Chapter -V

Conceptual Background
CHAPTER V
Conceptualizing Work Life Balance

Introduction:

This section will provide a summary of the main themes arising in the literature around attempts at conceptualizing ‘work-life balance’. Work-life balance has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life. The term ‘work-life balance’ is much contested in itself. Attempting to clarify its meaning prompts a further problem: ‘what constitutes ‘good’ work-life balance? This section will summarize some of the problems surrounding both of these issues, before providing a number of frameworks that have been developed from a number of different perspectives.

The role of work has changed throughout the world due to economic conditions and social demands. Originally, work was a matter of necessity and survival. Throughout the years, the role of “work” has evolved and the composition of the workforce has changed. Changes in the social, political and economic fabric of societies have influenced and continue to influence both the nature of employment and its relationship to life outside work.

Today, work still is a necessity but it should be a source of personal satisfaction as well. One of the vehicles to help provide attainment of personal and professional goals is work-life benefits and programs.

Finally, the section will provide an overview of outlining a range of possible work-life balance arrangements and differentiating between those that are legislated for and those that are non-statutory.
5.1 Historical Background / Evolution of the concept of WLB:

The work-leisure dichotomy was invented in the mid 1800s, as a result of industrial capitalism. In anthropology, a definition of happiness is to have as little separation as possible "between your work and your play." The expression "Work–life balance" was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work%E2%80%93life_balance)

The history of work-life balance begins in the latter half of the 19th century when reformers successfully campaigned against long factory hours and were able to demonstrate that reductions in working hours had no impact upon levels of output. During the early part of the 20th century the campaign to reduce working hours continued through a series of pioneering studies that demonstrated the relationship between time spent at work and the level of output was a complex one. These studies also took account of the importance of motivation and morale, fatigue, concentration, and attention to reveal that there were conditions under which a reduction in working time led to increased production, and there were optimum arrangements for the length of working time and intervals for rest pauses, in particular circumstances.

During the 1960s and 1970s, though the term work-life balance had yet to be coined, a number of factors can be identified that eventually gave rise to the current policy mix. These included:

- health and safety at work;
- international competitiveness;
- equality; and
- the flexible labour market.

During the 1960s the debate was very much about the extent to which paid overtime was “manufactured”, as explained below. The analysis focused upon informal work group organization and the joint regulation of working practices, within a framework of collective bargaining. The approach was at the heart of the report of the Royal Commission on Trades Unions and Employers Associations in the late 1960s. The analysis built on the productivity
bargaining experiences of the previous decade. Productivity bargaining recognized that groups of manual workers often exercised unilateral informal control over many aspects of their working practices. Case after case revealed that the control included the regulation of working hours where overtime was paid at premium rates. Long overtime hours were often not necessary but “manufactured” to boost earnings. The consequence was a low productivity culture, associated with low hourly rates of pay and long hours of work. The answer was to negotiate new productivity packages, which included major changes in work organization and working practices – including flexible patterns of work organization – increasing basic rates of pay and curtailing overtime working.

The 1970s proved to be a turning point brought about by a wide range of factors, such as increased international competition, changes in technology, new forms of organization, increased female participation, as well as changing and more diverse working-time needs of individuals. It was during the 1970s that regulation also began to recognize the importance of equality with the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. Since then issues relating to social equity and justice have multiplied and become more prominent and explicit. It is argued that long working hours among men in the child rearing years have disadvantaged women in two ways: they have made it less possible for men to share in childcare and home building, leaving the onus upon women to carry those responsibilities; they have made it less possible for women to compete for more senior jobs if a major criterion for promotion is commitment to the job, as demonstrated by long hours at work.

During the 1980s the political focus was very much upon liberalizing the economy, including the labour market. At the heart of labour market reform was the introduction of more flexible patterns of work – frequently referred to as “atypical forms of employment” (increased temporary/fixed-term employment, etc.). This took place at a time of a major structural shift in the labour market with employment moving from the production to the service sector, which tended to favour female employment at the time. The introduction of more flexible forms of work was an important strand in improving labour supply because it potentially allowed groups of individuals otherwise unable to enter the labour market the opportunity to do so. It was only during the 1990s, especially the latter half of the decade,
that Government began to play a more interventionist role to give employees (and potential employees) certain rights with respect to establishing a work-life balance that suited them.

Most people think of only one notion relating work and life: the work-life balance notion. We need to know that the relationship has been evolving over time. Here’s a picture of this evolution.
Diagram No: 04  
Evolution of Work Life

The Evolution of Work-Life

1900: Work

1950: Work-life separation

1970: Work spills into life

1980: Work-life balance

2000: Life spills into work

2010: Work-life blending

2050: Life

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5.2 What is Work Life Conflict?

There occurs conflict between life inside and work outside. This is mentioned in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work Life Conflict</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Overload</strong></td>
<td>Role overload occurs when an individual has too much to do and too little time to do it.</td>
<td>Overloaded people constantly feel rushed and &quot;time crunched&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work interferes with family</strong></td>
<td>Work interferes with family occurs when work demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfill family role responsibilities.</td>
<td>Where long hours in paid work prevent a parent from attending child's sporting event. Where preoccupation with work prevents someone from enjoying family time. Where work stresses spill over into the home and increase conflict with the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family interferes with work</strong></td>
<td>Family interferes with work occurs when family demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfill responsibilities at work.</td>
<td>A child's illness prevents attendance at work. Conflict at home makes concentration at work difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caregiver Strain</strong></td>
<td>Caregiver strain occurs when an employee experiences physical, financial or emotional strain which can be attributed to the need to provide care or assistance to an elderly dependent.</td>
<td>The need to help parents bath, dress etc, imposes physical strain on many. Watching loved ones mental health deteriorating can emotionally overwhelm the caregiver.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Work Life Conflict and women employees:
Women have to perform several roles in their families and work place (see Figure No 05). These roles include being a spouse, caretaker and parent; managing daily household chores; and providing services to the community and society. Women also must take care of their own health and other personal activities, which are often neglected because of role overload as well as time limitations. All of these situations lead to the absence of WLB and manifestation of many WLB issues. The demands originating from the work and personal life of women are quite often mutually exclusive, rendering it very difficult to strike a balance between the role demands.

*Diagram No: 05 Various Roles Performed By Woman*
5.4 What is Work Life Balance?

The term ‘work–life balance’ is most frequently used to describe the equilibrium between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside paid work; having a work–life balance means that this equilibrium is in the right position for the individual concerned. There is no one-size-fits-all definition for work–life balance. For some people it means spending more time in paid work and less time at home, while for others it means ensuring that work in running the business does not encroach on time needed for other responsibilities.

People have always integrated the different parts of their lives and work-life balance has long been of concern to those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to the broader quality of life.

Much confusion and ambiguity surrounds the understanding and definition of the term work-life balance. Even those who don’t have multiple, externally-imposed obligations may feel they lack work-life balance if they have a wide range of other interests they want to pursue.

Work-life balance is a form of metaphor; but a metaphor of what? In the English language “balance” is a complex word with a variety of meanings. As a noun, a balance is a set of scales, a weighing apparatus; it is also the regulating gear in clocks. If we use the scales, then balance occurs when there is “an equal distribution of weight or amount” but this presents problems for work-life balance since both sides may be very heavy or very light. Furthermore, the type of work-life balance sought by many may not imply equal weight on both sides. However balance also has a physical and psychological meaning as “stability of body or mind” so that suicide is sometimes officially recorded as taking one’s life “while the balance of the mind was disturbed”.

Work-life balance is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between career and ambition on one hand, compared with pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development on the other.

Work/Life Balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person’s job and personal life are equal.

Work-life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. Work-life balance is a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace.

Work Life Balance consists of the implementation of working arrangements and policies, which assist workers in combining employment with other aspects of their lives.

Work–life balance is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on the one hand and "life" (Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other.

The secret to work-life balance will differ depending on your field of work, family structure and finances. But some work-life balance principles are universal: saying no, prioritizing, banishing guilt.

Work life imbalance also comes with a different social perspective- How to address the work - life imbalance in the lives of the women work force. The society over the years has recognized women's need to legal and financial independence. Women work force now constitutes a significant percentage of the total work force in any organization today.

Work-life balance is a concern not just for women, but also for men who are tired of missing out on the rest of life.
The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life. The way to achieve this is to adopt an approach that is “conceptualized as a two way process involving a consideration of the needs of employees as well as those of employers.

In much of the debate about work-life balance, there is a loose use of language. Ideally, we should define work and life carefully. On the other hand, it is partly the blurring of the distinctions and the borders between them that has stimulated interest in the topic. In simple terms, “work” is normally conceived of in this context as including paid employment while “life” includes activities outside work.

5.5 Work Life Pyramid:

**SELF:** One cannot exist in harmony without the other and it all starts with the self. This is the foundation of any woman’s legacy. ‘Who am I?’ ‘Why do I do what I want to do?’ are the guiding questions to the journey as a person, daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend. It is not about the destination and all about the journey. The self is the whole package of spirituality, health, personal grooming and education. The sense of well being then reflects on every facet of life – family and work. The secret is to put your own oxygen mask on first to be empowered to support and nurture the people around you. Happy, healthy women make great role models for their families and the resulting support drives them to be successful employees. It is like a stack of building blocks forming a pyramid.

**FAMILY:** It’s an interesting to note that majority of women employees are married; obviously pointing to a trend that financial and emotional support is required not only to ensure success, but also to provide meaning to life. Strong family relationships are the foundation for most career women and they form great role models for their children and social network. All relationships need nurturing with time, love and a constant effort to fulfill needs and expectations. Happy healthy individuals have happy and healthy relationships and this then spills over into their work.
WORK: “When you’re passionate about what you do, would rather give their business to you than to your competitor,” explains Richard Nelson Bolles, author of the bestselling book ‘What Color is Your Parachute?’ The intrinsic feminine qualities of multi-tasking, networking, and communication results in a workplace which motivates and empowers. Their more worker-friendly policies boost morale and lead to less turnover, less absenteeism and higher productivity. A supportive circle of family and friends is the platform available to seek advice and assistance and a major factor in the success of women employees.

COMMUNITY: Once they move beyond the self and family, women employees find that their playing field encompasses the community and they have the power to make a difference and leave a legacy of positive change in the world. In following their passion and purpose in life they touch the lives around themselves through contribution and effective giving to become social activist.

Diagram No: 06 Work Life Pyramid

5.6 Models of Work Life Balance:
There are typically 5 models used to explain relationship between work and life outside work.

1. **Segmentation Model**: The segmentation model hypothesizes that work and non-work are two distinct domains of life that are lived quite separately and have no influence on each other. This appears to be offered as a theoretical possibility rather than a model with empirical support.

2. **Spillover Model**: In the context of work-life balance, spillover refers to positive or negative effects of an individual's working life on their personal life or family life and vice versa. The spillover model hypothesizes that one world can influence the other in either a positive or negative way. There is, of course, ample research to support this but as a proposition it is specified in such a general way as to have little value. We therefore need more detailed propositions about the nature, causes and consequences of spillover.

3. **Compensation Model**: The compensation model which proposes that what may be lacking in one sphere, in terms of demands or satisfactions can be made up in the other. For example work may be routine and undemanding but this is compensated for by a major role in local community activities outside work.

4. **Instrumental Model**: The instrumental model whereby activities in one sphere facilitate success in the other. The traditional example is the instrumental worker who will seek to maximize earnings, even at the price of undertaking a routine job and working long hours, to allow the purchase of a home or a car for a young family.

5. **Conflict Model**: The conflict model which proposes that with high levels of demand in all spheres of life, some difficult choices have to be made and some conflicts and possibly some significant overload on an individual occur.