

PSIWORLD 2012

Marital Status and Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

In an increasingly busy and hectic society downsizing can either lead to more time and effort dedicated to profession in order to keep the current position or less involvement in work in favour of personal life, thus leaving the possibility to have a job to chance. This study examined whether marital status has an impact on work-life balance so that the organizations can conceive and implement proper motivational policies. The findings show that the four categories of employees included in the research (unmarried, married without children, married with children under 18, married with children over 18) do not have a significantly different level of work-life balance. New insights into the relationship between marital status and work-life balance are provided.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of PSIWORLD 2012

Keywords: marital status; work-life balance; quality time dedicated to family; motivational policies;

1. Introduction

In today's society the idea of managing a stressful job and also dedicating quality time to family is definitely becoming a major challenge. More and more women have managerial jobs. Even so, they want to have happy private lives as well and do their best in order to succeed in both domains of life: professional and personal.

Even if it has been predominantly viewed as women's problem, especially of those who are in corporate employment and have family obligations (Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Hardy and Adnett, 2002; Felstead et al., 2002), work-life balance represents an issue of prime concern for working men too. Data suggests that in the families where childcare is shared men are likely to experience similar levels of work-life conflict as women (Duxbury and Higgins, 2008).

According to Duxbury and Higgins (2008), a large body of research links the parental responsibilities of working couples to the incidence of work-family conflict. Because they have more demands and less control over

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their time, parents seem to encounter more difficulties in balancing work and non-work activities than non-parents. Similar results are reported by Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996). They found that parent employees exhibit significantly higher levels of conflict between work and family/personal life than non-parents. The transition to parenthood appears to be a period characterized by an increased level of stress (Owen and Cox, 1988), in which significant changes in the couple's relationship, responsibilities and preoccupations take place (Belsky and Pensky, 1988; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Feldman, 2000).

The way women and men juggle their paid work with their household and caring responsibilities is a topic that requires even more attention when considering the negative consequences of work-family conflict.

As previous studies indicate, work-related effects include job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intention and stress (Anderson, Coffey and Byerly, 2002). A high level of work-family conflict seems to be correlated with a low organizational commitment as well (O'Driscoll, Ilgen and Hildreth, 1992).

With regard to family-related effects, the findings show that work-family conflict leads to a decrease in family satisfaction (Frone, Barnes and Farrell, 1994; Aryee et al., 1999; Burke and Greenglass, 1999; Carlson and Kacmar, 2000), parental overload, delays and absenteeism in family, a poor performance in family roles and a lack of family member support (Adams et al., 1996; Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997).

European documents speak often about supporting employees to reconcile work and family life. Family-friendly programmes are well-known and implemented in western societies. Yet, they fail to be understood by local organizations in Eastern Europe. As data suggests, a rigid organizational culture, focused mainly on performance and disregarding employees' needs can create a stressful climate which in turn constitutes a determinant for a high conflict between quality family time and job performance (Aryee, 1992).

There is no doubt that the employers play a major role in managing this conflict and creating a family-friendly organizational culture which promotes flexible work schedules, access to chreches, kindergartens or after-school and career management programmes would prove to be a useful solution. Yet, in order to lead to positive results this kind of measures should be addressed to a wider variety of employees.

Balancing work and non-work demands is an issue that pertains to all individuals who are in paid work, regardless of whether they have family responsibilities or not (Dex and Scheibl, 2001; Fu and Shaffer, 2001; Rotondo et al., 2003). It becomes clear that the employees who live within a family structure that does not include children (Waumsley, Houston and Marks, 2010) or those who are not married yet (Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2008) can experience a low level of work-life balance too and need to be taken into consideration when conceiving and implementing initiatives that promote flexibility in the workplace.

In order to reduce inequity, the differences between all these categories of employed persons (unmarried, married without children, married with -minor or major- children) in terms of work-life balance were addressed in this study. Thus the extent to which each one of them needs to benefit from work-life balance programmes could be identified.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objective

The aim of the present study was to examine the impact of marital status on work-life balance.

2.2. Hypotheses

The study was based on the following general hypothesis: Employees' level of work-life balance varies depending on their marital status.

Therefore the following operational hypotheses were formulated:

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