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The Strategic Interplay Among Work Life Balance, Age, Employee Experience and Employee Retention: Evidence from the Pharmaceutical Industry of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study takes a simplistic approach to understand the interplay between work life balance, age and employee retention while looking at the moderating effect of employees' job experience in Bangladesh context. Quantitative analysis has been carried out using SPSS on the complete data of 233 respondents (employees) from the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh. The results show that young employees place more importance on work life balance whereas senior employees are comparatively less sensitive towards work life balance issue. Moreover, job experience of employees is moderating the basic work life balance and employee retention relationship. This phenomenon is taking place probably due to the deep rooted employee loyalty and affective & continuance employee commitment towards the organization which is well explained by the social exchange theory. Interestingly, there is no significant result variation once the analysis has been carried out for the women respondents separately. It, perhaps, strengthens the fact that work life balance is important to both male and female group of employees in Bangladesh context. However, the data represents the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh only and hence generalization is subject to questions. Hence, scope for future research remains strong for broader generalizability.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, Employee Turnover, Employee Retention, Bangladesh Context.



INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business environment, the challenges an organization face are to balance work and personal lives of employees (Kim, 2014; Helpert, 2005) and to retain quality employees (Terera and Ngirande, 2014) in managing the human resources to become competitive and profitable (Chen, 2014; Arthur, 2001). Recent research shows work life balance has become essential concern for academic, practitioner and policy maker (Kim, 2014; Fleetwood, 2007; MacInnes, 2008; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hammer et al, 2005) due to the changes in society and workplace (Singh, 2014). The absence of work life balance causes poor performance, high labor turnover and absenteeism of employees (Anderson, 2002; Frone et al, 1997). High employee turnover increases the cost up to 200% of an individual employee's annual salary (Cloutier et al., 2015; Hebenstreit, 2008) and have a negative impact on innovation (Abbasi and Hollman, 2000), satisfaction of the internal and external customers and profitability of the organization (Ramlall, 2003). Work life balance in workplace has become crucial as it influences positive results such as reduced tardiness, absenteeism and turnover, and improved employee morale, effort, job satisfaction and increased organizational performance (Hussain & Muztaba, 2012; Lee & DeVoe, 2012; Ortega, 2009; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007).

RESEARCH PURPOSES AND PROBLEMS

Work life balance and retaining the best employee are getting a great deal of attention from employers, employees, government, academic researchers (McPherson & Reed, 2007) as human resource managers find it very difficult in retaining the key employees in their organizations (Litheko, 2008). Employees migrate to competing organizations every six years on average (Stovel and Bontis, 2002) and with the knowledge and trade assets of their former employers which is critical for the latter (Abbasi and Hollman, 2000). In today's globalized world, as companies aim to reduce costs, and attract, motivate and retain a highly skilled, flexible and adaptive workforce, it is very important for the Human Resource Professional to understand the critical issues of work life balance. Bangladeshi organizations are competing globally and employees are facing an increased level of stress and conflict between their personal and professional life just like any other person around the world. If the employees unable to find a balance between their personal and work lives, they become unhappy and tend to leave the organization (Schuler and Jackson, 2006).

There are not many researches on work life balance in Bangladesh though there are few researches in the Asian countries. People in this region consider work as a

source of earning and social status and family is a social institution that provides not only emotional support but also stands beside in times of crisis (Baral & Bhargava, 2011). This scenario is also relevant in Bangladesh (Newaz & Zaman, 2012). The context of most of the studies on work life balance to date is in the United States and other Western countries that are not similar to the cultural characteristics and individual structures of the Asian countries (Spector et al, 2004). The United States and other Western countries are characterized as individualistic society whereas Asian countries like Bangladesh is characterized as collectivistic society and therefore the study conducted on work life balance in individualistic society may show a different result from the collectivistic society (Kim, 2014).

In responding to these research problems and situational issues of Bangladesh, this study takes a simplistic approach to understand the interplay between work life balance, age and employee retention while looking at the moderating effect of employees' job experience.

SPECIAL SCOPE

Retaining high performing employees, irrespective of gender, is important for any organization. However, in the context of a society like Bangladesh retaining high performing female employees might be even more difficult. In one side due to the consequence of development of economy and the changes of attitudes and aspirations, more Bangladeshi women are entering into the job market and they are contributing to meet the rising living cost of the family (Esping-Anderson, 1999; 2002) and it is considered as one of the biggest social change (Beninger, A., 2010). On the flip side of the coin, in Bangladesh women are highly responsible for childcare and all other facets of running a home (Uddin et al, 2013) and thus many female employees may even leave jobs for the sake of better work life balance. So this paper is set to measure the impact of work life balance on employee retention with an additional angle to see whether there is any significant change for the female employees. The study is also set to investigate the moderating effect of job experience on the work life balance and employee retention relationship.

RATIONALE

This paper will contribute to the work life literature and it will help the policy makers to understand the influence of work life balance in retaining the best employees for the organization in Bangladesh context. Different research has shown that retaining the employees helps the firm to reduce the cost and improve the performance of the firm. However, it would be difficult to generalize the findings since the study is carried out only in the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Work Life Balance

All the stakeholders i.e. employees, organizations, trade unions, local communities and government need to be aware of Work life Balance (Kozjek et al., 2014). Since its popularization in 1959 work life balance has been defined by different authors (Ransome, 2007). Recent research on work life balance focus on the positive and negative relationships between the work and non-work domains which may facilitate and enhance some outcomes (Hanson et al., 2006; Brough et al., 2006; Wayne et al., 2007; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012; Ratanen et al., 2013). Brough et al. (2014) defines work life balance is how an individual would adjust to his/her work and non-work activities and life more easily. Work life balance usually refers to organizational support for dependent care, flexible work options, and family or personal leave (Estes & Michael, 2005). Different organization offer different work life policy options include flexible working hours, job sharing, part-time work, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, and on-site child care facility but are not limited to these (Grover and Crooker, 1995; Ioan & Patricia, 2010).

Greenhaus et al. (2003) defined work family balance as how an individual can engage and satisfy his and her work role and family role consisting three components: time balance (equal time shared in work and family), involvement balance (equal involvement in work and family) and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family). The demands from work and family are the key negative antecedents of work life balance (O'Driscoll et al. 2007; Brough et al., 2007) If individuals do not feel they have a 'good' blend of work and non-work roles, they may experience negative or conflicting outcomes. (Frone et al., 1996; Frone et al., 1997). The consequences of work life balance can be grouped in work related outcomes (job satisfaction, turnover intentions, absenteeism and performance), non-work related outcomes (marital, family and life satisfaction, and family performance) and stress related outcomes (psychological strain and burnout) (Allen et al., 2000). Employees become strongly attached to their organizations when their need and expectations are satisfied (Meyer et al. 1993; Kim, 2014). Therefore employees experiencing chronic imbalance try to find employment with a more family friendly employer (Brough et al., 2008; O'Driscoll et al., 2011). Work life balance practices can help an organization to gain competitive advantages by developing committed and dedicated employees (Huselid et al., 1997; Wang and Verma, 2012).

Employee Retention

In today's business world the critical employees are the major differentiating factor (Samuel and Chipunza, 2009) for organizations to gain competitive advantage over its current and potential competitors (Ramlall, 2003; Umamaheswari and Krishnan, 2015; Campbell et al., 2012) and that is why retaining the high performers is critical for organization (Gering and Conner, 2002; Smith, 2009).

Employee retention, is an intentional move made by the organizations to create an environment which will instigate the employees to stay within the organization for a longer period of time (Chaminade, 2007), enabling them to exercise or develop their capabilities and contributes to the success of the organization (Grobler and Diedericks, 2009). It is often measured by employee turnover and employee attrition (Hausknecht et al., 2008; Kar et al., 2011). But the researchers asserted that turnover and retention are not simply two sides of the same construct (Holtom et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). The factors that might stimulate an employee to stay may be different from the factors that lead an employee to leave an organization (Steel et al., 2002). Employee turnover is detrimental to the organization's performance when dysfunctional turnover occurs that is good performers leave and bad performers stay (Abassi and Hollman, 2000). However, turnover can be helpful when bad performers leave and good performers stay that is functional turnover takes place and reduce suboptimal performance (Stovel and Bontis, 2002).

Employees' intention to stay in the organization by a number of factors like the individual's age, family situation (Haider et al., 2015), organization commitment (Nasyira et al., 2014; Hussain and Arif, 2012), supervisor support (Shoib et al., 2009; Gentry et al., 2007), training and development (Chew and Chan, 2008; Hassan et al., 2013; Raghupati, 2013; Chen, 2014), hiring practices, lack of recognition, lack of job security, inadequate workplace environment (Abassi and Hollman, 2000; Sherman et al., 2006), work life balance (Hytter, 2007), Compensation (Gardner et al., 2004), leadership (Fang et al., 2009).

The main purpose of retention is to preserve the knowledge and prevent happening the knowledge gap within an organization as competent employees are in great demand and very difficult to source (Hendricks, 2006).

Work Life Balance, Job Experience, Age and Employee Retention

According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) when employees obtain economic and socio-emotional benefits from their organizations, they feel obligated to respond in the same way by staying with the organization. Person-organization fit which consists of employee's perception of compatibility and flexibility within the

organization enhances employee retention (Dawley et al., 2010). Retention of high performers for the organization is critical to get competitive advantage. Different researchers have shown that work life balance has becoming increasingly important for employee retention (Boxall et al., 2003; Walker, 2001). It encourages employees' decision to remain with the organization (Shoaib et al., 2009). But Hytter (2007) found that balance between professional and personal lives have an indirect influence on employee retention. The thought that came to our mind is that does the need for work life balance changes, with increased job experience of the employees, or not; is there any impact of biological age in that regard? Those queries led us to our hypothesis building.

H1: Work Life Balance and the age of the employee positively affect Employee Retention

H2: Job experience of the employees moderates the relationship of Work Life Balance and Employee Retention

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual framework defines the outline or the pattern for the conduction of the research (Ravitch & Riggan, 2011) and hypothesize that there is a relationship between work life balance and organizational performance. According to Kothari (2008), the independent variable is the variable being manipulated or being changed and the dependent variable is the observed result of independent variable being manipulated. Thus there is interaction between independent variables and dependent variables which is summarized in the figure below:

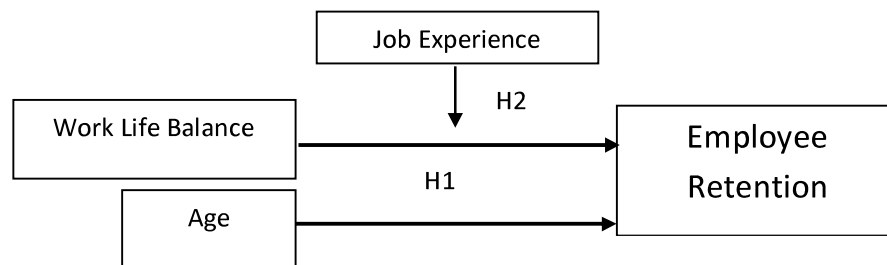


Figure I: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a questionnaire method to collect data from the employees working in the pharmaceutical companies of Bangladesh. Data was collected from ten top tier pharmaceutical companies of Bangladesh. The paper has used mainly questionnaire based primary data. Questionnaire was first tested to check the reliability of the variable measured on the sample. To determine the reliability of the constructs Cronbach's alpha was used. For age, clustering (age wise grouping) was done to run the tests separately and monitor significant changes compared to the group data (entire data set) analysis. The same analysis was done for the women respondents as well. Significant changes, when applicable, were reported in the analysis part accordingly.

SAMPLE

Secondary data was used to develop the literature review of the study. A total of 310 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of major pharmaceutical companies of Bangladesh. Random sampling method was used. However, personal links of the researchers were exploited to create access to the organizations. 275 filled up questionnaires were returned (around 69%) but 233 were completely filled up which were eventually considered after the data cleaning process. Around 42% respondents were female while the rest were male. The age of the respondents ranges from 22 years to 45 years where the average age is around 28 years.

Data Analysis, Presentation & Interpretations

SPSS was used for data analysis. To determine the reliability of the constructs, Cronbach's alpha was used which measures the internal consistency. Cooper & Schinder (2008) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. Table 1 shows the alpha to be 0.708 which is considered to be reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.708	10

RESULTS

This study attempts to understand the relationships among work life balance, employee age and experience, and employee retention. Table II presents the means, standard deviations and zero-order correlation among all the variables in the study. Work life balance is correlated significantly with employee retention ($r= 0.39$; $p < .01$)

Table II: Mean, Standard Deviations and Zero-Order Correlation
Group Data

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3
1. Age	2.41	0.87			
2. Total Experience	2.92	1.07	.578**		
3. Work Life Balance	3.48	0.52	.037	.074	
4. Employee Retention	3.68	0.88	.226**	.127	.393**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As table III shows, we used two models to explain the relationship of work life balance, employee age and experience, and employee retention. Model 1 refers to the impact of work life balance and employee age on employee retention and model 2 includes the moderating effect of employee experience on the impact of work life balance on employee retention.

In model I the results shown that work life balance along with the age of the employees explained 19% of the variables of employee retention under work life balance head. The model was significant with an F-statistic 28.58, $p < .000$. The standardized beta for work life balance and age is .39 and .21 respectively.

Model II was designed to investigate the moderating effect of employee experience on the relationship of work life balance, age and employee retention. The results showed the beta of work life balance increases by .02 and increment in adjusted R^2 by 3%. In addition $F=23.19$, $p < .000$.

Table III: Two Models and Results

Model	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Stat	Sig. F	Standardized Beta	Sig.
Model I						
WLB } → ER	.20	.19	28.58	.000		
Age } → ER					.39	.000
WLB					.21	.000
Age						
Model II						
WLB*Exp } → ER	.23	.22	23.18	.000		
Age } → ER					.41	.000
WLB					.21	.000
Age						
WLB*Exp					-.18	.002

Note: WLB: Work Life Balance, Exp: Experience, ER: Employee Retention

The model showed moderating effect of experience on the relationship between work life balance, age and employee retention. The experience of employees negatively moderates the relationship of work life balance and employee retention ($\beta = -.18, p < .002$).

The analysis was carried out for different age groups and women group of respondents separately. The results on the women data do not show any significant deviation from the group data analysis and hence is not discussed further. However, the analysis on age clusters does show significant variation and hence it is shown in table IV below:

Table IV: Age Clusters

Model II	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Stat	Sig. F
WLB → ER				
Below 25	.58	.54	12.56	.006**
25-35	.26	.25	54.04	.000**
35-40	.00	-.03	.09	.763
40-45	.07	.02	1.49	.237

**Results are significant

It is quite evident from the table that work life balance gets more importance to the young employees compared to their senior counterparts. For the below 25 age cluster the result explains as much as 54% of the variables of employee retention, where 25% variables are explained for the 25-35 age group.

DISCUSSIONS

The analysis results establish the need for work life balance for ensuring effective employee retention in Bangladesh context. It is quite evident from the age cluster wise data analysis that young employees place more importance on better work life balance and hence it is important for the policy makers to pay attention in this regard and design different facilities to ensure work life balance. Many other researches talk about many such benefits. Benefits and facilities, for work life balance, may include flexible working hours, job sharing, part-time work; compressed work weeks, telecommuting, and on-site child care facility but are not limited to these (Grover and Crooker, 1995; Ioan & Patricia, 2010; Mas-Machuca et al., 2016).

The analysis results also reveal that senior employees are comparatively less sensitive towards work life balance issue- Which is in line with the research of Kundnani & Mehta (2016). Moreover, job experience of employees is moderating the basic work life balance and employee retention relationship. This phenomenon is taking place probably due to the deep rooted employee loyalty and affective & continuance employee commitment towards the organization which takes place gradually over time. Similar findings were reported by Shore, L. M., & Wayne, S. J. (1993) under the social exchange theory framework.

Interestingly, there was no significant result variation once the models were tested for the women respondents only although in Bangladesh women are highly responsible for childcare and all other facets of running a home (Uddin et al, 2013). It establishes the fact that work life balance is important to both male and female group of employees in Bangladesh context.

From managerial perspective, the results show that relation between work life balance and employee retention is moderated by age of the employees. So the policy makers of the pharmaceutical companies in Bangladesh should incorporate differentiated benefits and perks for different level of employees such as for the young professionals (25-35), mid level (35-40) and senior level (Above 40) because Maslow (1943) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on. Therefore, it is needed to implement work life policies in companies in an effective way. In this sense, there are a number of different policies and practices such as flexible work

hours, autonomy in employee decision making, telecommuting, on-site child care facility and supervisor support on work life balance can be implemented in these organizations.

FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

The data represents the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh only and hence generalization is subject to questions. Moreover In this study only work life balance is considered as a determinant for employee retention. More variables like educational background of employees, family background, career development opportunities, perceived organizational support etc. can play a part. Hence, the scope and need for future researches are established here.

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