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Examining Frontline Hotel Employees' Perception of Work–Life Balance Practices at Five Star Hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh,Egypt

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Abstract

Hotel's employees are increasingly becoming aware of issues for balancing work and life (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2013). The lack of better work-life balance is one of the issues employees suffer from (Thogersen, 2005; McDonald et al., 2006). A questionnaire form was used to explore the perception of work–life balance practices among frontline employees at Sharm El-Sheikh hotels. The questionnaire form comprised seven practices as follows enough time-off from work; work place support of work–life balance; allegiance to work; flexibility of work schedule; life orientation; voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs; upkeep the work and career. A Mann-Whitney U test, a Kruskal-Wallis test, descriptive analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the 320 questionnaire forms collected from five-star hotels. It has been found that older, single employees have more balance between life and job than others. The results suggested that listening to employees, appreciating their differences and needs providing them with free time and flexibility of work schedule are key factors of positive work-life balance.

Keywords: Work–life balance- life orientation.

Literature Review

Hotel employees have difficulty working in multiple roles (as a supervisor in work, a parent at home, a young person helping elderly parents) that may hinder their commitment and increase the rate of their turnover. So, Researchers are now developing approaches with a greater orientation toward business, stressing the benefits of incorporating work life balance WLB as a tool for human resources (HR) management to motivate workers (Sturges and Guest, 2004; Consolación et al., 2016a).

Work-life balance is defined as one's ability to achieve and maintain a "balance" or equilibrium between one's paid work and life outside work, whatever "life" involves for the individual. (Sturges and Guest, 2004; National League for Nursing, 2005). Adequate work–life balance was defined by agreement (strongly agree, agree) to the statement, "My work leaves me enough time for my personal/family life" and inadequate by disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) Verena et al 2017.

Also, WLB can be defined as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with minimum role conflict (Sharmini, and Murali, 2015; Consolación et al., 2016b). work–life balance is defined as ''people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as a norm to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society'' (Suzanne et al.,2015).

Work-life balance practices encompass a wide range of programs, including flexible scheduling and work arrangements, family leave, employee assistance programs, counseling services, child care services, and the like (Patricia et al., 2018). Work-life conflict forms include time-based conflict for employees , strain-based for employees and behavior-based conflicts for employees. There are factors such as workplace culture, job enrichment / satisfaction, work- role-fit and many other behavioural and psychological factors which play an evident role in WLB (Sharmini, and Murali, 2015; Patricia et al., 2018).

Several researchers (Giardini and Kabst, 2008; Beauregard and Henry, 2009; Ollier-Malaterre, 2017) have identified the benefits of WLB. Examples to organizations and the frontline hotel employees are; improving the financial performance of the organization (Consolación et al., 2016a); improving the alignment between professional and non-professional areas of the worker's life; increasing job satisfaction among workers and retention of valuable workforce; reducing the conflict between work and family; reducing employee stress (Dadrie et al., 2017), boost productivity; increasing worker's engagement to the organizationl; reducing absenteeism; increasing actual number of hours spent working (Tristan et al., 2017; Mattessich et al., 2017).

Additionally, hotels provide a package to employees for the purpose of attracting talents and increasing retention rate (Wong and Ko, 2009). It includes ''benefits'' such as leave for getting married, holiday house, office parties, and training courses for personal development (John and Andrew, 2006; Flora et al., 2010; Verena and Nicola 2017). Many benefits are designed to be family-friendly to balance shift workers' family needs due to their erratic job nature (Verena and Nicola 2017). Many organizations started ''family friendly'' related practices such as child care provision for employees with children or school age children. Some examples of good issues also include paid maternity leave or chances to work more flexibly (Pocock, 2005; Mara and Lisa, 2015).

In contrast, Work–life imbalance negatively affects productivity, organizational commitment, turnover, parental problems, life satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003) . In addition, poor work–life balance was associated with negative health and fatigue; non-work conflict; burnout; psychological well-being; long working hours; work overload ; depressed moods and physical symptoms; undertaking much more job responsibility; intensive work content;   (Cropley and Millward, 2009; Losoncz and Bortolotto, 2009).

A few studies have investigated the Work–life balance issues in the Egyptian five-star hotels environment. So, this study aims to examine the influence of work life balance on the perception of frontline employees at the hotels of Sharm El-Sheikh. Based on the reviewed literature, the following research framework needs to be investigated. As seen in figure (1) the following hypotheses can be proposede.
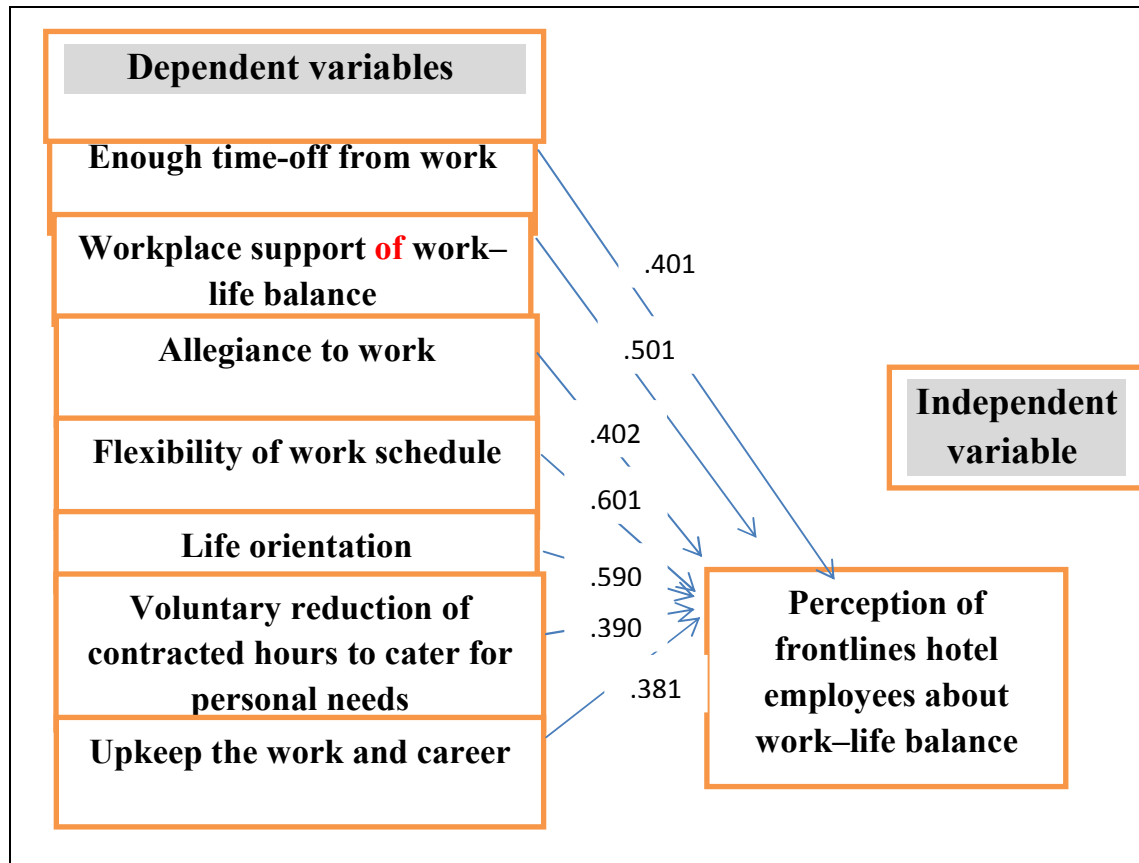
Figure 1: Research framework

H1: There is a relationship between gender and the perception of frontline employees;
H2: There is a relationship between age and the perception of frontline employee;
H3: There is a relationship between marital status and the perception of frontline employees;
H4: There is a relationship between tenure in the hotel and the perception of frontline employees;
H5: There is a relationship between work life balance practices and perception of frontline employees.

Methodology

Measurement and Instrument

A questionnaire of two main parts was designed for the purpose of this research. The first part contained five sections; enough time-off from work (4 items), workplace support of work–life balance (4 items), allegiance to work (3 items), flexibility of work schedule (4 items), life orientation (3 items), voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs (2 items), and upkeep the work and career (3 items). The second part was designed for measuring the perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance. A 5 point likert scale was used where 1 refers to completely disagree while 5 refers to completely agree.

Population and sample

The population of interest for this research was frontline employees at five-star hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt. According to the Egyptian Hotel Guide (2016), the whole number of five-star hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh was forty. However, only 30 hotels (75%) allowed distribute the questionnaire forms among their frontline employees.

To identify the number of frontline employees in the 30 hotels, a visit to the Department of Human Resources in these hotels has been paid in 3-2018. The sample size of frontline employees was computed according to formula described by Freund and Wilson, (1997) as follows:

$$n^0 = \frac{N}{1+n/N}$$

Where n is the required sample size; N is the population size. By this equation, it was possible to distribute the questionnaire forms to 600 employees. The questionnaire forms were equally distributed to these hotels (20 per hotel). of the 600 questionnaire forms, 320 valid forms were received, representing a response rate of 53 %.

Reliability and validity

According to Nunnally and Bernstein, (1994) Values exceeding 0.70 is considered acceptable.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences, SPSS for 16.0 was used to analyze the data descriptively. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine hotel employees' perception over work–life balance practices. Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and multiple regression analysis were used at a significance level of 5% to examine differences among respondents with regard to the other variables. In addition, regression analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

The Demographic section involved gender, age, marital status, educational level, tenure. Among the 320 hotel employees, 83% were male and 7% were female. About 72% of hotel employees were of 18 35 years old,

while approximately 28% of them were 36 57. Respondents who worked in their hotel for over 5 years accounted for 40%.

In investigating the variance among the employees' demographics, it was found that all demographic elements significantly related to WLB practices. hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5 predicted that age, gender, Marital status, and tenure would have a positive effect on the relationship between WLB practices and the Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance. Hence, these four hypotheses were supported.

Table (1) indicated that male employees (m=98) search more work life balance because they are responsible for family and old parents. In addition, older employees (m=88) were more compatible with work and life balance than younger single employees seem carefree pertaining this issus. Moreover, it was found that employees who worked in their hotel for more than 1, (m=86) have more balance between life and jobs than employees who worked in their hotel for less than 1, (m=15).

Table 1: Comparing means of WLB and Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance regarding demographics

Demographic Characteristics		%	WLB and Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance	
			Mean rank	Sig.
gender	Male	83%	98	.000
	female	7%	62	
age	18-35	72%	58	.000
	36-57	28%	88	
Marital Status	Single	59%	46	.000
	Married	41%	99	
Tenure	Less than 1	15%	15	.000
	1-5	45%	53	
	more than 5	40%	33	

With regards to gender and marital status, the results in table (1) are in agreement with those of Wong and Ko, (2009) which revealed that the relationship between WLB issues and Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance was positively correlated with gender and marital status.

Table 2: Means and Standard deviation of questionnaire items

Work–life balance practices		Mean	ST.devision
Enough time-off from work		2.08	.5303
E_1	I have enough time for sleeping	2.1	.5010
E_2	I have enough time after work to carry out personal matters	2	.5052
E_3	I have enough time for my family	2.9	.5040
E_4	I have enough time for my friends	1.3	.6110
Workplace support of work–life balance		2.9	.4784
W_1	My co-workers are very supportive when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	3	.6004
W_2	My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	3.3	.5062
W_3	I will consider changing from working full time to part time for a time frame, say 6 months, 1 year or 2 years, to fulfill my personal needs (e.g. 4 h per day, 5 days per week .	2.2	.3011
W_4	I work very smoothly to handover to the next shift because of the flexibility provided by the hotel	3.1	.5062
Allegiance to work		3.63	.5028
A_1	I look forward to being with the people I work with each day	3.9	.5012
A_2	I accept working over time each day because I am committed to my job	3.1	.6062
A_3	I find it easy to concentrate at work because of family support	3.9	.4012
Flexibility of work schedule		2.75	.5556
F_1	I have personal discretion over my starting and finishing times	2	.9072
F_2	I can change my roster if the daily working hours are not consistent	2.6	.3643
F_3	I can schedule my preferred days off supported by my team	3.1	.4076
F_4	I can finish work within contracted hours	3.3	.5435
Life orientation		4.43	.4910
L_1	I want to spend more time to fulfill my aspirations/interests	4.3	.7072
L_2	I have different responsibilities to meet during different life stages	4.4	.4643
L_3	I feel happy when I have family time for my family life	4.6	.3016
Voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs		4.15	.5178
V_1	I would consider working fewer hours per shift each day (exclude meal time) for a pro-rated salary	4.1	.6034
V_2	I will consider changing from working full time to part time for a time frame, say 6 months, 1–2 years to fulfill my personal needs	4.2	.4322
Upkeep the work and career		3.43	.5981
U_1	I accept working at least 10 h a day to keep up my workload	4	.5421
U_2	I accept working extra hours each day because it is essential to progress in my career	3.4	.5402
U_3	I choose not work over time even I got paid or compensated for day off	2.9	.7122
Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance		2.4	.3302
P_1	I feel my work–life is balanced	2.4	.3302

Table (2) shows that work–life balance practices represent life orientation, voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs, allegiance to work, and upkeep the work and career had means of 4.43, 4.15, 3,63 and 3.43 respectively while workplace support of work–life balance, flexibility of work schedule, and enough time-off from work are represented with a mean of 2.9, 2.75, and 2.08. From the previous table(2), it could be noticed that enough time-off from work designated by E_3, E_1 and higher means, 2.9, 2.1than E_2 , and E_4 , 2 and 1.3. From these findings we can conclude that enough time-off from work means negative perception of frontline employees about work at hotels. In addition, from the tabulated data it can be seen that workplace support of work–life balance, allegiance to work and flexibility on work schedule recorded means of (3, 3.3, 2.2, and 3.1) , (3.9, 3.1, and 3.9) and (2, 2.6, 3.1 , and 3.3), respectively.

Also, the results in table (2) clearly state that Life orientation, voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs and upkeep the work and career recorded means of (4.3, 4.4, and 4.6) , (4.1 , and 4.2) and (4, 3.4 , and 2.9), respectively.

Furthermore, the statement is I feel my work–life is balanced reported a mean of (2.4), which indicates a negative influence of work–life balance issues on, Perception of frontline hotel employees about work–life balance.

Relationship between work life balance and perception of frontline employees at Sharm El-Sheikh hotels

To indicate the relationship between work life balance practices and perception of frontline employees in hotels, a correlation was measured. The results significant relationships among all these variables (tables 3).

The findings clearly revealed positive relationships between the perception of frontlines employees and the seven practices of WLB: Flexibility of work schedule (r= 0.72, Sig. <0.000); Life orientation (r= 0.62, Sig. <0.000); workplace support of work–life balance (r= 0.59, Sig. <0.000); allegiance to work (r= 0.48, Sig. <0.000); Enough time-off from work (r= 0.43, Sig. <0.000); Voluntary reduction of contracted hours (r= 0.41, Sig. <0.000); and Upkeep the work and career (r= 0.39, Sig. <0.000), respectively (see table 3).

Table 3: Correlation between work life balance and perception of frontline employees at hotels

		Enough time-off from work	Perception of frontlines employees
Enough time-off from work	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.43 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.43 .000 320	1 320
		Workplace support of work–life balance	**Perception of frontlines employees**
workplace support of work–life balance	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.59 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.59 .000 320	1 320
		Allegiance to work	**Perception of frontlines employees**
Allegiance to work	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.48 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.48 .000 320	1 320
		Flexibility on work schedule	**Perception of frontlines employees**
Flexibility of work schedule	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.72 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.72 .000 320	1 320
		Life orientation	**Perception of frontlines employees**
Life orientation	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.62 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.62 .000 320	1 320
		Voluntary reduction of contracted hours	**Perception of frontlines employees**
Voluntary reduction of contracted hours	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	1 320	.41 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.41 .000 320	1 320
		Upkeep the work and career	**Perception of frontlines employees**
Upkeep the work and career	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	 320 320	.39 .000 320
Perception of frontline employees	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.39 .000 320	1 320

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression results of work life balance practices with the perception of frontline employees at hotels

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the seven dependent variables, which are work life balance practices affect the independent variables, which are perception of frontline employees in hotels or not (see table 4).

Table 4: Work life balance influencing the perception of frontline employees at hotels

Variables	Un-standardized coefficients		Sig.	Model statistics
	B	Std. Error R-square	.000	
Constant	.069	.0020	.000	
(A) Enough time-off from work	.035	.0059 . 401	.000	
(B) workplace support of work–life balance	.128	.0012 .501	.000	
(C) Allegiance to work	.315	.0099 .402	.000	*F: 11.8903*
(D) Flexibility of work schedule	.045	.0059 . 601	.000	
(E) Life orientation	.165	.0002 .590	.000	
(F) Voluntary reduction of contracted hours	.445	.0001 .390	.000	
(G) Upkeep the work and career	.065	.0029 . 381	.000	

Regression equation can be formed as perception of frontline employees in hotels = .069 + .035(A) + .128(B) + .315(C) + .045(D) + .165(E) + .445(F) + .065(G).

With regard to the influence of work life balance on the perception of frontline employees, it was found to significantly affect "enough time-off from work" (R-square =.401, P-value=.000), "workplace support of work–life balance" (R-square =.501, P-value=.000), "allegiance to work" (R-square =.402, P-value=.000), "flexibility on work schedule" (R-square =.601, P-value=.000), "life orientation" (R-square =.590, P-value=.000), "voluntary reduction of contracted hours" (R-square =.390, P-value=.000), and "upkeep the work and career" (R-square =.381, P-value=.000), thus hypothesis 6 (see table 4) is supported.
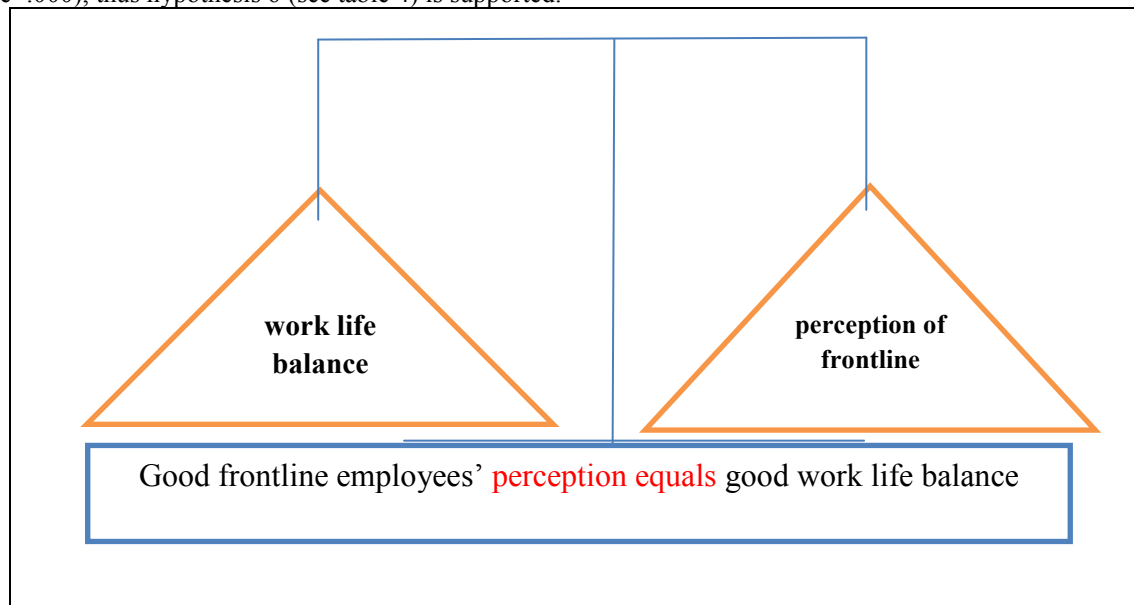

Figure 2: Research Results

Conclusion and recommendations

The study aimed at gaining better understanding of the current situation in the hotel industry so as to provide HR practitioners a comprehensive perspective to create a healthy and productive workforce. This study could provide useful implications for frontline employees:

1. Hotels must provide a package to employees for the purpose of attracting talents and increasing retention rate. It includes ''benefits'' such as leave for getting married, holiday house, office parties, health care benefits and training courses for personal development. Many benefits are designed to be family-friendly to balance shift workers' family needs due to the erratic job nature.
2. Efficient training programs can be used as a tool to help employees manage stress and handle multiple roles rigorously.
3. Hotels should pay more attention and listen to employees and appreciate their differences and needs.
4. Work schedule must be more flexible to balance the demands of the workplace and the personal life of the employees.
5. Family matters must be a key factor for the motivation of employees.

Limitations and future research directions

This study measured only the effect of work life balance on the perception of frontline employees at the hotels of Sharm El-Sheikh. In future, studies should be done at hotels of other cities. Second, this research focused only on the frontline employees, it would also be beneficial to examine these relationships in other hotel departments.

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دراسة عن إدراك عاملى الخط الأمامى بفنادق مدينة شرم الشيخ للتوازن بين متطلبات العمل وحياتهم الشخصية
جيهان الأمير عباس

أصبح لدى العاملين في الألفية الثالثة وعى بحقوقهم كما ارتفع سقف طموحهم فلم يعد يقتصر على المرتبات المجزية أو العائد المادي الملموس، بل أن التوازن بين متطلبات العمل والحياة الاجتماعية والشخصية بات حافزاً لاستمرار العامل المتميز في فندقه أو مغادرته. لذا يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة المدركات المتعلقة بالتوازن بين العمل والحياة الاجتماعية للعاملين في الوظائف التي تتعلق بمواجهة العملاء في فنادق الخمس نجوم بمدينة شرم الشيخ .

يكون هناك عبْ عمل ويتقبله بصدر رحب. جمعت البيانات استخدام استمارات استقصاء وزعت على 20 فندقاً فئة خمس نجوم بمدينة شرم الشيخ وتم تحليلها بواسطة برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS)، أوضحت النتائج أن الموظفين الذين قضوا سنوات خبرة طويلة داخل العمل، بالإضافة إلى العزاب لديهم قدرة أكبر على تحقيق التوازن بين العمل وحياتهم الشخصية من توصيات هذه الدراسة ضرورة تطبيق برامج المساعدة للعاملين في مشكلاتهم المادية والصحية مع خلق بيئة عمل ايجابية وذلك بمنحهم المرونة داخل أعمالهم وسماع أي شكاوى تخصهم. كما يجب على الإدارة من البداية توفير سياسات من شأنها دعم موظفيها لحياتهم الشخصية وذلك لرفع روحهم المعنوي والتي ستعود بالإيجاب على أعمالهم.

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