About PF11: Balance

What are Psychosocial Factors?

Psychosocial factors are elements that impact employees' psychological responses to work and work conditions, potentially causing psychological health problems. Psychosocial factors include the way work is carried out (deadlines, workload, work methods) and the context in which work occurs (including relationships and interactions with managers and supervisors, colleagues and coworkers, and clients or customers).

What is PF11: Balance?

GM@W defines PF11: Balance as present in a work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life. This psychosocial factor reflects the reality that everyone has multiple roles: as professors, parents, partners, etc. This complexity is enriching and allows fulfillment of individual strengths and responsibilities, but conflicting responsibilities can lead to role conflict or overload.

Why is Balance important?

A work environment where employers recognize the need for work-life balance makes employees feel valued and happier both at work and at home. When employers recognize that work-life balance is important, they realize the need for greater workplace flexibility. This flexibility helps minimize conflict by allowing employees to accomplish the tasks necessary in their daily lives. Balance reduces stress and the possibility that home issues will spill over into work, or vice versa. Balance allows staff to maintain their concentration, confidence, responsibility, and sense of control at work. Organizationally, this translates into enhanced employee commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviours (discretionary behaviours that are beneficial to the organization and are a matter of personal choice) and job performance. In turn, balance is associated with enhanced well-being and reduced stress. These effects have been demonstrated over time, showing a direct causal relationship to physical and psychological health.

What happens when balance is compromised?

Job stress is on the rise, surging from 20 percent in 1990 to 33 percent in 2000. Employees with higher job stress are more likely to be dissatisfied with work and be absent either physically or mentally. One source of stress is conflict between work and family roles. When work-family conflict occurs, health and well-being are undermined. This imbalance can lead to constant tiredness, bad temper, and inability to progress. These can, in turn, lead to additional stress-related illness, as well as higher cholesterol, depressive symptoms, and overall decreased health. The impact on the organization is increased costs due to benefit payouts, absenteeism, disability, and turnover.

How can Balance be improved?

Start by conducting the GM@W Organizational Review and/or the GM@W Survey and reviewing the results. If Balance is identified as an area of concern or relative strength, refer to the GM@W Action Resources for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggested actions that can improve Balance. It is also important to discuss the findings with employees to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input into possible interventions. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the undertaken interventions over time to ensure they are effective and to take corrective action where needed. Consider reviewing the resources below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how Balance can be enhanced.

Further information about Balance:

- Byrne, U. (2005). Work-life balance: Why are we talking about it at all? *Business Information Review, 22*(1), 53-59. doi: 10.1177/0266382105052268

- Casey, P., & Grzywacz, J. (2008). Employee health and well-being: The role of flexibility and work-family balance. *Psychologist-Manager Journal, 11*(10), 31-47. doi: 10.1080/10887150801963885

- Gallup Management Journal. (2006). Unhappy workers are unhealthy too. Retrieved from http://gmj.gallup.com/content/14545/gallup-study-unhappy-workers-unhealthy-too.aspx

- Gilbert, M. & Bilsker, D. (2012). *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf

- Grzywacz, J., & Carlson, D. (2007). Conceptualizing work-family balance: Implications for practice and research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 9*(4), 455-471. doi: 10.1177/1523422307305487

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- Health and Safety Executive. (2012). Work related stress – together we can tackle it. In *Guidance*. Retrieved from http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm

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- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*, 692-724. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/256287

- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2012). PF11: Balance. In *Centre Resources by GM@W Factor* and *On the Agenda*. Retrieved from http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com

www.guardingmindsatwork.ca