

Revitalizing Institutional Policy Grounded on Work-Life Balance of Employees in a Catholic Higher Education Institution: A Cross-sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

It presupposes that workers must deal with the challenging demands as they confer between spheres of “life” and “work”. The study determines the current Work-life Balance (WLB) practices and policies as basis for institutional policy reformulation in a Catholic Higher Education Institution (HEI). The researchers utilized the descriptive cross-sectional design of research to obtain information concerning the analysis of the work-life balance of employees using survey-

questionnaire at a given time in an academic year. The participants of the study were school administrators and faculty members in one private higher education institution in the Philippines with full-time status during the Academic Year 2015-2016. The survey- questionnaire for work-life balance (WBL) was modified from “Better Work-life Balance Survey-Employees” of the University of Queensland in 2005. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as Percentage, Weighted Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson’s Product Coefficient Correlation were used for a more efficient, effective and accurate analysis of data. The work-life balance related activities of employees are sometimes at risk. Work-life related policies on leave arrangements are being viewed by employees in various ways in the organization. Parenting and pregnancy related policies are also evident. Furthermore, various work arrangement related-policies are also enjoyed by the employees. Additional provisions regarding work are also evident. Thus, there is moderate impact work-related activities and policies on the personal life of employees.

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

INTRODUCTION

This study provides human resource professional with empirical evidence related to work/life balance. The study begins with the basic assumption that work related demands can interfere into the rest of workers’ lives (Sen & Bakht, 2013). It presupposes that workers must deal with often challenging demands as they confer between spheres of life and work (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). This study explores how academic employees manage these competing demands as observed and practiced within the academic institution. The goal is not to suggest the predominance of work in workers’ lives. Indeed, it suggests the potentially problematic nature of work’s interference into the rest of workers’ lives through policy reformulation.

Several studies have been conducted regarding work-life balance of employees and their correlates to other factors in different work settings. Studies like the impact of women entering the workforce on work/life balance issues (Mitnick, 2007); the potential reduction in overall employee flexibility (Azeem, 2015); the incidence and impact of flexi-time programs in Britain among employers and employees (Downes & Koekemoer, 2012); and the increasing prevalence

of work-life conflicts and increasing concern about work-life issues present (Agarwal, 2014); the satisfaction with work-family balance among employed graduate students (Allison, 2014), were carried out to spell out the importance of work-life balance. However, the present study is focused on the work-life balance of employees in private educational institution.

One of the theories as regards work-life balance was set by Clark (2000). According to the theory, people are daily border-crossers, meaning work and family are two domains, which are integrated. This again emphasizes the concept of level of flexibility needed. In the research done by Hoffman and Cowan (2007), participants identified flexibility as key to define work-life balance that is consistent with Clark (2000). Flexibility is interconnected with the work-life balance and for generation Y different flexibility options, as time or location, are affecting work-life balance (Bresman, 2015). Research shows flexibility in general positively influences work-life balance (Hill et.al, 2001). Furthermore, Hill, Erickson, Holmes and Ferris (2010) suggested in their research that having flexibility makes one less likely to report work-life balance decrease or how they define it work – life conflict. This opens a new stream of thoughts in which flexibility is almost eliminating borders in a way that it is making work – life balance disappear.

Moreover, a work-life misbalance is a frequently observed phenomenon around the world (Bucek, 2013). People strive for more monetary security and tend to increase the amount of work by working overtime or having two or more jobs (Burton, 2012). Nonetheless, they wish to spend a sufficient amount of time with their families and friends (Chan, 2007), as well as dedicate time to various interests and hobbies. Other researchers have shown work-life balance practices to enhance the productivity of workers (Canonico, 2016), increase retention (Caroline Straud, 2008), and diminish levels of turnover and absenteeism (Chan, 2007), which ultimately resulted in financial gain for the company (Daniels & McCarraher, 2000). Work-life balance will enable members of the academic community to be productive and endure over time, ultimately benefiting both the school and the individuals (Hall & Wilk, 2013).

This study contributes to both scholarly and practical endeavors. From a theoretical standpoint, this study is the first of its kind to examine the construct of work-life balance as it pertains to the pivotal role of academic employees in a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI) in the Philippines. Additionally, this study will help explain if the factors impact academic staff's work-life balance. Much of the existing literature explored the idea of work-life balance in

various settings; however, there is a scarcity of literature and studies explaining the phenomenon through quantitative analyses in the academe. This study aids in understanding the factors that impact work-life balance, thereby, serves as a basis for institutional and administrative policy revisit and reformulation. Thus, the present study serves to expand role theory by providing a broader and more encompassing context (Cain, 2015).

FRAMEWORK

In a state of equilibrium, the weight of both a person's job and personal life are equal (Sen & Bakht, 2013). Thus, several theories have been proposed by researchers to explain WLB. Clark (2000) presented a border theory separating family and work dimension by physical or psychological element. Moreover, some researchers (Canonica, 2016; Caroline Straud, 2008) considered compensation theory, in which, an employee may find higher level of satisfaction in one element to compensate the dissatisfying domain. Others such as Chan (2007); Cook (2011); Rothbard & Dumas (2006); Grzywacz & Marks (2000) referred to spill-over theory, wherein feelings, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors caused in one domain can be transmitted into the other domain. Frone (2003) and Grzywacz and Marks (2000) proposed more conceptual models where WLB is being measured family-work conflict and enhancement. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) implemented Bronfenbrenner's ecological model which suggested that work-life balance does not influence the practice and knowledge. Cookson (2015) explained that focus on the domains of work and family is essential, as family and work are the most important elements of everyone's life. Any competing demands of work and family life will cause conflict and negatively affect the wellbeing of workers. De Cunto, Berti, Minute, and Longo (2012) agreed that measurable aspects of WLB are satisfaction, lack of role conflict and an overall sense of harmony, while Delina and Raya (2013) believed that WLB involves proper time management, balance and involvement. Frone (2003) stated that the measurable four aspects of the balance between work and family roles, which have bi-directional effects on work and family domains are: (1) work-family conflict; (2) family-work conflict; (3) work-family enhancement; and (4) family-work enhancement.

Thus, the study was framed within the context of Clark's (2000) border theory. It focused on paid employment, family, leisure, and reported experiences of work-life balance amongst the sample. Jebel (2013) concluded that

transforming the work place pro-actively using a condition of well- designed QWL initiatives for the employees will yield competitive advantage as it will increase employee job satisfaction and commitment to organization. Lazar, Osoian, and Ratiu (2010) established the WLB may be considered as strategic peoples management decisions towards improving the individual's life as well as organizational productivity. Lastly, flexible working hours are becoming important to the workplaces, wherein lot of organizations offers flexible working hours to employees for the benefits of higher productivity, higher organization profitability, promotion work-life balance, reduction of stress and increasing employee wellbeing (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014), and another reason for conducting such study is that work-life balance programs could help improve organizational culture and employee overall performance, and it can contribute to social change by preparing employers for success while simultaneously positioning individual employees to attain optimum balance between work and life responsibilities (Sheppard, 2016).

Furthermore, researchers have suggested that work and non-work domains (family and personal life) are the primary domains for an individual, and the challenge of balancing work and non-work demands is a major concern for employees (Shujat & Bhutto, 2011). Having work-life balance means finding a way to strike a balance between fulfilling both work commitments and care responsibilities and other activities that are important to the individual. Individuals invest in other activities (Simard, 2011), because they consider them beneficial to their health and well-being (Singh, 2013). For many employees, work satisfies many of their needs, such as financial needs, interpersonal needs (i.e., social support from supervisors and co- workers), and power and status (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). Performing a meaningful job that is aligned with an individual's skill, values, and interests can promote overall well-being and satisfaction with life (Smeaton, Knight, & Ray, 2014). Therefore, if an individual experiences balance between their work and non-work domains, their well- being is improved (Special, Town, & State, 2014).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study determines the current Work-Life Balance (WLB) practices and policies as basis for institutional policy reformulation in a Catholic Higher Education Institution (PHEI). Specifically, the study seeks to describe: (1) the work-life related activities of employees; (2) impacts of work-life balance

related activities; and (3) the related policies of the institution in terms of leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy, work arrangements, additional work provisions, and experience in the organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers utilized the descriptive cross-sectional design of research to obtain information concerning the analysis of the work-life balance (WLB) of employees in a Catholic Higher Education Institution. It is one of the common study designs to assess the WLB using survey-questionnaire at a given time in an academic year (Alexander, L.K., Lopes, B.; Masterson, K.R. & Yeatts, K.B., 2016). This means that researchers simply recorded information about the participants without manipulating the study environment. In this study, the researchers simply assessed the WBL practices along with the other characteristics related to institutional policies concentrating on the factors affecting the WLB of employees. In short, the researchers did not force the employees to modify their behavior towards research. Thus, the researchers tried not to interfere while the participants were observed using a well-framed instrument (Bueno, 2017).

Participants

The participants of the study were the school administrators and faculty members in one private higher education institution in the Philippines with full-time status during the Academic Year 2015-2016. There were twenty-two (22) administrators and sixty-four (64) faculty members subjected to the assessment by the Research and Publications Office (RPO) of the Institution. Thus, there was no sampling technique done because the researchers considered the entire population available during the conduct of the study. All of them finished doctorate and/or master's degrees in various specializations such as education, philosophy, social and natural sciences, business management, and public administration. Majority of them have been in the institution for more than 15 years now.

Instrument

The survey- questionnaire for work-life balance (WBL) was modified from "Better Work-life Balance Survey- Employees" of the University of Queensland in 2005. It was divided into several parts. Part 1 solicited how the participants

describe their work-life balance related activities. Part 2 gathered information on the impacts of work-life related activities on employees. Part 3 delved on the school's policies on leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy, work arrangements, additional work provisions and experience in the organization. It also described the level of importance of these policies in the work-life balance of the employee. The questions were structured to describe the work-life balance of the employees which aimed to quantify the variables. The same instrument was used for the purposes of determining the WLB of employees in a PHEI. To assess the WBL of employees, there are several items under work-life balance related activities of employees and policies.

The instrument used the 5 point Likert scale with the corresponding descriptive ratings: (1) **Related Activities of Employees:** (5) 5.00-4.20= Always (A); (4) 4.19-3.40= Oftentimes (O); (3) 3.39-2.60= Sometimes (So); (2) 2.59-1.80= Seldom (Se); (1) 1.79-1.00= Never (N); and (2) **Related Policies:** (5) 5.00-4.20= Strongly Agree (SA); (4) 4.19-3.40= Agree (A); (3) 3.39-2.60= Moderately Agree (MA); (2) 2.59-1.80= Disagree (DA); (1) 1.79-1.00= Strongly Disagree (SD). These criteria were subjected to face and construct validity by the administrators and faculty members in a sister PHEI and graduate education professors and experts after taking into consideration the existing constructs from previous literature and studies. The evaluators of the constructs used the same descriptive ratings and analysis clearly indicated in the instrument. The results of the average computed mean of the juries were 4.71 (Related Activities) interpreted as "Always", and 4.68 (Related Policies) interpreted as "Strongly Agree".

After the validation of the instrument, reliability test was conducted to determine the consistency of the scores using the instrument measuring the same set of factors with similar type of study was established. In this study, the Test-Retest Method was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. The validated instrument underwent pilot testing to a select group of administrators and faculty members. After one month, the same questionnaire was administered to the same group. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was used to correlate data gathered.

The computed coefficient of correlation was 0.87 (Very High). The result was interpreted based on the following: 1.0 (Perfect); 0.81 - 0.99 (Very High); 0.61 - 0.80 (High); 0.41 - 0.60 (Moderate); 0.21 - 0.40 (Low); and 0.01 - 0.20 (Negligible correlation). Thus, the computed correlation value indicated that the instrument was reliable. Saunders and Thornhill (2012) emphasized the importance of the internal validity and reliability of a questionnaire, because a

valid questionnaire allows collecting data that measures the investigated concepts; whereas a reliable questionnaire allows the data to be collected consistently. Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) suggested that for reliable responses in research, the minimal internal consistency threshold of Cronbach's alpha 0.7 is required. Collis and Hussey (2009) stated that "reliability is concerned with the findings of the research". However, even when a questionnaire is reliable, without an internal validity it will not be able to answer the research question (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012).

Data Gathering Procedure

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

Ethical Considerations

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

Statistical Analysis

Before processing the responses, the completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. The questionnaires were then coded to enable

the responses to be grouped into various categories. The researchers mainly used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as Percentage, Weighted Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson's Product Coefficient Correlation to analyze the data. The data gathered were collated, treated and analyzed in accordance to the objective of the study. The WLB of the administrators and faculty members relative to the specific factors was considered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

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

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

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

Additional provisions regarding work are also evident. The employees agree that there are additional provisions related to work regarding telephone for personal use (allowing employees to contact family members if needed); counseling services for employees (availability for counseling services for employees experiencing among others work/family stress); health programs (quit smoking programs, flu vaccination on site, dietary advice program, etc); exercise facilities (the organization provides onsite or subsidizes exercise facilities

/gym memberships). However, relocation assistance (where an employee has to move for work purposes, the organization helps the whole family adapt to the new environment) is moderately provided among the employees. The overall computed X is 3.81 (Agree).

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

The findings of this study affirmed O'Neal's (2012), who claimed work schedule flexibility as part of the organizational policy resulted to a positive correlation with overall job satisfaction and displayed statistical significance. However, no significant relationship was found between work-life balance and job satisfaction of employees. The second conclusion was elaborated by Oswald, Proto and Sgroi (2015), when they mentioned that lower happiness is systematically associated with lower productivity and the occurrence of the various forms of evidences, with corresponding strengths and weaknesses are consistent with the existence of a causal link between human well-being and human performance.

Moreover, the results of the present study revealing the picture of difficulties faced in balancing the work demand and the life (family) responsibility, and the high correlation between the difficulties faced and the balancing act to be performed as reflected in the areas of career advancement factors, organizational support and psychological factors towards human resources management interventions for better work-life balance, per se was supported by Maiya and Bagali (2014). Furthermore, a study on high correlation between employees' job satisfaction as affected by organizational commitment (Malone, 2010) further reinforced the findings of the present study. Researchers (Maurya et al., 2015) have established the level of agreement on various aspects of policies.

Accordingly, the employees experienced conflicts in schedule when it comes to family events and work. They further established that long daily working hours have caused conflicts between work and family, where employees were not given a chance to decide about the starting time, and were not provided technological resources to allow them to work at home. A study utilizing the existing database

from the Iowa State University explored faculty work-life balance and job satisfaction among academic disciplines. The results indicated that there was a high correlation between work-life and job satisfaction. Additionally, demographic profile like age, school climate and culture were significant predictors for WLB (Mukhtar, 2012). Thus, the findings of this study provide valuable insight for educators and policy makers who are interested in factors that contribute to work-life and overall job satisfaction among academic disciplines at a large research institution.

Although these studies insist that work-life balance plays a significant role in employees' psychological well-being and behavioral performance (Kim, 2014), less attention has been focused on what affects work-life balance has on employees' behaviors in the academic setting. Thus, the current study posited that work-life balance, along with employees' behavior, could affect performance improvement in the PHEI. The data for this study are collected from the private higher educational institution context where the interest in work-life balance has increased and the in-depth research on work-life balance is needed. Lastly, employee performance is key determinant in the achievement of organizational goals, and every individual is an integral part of the family in particular and the organization in general. Thus, work-life balance practice is an important factor in increasing employee performance (Ngozi, 2015). The results further indicate that employee orientations on policies were highly correlated to organizational commitment, and mediated by job satisfaction. The study of Pitek (2015) had provided substantial information regarding understanding individual-level value differences when examining the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of organizational policies and practices affecting WLB of employees.

Consequently, processing of institutional policies affecting employee life in legal and ethical manners will definitely bring effectiveness and productivity in the workplace; and because this generation of employees are committed to their personal learning and development and this remains their first choice benefit from employers together with flexible working hours, and cash bonuses (PWC, 2011), the phenomenon of flexible working arrangements affected the well-being of employees as reiterated by (Subramaniam, 2011) and to ascertain and review the organizational policies to address improve work-life balance (Taylor, 2010). The results of a study suggest that there is a great deal of overlap in the factors responsible for the WLB experienced by those in the teaching fields to include hours worked, workload, work pace and spillover (W, 2010). In summary, the presence of work-life balance policies can lead to the organization being identified

as an employer of choice, ensuring that the company will continuously attract employees (Wright, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The school administration may consider reviewing and enhancing the related policies such as leave arrangements, parenting and pregnancy so that the work-life related activities of employees may be safer. Additional provisions regarding work are also evident. There is a moderate impact of work-related activities and policies on the personal life of employees. This research on work-life balance (WLB) has provided significant contribution to the management of higher educational institution by stimulating the review of the existing policies and procedures affecting the social life of employees. Thus, the findings of the study suggest the need to frame policies that would minimize the work load of academic employees without affecting the productivity of the institution, for achieving successful work-life balance (Mumbai, 2014). Moreover, several practices have already been explored related to WLB to promote the value of human resource management in organizations, which were confirmed by the findings of the present study. For example, the HR functions are now considered as strategic tool in the formulation policies to attain its objectives (Nierras, 2012). The function of work before which was a matter of necessity and survival has evolved encouraging organizations to create and reformulate new policies and standards that will encourage employee retention and personal satisfaction (Rangreji, 2010). It is, therefore, significant for all educational leaders to understand and give due magnitude to the different human resource policies and practices in the institution of higher learning. Reformulated policies are concerned with attracting, managing, motivating and developing and retaining employees for the benefit of the well-balanced work-life and the entire organization.

WLB is a challenging issue for educational leaders, managers and has also attracted the attention of researchers. Work/life balance is described as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in employees' life. Managing the boundary between home and work is now becoming more challenging. Catholic educational institutions need to ensure effective balancing act between work and personal life of employees through a functional policy framework towards the overall satisfaction of the workforce. Furthermore, there is a need for employers and employees alike to find flexible and innovative solutions that maximize productivity without damaging employees well – being,

their family relationships and other aspects of life. Studies in the US and Europe have already been made to test the effectiveness of good WLB-related practices. This study will help future researchers and readers find out the prevalence of such WLB practices.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The result of the study could be translated through a journal article for international publications, newsletters, radio, social media, and other media for information dissemination and to revisit the institutional policies. Additionally, both the external and internal stakeholders might be able to translate it into a more comprehensive administrative policy and enhanced intervention program that could increase the interest of prospective internal stakeholders and professionals towards further studies. Finally, it can be translated by sharing this with present and future employees to clarify the administrative policies in the workplace.

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