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QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

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Abstract:
The modern way of life tends to push us to work more that we have used to, in this aspect it is very important for everyone to balance work and private life as much as possible. Modern pace of work is often affected by workplace violence, mostly verbal, psychological and in some cases also physical violence. Violence at the workplace is very hard to detect, especially when we are talking about psychological violence and verbal violence, though physical violence is easier to detect there is much less of it found at the workplace. Victims of workplace violence in most cases deny the existence of this violence since they are concerned what will happen if they disclose the violence. The reason for this is fairly simple in vast majority of workplace violence it is the violence of superiors toward employees. In this article we are trying to establish what are the effects of workplace violence on work-life balance? Through the online research we will gather opinions of interviewees regarding the occurrence of workplace violence and how do they feel that this affects their work-life balance. Research based on opinions is going to be conducted due to the fact that victims tend to avoid disclosing their cases of workplace violence, thus making it hard to investigate this phenomenon. We expect results to show that workplace violence impacts work-life balance in a significant way.

Keywords: work-life balance, workplace violence, quality of life, bullying

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1. INTRODUCTION

The way we are living our lives today is much different then it was. We are spending more time at work that we have ever before, and that is why generally everyone perceives time we have to spend with our families more important then ever before. Through history we have seen that work and personal life was much more connected then it is today, if we for example look way back into the past, families actually worked together on farms or different craftsmen had their workshops in their own homes and at that time work and personal life was interconnected. With the start of industrial revolution this has started to change, people started to go away from their homes to work and came back home with the money they have earned. This was the period where people worked long hours away from their families and their dissatisfaction grew. With the growth of the dissatisfaction trade unions started to emerge, fighting for the rights of workers, such rights included also the right of free time where workers could spend time with their families. We are now living in modern society, in many aspects our lives are much better then they were for people at the beginning of 20th century, but are they really? Why are we now again working longer hours? How does that affect our work-life balance? These are just some of the questions that are being discussed in this paper, the other part is workplace violence, although we can claim that employers tend to provide in accordance with the law safe working environment this is in many ways only seen in physical sense. Looking from the physical perspective work environment is safer then it has been ever before in the history, but there is another maybe a bit darker side to all of this, which is workplace violence. If we can quite comfortably say that there is very little or almost none physical violence at the workplace there is quite a difference when we come to psychological violence at the workplace. The problem of psychological workplace violence is mostly in the fact that in many cases it is not detected, also in many cases victims of this kind of violence perceive it and on the other hand perpetrators do not, just perceiving it as "leadership". So if manager is giving directions, encouraging employees to perform better, suggesting improvements this all might be perceived pressure by employees also maybe as psychological violence, but is it? For one thing is certain, the line between what is and what is not psychological workplace violence is very thin and blurry and this brings us to the aim of this paper, which is to investigate how work-life balance concepts and workplace violence interact. This is important in order to understand how human resources managers can help to create a safe working environment that is free from any psychological violence thus giving employees chance to have a somewhat normal work-life balance even in work environments that are highly demanding.

2. WORK LIFE BALANCE

As we have indicated above, maintaining balance between work and personal life is becoming increasingly more demanding. Kozjek et. al. (2014, p. 35) argue that work life balance is something that all stakeholders need to be aware of and need to manage, authors perceive important stakeholders to be: employees, organizations, schools, nurseries, trade unions, local communities and state itself. Why it is important for individuals as well as organizations to be aware of the importance of work life balance is in an interesting way presented by Swift (2002) stating that work life balance is: "juggling competing demands is thrilling if not stressful and brings lower productivity, sickness and absenteeism, so work life balance is an issue for all employees and all organizations. But first of all we have to define what we understand under the term work life balance, according to Greenhaus et. al. (2003) work life balance is defined as: "the extent to which an individual is engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role consisting three components, of work family balance: time balance (equal time devoted to work and family), involvement balance (equal involvement in work and family) and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family)." Somewhat different view is presented by Kalliath and Brough (2008) where they define work life balance concept as: "perception of an individual that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities. Karthik (2013, p. 26) explains that work life balance can be understood as the balancing point on the seesaw, one side of which is work while the other side is domestic and personal life. Somewhat different to all above Beauregard and Henry (2009) argue that there is no one accepted definition of what constitutes a work life balance practice, but there is much agreement among authors about the practices that are in place to achieve this balance. Armstrong (2006) has discussed such practices providing an overview when saying: "work life balance practices are concerned with providing scope for employees to balance what they do at work with the responsibilities and interests why have outside work and so reconcile the competing claims of work and home by meeting their own needs as well as those of their employers."

After establishing what work life balance is it important to understand how it is related to various human resources management concepts. Based on findings of Brich & Paul (2003, p.161) organizations that focus on work life balance of employees tend to have better business results including higher profits. Agarwala (2009) supports this view and adds that organizations that focus on work life balance can also expect that employees are going to be more committed to their work. Jyothi & Jyothi (2012, p.36) in this context see that today's organizations need to be more flexible in balancing work life schedules so that they can be equipped with members of organization that are fully committed to their organizations. Lazãr et. al. (2010, p. 207) sees even more benefits for the organization, among them are: reduced staff turnover rates, reduced absenteeism and lateness, improved productivity, enhanced image of the organization, employee loyalty and commitment and increased retention of valuable employees. Looking at these positive outcomes of better work life balance we can definitely say that organizations have a good enough reason to try and help their employees balance work and life schedules as much as possible. But what can an employer do to improve work life balance of employees? There are several elements that employees need to consider, based on findings made by Svetlik (1996, 162) employer needs to encourage employees to participate in problem solving, improve communication between employees and managers and vice versa and reduce resistance to change. McDonald et. al. (2005) also analyzed components that employers need to consider, in their work they outlined general areas which have to be considered, however there are several specific aspects within these general areas, the general areas are: managerial support, career consequences, organizational time expectation, genders perceptions and co-worker support.

We can see that work life balance concept is very interesting for employer as well as employee, however it is also interesting what has been noted by Yeandle et. al. (2002) those over 50% of employees were unaware of family-friendly practices that are offered by their organizations. This poses an interesting question to what extent employees are even aware of these practices being offered by their employers, and also leads us to the second part of this paper, where we are going to discuss the occurrence of workplace violence and how it might affect work life balance.

3. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence is defined by Barling et. al. (2009, p. 672) as: "any behaviour initiated by employees that is intended to harm another individual in their organization or the organization itself." Englander (2003) adds that workplace violence can be physical or psychological. However we must stress that majority of violence is on the psychological side, Maes et. al. (2000, p.14) elaborates on psychological violence and stresses that we may see various types like verbal threats, intimidation, sexual harassment, and so on. But these types of psychological violence are in some way "visible" there are also much less visible ways of psychological violence in most cases we are talking about bullying which is sometimes referred to also as mobbing. Posel (2009, p. 17) refers to mobbing as hostile and unethical communication of one or more individuals that is systematic and in most cases directed towards a single individual within organization. This individual is due to mobbing cornered and is feeling powerless since he or she does not have any protection due to repeated actions of above mentioned individuals. Posel (2009, p.17) continues that the victim of mobbing can show signs of emotional distress that can relate to psychosomatic and also social discomfort and problems of individual. Bullying is according to Bučar-Ručman (2004, p. 136) more commonly seen in hierarchical organizations, we can divide it into horizontal and vertical bullying. In the case of horizontal bullying is mostly seen in various initiations that are commonly seen in military, police or fraternity or sorority organizations. Vertical bullying is most commonly seen where perpetrator perceives their subordinate as a threat to their own position within hierarchical organization.

Any kind of psychological violence has certain toll on human resources within organization. Victims have increased likelihood of mental health issues such as depression, increased use of alcohol, high blood pressure, insomnia and so on. Some authors (Corney (2008), Pompili et. al. (2008)) even suggest that victims of psychological violence can in extreme cases become suicidal. Dillon (2010, p.17) suggests that in order to prevent such occurrences first and foremost an organization must create and nurture positive work culture, where people are treated with respect by management and co-workers, where good work is recognized, and where conflict is effectively dealt with as it arises. However this is by no means easy, since psychological violence in many cases goes undetected in early stages. La Van & Martin (2008, p. 153) suggest the use of so called A-B-C analysis for supervisors when the incident occurs, this is useful tool for in determination whether events or

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behaviours that are currently taking place in organization need changes in policies how we deal with violent behaviour. In the A-B-C model an antecedent (A) presents a stimulus that triggers behaviour (B) and a consequence (C) is an event that follows the triggered behaviour.

As we have shown, work-life balance and workplace violence are two concepts that are quite opposite to each other, but however there are some aspects that are quite alike, while work life balance (if it is positive) can have a positive impact on health of employees, workplace violence always has a negative impact on health of employees that are being victimised. In the next part of this paper we are going to discuss these positive and negative impacts.

4. THE OVERLAPING OF EFFECTS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE AND WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

We have already established based on findings of previous studies made by various authors above that organizations that take care of their work environment and focus on well being of their employees in context of work life balance can have better business results, their employees are more positive towards work and organization itself, there is also lower level of absenteeism and so on. There should be no doubt about the fact that positive working environment is good for the employees. On the other hand we have also established based on findings of previous studies made by various authors above that those work environments where we can see workplace violence occur are by no means positive to the victim and in the longer run not positive for other employees or perpetrator either. Workplace violence can show in victims as mental health issues such as depression, increased use of alcohol, high blood pressure, insomnia and in extreme cases victims can become suicidal. Two extreme poles, that can occur in two completely different work environment settings. But the question that we want to answer in this paper is how does occurrence of workplace violence affect work life balance?

4.1. Research hypothesis

For the propose of this paper we have set up the following hypothesis:

H 1: People that have experienced work place violence also report struggling with keeping up their work life balance.

H 2: People that have experienced work place violence are less satisfied with their work life balance then people that have not experienced work place violence.

5. RESEARCH

Data that we are using in this paper was gathered in a wider survey, the following in this paper is presented for explanatory purposes so that readers are able to fully understand the survey that was conducted.

5.1. Research instrument

The research was done using a questionnaire with an online survey. We have used a variety of means to spread out the survey as much as possible, form emails to posting in forums and also social media contacts, asking interviewees to send the link to the questioner onwards creating the so called snowball effect.

The questionnaire comprised 45 questions relating to (1) work life balance (25 questions), (2) workplace violence (12 questions) and (3) respondent's personal details (age, gender, number of working years and level of education – 8 questions).

In the questioner we have used various types of questions, some where aimed at selecting the most appropriate question others that were measuring level of agreement with certain statements used a five point scale, one meaning totally disagree with the statement, five meaning totally agree with the statement and the other values in between. The questioner was self-developed; in the first stage we have discussed the questioner with variety of co-workers, later putting it to the test in paper-pencil

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form with 10 selected individuals that help us understand what somewhat problematic areas of the questioner were. Later we have made some minor changes to the questioner before putting it online for a final survey. Survey was conducted between February 25th and March 7th 2014 with the help of an online platform called 1ka – en klik anketa.

5.2. Sample

Data that we have collected through the webpage shows, that there was 326 people that have started the questioner but we have could only use 302 questioners that were filled out.

The sample which has been used for the purpose of this paper contained 98 (32.5%) male respondents and 186 (61.6%) female respondents, 18 (6.9%) respondents did not want to disclose their gender. The average age of respondent was 37.52 years of age, respondents have an average of 14.88 years of work experience and 11.61 years of work experience in current organization on average. The data on education is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Education of respondents

Education	Responses	%
Vocational high school or less	2	0.7
High school	52	18.6
Colleague degree	68	24.3
University degree	114	40.7
Post graduate degree	44	15.7
Total	280	100.0

5.3. Variable analysis

In order to confirm or reject our two hypotheses we have conducted crosstabs analysis and independent sample t-test. But first of all we have conducted a Cronbach's Alpha test, that shown the value of ,829 on the set of variables that we have researched on. This value is showing, according to Ferligoj and others (1995) that the responses collected are reliable.

The next step was to analyze with the help of cross tabulation the strength of correlation between independent variable *how are organizational values stated in your organization* and dependent variable *organizational performance – combined.* Results are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Crosstabs analysis

I was victim to workplace violence		How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance?			
		1,00 never	2,00 sometimes	3,00 often	Total
1,00 Yes	N	6	62	46	114
	% within Workplace violence	5.3%	54.4%	40.4%	100,0%
	% within Problems with keeping balance of work and life	23.1%	36.5%	52.3%	40.1%
2,00 No	N	20	108	42	170
	% within Workplace violence	11.8%	63.5%	24.7%	100,0%
	% within Problems with keeping balance of work and life	76.9%	63.5%	47.7%	59.9%
Total	N	26	170	88	284
	% within Workplace violence	9.2%	59.9%	31.0%	100,0%
	% within Problems with keeping balance of work and life	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

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Table 3: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.138	.057	-3.117	.002(c)
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-,138	,058	-3.121	.002(c)
N of Valid Cases		284			

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c Based on normal approximation.

From data shown in Table 2 we can see that 52.3 % those respondents that have been victims of workplace violence report that they often feel that they have problems with balancing work and life, 36.5% of those respondents that have been victims of workplace violence often feel that they have problems with balancing work and life and only 23.1% of those that have been victims of workplace violence report that they never feel that they have problems with balancing work and life.

Also from Table 2 we can see that a much lower percentage 24.7% of those that have not been victims of workplace violence report that they often feel that they have problems with balancing work and life, 63.5% of those respondents that have not been victims of workplace violence often feel that they have problems with balancing work and life and only 11.8% of those that have not been victims of workplace violence report that they never feel that they have problems with balancing work and life.

From Table 3 we can see that for the variables *How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance* and *I was victim to workplace violence* we have determined the coefficient of convergence of -0.138. From this data we can determine that this represents a rather weak statistical correlation. The level of statistical importance of correlation is 0.002, this tells us that coefficients are statistically important at level p=0.05, this means that variables are valid in 95 % confidence interval. Overall we can say that *I was victim to workplace violence* influences *How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance* with a 5 % risk interval.

In the next step we performed an independent sample t- test between variables *How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance* (3 possible answers: 1 never, 2 seldom, 3 often) and *I was victim to workplace violence* results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test on problems of work life balance

Variable	t	p	Mean	
			Been victim	Not been victim
How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance	3.130	.002	2.35	2.12

As we can see form Table 4, those respondents that have been victim to workplace violence report more often (average 2.35) that they have problems with keeping work life balance then those respondents (average 2.12) that have not been victim of workplace violence.

In the last part we have performed an independent sample t-test between eleven (11) variables that have indicated the satisfaction with various work life balance indicators and the variable *I was victim to workplace violence* results are shown in Table 5.

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Table 5: Independent sample t-test on satisfaction with work life balance

Variable I am satisfied with …	t	p	Mean	
			Been victim	Not been victim
… relationships with my immediate family	-3.271	.001	3.80	4.13
… my relationships with my partner/spouse	-2.477	.014	3.39	4.24
… what I have achieved in my career	-2.423	.016	3.48	3.75
… the relationship that I have with my co-workers	-4.347	.000	3.54	3.93
… my financial wellbeing	-1.826	.069	3.21	3.30
… my physical health.	-4.655	.000	3.50	4.00
… my mental health.	-3.816	.000	3.55	4.00
… my emotional stability	-2.426	.016	3.64	3.92
… my free time	-2.087	.038	3.14	3.41
… with my home environment	0.013	.990	3.89	3.89

As we can see from Table 5, there are nine (9) out of eleven (11) indicators that have helped us measure work life balance where we have seen statistical differences between those respondents that have been victim of workplace violence and those that have not been victims of workplace violence. We can see that in all nine (9) indicators those respondents that have been victims of workplace violence indicate that they are less satisfied with the indicators of work life balance then those respondents that have not been victims of workplace violence. It is interesting to see that the biggest difference among those that have been victims of workplace violence and those that have not been victims of workplace violence occurs with variable *I am satisfied with my physical health*.

6. DISCUSSION

From what we have shown through literature review and our own research there are some interesting correlations between work life balance and workplace violence. People that have been victims of workplace violence are more likely to feel that they have problems with their work life balance. That is to some extent completely reasonable to expect since the concept of work life balance is based on having a comfortable situation in which you can be at easy with balancing work and life schedules, commitments, time, and so on. Our research shows that 40.4% of those interviewees that have been victims of workplace violence report that they often have feel that they have problems with balancing their work and life, compared to only 24.7% of those that have not been victims of workplace violence. This is also supported with the independent sample t-test, where we have seen that for the variable *How often do you feel that you have problems with keeping your work life balance* (t= 3.130; p=0.002) those interviewees that have not been victims of workplace violence evaluate this variable lower (mean 2.12) than those that have been victims of workplace violence (mean 2.35). With this information, we can *confirm* our hypothesis; H 1: People that have experienced work place violence also report struggling with keeping up their work life balance.

Regarding the satisfaction with work life balance we can say that in general people that have been victims to workplace violence are on average less satisfied with indicators of work life balance. This is most intensely seen with the indicator *I am satisfied with my physical health* (t= -4.655; p=0.00) those interviewees that have been victims of workplace violence evaluate this variable lower (mean 3.50) than those that have not been victims of workplace violence (mean 4.00). Also with the variable *I am satisfied with the relationship that I have with my co-workers* (t= -4.347; p=0.00) those interviewees that have been victims of workplace violence evaluate this variable lower (mean 3.54) than those that have not been victims of workplace violence (mean 3.93). Also with the variable *I am satisfied with my mental health* (t= -3.816; p=0.00) those interviewees that have been victims of workplace violence evaluate this variable lower (mean 3.55) than those that have not been victims of workplace violence (mean 4.00). These are just the top three indicators based on which we can *confirm* our hypothesis H 2: People that have experienced work place violence are less satisfied with their work life balance then people that have not experienced work place violence.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Through this paper we have established that workplace violence effects work life balance of employees, results of our survey also confirm what was already suggested before by some authors

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(see: Corney (2008), Pompili et. al. (2008)) that workplace violence even though it is psychological can have effects on health of employees. There is no doubt that workplace violence; especially psychological workplace violence is a major problem in modern workplace, and needs to be addressed in many ways. Although it is hard or sometimes almost impossible to detect we might be able to "see" it through problems in balancing work and life as we shown in this paper that it affects it. There are some limitations to this paper, first is the research, it was done through online questioner, thus eliminating those that do not have access to internet, second is the size of the sample, with 302 respondents it is not huge by any means but still large enough to give us a general idea on how situation is currently. For further research we would recommend enlargement of sample with increased focus on effect of workplace violence on physical and mental health.

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