

A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE ON IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON 3 'P'S IN AVIATION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT: *The intent of this research is to bring out strategic impact of one of the facet of the employee engagement - work life balance in high precision service industry and analyse it's impact on Performance, Productivity and Profitability as popularly known as '3P'. Author has tried to highlight the importance of employee engagement through instituting systems and practices of work-life balance on performance, productivity and profitability of the organisation. Accordingly author has chosen aviation industry which is characteristically known as high demand service industry. Background and introduction highlighted the key rationale and understanding of the research area and literature review has been provided to create an academic platform to conduct the research. Author has chosen case based approach to investigate the key research aim, objectives and questions to present comprehensive analytical insights on the area. Conclusion and recommendation has been made to value add in the subject area and towards future research.*

KEYWORDS: Employee-Engagement, Performance, Productivity, Aviation Industry etc.

INTRODUCTION

Organisational performance, productivity and profitability (3Ps.) critically depends on effective engagement of human capital of the organisation without any iota of doubt. The rationale of selecting this topic is to shed light on impact of employee engagement through efficient and effective system and practices of work life balance in 3Ps.

Historically it has been seen many organisation could not create long term sustainability and competitiveness by ignoring the employee engagement in general and creating work life balance in particular. This is primarily because of it's negative impact on value delivery mechanism of the organisation. As pointed out by Frye, & Breugh (2005) that when an organisation does not address the need by resolving the conflict of an employee towards handling of shifting and managing multiple roles and responsibilities, a visible impact can be noticed in behavior and performance of any employee.

Employee engagement has assumed higher currency in the corporate world for addressing the critical need of any futuristic organisation to become innovative and competitive by constantly renewing and reinventing the value delivery to customers and other key stakeholders. There are many key drivers of employee engagement and one of the driver is to have a clear policy ,systems and practices of work-life balance. It helps employees to develop emotional commitment and bond towards the organisation reflecting it's positive impact on performance, productivity and profitability and it's customers resulting into creating better competitiveness and loyalty of the customers.

Before plunging into the analysis of industry, author feels an understanding of causative factors rather key drivers for employee engagement and disengagement will drive home the understanding better. The key drivers of employee engagement are as follows :

- Respect for employees
- Fairness and Equality
- Building atmosphere of trust
- Organisational values as espoused and practiced religiously in all echelons of management in the organisation
- Teamwork and Cooperation
- Empowerment of the different levels of employees
- Ethical business and employee relation practices
- Scope for Career growth based on merit
- Work-life balance

It's hard to find a comprehensive definition of work life balance but the term, as seen from the perspective of workforce, is referred as having:

- Organizational support in dependence care (health & hygiene, medical benefits of parents etc.)
- Flexible working facility such as work from home and flexibility in work hours and options
- Various policies and practices pertaining to family welfare (maternity leave, child birth leave, adoption leave, annual leave, sick leave etc.)

Globally lots of initiative has been taken and supportive legislations passed to make a comprehensive eco system for mandatory and regulatory compliance. Various HR initiatives like 'Great Place to Work' driven many forward looking organisations internationally to adopt work life balance measures and practices so as to win the talent war **to remain competitive , innovative and sustainable**.

In one of such move was made by, Tony Blair, Ex-Prime Minister of UK, in 2000 who kick started a campaign to bring and improve work life balance. The key focus of the said initiatives was to inject a sense of belongingness with pride and loyalty into the moral fabric of workforce about the organisation through emotional commitment and bonding. This in turn can help United Kingdom to be innovative, competitive in global business landscape with the positive impact on bottom line through better performance and productivity.

Therefore, the major focus and objective of this article is to view the employee engagement by analysing the impact of work life balance on the performance and productivity of employees. This aspect is not only an important step for the employees to create strong emotional connectivity with the organisation but also for the employers to influence organizational performance, productivity and profitability as well. Employee engagement with practice of healthy work life balance provides a platform to make employees think out of the box or what is called as development of innovative mindset and competitiveness and bring operational excellence by reducing stress, absenteeism, burn out rate and retention of the trained work force with high motivation level. Trained workforce is Thus, employee engagement in broad sense influence the three 'P's i.e., performance, productivity and profitability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Author has tried to review some of the key concepts given by different authors on work-life balance as one of the key factor of employee engagement and employee productivity area so as to build a conceptual framework and academic platform to carry the objectives of this research article forward. Has discussed the past researches related to the research topic. Author has also done some of the critical analysis of the past researches to reflect on both sides of the picture.

The research on the work life balance reflects the balance between workplace, home and other aspects of life of an individual has been researched out over time (Dean, 2007; Lewis, 2003). Initial research on work life balance has been carried out with the research on work family balance (Lewis & Campbell, 2008). The work family conflict focused on care for family and tensions arising from work impacting over the responsibilities of family whereas work life balance focused on non-earning activities, personal life needs, servicing work for the employees (Carlson et al., 2009; Lewis, 2003). As Lambert et al (2006) has clearly mentioned that the major objective of work life balance was to effectively integrate the both life i.e., personal as well as professional life of the workforce

According to Clark (2000) work life balance is reflecting on satisfaction level of the employee on functioning effectively and feeling good in workplace and home. Parkes and Langford (2008) defined the work life balance as the ability of an individual rather employee to meet all the work and family commitments and responsibilities.

Broadly there are two level of approaches to work-life balance classified as organizational approach and individual approach as pointed out by Anderson et al., 2002; Frone et al., 1997; Wayne et al., 2004. In the organisational level, the practice of work life balance helps to have positive impact on three 'P's i.e. performance, productivity and profitability as performance boosts. And individual level approach brings positive changes in the life of an individual and it's impact on society.

There are many contributing factors towards an effective work - life balance of the employees. According to Ngo and Lau (1998), there are two aspects one is work interference with family and second is the interference of family with the work. There are various other work related factors that include career growth, hours of work and work involvement which tend to have direct impact on work - life balance as observed in the findings of researchers.

Another interesting reflection came in the work of Warner and Hausdorf (2009) who suggest that support of organisation and supervisor can critically help in the achievement of the work - life balance. And, the same was echoed by McPherson (2007), top management support is critical regarding the work - life balance as top management are involved in policy making of the organisation. they are the one who are involved in making policies of an organisations. In one of the break through research in this area, one of the Fortune 500 companies selected supervisors to survey on the employee desire towards work - life balance in organizational policy. The findings highlighted that changes in schedule and flexible timings were one of the most common request from the employees that these supervisors were receiving. The supervisors could not entertain employee's requests cannot because of lack of authority and empowerment. Therefore, empowerment of supervisor is needed to bring

flexibility and agility to create work life balance and reward the employees with less stress to negotiate life problems.

As flexibility is the hallmark of modern work place, working from home is another important area relating to flexible working and this one also helps in the maintenance of work - life balance (Tipping et. al: 2012).

Work Life Balance has got strategic and profound impact on individual and organizational performance and productivity. Numerous research has been done to explore relationship between work life balance and performance .These researches could able to establish a positive link between work life balance and performance.

The positive impact on the outcomes such as improved performance, low turnover rate and satisfaction with the job as reflected in the work of Cegarra-Leiva et al.,(2012); and Scandura and Lankau (1997). The research work of Magnini (2009) reflects that there is a corelation of work life balance with performance of employees. It is observed that when there is harmony and psychological well – being in life of employees help them to concentrate in their job. The research work of Secret (2006) also found out a positive relationship between work life balance and job performance.

In view of the above discussion, author feels that the independent variable of research is work – life balance whereas the dependent variable job performance and productivity. This establishes the fact that when there are well defined policies and practices relating to work – life balance in an organisation, the performance of employees or the productivity of employee and the organisation increases.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PHILOSOPHY

Author has selected aviation industry and a popular European Airlines and set out to explore following research questions to justify the research aim and objective of this article.

Author has set the following key research questions to explore:

- Present policies of European Airlines?
- Scale of impact of employee policies on work life balance and employee performance if it is changed or implemented
- How European Airlines can take advantage by the implementation of new policies and strategies?

The research philosophy chosen for this study is the positivism with quantitative and qualitative approach.

This philosophy aids in making the research more conclusive as the data is first hand and quantifiable which is easier to analyse.

The Research strategy chosen for this research study is deductive approach. In this approach the researcher deals with qualitative data, and makes use of information using a top-to-bottom approach, and hypothesis will lead to achieving results.

The proposed research strategy is carried out using questionnaire to get data.

The research design chosen for this study is the quantitative design. This design helps the researchers understand that the data will be collected using the survey approach with the help of a questionnaire. The biggest advantage of using this research method is that the data is first hand, numeric, easy to comprehend and reliable (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

Therefore the instrument selected in this research is close – ended questionnaire in which there 10 questions in total. The first 8 items are adopted from Strolin-Goltzman et al., (2007) work – life balance measurements. The rest two items are developed by the researcher. The scale used in the questionnaire is five point likert scale. In addition to this, questionnaire include a demographics portion as well.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data is collected from 200 employees working in the chosen European Airlines. All the data is plotted into graphs, histogram, pie charts, and percentages and then compared with each other. The figures depicts the true interpretation of the data. The data which is plotted on the axis shows reliable and valid results, and the hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

The first section included the response rate, second signifies the demographics, the third section analyses the raw data and the last one provides a link with the past researches.

Section 1 - Response Rate

The sample size was 250. 250 questionnaires were distributed to the employees working at European airlines. There is about 210 of the questionnaires that were returned by the company. The response rate is 84%. The response rate is shown in the following table

Table: 1

| | | Percentage response rate |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| Number of Questionnaires Distributed | 250 | 84% |
| Total Filled Questionnaire | 210 | |

Section 2 – Demographics

The demographics used in the research are mentioned with their percentages in the following table.

Table 2:

| Demographics | Demographic characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | 20-25 | 36 | 17% |
| | 26-30 | 76 | 36% |
| | 31-35 | 43 | 20% |
| | 36-40 | 45 | 21% |
| | 41 and Above | 10 | 4% |

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----|-----|
| Gender | Male | 153 | 72% |
| | Female | 57 | 27% |
| Job Designation | Trainee | 44 | 20% |
| | Managerial | 72 | 34% |
| | Non-managerial | 64 | 30% |
| | Cabin Crew | 25 | 11% |
| | Pilot | 5 | 2% |

Data Presentation and Data Analysis

There were 10 items in the questionnaire. 8 items of work life balance are adopted from Strolin-Goltzman et al., (2007) whereas two items are self - developed. The questionnaire used five point likert scale in which the options were from strongly disagree to strongly agree (SD - Strongly disagree, D – Disagree, N – Neutral, A – Agree, SA - Strongly agree). The items are analysed one by one in the following sub – headings.

Good Fit between Personal and Work life



Chart 1

According to the responses given by the employees, there are about 44% of the employees who agree that the personal and work life are good fit and 34% strong agree to this item. Rest of the responses fall in other three categories

Good fit between family and work life

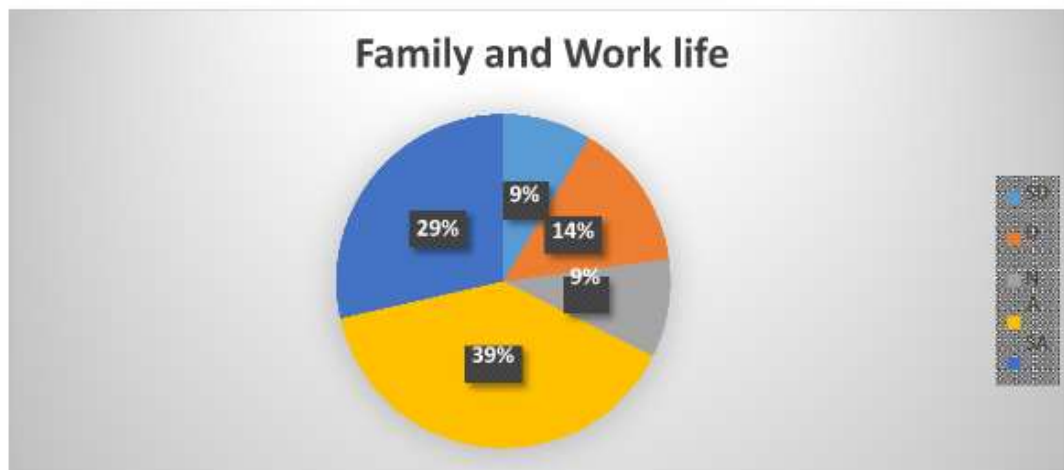


Chart 2

39% and 29% of the employees reported that there is a good fit between family and work life whereas the rest of the options cover 9% and 14%. This signifies that employees are satisfied with their job.

Support and recognition from family members

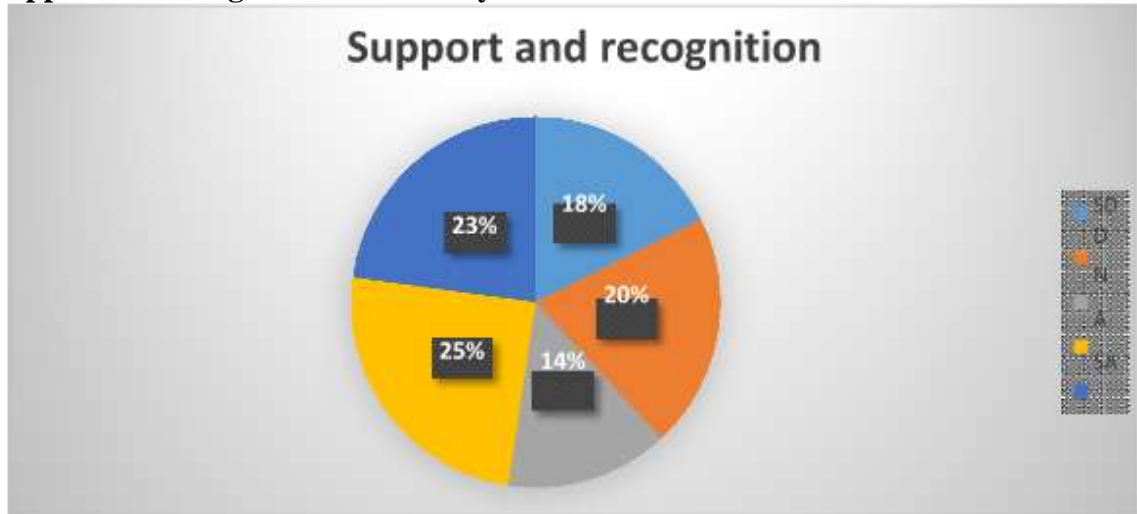


Chart 3

The responses provided in strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree options are somewhat similar showing that there are some employees who have got support and recognition from family whereas other do not receive support as well as recognition from family.

Good fit between job and personal health

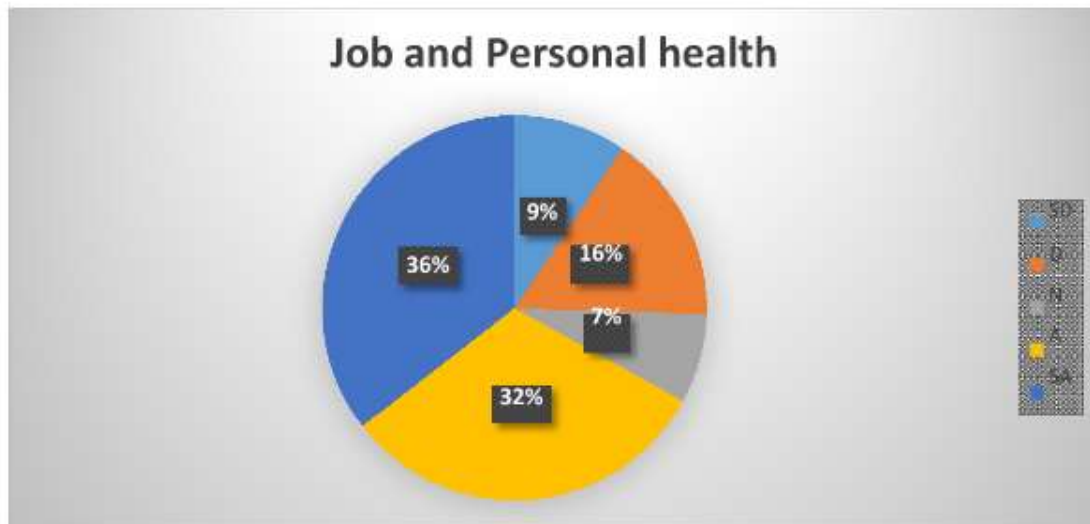


Chart 4

36% of the total respondents considers their job having a good fit with their personal health whereas 32% agree with this question. There are 16% employees who disagree with this item showing that their personal health and job are not a good fit.

Job Burnout



Chart 5

44% of the respondents strongly agree to this question and are of view point that they can do their job and that there is no job burnout. But on the other hand there are 24% of the employees who disagree with this item as they think that there is job burnout.

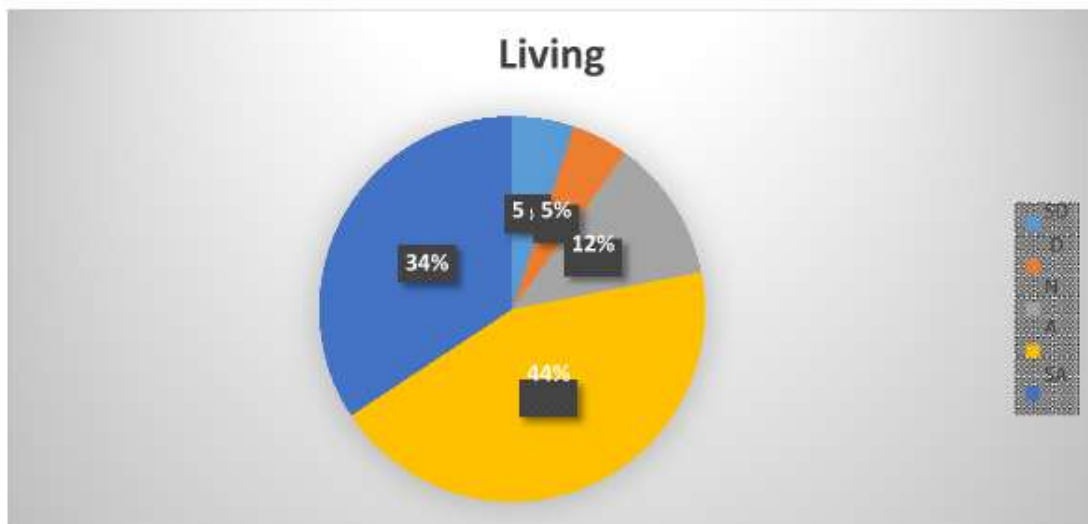


Chart 6

There are 34% and 44% of the respondents who agree and strongly agree with the item mentioning that the employees are living where they want to live.

Emotional Energy for job



Chart 7

There are 39% and 29% of the respondents who agree and strongly agree with the item mentioning that the employees have sufficient amount of energy to do their job.

Schedule Flexibility



Chart 8

25% and 32% of the respondents strongly agree and agree about the flexibility in the schedule provided. There are 21% of the employee who strongly disagree. This can be related to the employees who are cabin crew or the pilots as they have tough schedule.

Work life balance and Job performance

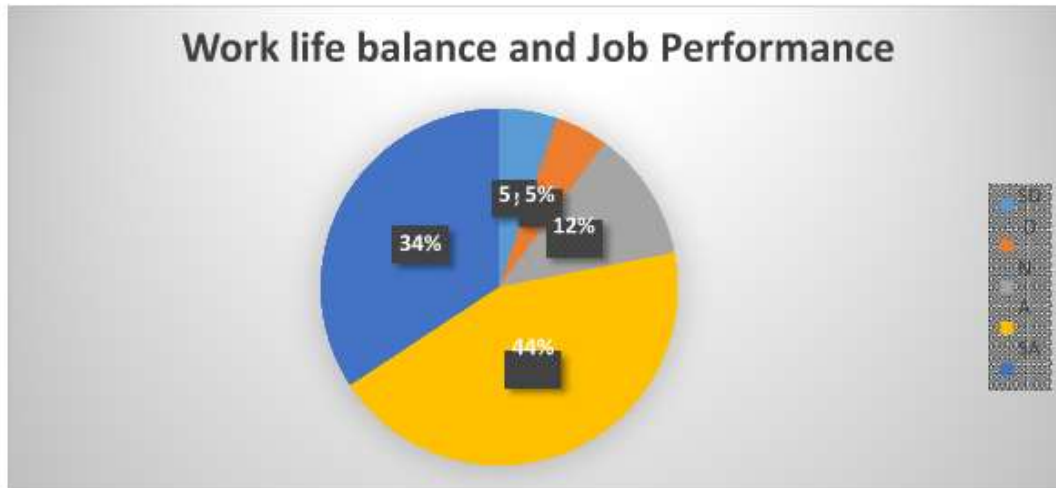


Chart 9

There are 44% of the respondents who consider that their job performance is good because there is work life balance.

Link between work life balance and job performance

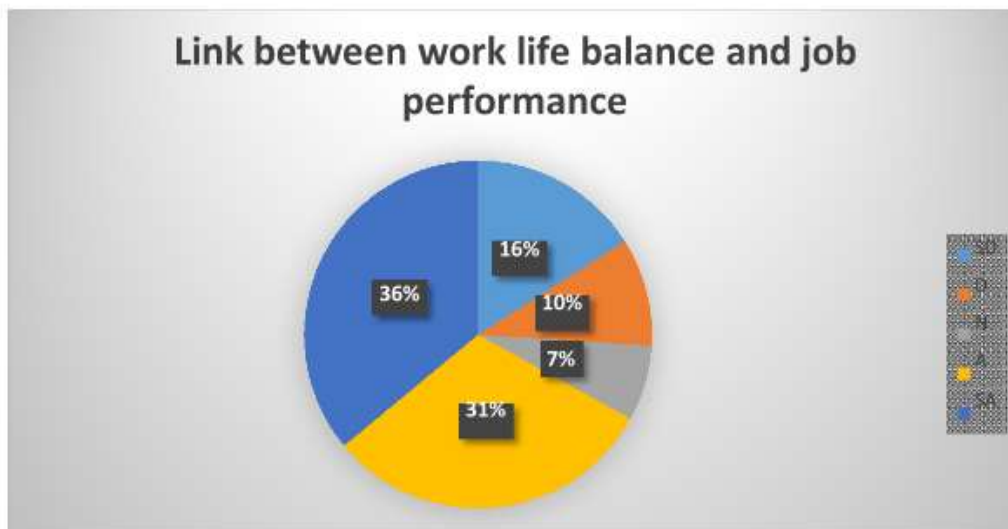


Chart 10

According to the response of the employees, 36% and 31% employee are of the view point that there is a positive link between work life balance and job performance. Meaning thereby, that when there is balance between work and life, the performance on the job increases.

Hypotheses – Acceptance and Rejection

There were three hypotheses presented in the literature review. These are mentioned in the following table with their acceptance and rejection

Table 3

| Hypotheses | Accepted | Rejected |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| H1: There is a positive relation between work – life balance and job performance. | Accepted | |
| H2: There is a negative relationship between work – life balance and job performance. | | Rejected |
| H0: There is no relationship between work – life balance and job performance. | | Rejected |

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The key objective of this research was to explore the relationship of work – life balance in relation to job performance in European Airlines. The results of the research revealed out that there is a positive relationship between work – life balance and job performance. This also accepts the first hypotheses stating “There is a positive relation between work – life balance and job performance.” The other two hypotheses are rejected.

The employees working at Etihad Airways are satisfied with the work life policies of the company so they have responded positively toward the research problem.

Following recommendations are being made based on the understanding and analysis of the data which author feels can provide a new directions to the management.

1. More pragmatic and prudent HR policy towards Work – life balance need to be initiated to cater to all strata of the employees with strategic and operational objectives in mind.
2. More initiatives should be taken to involve family through various get together at the workplace which will make the employee and family get connected to bigger picture and develop bonding to positively influence three ‘P’s.
3. Create a broader platform in the organisation and empower the workforce to participate in the organizational decision making through consensus. Work – Life conflict issues can also be discussed in this manner.
4. Space should be given to the employees for personal life. With the professional life, there is personal life of employees. An employee should be given respect as he / she is an individual having unique personal life. Organisations must acknowledge the personal life of employees. HR should develop the policies relating to personal life so that the professional life is not disturbed.
5. Create an inclusive organisational culture so that each employee is concerned about other employee and management should also be concerned about its employees. The issues relating to work should be discussed. Performance related issues should also be discussed so that every employee must know what is the right and wrong way to perform a task.

Future Research Implications

Employee engagement and work life balance has become one of the most critical agenda for organizational think tank. Lots of research is being done in this regard but more focus need to be given to address cultural issues of employee engagement and develop metrics to measure employee engagement level with 3’P’s. How the variables like work life balance can be made a part of organizational culture contributing to strategic objectives of the organisation towards better competitiveness and sustainability.

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