

## **1. Title**

Impact of Work-life Balance on Stress Levels of Employees in Organisation of Saudi Arabia

## **2. Research Problem**

There has been an increased focus on the importance of balancing work and family life by employees working in different organizational setup. Work-Life balance refers to adjusting the working pattern of individuals irrespective of their age, sex, or race to ensure that they can find a rhythm between their work life and personal life and other responsibilities as well as aspirations (Stevens, Brown & Lee, 2004). Proponents of work-life balance philosophy argue that serious professional and personal problems are generated when an employee fails to maintain a balance between his/her work and family life. A survey on US residents revealed that excessive job constraints due to competitive pressures to enhance productivity and reduce costs, as well as expanding personal and household financial needs are the main reasons why people fail to maintain a healthy balance between their work life and family life (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001). Today's labor laws emphasize the importance of providing the work arrangement which allows work life balance to employees. According to a study conducted by CIPD, 75% of the respondents claimed they did not feel that they could take any more work load than they presently did, while 20% of the respondents believed that working from home makes it easier for them to complete their assignments in due time. Studies like these have raised the concerns to lessen the instances of employee burn out and stress owing to work load. The organizations, therefore, emphasize the importance of developing work-life balance to employees. The objective of the present thesis is to analyze the effects of work-life balance on stress level of employees and their decision to have kids in firms in Saudi Arabia.

### **3. Theory**

The concept of work- life balance did not gain much attention until the later decades of the twentieth century when women became an active part of the work force. Therefore, earlier organizational behavior theories do not talk about the concept of work-life balance, or the importance of providing flexible schedules to the work force. A number of organizational theories and concepts are, however, important to consider in order to reach a theoretical ground for this research. Below are discussed some important work place related, and motivation theories:

#### **Flexible Firm Model (1984)**

The model argues that employers increasingly segment their workforce into two broad categories: core and periphery (Atkinson, 1984). The core employees include full time permanent employees, while the peripheral employees include temporary, outsources, sub-contractual workers. The core employees offer functional flexibility, whereas the periphery offers numerical flexibility based on the organizational needs. The model gained much acceptance in the 80s, due to the flexibility it allowed the firms in the face of changing work place environment.

#### **Psychological Contract, Schein (1985)**

The theory of psychological contract refers to the mutual expectations and obligations of work force. Schein (1985) explains it as the unwritten expectations that exist all the time within an organization and its employees. Such expectations consist of things like benefits, working hours, salary, and security etc. Conversely, the organization itself has some expectations as well from the employees including the enhancement of organization's image, and loyalty towards the

organization etc. This theory signifies that there is a high level collective relationship between the employees and the organization. Later researches on the topic brought organizational focus on understanding the changing needs of employees.

### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954)**

Maslow theory (1954) states that human motivations generally move through a hierarchy with physiological needs at the base and, safety, belongingness and self-actualization, esteem and love up the hierarchy. According to this theory, once a need of individual is met, he moves up the hierarchy of needs. Therefore, in order to motivate individuals and employees, organizations need to recognize the needs of employees and give them incentives accordingly to motivate them.

### **Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (1966)**

This theory suggests the factors which cause job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the work place. Herzberg (1966; 1968) identified that workers are not motivated by fulfilment of lower order needs at work place, as suggested by Maslow. He states that there are two different sets of factors related to job characteristics known as hygiene factors and motivation factors. The presence of hygiene factors is necessary for removing the dissatisfaction amongst employees, while the motivation factors improve the job satisfaction.

### **The Hawthorne Studies (1920-1930)**

Hawthorne Studies were aimed at understanding the impact of working conditions on employee productivity. The studies implied that the work force is a social system where workers' attitudes and productivity are conditioned by the external and internal influencing factors. The studies also

found out that it is very important to recognize the need for recognition, security, and belongingness to boost up the morale of the work force (Gale, 2004).

### **Job Characteristics Approach (1980)**

This theory explains the association between the job characteristics and how individuals respond to them (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The theory describes five job dimensions that lead to various personal and work outcomes by inducing three different psychological states. These five dimensions comprise of autonomy, task significance, task identity, skill variety, and the feedback mechanism. The theory implies that internal motivation acts as the most important outcome variable. The theory suggests that three psychological states should be reached by the individuals, namely experience, personal responsibility, and knowledge. In order to get the maximum output from the employees, the organizations should make sure that they experience all three psychological states.

### **Equity Theory (1963)**

Equity Theory was proposed by Adams (1963) in which he notes that the inequity presence motivates individuals to strive to attain the equity, and the extent of this motivation depends upon the amount of inequity. The theory emphasizes the personal perceptions of fairness that people develop in a work environment. The theory suggests that if there is inequity in the work place, he will adjust his output according to his perceived inequity.

These theories discussed above describe how a work place environment can be altered to motivate employees and increase their productivity. Furthermore, a number of factors needed to be there in order to enhance the level of productivity of employees and to increase their job satisfaction. The older theories, however, focus on job related factors only and do not talk about

factors outside the job that have an influence on employee motivation and satisfaction. These involve a healthy balance in family and work life. The theories, nevertheless, provide a theoretical basis for formulating work place policies that facilitate employees taking control of their work life.

Such theories can be used to understand the methods of providing flexibility to employees in terms of job and working hours. Recent studies have investigated the effect of work-life balance and anxiety levels of employees. In a study on measuring job satisfaction amongst physicians and the work place burn out, it was found that burn out was an important predictor of career satisfaction (Keeton et al, 2007). It was found that the control over work schedule and work duration helps in reducing the levels of stress and workplace burn out. Flexibility in timings and location are found to trigger the employee productivity and reduction in work place burn out instances (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris & Weitzman, 2001). Flexibility allows employees to reduce stress related to daily commute, housing, and balancing family life. Hill, Hawkins, Ferris & Weitzman (2001) found out that flexibility is especially beneficial for parents who want to divide their time between work and family equally.

#### **4. Justification for Research**

Not many studies have been carried out in Saudi Arabian context regarding the work life balance. One comprehensive study on understanding the occupational stress as a result of work-life balance issues was carried out by Ben-Bakr et al. (1995). They concluded that primary stress factors for employees of private firms are related to transparency in performance measurements; age; experience; and the level of education. They found employees below 30 years showed a higher level of stress as compared to the older employees. Furthermore, employees with

experience between 6 and 10 years also reflect a high level of stress. Employees with less education showed more stress in comparison to employees with high education. If social values do not align with the recent industrial challenges and requirements, they become stressor for workers to remain productive for a long time.

Another survey conducted by King Saud University was also on similar lines to find the relationship between demographic and job variables with stress on government school teachers in Riyadh. The study concluded that demographic variables and job stress negatively affect each other, whereas work variables and job stress reflect positive correlation. However, work variables have more impact on job stress than demographic variables. They suggested providing supportive environment and job characteristics to improve employee satisfaction.

A recent study found that the changing nature and structure of families across the globe, the work family life balance has become an essential need for job satisfaction, and personal life satisfaction (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris & Weitzman, 2001). The study indicated that flexibility in working hours and working location can help in reducing the stress and workplace burn out instances, and increase the productivity of employees.

Previous researches do not accommodate in-depth attitudinal parameter of workers on how work-life balance policies affect those who do not have children as yet, but are planning to have kids. Current research will include the impact of the current workplace issues on future parents. Additionally, the research will also highlight the impact of work hour flexibility on the decision making process regarding having kids. There is little research on intentions of non- parents' attitude on how they perceive flexible work policies in relation to planning children. If organizational policy creates work culture of long hours and no flexibility, this will influence decision making process of future parents, about timing and numbers of kids that they can have.

Unexpected pregnancy brings challenges to each parent for harmonizing official and caring duties. If a company provides flexible working hours, future parents can plan differently. There is a need of empirical evidence to support these hypotheses. This research intends to fill in these gaps and to develop insight into family policy at the workplace to balance personal and professional life of employees.

## **5. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The research questions that have been developed as a result of reviewing existing literature and the gaps in previous researches are:

1. What is the effect of work life balance policies on work related stress/ burn out?
  - a. What effect does giving control has on perceived employee stress?
2. Does giving work time control to employees effect the employees' decision of planning to have kids?
  - a. Does giving control influence the decision by employees to have kids?

Based on these research questions, following hypotheses have been formed for testing:

### **Hypothesis 1:**

$H_0$  = Current work-life balance practices lead to employee burn out

$H_1$  = Current work-life balance practices do not lead to employee burn out

### **Hypothesis 2:**

$H_0$  = Giving work time control to employees reduces instances of employee burn out/stress

$H_1$  = Giving work time control to employees does not reduce instances of employee burn out/stress

### **Hypothesis 3:**

$H_0$  = Giving work time control to employees impacts on their decision to have kids

$H_0$  = Giving work time control to employees does not impact on their decision to have kids

Employee burn out refers to the psychological consequences that employees face as a result of job related or personal issues. Work time control refers to work schedule flexibility and arrangements like work from home to allow them to balance their work and family lives.

## **6. Research Methodology**

The research methodology employed in the research comprises both, primary and secondary techniques. Secondary techniques involve review of relevant literature and analysis of pertinent theories and models; whereas primary technique involves conducting a questionnaire based survey on employees of Saudi Paper Manufacturing Group. Quantitative techniques will be used for the data collection and analysis.

### **Research Design**

The research design opted for this study applies process of causal research to understand the instances of stress as well as employees' decision to have kids arising from imbalances in work and life of the company Saudi Paper Group. Causal research design is used when the effect of one variable is shown on the other. This research design is used here because the aim is to find the effect of a particular change in company work place policy (flexible working schedule and



giving control of work to the employees) on their attitudes and behaviors (stress level, and decision to have kids).

### **Organisation Used**

Saudi Paper Manufacturing Group (SPMC Group) has been selected to carry out the research. 30 participants will be surveyed for the research. This sample size has been chosen in order to understand the problem in depth.

### **7. Data Sources and Rights of Participants**

The research incorporates both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data involves the review of existing literature. Literature review helps in updating and understanding the theoretical concepts and critically evaluating the existing literature in an objective manner. It also proves to be the starting point of any research and helps in identifying the gaps in the existing literature. Literature review will be used as a method for understanding and shaping up the length and breadth of the research.

The primary data collection technique involves a questionnaire based survey using quantitative techniques. This technique of data collection will not only provide firsthand information on the research topic, but also help in investigating the specific elements of the research topic. Furthermore, as there are no recent researches carried out in Saudi Arabian context about the work life balance and stress levels as well as decision to have kids, primary data collection will provide the best possible insight.

### **Questionnaire Design and Administration**

In order to keep the survey simple and easier, the questionnaire with closed ended questions will be designed. Respondents will be required to choose from a given set of responses. Validity and

reliability are the two most important aspects of research instrument design. Validity is the extent to which the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure; whereas reliability refers to the consistency and stability of test results. The questionnaire will use constructs and variables used in the previous studies in the same research area to ensure construct validity. The validity will be ensured by testing the questionnaire in pilot study phase. The reliability of the research will be maintained by carrying out correlation analysis as well as measuring standard error of the responses. Online questionnaires will be provided to the respondents to determine their responses. Freesurveyonline.com will be used to carry out the research.

### **Data Analysis**

MS Excel will be used for statistical analysis of the data. Statistical tools will be used to test the hypotheses as well as predicting validity and reliability of the research design.

### **Participants:**

The target population for this research involves employees, both men and women, working in Saudi Paper Manufacturing who are married. Non-probability convenience sampling will be used for the research. Although biased data can affect the validity and reliability of research from such sampling, possibility of homogenous data ensures credibility of the conclusion from research. Accessibility of firms and close approximations to accuracy make the non-probability convenience sampling a favorable choice (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

### **The Pilot Study**

The questionnaire will be tested on 10 employees to test the reliability and validity and any shortcomings in the questionnaire design.

## **8. Legal Issues**

It is the duty of the researcher to carry out research within the domain of legal and ethical laws.

A number of legal and ethical considerations which will be kept in mind during this research are:

- The participants of the study will be contacted with the permission of the organization.
- The participants' consent to become part of the study will be taken before involving them in any part of the study.
- Ethical compliance for the present research includes the selection of participants satisfying the age criteria of above 18 for adult.
- The research process will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the data to ensure integrity.
- The respondents will be informed of the purpose of the research before carrying out the survey. The data will not be used for any other purpose apart from this research.
- The data collection techniques will be fair and transparent and will not involve any kind of misleading and fraudulent activities.
- The data will be used ethically and the results and findings from the study will be objective and unbiased.

## **9. Research Plan- Time Schedule**

**Business Research**  
SMC MANAGEMENT CENTER

Today's Date: 23-10-2012 Tuesday  
(vertical red line)

Project Lead: MUSAED ALROUG  
Start Date: 23-07-2012 Monday

WBS	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	End	Duration (Days)	% Complete	Working Days	Days Complete	Days Remaining	First Day of Week (Mon=2)																							
										23-Jul-12	30-Jul-12	06-Aug-12	13-Aug-12	20-Aug-12	27-Aug-12	03-Sep-12	10-Sep-12	17-Sep-12	24-Sep-12	01-Oct-12	08-Oct-12	15-Oct-12	22-Oct-12	29-Oct-12	05-Nov-12	12-Nov-12	19-Nov-12	26-Nov-12	03-Dec-12	10-Dec-12	17-Dec-12	24-Dec-12	31-Dec-12
1	Literature Review	Musaed	7-23-12	11-28-12	129	0%	93	0	129	[Gantt bars for Literature Review]																							
	Research Title & Background		7-23-12	11-19-12	120	0%	86	0	120	[Gantt bars for Research Title & Background]																							
1.1	Background		7-23-12	11-19-12	120	0%	86	0	120	[Gantt bars for Background]																							
1.2	Academic Theories		7-24-12	11-20-12	120	0%	86	0	120	[Gantt bars for Academic Theories]																							
1.2.1	Basic Review		7-24-12	7-28-12	5	0%	4	0	5	[Gantt bars for Basic Review]																							
	Organisation Selection		7-30-12	7-30-12	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Organisation Selection]																							
1.2.2	Selection		7-30-12	7-30-12	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Selection]																							
1.3	Research Objective		8-01-12	11-28-12	120	0%	86	0	120	[Gantt bars for Research Objective]																							
1.4	Draft Literature Review		8-17-12	11-24-12	100	0%	71	0	100	[Gantt bars for Draft Literature Review]																							
	Questionnaire Design	Musaed	11-03-12	12-30-12	58	0%	40	0	58	[Gantt bars for Questionnaire Design]																							
2	Design	Musaed	11-03-12	12-30-12	58	0%	40	0	58	[Gantt bars for Design]																							
2.1	Compile		11-03-12	11-12-12	10	0%	6	0	10	[Gantt bars for Compile]																							
2.2	Pilot		11-12-12	11-21-12	10	0%	8	0	10	[Gantt bars for Pilot]																							
2.3	Review & Administer		12-21-12	12-30-12	10	0%	6	0	10	[Gantt bars for Review & Administer]																							
2.4	Collection		12-07-12	12-16-12	10	0%	6	0	10	[Gantt bars for Collection]																							
3	Data Analysis	Musaed	12-30-12	1-19-13	21	0%	15	0	21	[Gantt bars for Data Analysis]																							
3.1	Chart Preparation		12-30-12	1-08-13	10	0%	7	0	10	[Gantt bars for Chart Preparation]																							
3.2	Descriptive Statistics		12-30-12	1-08-13	10	0%	7	0	10	[Gantt bars for Descriptive Statistics]																							
3.3	Results Preparation		1-09-13	1-14-13	6	0%	4	0	6	[Gantt bars for Results Preparation]																							
3.4	Discussion		1-14-13	1-19-13	6	0%	5	0	6	[Gantt bars for Discussion]																							
4	Final Project Report	Musaed	1-19-13	3-09-13	50	0%	35	0	50	[Gantt bars for Final Project Report]																							
4.1	Draft Version		1-19-13	1-21-13	3	0%	1	0	3	[Gantt bars for Draft Version]																							
4.2	Peer Review		1-21-13	1-30-13	10	0%	8	0	10	[Gantt bars for Peer Review]																							
4.3	Supervisor Review		1-30-13	2-08-13	10	0%	8	0	10	[Gantt bars for Supervisor Review]																							
4.4	Final Paper		2-08-13	3-09-13	30	0%	21	0	30	[Gantt bars for Final Paper]																							

TEMPLATE ROWS: Copy and insert the entire section, or just the specific sub tasks, depending on which level you want to use (formulas are different for different WBS levels)

1	Task Category 1		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Task Category 1]												
1.1	Sub Task level 2		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Sub Task level 2]												
1.2	Sub Task level 2		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Sub Task level 2]												
1.2.1	Level 3 Task		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Level 3 Task]												
1.2.2	Level 3 Task		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Level 3 Task]												
1.2.2.1	Level 4 task		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Level 4 task]												
1.3	Sub Task level 2		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Sub Task level 2]												
1.4	Sub Task level 2		1-05-09	1-05-09	1	0%	1	0	1	[Gantt bars for Sub Task level 2]												

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