

The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Mental Health: A Management Psychology Perspective

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Keywords: Work-life balance, mental health, management psychology, work-family conflict

Abstract: This article explores the impact of work-life balance on employee mental health from a management psychology perspective. By analyzing the Work-Family Conflict Theory and the Conservation of Resources Theory, the article explains the mechanisms behind work-life conflicts and their negative effects on employee mental health. Furthermore, the article discusses the positive effects of work-life balance, such as increasing job satisfaction and improving employee emotional well-being. The article also proposes strategies for promoting balance, including organizational policies, leader support, and individual coping mechanisms, aiming to provide effective management and adjustment methods for both businesses and employees to enhance employee mental health and overall well-being.

1. Theoretical Framework of Work-Life Balance

1.1 Key Theories of Work-Life Balance

1) Work-Family Conflict Theory

Work-family conflict (WFC) theory is one of the core theories in the study of work-life balance. This theory posits that work and family are in competition for time, energy, and roles, and when work and family demands cannot be balanced, conflict arises. There are two main types of work-family conflict: work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.

The work-family conflict theory suggests that employees face conflicts between the demands and expectations of work and family roles, which may prevent them from dedicating enough time and energy to either role^[1]. Work pressure, long working hours, and uncertain job tasks are often the primary sources of work-family conflict. This conflict not only affects employees' emotional states but also their overall mental health. For example, excessive work pressure can lead to anxiety, fatigue, and other psychological issues, while pressure from family responsibilities may cause feelings of guilt and unease.

This theory highlights the contradictions and conflicts between work and family roles and emphasizes the need for employees to find a balance between the two. Over-demanding work may encroach on family time, while family responsibilities may interfere with work. Achieving balance

between these two aspects is the core issue of work-family conflict theory.

2) Conservation of Resources Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, proposed by Hobfoll, argues that an individual's mental health is closely related to the resources they possess, and individuals strive to preserve and accumulate these resources. Resources refer not only to material possessions but also to intangible resources such as time, energy, social support, and emotional support. When an individual's resources are depleted or insufficiently supported, their mental health is threatened, which may lead to anxiety, stress, burnout, and other issues.

In the context of work-life balance, the COR theory emphasizes that employees' resources may compete with each other between work and life. When employees invest excessive time and energy in work, their personal time and energy resources may be squeezed, affecting the quality of family life, thus leading to work-family conflict. Moreover, when employees face work and life pressures but lack adequate social support or effective time management strategies, their mental health may suffer, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems.

The COR theory also points out that the key to work-life balance lies in the effective management of resources. If employees can manage their time effectively, seek social support, and plan their work tasks reasonably, they can better maintain and accumulate their psychological resources, thus mitigating the negative effects of work-life conflict.

1.2. Theoretical Basis of Mental Health

1) Definition and Components of Mental Health

Mental health refers to an individual's well-being in psychological and emotional aspects, the ability to effectively cope with life's challenges, maintain emotional stability, and possess good self-awareness and adaptability. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is not just the absence of mental illness but is also about the overall development of individuals in emotional, cognitive, and social functions. The main components of mental health include:

Emotional Stability: Mentally healthy individuals can maintain emotional stability when faced with life's pressures and challenges, avoiding excessive emotional fluctuations.

Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance: Mentally healthy individuals have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, can accept their imperfections, and maintain a positive self-identity.

Social Adaptability: Mentally healthy individuals can adapt to different environments and interpersonal relationships, and handle various role conflicts in work, family, and social life.

Stress Coping Ability: Mentally healthy individuals can adopt positive coping strategies when facing work or life pressures, preventing the accumulation of stress and its transformation into negative emotions.

These components of mental health indicate that good mental health is not just about emotional stability but also an individual's ability to adapt to social environments and cope with life pressures. Based on this, achieving work-life balance helps employees find the right balance between work and family, avoiding the negative impact on mental health caused by overwork or excessive family responsibilities.

2) Factors Affecting Mental Health

Mental health is influenced by various factors, and work-life balance is an important one. The main factors affecting mental health include:

Work Environment: The work environment directly affects employees' mental health. High-intensity work pressure, unreasonable work schedules, and a lack of supportive work environments often lead to mental health issues. Conversely, a supportive work environment can help employees alleviate stress and improve emotional stability and job satisfaction.

Family Support: Family is a crucial support system for work-life balance. Family support provides

emotional comfort and practical help in daily life, alleviating work pressure and enhancing employees' psychological resilience. Employees who lack family support often face greater mental pressure, which may lead to emotional problems or work burnout^[2].

Social Support: In addition to family support, social support from colleagues, friends, and the community is also an important factor affecting employees' mental health. Social support can provide emotional solace and help employees cope with challenges in both work and life, reducing feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

Personal Adaptability: Employees' personal psychological resilience and coping strategies also impact their mental health. Employees with higher psychological resilience are better able to cope with work pressure and life conflicts, maintaining a good mental health state.

2. The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Mental Health

2.1. Positive Impacts

1) Improvement in Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the sense of fulfillment, accomplishment, and overall perception of the work environment that employees experience. Work-life balance plays a direct and indirect positive role in enhancing job satisfaction. When employees can effectively coordinate their work and personal lives, they are more likely to feel that they have enough time to manage personal affairs, which reduces anxiety and stress at work, and thus improves engagement and participation in their job.

Achieving work-life balance allows employees to feel that both work and life demands are adequately met, reducing feelings of frustration and depression that may arise from neglecting personal life. By allocating time appropriately, employees can engage in activities they enjoy, increasing their sense of self-efficacy and motivation at work. This positive feedback loop can effectively enhance job satisfaction and promote better mental health.

2) Improvement in Employee Emotional and Psychological State

Work-life balance has a positive impact on employees' emotional and psychological well-being. A healthy balance can reduce anxiety, depression, and emotional fluctuations caused by overwork. Conflicts between work and life often lead to feelings of emotional suppression and fatigue, and prolonged exposure to such conditions can lead to a range of psychological issues.

Conversely, when employees can effectively find a balance between work and life, they not only maintain a better emotional state but also enhance their ability to cope with stress. More importantly, having time to share joyful moments with family and friends helps improve mood, strengthens self-regulation abilities, and in turn, enhances mental health. Studies show that a healthy work-life balance can promote emotional stability, boost confidence and satisfaction, and enhance work engagement and overall happiness.

2.2. Negative Impacts

1) Psychological Pressure Due to Work-Life Imbalance

When working hours are excessive, work pressure is too high, or personal life is disrupted by work, conflicts between work and life can severely impact employee mental health. Employees may find it difficult to concentrate at work and unable to relax due to work pressure during personal time, leading to high levels of psychological tension^[3].

Work-life imbalance causes employees to feel that they have no control over their quality of life. Prolonged mental strain and anxiety accumulate, affecting both physical and mental health. Research indicates that excessive work hours and high expectations for work outcomes are primary factors contributing to employee psychological pressure. Excessive psychological stress can lead to a range

of physical and psychological issues, such as headaches, insomnia, emotional distress, and even more serious psychological disorders like depression and anxiety.

2) Increased Work Burnout and Anxiety

Work burnout refers to emotional exhaustion, loss of motivation, and decreased efficiency due to excessive work pressure, long working hours, and a lack of sufficient rest and self-adjustment. Work-life imbalance is often one of the root causes of burnout, especially when clear boundaries between work and life are lacking, leaving employees in a state of extreme fatigue and energy depletion.

Long-term burnout not only affects job performance but can also have deeper psychological consequences. Employees under constant work pressure may feel unable to cope with tasks, develop avoidance behaviors, and even experience anxiety and depression. Anxiety is another common negative impact, especially when the boundaries between work and life are blurred, leading to a highly unstable psychological state that fosters anxiety and impacts both physical health and family life.

2.3. Mechanisms and Pathways of Impact

1) Work Time Management

Effective work time management is the foundation for achieving work-life balance. A reasonable time schedule not only improves work efficiency but also helps employees allocate time effectively, avoiding neglecting personal life due to work demands. Time management enables employees to identify key tasks and set reasonable priorities, ensuring that work tasks are completed efficiently without delays or excessive energy consumption.

From a management psychology perspective, reasonable work time management not only boosts employee productivity but also reduces work-related stress and burnout. Employees can efficiently complete work while leaving enough time to take care of family, rest, and self-relaxation, thereby enhancing their mental health. On the contrary, employees who lack effective time management may experience work-life imbalance, leading to increased psychological pressure and anxiety.

2) Social Support and Corporate Culture

Social support, especially from colleagues, supervisors, family, and friends, is a crucial factor for maintaining good mental health in employees. In the workplace, a supportive culture and social support system can provide emotional relief and help with practical issues, reducing stress and effectively addressing work-life conflicts.

A “care culture” in corporate culture helps create an environment that supports employees, allowing them to work in a supportive atmosphere, alleviating stress and emotional issues caused by work. Additionally, companies can organize various employee care activities, such as mental health seminars, team-building events, and more, to enhance interaction and support among employees, creating a harmonious work environment that promotes employee mental health.

The existence of social support provides a buffer zone for employees to cope with difficulties, reducing their psychological burden when facing work-life conflicts. When employees feel supported by colleagues and leaders, they are more confident in balancing work and life and gain psychological comfort, which enhances their ability to self-regulate.

3. Strategies for Promoting Work-Life Balance from the Perspective of Management Psychology

3.1. Development of Corporate Policies and Systems

Corporate policies and systems are crucial factors influencing work-life balance. Reasonable policies and systems can provide more support for employees, helping them better balance work and life, thereby improving their mental health.

1) Flexible Work Arrangements and Remote Work

The implementation of flexible work arrangements and remote work can significantly improve employees' work-life balance. Modern businesses have recognized that traditional fixed work hours and workplaces no longer meet employees' diverse needs, especially after the pandemic, when remote work has been widely adopted. Flexible work arrangements allow employees to adjust their work hours according to their personal circumstances, which reduces the conflict between work and family life and increases employees' autonomy and satisfaction.

Moreover, remote work allows employees to work from home, reducing commuting time and related stress, and helping employees achieve a better balance between work and personal life. Research shows that remote work can improve job satisfaction, reduce fatigue and stress caused by commuting, and increase employees' work efficiency.

2) Mental Health Training and Support

Providing mental health training and support is an important strategy in corporate policies. Companies can regularly offer mental health seminars and training sessions to help employees recognize the importance of mental health and learn how to manage emotions, alleviate stress, and handle conflicts effectively. In addition, companies can establish counseling services to offer professional psychological support and help employees cope with psychological stress and challenges at work.

Mental health training and support in the workplace not only help employees improve their mental health but also enhance their psychological resilience, allowing them to better handle workplace stress and life challenges. This approach can increase employees' overall well-being and job satisfaction, further promoting work-life balance.

3.2. The Role and Behavior of Leaders

The behavior and management style of leaders significantly impact employees' mental health. A good leader can help employees achieve a better work-life balance through positive support and care, thus improving their mental health.

1) Supportive Leadership and Employee Mental Health

Supportive leadership refers to leaders who pay attention to employees' needs, offer emotional support and assistance, and foster employees' growth and development. Studies have shown that supportive leadership helps employees feel cared for and understood, which enhances their psychological sense of security and belonging, and reduces work-related stress and emotional distress.

When employees feel supported by their leaders, they are more likely to adjust their work-life balance because they know they can receive help and understanding. This leadership style not only boosts employees' motivation but also helps them cope with work-life conflicts with more confidence. Supportive leadership can significantly improve employees' mental health, reduce anxiety and stress, and increase job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

2) Leader's Psychological Support and Stress Management

Leaders play a crucial role in stress management. By listening to employees' concerns and providing psychological support, leaders can help employees alleviate stress. In high-pressure work environments, leaders can organize team activities or offer relaxation time to reduce employees' work stress.

Additionally, leaders should lead by example, demonstrating healthy work and life practices to avoid adding to employees' burdens. By establishing a positive and supportive work environment, leaders can guide employees to develop healthy work attitudes and lifestyles, promoting mental health and reducing work burnout caused by excessive stress.

3.3. Employees' Personal Coping Strategies

While businesses and leaders play important roles in promoting work-life balance, employees' personal coping strategies are equally crucial. Employees can adopt a range of self-management methods in their daily work and life to achieve a better work-life balance and maintain good mental health.

1) Time Management and Prioritization

Time management is a key tool for employees to effectively balance work and life. By properly organizing work and personal time, employees can reduce stress caused by lack of time. Effective time management includes setting clear work goals, prioritizing important tasks, and avoiding procrastination.

Employees also need to allocate sufficient time for personal life to avoid neglecting family and personal needs due to overworking. Through prioritization, employees can efficiently complete work while ensuring they have enough time to spend with family and friends, rest, and engage in recreational activities, thus achieving a good balance between work and life.

2) Optimizing Lifestyle and Enhancing Mental Health

Lifestyle choices directly impact employees' mental health. A healthy lifestyle, such as regular sleep, a balanced diet, and moderate exercise, can effectively alleviate stress and improve mental health. Employees should recognize that a good lifestyle is not only for physical health but also for enhancing psychological well-being.

For instance, regular physical exercise helps employees release work-related stress, improve mood, and enhance cognitive functions. Additionally, maintaining healthy eating habits and ensuring adequate sleep are important factors for maintaining mental health. By optimizing their lifestyle, employees can enhance their psychological resilience, reduce the negative impact of work stress, and promote work-life balance.

4. Conclusion

Work-life balance has a profound impact on employee mental health. Achieving a good balance not only reduces conflicts between work and family but also enhances employees' job satisfaction, emotional stability, and overall mental health. Management psychology provides significant theoretical support for understanding work-life balance and offers practical strategies for both businesses and individuals. Future research can further explore the impact of employee mental health in different cultural contexts and the optimization of management policies, with the aim of better promoting employee mental health in a globalized work environment.

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