Winter: 23-27.

Career Development International (2003). More People Want Flexible Hours than Cash, Company Car or Gym, 8 (4).

Cassell, C. (1997). The Business Case for Equal Opportunities: Implications for Females in Management, *Women in Management Review*, 12(1): 11-16.

Cinamon, R. G. & Rich, Y. (2002). Gender Differences in the Importance of Work and Family Roles: Implications for Work-family Conflict, *Sex Roles*, 47(11-12): 531-541.

CNN Money (2011). 100 Best Companies To Work For, available at: http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2011/index.html (accessed on 11 November 2011).

Council of Civil Service Union/Cabinet Office (2004). *Work, Stress, and Health: the Whitehall II Study*. London: Public and Commercial Services Union.

Dex, S. (2003). *Families and Work in the 21ˢᵗ Century.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Dex, S. & Smith, C. (2002). *The Nature and Pattern of Family-friendly Practices in Britain.* Bristol: The Policy Press.

Doherty, L. & Manfredi, S. (2006). Action Research to Develop Work-life Balance in a UK University, *Women in Management Review*, 21(3): 241-259.

European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity-ECPESS (2009). *A Transnational Report: Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of Public Employment Service for a Better Work Life Reconciliation.* Available at: http://www.vinnumalastofnun.is/files/TNR%20-20afternoon%2023%20Sept%202009_ 679676203.pdf (accessed on 5 September 2012).

Ezzedeen, S. R. & Swiercz, P. M. (2002). Rethinking Work-life Balance: Development and Validation of the Cognitive Intrusion of Work Scale (CIWS) - A Dissertation Research Proposal, *Proceedings of the 2002 Eastern Academy of Management Meeting.*

Fagnani, J. & Letablier, M., (2004). Work and Family Life Balance: The Impact of the 35-Hour Laws in France, *Work, Employment and Society*, 18(3): 551-572.

Fine-Davis, M., Fagnani, J., Giovannini, D., Højgaard, L. & Clarke, H. (2004). *Fathers and Mothers: Dilemmas of the Work-life Balance*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing.

Fineman, M. (1999). Why Diversity Professionals Should Care About Work/Life Balance, *Mosaics,* 5(6): 6-7.

Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I. & Schlarlach, A. E. (2001). *Families and Work: New Directions in the Twenty-first Century.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Friedman, S. D. & Greenhaus, J. H. (2000). *Work and Family—Allies or Enemies? What Happens When Business Professionals Confront Life Choices*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Galinsky, E., Kim, S. & Bond, J. (2001). Feeling Overworked: When Work Becomes Too Much, available at: http://familiesandwork.org/summary/overwork.pdf (accessed on 5 September 2012).

Gambles, R., Lewis, S. & Rapoport, R. (2006). *The Myth of Work-Life Balance: The Challenge of Our Time for Men, Women and Societies,* Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Hakim, C. (2003). *Models of Family in Modern Societies: Ideals and Realities*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press.

Haley, D., Back, D. & Water, K. L. (2005). The Balancing of Work and Life," *IEEE Potentials*, December: 22-26.

Hall, D. T. (1989). Promoting Work/Family Balance: An Organization-Change Approach, Revised version of the paper presented at the Emerging Issues Forum, North Carolina State University, 12 April.

Harrington, B. & Ladge, J. J. (2009). Work-Life Integration: Present Dynamics and Future Directions for Organizations, *Organizational Dynamics*, 38(2): 148-157.

Helfat, C.E., Harris, D. & Wolfson, P. J. (2006). The Pipeline to the Top: Women and Men in the Top Executive Ranks of U.S. Corporations, *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 20(4): 42-64.

Income Data Services (2000). Income Data Services: Work-Life Balance, *IDS Studies*: 698.

Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Khan, S. A. (2000). The New Organization and Human Resource Management, in Saini, D. S. & Khan, S. A. (Eds.). *Human Resource Management: Perspectives for the New Era*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Khan, S. A. (2007). The Future of HR Function and the Challenges before the HR Managers," *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations,* 42(3): 430-444.

Latham, W. (2006). *Intergenerational Conflict between Physicians: Bridging the Great Divide.* Unpublished manuscript.

Lockwood, N. (2003). *Work/Life Balance: Challenges and Solutions.* Alexandria: Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Mabey, C., & Salaman, G. (1998). *Strategic Human Resource Management: For Change, Development and Performance.* New Delhi: Beacon Books.

Maddock, S. J. & Parkin, D. (1993). Gender Cultures: Women's Choices and Strategies at Work, *Women in Management Review*, 8(2): 3-10.

Malik, F., Linde, M., Rona, B. & Gillian, H. (2010). A Toolkit to Support Human Resource Practice, *Personnel Review,* 39(3): 287-307.

Nord, W. R., Fox, S., Phoenix, A. & Viano, K. (2002). Real-World Reactions to Work-Life Balance Programs: Lessons for Effective Implementation, *Organizational Dynamics*, 30(3): 223-238.

Parasuraman, S. & Greenhaus, J. H. (2002). Toward Reducing Some Critical Gaps in Work-Family Research, *Human Resource Management Review,* 12(3): 299-312.

People Management (2002). Editorial, 11 July.

Plantenga, J. & Hansen, J. (1999). Assessing Equal Opportunities in the European Union, *International Labour Review,* 138(4): 351–379.

Pleck, J. H. (1997). The Work Family Role System, *Social Problems,* 24(4): 417-428.

Pollitt, D. (2003). Job Flexibility and Work Life Balance Pay Dividends for Nationwide, *Human Resource Management International Digest,* 11: 8-11.

Powell, G. N. (1999). Reflections on the Glass Ceiling: Recent Trends and Future Prospects, in Powell, G. N. (Ed.). *Handbook of Gender and Work*: 325-345, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Powell, G. N. & Butterfield, D. A. (1994). Investigating the 'Glass Ceiling' Phenomenon: An Empirical Study of Actual Promotions to Top Management, *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(1): 68-86.

Roper, I., Cunningham, I. & James, P. (2003). Promoting Family-friendly Policies: Is the Basis of the Government's Ethical Standpoint Viable? *Personnel Review,* 32(2): 211-230.

Saini, D. S. (2000). Globalization and Development in Human Resource Management, in Saini, D. S. & Khan, S. A. (Eds.), *Human Resource Management: Perspectives for the New Era*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Schor, J. (1991). *The Overworked American.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Singh, P., Bhandarkar, A. & Rai, S. (2012). *Millennials and the Workplace: Challenges for Architecting the Organizations of Tomorrow*. New Delhi: Sage Response.

Staub, C. (2007). A Comparative Analysis of the Use of Work-Life Balance Practices in Europe. Do Practices Enhance Females' Career Advancement? *Women in Management Review,* 22(4): 289-304.

Taylor, C. (2005). Life in the Balance, *Incentive,* 179(1): 16-18.

Williams, J. (2002). How Academe Treats Mothers, available on: http://chronicle.com/jobs/2002/06/2002061701c.htm (accessed on 6 September 2012).