

Work life balance



According to Simonetta Manfredi and Michelle Holliday's research (2004), the topic about work-life balance is popular among people since the beginning of a major UK campaign in 2000 (Changing Patterns in a Changing World, DFEE, 2000). What does the "work-life balance" mean? According to the explanation of Eurofound Website (2009), work life balance refers to "a state of equilibrium between an individual's work and personal life".

But the Economic Times website (2013) think that work-life balance does not mean an absolutely equal balance of time, because it is impossible for a person to separate a day equally into both work and personal activities. While the fact in terms of work-life balance is that people are encountering the imbalance between work and life every day, contributing to health problems.

Therefore, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is of importance because the imbalance between work and life may lead to stress that finally will result in illness in terms of both physical and psychological aspects. The best way of reaching the balance is to increase the efficiency of daily work. This essay will focus on a healthy work-life balance, introducing the content of work-life balance firstly and will give an example about imbalance . Next, it will explain how the imbalance influence people's health by stress in physical and mental aspects .

The final part is the summary to support these statements and the view throughout the whole research essay. According to Robert Taylor (2001), work-life balance is the existent relationship between the paid work and the lives people own without their jobs. Simonetta Manfredi and Michelle Holliday's research (2004) suggests that the hardcore of work-life balance

depend on the theory that “ paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life”.

The innovation of the concept is in order to encourage people to “ adopt flexible working arrangements such as job sharing, flexible time, compressed hours and others, to help their employees to achieve a better balance between the demands of paid employment and those arising from their private life”. For the purpose of reaching this goal, people should adopt an approach that is “ conceptualized as a two way process involving a consideration of the needs of employees as well as those of employers”(Lewis, 2000: p. 105).

And OECD’s calculation about Table “ Correlation between different indicators of work-life balance”(2011) indicates that work-life balance can be related to some social status and concerned topics as follows: working time, time in leisure and personal care, satisfaction with jobs, family as well as social contacts and hobbies, among which, personal care about health or wellbeing, among which wellbeing is an essential factor for work-life balance. What stop the steps of human beings searching for a healthy work-life balance and wellbeing?

It is reported by OECD (2011) that “ the average person works 1 749 hours a year and devotes 62% of the day”. And according to Guardian website (2011), the mean of working time in the United Kingdom is 42. 7 hours a week for full-time workers, and the situation of people in Australia and Greece is much worse in comparison. And according to ONS, 24% growth in part-time working in 1992 has been replaced by 27% increase in 2011

around the Europe from 38. 1 hours in 1992 to 36. 3 hours in 2011 (the Guardian Website, 2011).

These data depict the fact that over-work exist in many countries and it has become a serious problem that every employee is encountering nowadays. For instance, Karoshi, which is from the literal translation from Japanese, means " death from overwork"(Katsuo Nishiyama, 1997)and it belongs to the range of social medicine (Okudaira, M. (2004). It has been proved by a recognized professional scholar of the Epidemic of karoshi whose name is called Oshinori Hasegawa that most patients of karoshi were managers who spend too much time on their work.

And in Japan, people have gotten a common view that the numerical quantity of working hours is one of potential reasons for karoshi(Katsuo Nishiyama, 1997). Karoshi, to some extent, illustrates a usual and serious problem related to human being's health, namely the imbalance between work and life. But Karoshi is only one of various patterns of presentation about health issues due to work. Office workers stare at the computer as much as at least eight hours a day, maintain the same posture for a long time, and because of lack of exercise, people are suffering from the bitter from occupational disease.

According to W. Gilman Thompson, M. D. (1914), occupation's producing also produce the largest number of victims who have chronic poisoning. Mukesh Sharma and P. K. Majumdar (2009) suggest that it depends on their way of living or their occupational habits. Whereas, the probability of happening about illness can be avoided by changing the content of daily diet, the way people live, and the environment.

The main elements of occupational diseases mainly contain “ bad food habits, physical inactivity, wrong body posture, and disturbed biological clock”. (ibid.) According to ILO List of Occupational Diseases (revised 2010), diseases from work include: “ occupational diseases caused by exposure to agents arising from work activities, Occupational diseases by target organ systems such as Respiratory diseases, Skin diseases, Musculoskeletal disorders, Mental and behavioural disorders, Occupational cancer”.

A series of the diseases listed originate from work, because the imbalance of work and life cultivate people some unhealthy behavior, and work takes account of large part of time, this kind of lifestyle leaves people less time for a rest to release pressure, finally the imbalance between work and life resulting in the imbalance of body situation. The final outcome of Imbalance between work and life is illness. And wellbeing can be classified into psychological wellbeing and physical wellbeing. According to Robert Taylor (2001), over-work is considered as the mainly reason for the growth of ill health in both aspects.

Under the pressure from social competition, males and females are forced to work constantly and finish their task at much more nervous pace and then all kinds of stress come. Stress is an extremely difficult problem in the modern workplace not only for managers but also for staff or workers. Overwork breaks the balance and finally lead to stress and illness. There are hundreds of problems about work and life that need people to cope with, and the invisible and potential stress is always surrounded in either workplaces or home.

Stress can be defined as “ an unpleasant state”, and the main reason of stress is “ insufficient control” in terms of our personal actions. Stress is also a very “ unpleasant phenomenon in itself”, the passive results of stress for employees themselves will lead to limited creativity and restraint the development of individuals, lack of motivation and satisfaction, inefficiency, diminishing quality of life and work as well as personal wellbeing, and different kinds of physical and mental complaints that may result in premature death. (Marc Schabracq, 2001, p. 4) Does stress really have enormously negative effects?

According to the increase in the number of article about stress in academic journals that can be found in the Psychological Abstracts over the last 25 years, it shows that stress has become a social problem that can cause strong repercussions: the number of articles that research in stress was less than 250 in 1974, then the number presented a dramatic increasing trend still remained at high levels in 1999. (Jones & Bright, 2001) Overwork not only bring about stress to effect human’s health, it can also have negative influences on health according to the interaction with family. According to Dr.

Graeme Russell and Lyndy Bowman’s report (2000) about the influence of work on family strength and wellbeing, it suggests that “ Characteristics of the workplace and society “ can impact on the “ strength and wellbeing of workers’ families”. The objectives of the survey are the group of people with full-time work, the workforce of underemployed part-timers who want to work more and obtain higher salary, and overworked full-timers who are in

the status of imbalance between work and life. Survey data show that full-time workers show a decline in satisfaction with work and family balance.

Moreover, this satisfaction contains the insecurity from job. It shows that job insecurity is especially obvious and will have a major impact on stress levels experienced in families. The report also concentrates on family life associated with time spending on children and the differences between parents. So stress not only come from work, it can also be connected with family. Employed mothers are more responsibility for children. Therefore, Managing work and family responsibilities can often, and very difficult for mothers in dual income families.

So the negative emotion or stress from work is continuing to affect the families, which forms the vicious circle from imbalance of work and life. In conclusion, the role of sustainable work-life balance is extremely necessary because the imbalance between work and life mainly comes from overwork, and overwork lead to stress that finally will result in illness in terms of both physical and psychological aspects. Therefore, the best way of reaching the balance is to increase the efficiency of daily work.

If people could improve the balance between the demands of their work and the demands of their home, start the first step from keeping healthy, they would be more satisfied with their life. Therefore, people should learn to arrange their work and personal life by reasonable distribution. Bibliography Eurofound Website (2009). Work-life balance. Retrieved May 20th, 2013 from <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/worklifebalance.htm> Jones,

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