WORK LIFE BALANCE AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN STATE COMMISSIONS IN KENYA

A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The business environment today is competitive and every organization is facing a problem of attracting and retaining a competent human resource. To overcome this challenge every organization needs to maintain high level of Quality Work Life. Employee commitment is one of the challenges facing many organizations both public and private. Retention and commitment of productive employees is a major concern of HR professionals and management. As studies show, it is more efficient to retain a quality employee than to recruit, train and orient a replacement of the same quality. A decent balance in work and life can play a remarkable role in the attainment of personal and professional goals and ensure employee commitment in organizations. The study explored the influence of work-life balance on employee commitment among civil servants in state commissions in Kenya. In the civil service, where employees' work interferes with their social life, it is crucial to examine their commitment. The objectives of the study were to explore employees' perceptions on work-life balance and the relationship between work-life balance and commitment. The study was guided by the following objectives; to establish whether flexible work arrangement affects employee commitment; to assess the effect of work-life conflict on employee commitment; to determine how work-life practices affect employee commitment and to establish the effect of work-life support programs on employee commitment in State Commissions in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design with 115 employees responding to questionnaires and seven employees participating in interviews. The study found among others that unmarried employees balanced their work and family roles better than their married counterparts. Women also experienced more work-life conflict than men. There was a weak positive relationship between work-life balance and commitment among employees because they were not satisfied with paternity leave, study leave, and part-time work. The study concluded that work-life balance policies did not influence employee commitment that much. It was therefore recommended that employees in state commissions should benefit from paternity leave, study leave and part-timework to enhance work-life balance. Additionally, there's need to sensitize civil servants on how to balance their work and social responsibilities in order to manage both domains and perform efficiently and effectively at the workplace.

Key Terms: *Quality Work Life, Work Life Balance, Commitment, Civil Service, Flexible Work Arrangement, Work-Life Conflict, Work-Life Support, Work-Life Practices*

INTRODUCTION

Employees today are offered a wide range of work-life policies, such as flexible working hours, part-time work, a compressed work week and various types of leave arrangements (Evans, 2001). Nevertheless, there is evidence that many employees are not taking advantage of existing policies (Webber, Sarris & Bessell, 2010). Research has also shown that employees do not always utilize existing schemes, even when they need to do so (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Eaton, 2003; Williams, 2000). Moreover, the study indicates that work-home conflict is on the increase (Winefield et al., 2008; Webber et al., 2010). Other studies also indicate that employees are experiencing difficulties in achieving WLB (Horton, 2006; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005). McDonald, Guthrie et al. (2005) also showed that the use of part-time work for University working mothers was seen as career damaging.

This study examined the influence of work-life balance on employee commitment in State Commissions in Kenya. Though the issue of work-life balance and its influence on employee commitment is widely discussed in most developed countries and other developing countries of the world, yet not much research has been done in Kenya and it is not very easy to find reference to work-life balance polices and issues. World of Work Report (2011) acknowledge that there exists little formal research in Kenya's work family field and few organizations in the country have work-life balance policies, such as flexi time, alternative work arrangement, teleworking and child care centers. As global the economy experiences financial and economic crisis, resulting in weak GDP growth of most countries since 2010, work-life balance remains a central issue for employers and employees. There is pressure from competitive work environment leading to conflicting priorities for employers and governments creating considerable stresses for employees trying to "juggle" between work and family responsibilities (O'Brien, 2009).

There is no one accepted definition of work-life balance practice, but the term usually refers to one of the following: organizational support for dependent care, flexible work options, and family (Estes & Michael, 2005). Hence these practices include flexible work hours, telework, job sharing, and family leave programs such as parental leave, adoption leave, compassionate leave, childcare, and informational assistance in terms of childcare and eldercare services. Vidal, Leiva and Navarro, (2012) defines WLB as the individual's ability, irrespective of age and gender, to find a life rhythm that allows them to combine their work with other responsibilities, activities or aspirations. Work-life balance practices are increasingly becoming popular today in the organization because of their potential value for both employers and employees. Employers benefit from work-life balance because they can increase their organizational results through improved employee outcomes, such as commitment, motivation, and talent retention and reduced turnover intentions (Carrasquer & Martin, 2005; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). Organizations that embrace work-life balance practices get a lot of benefit which includes improved corporate image in the market, reduction of absenteeism, lower stress levels, higher levels of productivity and performance, and greater quality of life, satisfaction and commitment among employees. Work-life balance practices are seen the key to retaining and attracting highly qualified professionals (Harrington & Ladge, 2009).

Despite the popularity of work-life balance as a topic of academic and research debate, and the increasing prevalence of work-life balance practices in organizations around the world (US Bureau of Labor, 2007; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007; Vidal *et al*.,2012), research on the organizational effects of such practices is not well integrated. The competing demands between work and family has resulted to increased relevance for employees in recent years, due to demographic and workplace changes such as rising numbers of women in the work place, ever ageing population, longer working hours and

improved communications technology enabling regular contact with the workplace. In response to these changes at the work place and the conflict generated among the multiple roles that individuals occupy, organizations are under pressure to implement work practices and policies intended to facilitate employees' efforts to fulfill both their work requirements and their personal responsibilities (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002).

Work-life balance is an issue of concern for both male and female employees. In recent survey data by Fleetwood (2007) shows that a higher proportion of employed men than women in the UK work for long (more than 48 hours per week) as a result, men may experience lower work-life balance than their female counterparts. Moreover, it is not family obligations that comprise an issue in work-life balance in the organization. Other types of activities that the individual hopes to pursue outside the work obligations relate to work-life balance. Indeed, past survey research by DTI (2004) indicated that more than half of British employees considered that a better work-life balance was necessary in order to pursue their interests in arts and to engage in sports activities.

In response to the current situation, the Kenya employers have recognized the importance of having work-life balance policies and programs in the organization. The government encouraged private organizations and social services to deliberately introduce the family friendly policies in the workplace to help employees to balance their work and family life. The arrangement of five day's work week in Kenya Government has been smoothly implemented. In the pursuit of reducing work-life conflict, improving commitment, increasing productivity, reducing costs and enhancing profitability in the workplace, organizations in Kenya have been evolving new ways and means in building psychological relationships with employees (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Employees all over the world are facing challenges how to balance work and their personal

life. During the period 2002-2011, many organizations in Kenya adopted work styles and organizational practices from developed countries. Workers were expected to work 24/7 × 365 days of the year. To prevent such a work style from affecting workers' health, productivity, turn over and commitment, organization have decided to offer services traditionally associated with the family and non-work domain within their premises such as gymnasiums, day-care facilities, laundry facilities, canteen facilities (Devi, 2002).

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 established eleven independent constitutional commissions which include; Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission; National Land Commission; Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission; Parliamentary Service Commission, Judicial Service Commission; Commission on Revenue Allocation; Public Service Commission; Salaries and Remuneration Commission; Teachers Service Commission; Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Police Service Commission.

REVIEW OF VARIABLES

Flexible Work Arrangement

Flexible work arrangements is defined as an alternative to the standard working day (Rau & Hyland, 2002) which include flexible and restructured full-time options (flextime, compressed workweeks), reduced work-time options (part-time, job sharing, and leaves of absence) and off site options (telecommuting). It is acknowledged that flexible working arrangements allow for the employee to better balance their commitments to both work and family. Economic, technological, social and family changes have encouraged the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Flexible work arrangements are connected to a number of positive outcomes for employees who access them, including better mental health, and reductions in stress, burnout, turnover, and absenteeism and increases in retention, loyalty, job satisfaction, innovation,

creativity, and productivity (Galinsky, Bond, Sakai, Kim, & Giuntoli, 2008; Shapiro, Ingols, O'Neill, & Blake-Beard, 2009).

Flexible work arrangements can increase the level of organizational commitment between employees' work and family demands. Research by (Francis & Lingard, 2004) suggests that flexibility in work arrangements can enable employees to integrate and overlap their work and family responsibilities as well as assist them to achieve a healthy balance between work and family. Flexible work arrangement benefits both the organization and employees. Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman (2001) investigated the level to which flexible hours and flex place arrangements resulted in benefits for individuals such as more satisfactory work-family balance and organizations such as longer work hours. They found that, given a reasonable work week, employees who perceived flexibility in the timing and location of their work committed to their organization. Moreover, Hill *et al*., (2001) reported that employees with perceived flexibility in the timing and location of work could work longer hours before work-life balance was perceived to be a problem.

Flexible Career Path

Flexible Career arrangements could be policies perceived by individuals necessary to enhance their ability to achieve WLB (Glass & Finley, 2002). Rau and Hyland(2002) found that employees were more attracted to organizations offering flexible career paths and policies. In a study of young and inexperienced job seekers without care giving responsibilities, Carless and Wintle (2007) found that organizations offering flexible career paths and dual career paths were perceived as significantly more attractive than those offering only traditional career paths. Similarly, in a survey of 120 employers in upstate New York, Baughman *et al.,* (2003) found that employers who had instituted flexible sick leave and childcare referral services experienced significant subsequent decreases in turnover and increase organizational commitment amongst all employees.

Understanding the impact of various work schedules, including supervisory and organizational discretion (Ortega, 2009), has important career implications. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that workers believe that work schedules can hinder career development (Beutell, 2010; Kelly &Moen, 2007). Further, women on flexible schedules may be perceived as having less job-career dedication and less advancement motivation (Beutell, 2010; Rogier& Padgett, 2004). Yet, Cooper (2005) has argued that the future of flexible working can be liberating giving power and control to employees.

Arthur (2003) longitudinal assessment of a flexible scheduling intervention in a public service organization found that absenteeism decreased significantly among employees in the experimental group, but not in the control group. Two years after the program had ended, absenteeism levels had returned to per-intervention levels. Using a nationally representative sample of working adults, Halpern, (2005) found that employees using flexible work hours reported lower levels of commitment.

Flexible work schedule

Flexible work schedule offers workers the freedom to vary their starting and ending work times such that they can fulfill other family obligations they have. In Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach's (2001) study, 99 percent of employees indicated that flexible scheduling was helpful to them. Schedule flexibility, in particular, contributes to valued organizational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism, and job satisfaction (Carlson, Grzywacz & Kacmar, 2010; Grzywacz *et al.,* 2008; Hill *et al.,* 2008b). Schedule flexibility is a work arrangement whereby employees are allowed to decide the time of day they start and stop their job-related work, usually around a band of core hours where each employee must be present (Carlson *et al.,* 2010). Schedule flexibility has relevance to our study as it is a valued organization resource offered to workers. Furthermore, it is a boundary-spanning resource (Voydanoff, 2004) that takes into account

the interrelated process of the work and family domains.

Wharton and Blair-Loy's (2006) reported that less intense and more stable and predictable work conditions may alleviate worries about the effects of work hours on those in one's personal life. Flexible work schedule increases continual organizational commitment. A meta-analysis by (Batt & Valcour, 2003) found that flexible work schedules had positive effects on both organizational commitment and satisfaction with work schedule. In a study of the virtual office, Woods and de Menezes (2008) participants attributed an increase in job satisfaction to increased flexibility in the location and timing of their work.

Telework

Teleworking is defined broadly as "working from anywhere at any time" (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive & Heelan, 2010) or performing one's work duties at a remote location. The term "telework" is used interchangeably with "telecommuting" and "virtual work" (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Siha &Monroe, 2006). For instance, Kurland and Bailey (1999) described four types of telework: home-based, satellite office, neighborhood work center, and mobile. In contrast, Garrett and Danziger (2007) those whose remote work is from the home or in a satellite office, (b) those whose telework is primarily in the field, and (c) those whose work is "networked" in such a way that they regularly work in a combination of home, work and field contexts.

Telework researchers (Sparrow, 2000; Morganson et al., 2010) have explained how work location may impact employees' psychological contract or underlying cognitive schema of their employment relationships. Allowing employees to work away from the office may be viewed as a gesture of kindness and trust, which in theory should be reciprocated through employee loyalty and commitment. According to Morganson et al., (2010) teleworkers represent "privileged core employees, enjoying high trust relationships, and given autonomy over work location and time, i.e. the re-

emergence of industrial guilds serviced by small technical and commercial elite" (Morganson et al., 2010). Due in part to the autonomy and flexibility it provides, and the entrusted status it may symbolize, telework is likely to impact employee perceptions of work-life balance (WLB) support and job satisfaction.

A number of reports indicate that telework arrangements are becoming more common (Kowalski &Swanson 2005; Shanks 2007) due to a number of advantages that are possible for individuals and organization. Employees typically view telecommuting as an opportunity to remain in the workforce and still attend to family issues, reduce on commuting time, increase job autonomy, achieve flexible working hours, and obtain valuable training in information and communication technologies. Research suggests that employers might gain more satisfied employees, which could translate into increased retention, reduced employee relocation costs, lower absentee rates, and greater employee commitment to the organization (Mamaghani, 2006).

Work-life Conflict

Work-family conflict is generally defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible because participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other (Greenhaus et al., 2009). Constitutional reforms have considerably altered the work environment in State Commissions in Kenya with the increase in elective positions. This has considerably increased the work load enormously thus putting a lot of pressure on employees. To increase profitability and have competitive advantage organizations have streamlined their workforce considerably, which consequently eliminated a large proportion of their qualified personnel (Chenevert, Jourdain, Cole, & Banville, 2013). This situation, coupled with the growing complexity of working environment and massive re-engineering of work processes, has imposed a work overload on employees in State Commissions in

Kenya, thus leading to work life conflict (Cheˆnevert*et al*., 2013).

Work-family conflict has been shown to reduce work performance (Stordeur, D'hoore, & Vandenberghe, 2001) and increase absenteeism, turnover and job dissatisfaction (Chandola, Martikainen, Bartley, Lahelma, Marmot & Michikazu, 2004). Work-family conflict has also been shown to reduce life satisfaction, marital and family satisfaction as well as mental and physical well-being including burnout and health problems (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001; Chandola *et al.,* 2004). Many studies revealed that WFC has a negative impact on employee commitment. Study by Akintayo's (2010) reported a negative impact of WFC on organizational commitment in industrial workers of Nigeria. Findings are also consistent with other studies indicating that WFC has an impact on several variables like commitment, personality, self-efficacy, and leadership style (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000) and that WFC particularly is negatively associated with affective and continuance commitment, which are the dimensions of organizational commitment (Ansari, 2011; Frone *et al.,* 1992; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) it is the inter-role conflict which causes role pressures from the work and family domains which consequently results in low organizational commitment.

Work-family conflict has been consistently linked to negative outcomes for employees, their families and organizations. For example, work interference with family life has been associated with job dissatisfaction, turnover intention, general well-being, psychological strain, psychiatric disorders and substance abuse and problem drinking (Boyar, Maertz, Pearson & Keough, 2003; O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper & Sanchez, 2003; Hammer, Saksvik, Nytrø, Torvatn & Bayazit, 2004). Employees reporting high levels of work-life conflict tend to exhibit lower levels of job

satisfaction and organizational commitment (Beauregard, 2006).

Work-life conflict is a common source of work stress (Tanacoody, Bartram & Casmir, 2009; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). Work-family conflict has a positive relationship with job burnout and is often associated with a higher tendency to leave the organization (Tanacoody *et al.,* 2009; Lambert, 2006). Grunfeld, Zitzelsberger, Coristine, Whelan, Aspelund, Evans, (2004), in a rare study of job stress among cancer workers, they argued that a major source of work stress is work-family conflict coupled with heavy workload demands. Additionally, many clinicians are leaving the public health care industry in Australia due to the inability to balance work and family domains in the face of work intensification (Tanacoody *et al.,* 2009).

Burnout

Burnout is a stress-related psychological syndrome in which exhaustion and disengagement may be considered, the core elements (Langballe, Innstrand, Aasland & Falkum, 2011; Peterson *et al.,* 2008). Burnout may be defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment at work and home (Maslach *et al.,* 1996). According to Demerouti *et al.,* (2001), burnout has two critical dimensions: emotional exhaustion and disengagement. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and exhausted by the emotional demands of work (Demerouti *et al.,* 2001). Disengagement refers to employees' engagement, identification, and willingness to remain within the same occupation. The burnout process is assumed to start with feelings of exhaustion in response to prolonged exposure to stressful experiences at work (Langballe *et al,* 2011). People who are 'burned out' are not only exhausted but may also have lost their capacity for involvement in their work (Leiter, 2008). A high level of job burnout causes employees to feel depressed and experience a sense of failure, fatigue, and a loss of motivation, which in turn can lead to a number of problems for the organization,

including employee turnover, absenteeism, and reduced organizational commitment, morale, job satisfaction, and productivity (Choi *et al.,* 2012).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) asserted that job burnout (including emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) is an important predictor of turnover intentions for service organizations. Research has linked burnout to lower levels of organizational effectiveness, job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as to higher levels of absenteeism and turnover (Harrington & Ladge, 2009; Beutell, 2010; Choi *et al.,* 2012). Research has linked burnout to lower levels of organizational effectiveness, job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as to higher levels of absenteeism and turnover (Maslach *et al.,* 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Rupert, Stevanovic and Hunley, (2009) studied the relationships between work-family conflict and burnout in a group of psychologists. The results indicated that both work to family conflict and family to work conflict are significantly related to burnout.

Stress

The concept of work-life balance requires organizations to effectively integrate employees' work and non-work roles such that levels of multiple-role conflict, the associated stress and job-dissatisfaction are minimized (De Bruin & Dupuis, 2004; Greenblatt, 2002).High job involvement may lead to increased stress, lack of job satisfaction, and reduced organizational commitment (McDonald & Bradley, 2005). Grunfeld *et al.,* (2004) in a rare study of job stress among cancer workers, argue that a major source of work stress is work-family conflict coupled with heavy workload demands. Additionally, job stress has been shown to be positively associated with absenteeism and turnover among clinicians more generally (Stordeur *et al.,* 2001). Stress is associated with economic costs for the individual, society and the organization. Job stress is estimated to cost industry in the US more than $300 billion a year in related costs such as absenteeism and reduced productivity

(Rosch, 2003; APA, 2010). In the US, more than half of adults report that family responsibilities are a source of stress to them and 55% indicated that they experienced work-family conflict in the past 3 months APA (2010). The consequences of work-life imbalance can be dreadful in terms of the profitability of organizations. Organizational psychologists have shown that high levels of work-life balance stress can significantly increase levels of absenteeism and turnover, and substantially decrease employees' levels of job satisfaction, job performance and commitment to the organization.

Absenteeism

Many researches support the notion that absenteeism rates can be influenced by employees' use of work-life balance practices in the work place. There is evidence that work/family programs increase loyalty and commitment to the organization and reduce absenteeism and turnover, reduce conflict between work and family and as a result increase productivity (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). Other more tangible benefits include reduction of absenteeism, lower stress levels, higher levels of productivity and performance, greater quality of life, satisfaction and commitment among employees (Carrasquer& Martin, 2005; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). In Auerbach's (1990) study of an American hospital's childcare program, absenteeism rates dropped from 6% to 1% among eligible parents following the introduction of the childcare center, whereas absenteeism rates for other employees remained steady at 4%.

Work-life Practices

The influence of work-life practices on organizational commitment may be compromised by practices that fail to achieve their intended aims. Research in the UK suggests that employees often remain unaware of their work-life entitlements following the implementation of work-life balance practices (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002). For example, in a survey of 945 employees in six different organizations across three sectors of employment (local government, supermarkets, and retail banking), Yeandle,

Crompton, Wigfield, & Dennett (2002) found that 50% of employees were unaware of the family-friendly practices offered by their organizations. Availability of work-life balance practices produced positive results in terms of work-related attitudes. For example, the availability of organizational resources, including flexible work hours, has been linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for women and for all employees with family responsibilities, regardless of whether or not these resources are being used (Allen, 2001).

Family Leaves

Family leave policies allow employees to be away from the workplace for a particular period of time in order to deal with family responsibilities (Wise & Bond, 2003). Since 1990s policies to support fathers manage their home and employment responsibilities after the birth of their child have been developed by many organizations. According to Butt *et al.,* (2007) use of work-life leave provisions is low among staff with career aspirations due to the belief that taking such leave will be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the organization. This proposition is supported by Brandth and Kvande (2002) who studied 1,360 Norwegian working fathers and found that as they progress up the managerial career ladder, fathers exhibit a reduced tendency to use the paternity leave to which they are entitled to. Provision of work-life practices improved employees' organizational commitment Eaton(2003) but only to the extent that employees felt free to use the practices without negative consequences to their work lives such as damaged career prospects. Family leaves policies help employees to achieve a balance of work-life by increasing job satisfaction and reducing the intention to leave the organization.

Part-Time Work

On part time, employees are allowed to work less than the standard time. According to a report published by European Investment Bank (2005) part-time working is used by the employees to take time out of work for their family concerns or studying. Part-time work may be an option for overworked employees that need time off to tend to family matters, or to reduce the likelihood of psychological consequences. Hein (2005) reported that the progressive decrease of daily hours of work and the reduction of overtime are general measures for improving working conditions and the quality of working life. Part-time work can be beneficial to employees who feel they have been absent in their family members' lives such that they can establish a better connection with them. Individuals who work and are committed to family are more likely to be satisfied and committed to both organization and family work (Perrone, Aegisdottir, Webb & Blalock, 2006).

Alternative work location

Alternative work location is referred to as a work week of fewer than 5 days and flexibility to take time off without pay for hours not physically at work. Eaton (2003) also found that work/family policies were more important to employees where supervisors allowed more flexibility than the formally provided policies by the employer, such as annual leave and sick leave. Research by Casper *et al.,* (2004) showed that supervisors generally had poor awareness of work-life practices especially alternative work location in their organization, and this influenced their ability to refer employees to these practices. Research has also demonstrated that factors completely unrelated to employees' requests to use work-life practices can have a profound influence on the likelihood of those requests being granted. For example, female managers are more likely than male managers to grant requests for alternative work arrangements (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Alternative work location is said to favor parents who would rather work at home rather than in the office, such that they can be close to family members or children.

Work-life Support Programs

Work-life support programs are designed to diagnose the interaction between people's home and working lives and to offer confidential counseling to staff to address personal or other

problems, including work-related stress that may be affecting their performance and organizational commitment (Clemmet, 1998). Examples of work-life support programs included providing support in the areas of personal issues, relationship issues, eldercare, childcare, parenting issues, harassment, substance abuse, job stress, balancing work and family, financial or legal and family violence. Butt at el., (2007) reported that Work-life support programs are important in improving employee mental and physical well-being so that they have better performance at work and enhanced job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention.

Childcare centers

A number of studies have established that employees who benefit from childcare centers, referral services and other family supportive practices report higher levels of organizational commitment (Roehling *et al.,* 2001; Houstone & Waumsley, 2003). Availability of work-life balance practices appears to produce similarly positive results in terms of work-related attitudes. For example, the availability of organizational resources, including childcare centers, has been linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for women and employees with family responsibilities, regardless of whether or not these resources are being used (Roehling *et al.,* 2001). Also, Roehling *et al.,* (2001) found in a representative sample of 3,381 American employees that the presence of flexible time policies and childcare assistance programs was associated with employee loyalty for those with family responsibilities. A number of studies have found employees who benefit from childcare Centre's, referral services and other family-supportive practices report higher levels of commitment to the organization (Houstone & Waumsley, 2003).

Counseling services

Counseling is advantageous to workers who have problems with work family care conflict. This program can help to reduce psychological strain. Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach (2001) study on

effects of counseling on work-life balance showed 83 percent of individuals to find this method helpful in their lives. Watt (2004), recognized counseling as an effective program which developed the intellectual capital of leading organizations. Mentoring helps Human Capital to develop their knowledge, skills and behavior to fit into their role. Counseling is the most effective in improving the commitment of the employees. Valentine (2004) attempted to determine whether corporate employment counseling could enhance employees' beliefs about organizational ethics. The results supported for the notion that counseling is positively related to perceived corporate ethical values.

Managerial Support

Managerial support may moderate the link between work-life balance practice provision and employee commitment Casper e*t al.,* (2004). If management is unsupportive of employees' efforts to balance work and family/personal responsibilities, and workers anticipate career penalties should they make use of the available practices, organizations may find that perceptions of management support are not enhanced and outcomes such as improved citizenship behavior and organizational performance are thus unrealized. Fear of harming their career prospects may discourage employees from using the work-life practices on offer, which in turn may nullify some of the intended beneficial effects of those practices.

It has been argued for some time that managers play an important role in the success of work-life programs because they make significant choices regarding the adoption of workplace practices Lingard and Lin (2003) and are therefore in a position to actively encourage or discourage employees' practicing. Where management support the integration of paid work and family responsibilities, employees will be more likely to take up available work-life programs. The argument that managerial support assist to explain work-life policy utilization rates is well supported by many researchers. Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness

(1999) concluded that managerial support on a daily basis may be the most important variable in employees' decisions to use family-friendly benefits and programs. Lingard and Lin (2003) also found that employees whose managers supported their efforts to balance work and family responsibilities were less likely to experience work-family conflict. These findings which linked perceived family support by managers to reduced levels of work-life conflict was echoed in a study by (Allen, 2001; Beauregard & Henry, 2009) found a strong association between manager's support and family-supportive work environments in general.

Bardoel (2003) found that managerial factors such as perceived organizational benefits, organizational concerns, top management support, high-performance work systems and two work-family strategies of respect and integration, accounted for 28 percent of the variance in total number of work-family practices available in different organizations and 54 percent of variance in relation to accommodating work-family workplaces. Having a strong supportive management team has been reported to reduce the negative impacts of work-life conflict and increase on employee's commitment. O'Driscoll *et al.,* (2003) tested whether management support for employees' work-family balance moderated the relationship between work-family conflict and psychological strain. They found that, when work-to family interference is high, respondents who reported high levels of management suggestiveness experienced less psychological strain than those who reported low levels of supervisor suggestiveness.

Based on social exchange relationships, perceived managerial support refers to the perception of employees regarding their relationship with their manager and how well they can rely on the manager to care for their individual concerns (Hsu, 2011). Gagnon and Michael (2004) described perceived managerial support as "the degree to which an employee feels that they are supported by their managers." Managerial support may help employees reframe their work demands so they are

more manageable and enhance their coping skills (Bakker *et al.*, 2007; Beutell, 2010).Thus, managerial support has a significant effect on employees' well-being and commitment. Under social exchange relationships, employees are more likely to remain with an organization if they feel that their managers value their contributions and well-being, communicate well with them, and treat them with respect and recognition (Hsu, 2011). In other words, a high supervisory support climate produces a reciprocal relationship in which employees feel emotionally connected and obligated to "repay" their supervisor and/or organization by staying in the company (Hsu, 2011).

Sorensen (2008) compared the effect of perceived supervisor and coworker support on work attitudes and found that perceived supervisor support was more strongly related to job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention. By studying employees of high-tech firms and government agencies, McCallister (2003) examined the extent to which work environment variables (coworker support and supervisor support) and personality disposition variables (hardiness and negative affect) impact work stress and job satisfaction; results revealed that coworker support, supervisor support, hardiness, and negative affect all significantly influence work stress and job satisfaction.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is one of the most important factors that affect growth and productivity as well as a defining factor that shape human resource management (Padala, 2011). In general, employee commitment reflects a psychological state that characterizes the employees' relationship with the organization, which has implications for their decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization. Several studies have demonstrated that organizational commitment is a very important factor that influences job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, absenteeism, performance, and turnover (Lambert, 2006). Allen

and Meyer, (1996) categorized commitment in three dimensional concepts that include affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment.

Affective Commitment

The affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, as well as an individual's identification with and involvement in the organization (Lambert, 2006). Accordingly, employees with a strong affective commitment are said to continue working for the organization because they want to do so. Many researches show that affective commitment has the strongest and most consistent relationship with retention, attendance, and performance (Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment has been reported to be positively correlated with job redesign, employee empowerment, and self-determination. Study by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, (2002) reveal that affective commitment is the most important component of organizational commitment in predicting turnover intentions, which implies that organizations interested in reducing turnover behavior can do so by fostering affective commitment in the work place. Consequently, other studies have found a positive and significant correlation between affective commitment and job satisfaction and recommend that the management should consider policies that increase job satisfaction to reduce turnover intentions.

Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment refers to an employee's perception that there are costs associated with them leaving the organization thus, employees whose primary link to the organization is based on this component remain with the organization because they believe they need to do so (Allen & Meyer 1996). Continuance commitment develops from actions which are taken by the management to the employees. Examples of continuance commitment elements are investments, something valuable an employee would lose if he/she leaves the organization. Unlike affective commitment, most research on continuance commitment suggests that employees showing strong continuance commitment may be poor performers, engage in fewer organizational citizenship behaviors, and exhibit more dysfunctional behaviors, relative to those with weak continuance commitment (Meyer et al., 2002).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment refers to the feelings by employees of their obligation to remain with an organization because of their belief that it is the right thing to do (Meyer & Allen, 1996). Normative form of commitment might be developed through conditioning such as rewards and punishments or through observation and imitation, where individuals learn from their family, culture, or the organization. Normative commitment can also be from the investments that an organization makes in an individual which might be perceived as difficult for the individual to repay (Meyer et al., 2002). Employees view such imbalance uncomfortable and choose to remain working for the organization out of a sense of obligation (Meyer et al., 2002).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Work-life balance has been a major topic of research at the organizational and academic circles. Numerous studies have been done on the influence of work-life balance and employee's commitment. Virick, Lilly and Casper (2007) study on layoff survivors in a high tech company found that work-life balance is positively related to job satisfaction and commitment. Casper and Harris (2008) study on the impact of work-life practice availability on organizational found that availability of work-life practices had a positive relationship with commitment among women. When use of flexible schedules was low, the availability of this practice was negatively related to commitment. Similarly, Butts, Ng, Vandenberg, Dejoy, and Wilson (2007) found that for men, the availability of work-life practices was associated with higher employee commitment only when perceived organizational support was high. For women, there was a positive

link between practices and commitment regardless of levels of perceived organizational support.

In McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley, and Shakespeare-Finch's (2005) qualitative study of employed women with dependent children, several of the participants in the study stated that without access to flexible working hours, they would not continue to work full-time. The availability of flexible working hours improved commitment and retention among new employed mother, (Glass & Riley's, 1998). Studies have also shown that as levels of flexibility in terms of working hour's decrease, turnover intentions are raised in most organizations (Rothausen, 1994).

Duxbury and Higgins (2001) in examining the effects of three types of work family conflict (role overload, work-family interference and family-work interference) on organizational commitment. It was found that work-life conflict had a negative impact on organizational commitment of employees. Employees who are overloaded or whose work interfered with family (vice-versa) were highly stressed, experienced burnout, expressed dissatisfaction with life, and were in poor mental/physical health. Rogier and Padgett (2004) conducted an experimental study among 107 working MBA students, participants were given a packet of materials designed to simulate the personnel file of a female employee in an accounting firm who was seeking a promotion to senior manager. They found that participants perceived the job candidate who was using flexible work hours as being less committed to her job, less suitable for advancement, less ambitious, and less desirous of advancement, despite no differences in her perceived capability compared to a candidate not using a flexible schedule. The finding was similar to Cohen and Single (2001) whose research showed that accountants working flexible schedules were perceived to be less likely to be promoted and more likely to leave the firm.

Many researchers have suggested that employers providing work-life benefits such as flexibility policies gain the rewards of higher employee commitment (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Many employers provide work-family policies to employees in order to increase their loyalty and encourage work effort (Konrad &Mangel, 2000). There are other more tangible benefits such as the reduction of absenteeism, lower stress levels, higher levels of productivity and performance, and greater quality of life, satisfaction and commitment among employees (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Carrasquer & Martı´n, 2005; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). WLB practices are considered as crucial for retaining and attracting highly qualified professionals (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). Several studies also found that these positive behavioral outcomes on employees when they use WLB. For instance Scandura and Lankau (1997) showed that availability of WLB measures increases job satisfaction on employees.

Interference between work and non-work responsibilities has a number of negative. In terms of job attitudes, employees reporting high levels of both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict tend to exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Turner, Lingard and Francis, 2009; Lingard & Francis, (2004). Behavioural outcomes include reduced work effort, reduced performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover (Tanacoody et al., 2009; Beauregard, 2006). Both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict have also been associated with increased stress and burnout (Turner et al., 2009; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007; Lambert, 2006), cognitive difficulties such as staying awake, lack of concentration at work, and low alertness (Chandola*et al.,* 2004). While the majority of work-life balance research focuses on employees' family responsibilities, there are also a number of studies that recognize commitments to friends and community groups, expanding the affected population to virtually all employees (Beauregard, 2006; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001).

Critique of Existing Literature
A review of some of the literature questions the supposed link between work-life balance practices and employees' commitment. The majority of

studies investigating work-life practices doesn't measure work-life conflict and its role on organizational commitment and thus cannot support this proposed refereed relationship (Ebby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). The mechanisms by which the provision of work-life practices affects both employee behavior and organizational commitment remain unclear and under researched in many organizations.

Beutell (2010) on examining the effect of work schedules on work-family conflict and synergy using the job demands-resources (JD-R) and conservation of resources models. Although the data came from a well-conducted national probability sample, all of the measures were self-reports collected during one interview. Such self-report, cross-sectional designs tend to inflate correlations and they lack the ability to make causal inferences, including the direction of possible causality. Also, cross-sectional designs based on self-report measures do not afford the ability to rule out the fact that measured constructs share a common cause. Thus, a portion of the variance in any observed relation is likely to be spurious. Some of the findings, while statistically significant, do not account for much variance. Finally, a number of the study variables (e.g. work schedule, work schedule control) were based on one-item scale.

A study by Wickramasinghe (2012) on examining the moderating effect of supervisor support on the relationship between work schedule flexibility and job stress, the sample used was confined to a considerably large homogeneous sample of software developers attached to offshore outsourced software development firms that offered three types of work schedule flexibility as a standard employee benefit. However, it should be acknowledged that detailed descriptions of the nature of flexible work schedules that prevail in the firms were not pooled from the respondents, and the availability of the three types of work schedule flexibility was identified by contacting the person responsible for people management in these firms. Hence, the difficulties of describing the sample

characteristics by the nature of flexible work schedules have to be acknowledged. If the sample was selected from different industrial and service sectors, findings would have become more generalizable. Further, the study was limited to investigate the moderating effect of supervisor support though there are other forms of social support such as co-worker that could also influence job stress. Finally, the validity of the measures used in this study and generalizability of the findings cannot be truly established on the basis of a single cross-sectional study. The validation of a measure requires the assessment of measurement properties over a variety of samples in similar and different contexts.

In a comparative study of companies' involved with work-life balance practices and policies in 14 European countries and in testing whether these practices actually enhance the career advancement of women to senior management positions Straub (2007) sample for the study was based on the best company competition where firms were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. The study analyzed companies that were nominated as the best companies to work for in terms of work climate in each European country. Therefore, conclusions should have been drawn for similar types of companies. A consequence of this sampling procedure is small variances in the independent and dependent variable; only a certain kind of company was selected. Nevertheless, companies in the sample differ in company size and represent different sectors. Secondly, the study uses cross-sectional data, which limits the possibility of testing for causal linkages. The study did not assess when the practices were introduced and which women actually make use of them. This is essential if one is to correctly infer the role played by work-life balance practices in advancing women's careers. Future research should overcome this limitation by applying a longitudinal design. Moreover, a wider sample should be used for hypothesis testing.

In their study of organizational culture and the use of work–life balance initiatives in Australian

university Webber, Sarrisand Bessell (2010) study raises several questions that should be considered when reviewing the results. First, the study design was cross-sectional in nature, with data being collected at one point in time. Although this provides important information on relationships between variables, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about cause and effect. The use of a single university in the study may also limit the generalizability of the results, although it is likely that these results are relevant to other universities nationally and internationally. Another possible short coming of this study is the composition of the sample. Although the study was widely disseminated throughout the whole of the university, the majority of participants were women employees. One explanation for this relates to the study's methodology. The study was promoted to two women's network forums within the university, which is likely to have influenced the high response rate by women employees. An alternative explanation is that participation of more women in this study may be related to the extent to which WLB is viewed as an issue of greater concern to women, resulting in a lower response rate by men in this study.

Finally, in terms of the relationship between managerial support and WLB, results need to be interpreted cautiously, taking into account effect sizes. In addition, the response scale used in the WLB initiative could also be viewed as a limitation of the study due to the limited response options of *Yes*, *No* or *Unaware*. For example, some respondents (e.g., those with no dependants) may have answered 'No' to WLB initiative use because they perceived the initiatives as 'not relevant'. Alternatively, some respondents may intend to use the initiatives in the future but have not needed them over the past 12 months. These alternatives would have been reported more accurately if a broader range of response options had been utilized.

An empirical study by (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2012) on determining the level of awareness and implementation of family-responsible parameters: policies, enablers, practices, and culture, in Spanish and Latin-American companies, and how they impact work-life balance. Their research had some short coming. One is the use of survey-based data that, to an extent, limits insight into causal relationships. Qualitative and longitudinal studies are needed in order to clarify motives for individual and organizational decisions regarding work-life initiatives. Another limitation is that data was collected from one source only: in this case, employer management. Multi-source studies must follow. A third inadequacy is that the majority of companies that participated in the study were private. Studies that include the public sector will enrich the scenario and probably allow different elements, not previously considered, to emerge.

A study by Makela, Suutari and Mayerhofer (2011) on female expatriates' work-life conflicts and enrichments which take place during the international engagement, a total of 20 interviews were carried out with female expatriates. The qualitative approach and the number of participants limited the opportunity for generalization. Second, all of the females in our dataset are Finnish and represent a rather homogeneous educational background. Findings might thus be different if respondents with other national or educational backgrounds had been interviewed.

Earlier studies treat different work-life balance configurations as a single construct. The study by Hyland *et al.,* (2005) used a questionnaire to investigate the effects of flexible work arrangements (flextime, compressed workweek, and telework) on performance and affective commitment, but they did not differentiate between various telework options the workers used. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) report their meta-analysis of work-life balance, indicating that "home" was the primary location for telecommuting in many of the studies they included in their analysis, other telework options were not

considered separately. These studies appear to implicitly assume that all work-life options have the same impact on the organizational commitment of employees.

Research Gaps

From the review of literature, a number of research gaps have been identified for analysis and future research in the field of work-life balance. An exploratory study by Turner, Lingard and Francis, (2009) on work-life balance supports barriers in construction project in Australia it was suggested that future research should test the hypothesis that collaborative contracting leads to better WLB outcomes compared with traditional contracting, as well examining whether perceptions of equity moderate the relationship between job demands and work-life conflict in construction projects. Particular attention should be paid in future research to the implications of workload and resourcing changes at the transition between project life cycle stages. Another important area for further investigation should be the impact of unexpected events in projects, and the impact of resource leveling practices on workload and WLB.

A study by Sidin *et al.,* (2010) on examining relationship between work-family conflict and quality of life had some limitations. The study had entirely relied on cross-sectional data instead of longitudinal and experimental. The sample elements were derived from Klang Valley, a small industrialized area in Malaysia which included all the three ethnic groups in Malaysia and therefore, the sample elements were not from a homogeneous group. It had also considered only supervisor and spouse supports instead f co-workers, friends, and community support.

A study by Dikkers, Engen and Vinkenburg (2010) on how gender and ambition are related to work hours and the utilization of other flexible work-home arrangements suggested that future research should collect dyadic data from both partners, as also recommended by Barnett *et al.,* (2009). Only by using such a multi-source design we can perform a more fine-grained analysis on the impact of

different constellations of work and care between mothers and fathers (e.g., the one-and-a-half income model versus the more traditional male breadwinner model, and the model in which both parents work full time) on their level of ambition, utilization of work-home arrangements and career success. Therefore, it was important for future researchers to examine associations of ambition, work-home arrangements, and career-related outcomes with a longitudinal design comprised of at least three measurement points.

A study by Makela*et al.,* (2011), on Lives of female expatriates and work-life balance concerns had several gaps for future research. The balance between female expatriates' work and private lives is a complex phenomenon and merits more attention. Comparison of experiences of WLB between genders is needed in order to build an in-depth view of the phenomenon. For instance, social cognitive career theory may well be suitable to study the kinds of support available in the environment (Lent, Brown, &Hacket, 2000; Tharenou, 2008) and could also be helpful when studying WLB issues. Further studies concerning WLB issues and how those affects, for instance, work performance and effectiveness is also needed (Selmer &Lauring, 2010). This may also lead to questioning whether the female expatriates' occupations, locations or income level are somehow different from those of their male counterparts, and if so, why? Furthermore, additional studies are needed to focus on the effects of the different life and career stages of female managers.

Survey by Virick *et al.,* (2007) on work-life balance among layoff survivors, suggested that future research might examine whether increased job responsibilities survivors take on after a layoff result in true job enrichment or merely job enlargement. This is an important consideration, given research suggesting that job enrichment is related to motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Tharenou, 2008). Still, future research which explores the phenomena examined

in the current study with longitudinal designs should facilitate greater confidence in the true magnitudes of the relationships and allow exploration of causal relationships. To discern whether the relationships explored in the study were truly due to the post-layoff environment, future research should include a control group of employees who have not experienced a layoff and collect data from both control and layoff survivor groups over time, before, during and after layoffs are conducted. Accordingly, future research is needed to replicate these findings within distinct samples, particularly among employees in non-professional occupations. Findings suggest that high workloads experienced by layoff survivors do contribute to reduced job and life satisfaction through reduced work-life balance as a mediating mechanism. Future research should determine whether these findings generalize to diverse layoff survivors in distinct industries, and assess whether these phenomena change over time.

Vidal, Leiva and Navarro (2012) study on the Gaps between managers' and employees' perceptions of work–life balance suggested that it would be interesting for future research to examine the differences in perception gaps between categories of employees, using a larger sample. Future studies should address other possible effects of knowledge gaps inside companies such as organizational results or employee outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, turnover intentions or citizenship behaviour. The shortcoming of the current research should be addressed in future studies. For example, one line of research would be to develop a longitudinal study that examines the changes in the variables of the study over time, particularly if some recommendations given in this article are taken into account by the managers of the firms. Another interesting line of research would be to examine other predictors of employees' use of WLB practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this study was that a well-balanced work-life work environment has a positive impact on employee commitment. The study found among others that unmarried employees balanced their work and family roles better than their married counterparts. Women also experienced more work-life conflict than men. There was a weak positive relationship between work-life balance and commitment among employees because they were not satisfied with paternity leave, study leave, and part-time work. The study concluded that work-life balance policies did not influence employee commitment that much. It was therefore recommended that employees in state commissions should benefit from paternity leave, study leave and part-timework to enhance work-life balance. Additionally, there's need to sensitize civil servants on how to balance their work and social responsibilities in order to manage both domains and perform efficiently and effectively at the workplace. The commission should establish effective flexible work schedules to enable employees attend to work and personal matters. This would improve the performance of the employees as they would be able to have better working measures. Formulation and adjustment of policies and mechanisms should be implemented to accommodate work life balance to enhance employee commitment. Employees should be given adequate resources, facilities, training autonomy, and responsibility to strengthen their commitment with their organization and performance.

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