

Work Life Balance: A Study of Information Technology (IT) Industry in India

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Abstract

Human resources are the most important and indispensable resource of a business organization devoid of which all other resources cannot be utilized. Human resources can perform efficiently and effectively only when their work and personal life is balanced well. An unmanageable schedule and out of control personal life can lead to poor performance at work, depression, and conflict with family or colleagues and a feeling of exhaustion. And similarly poor working environment, long working hours, heavy workload, work pressure, hectic work schedule and stressful work also adversely impact the health of employees. Maintaining balance in work and family life is a great challenge for both employers and employees. In this research paper attempt has been made to reframe the concept of work life balance and shed light on various aspects related to work life balance. This paper puts emphasis on the fact that organizations need to adopt different strategies for different employees based on their requirements and the problems they are facing to manage their work and personal life. The study specializes in analyzing the employees' level of satisfaction with regards to the Work Life Balance Practices in Information Technology (IT) Industry in India. The findings confer most of the IT professionals are either moderately satisfied or slightly satisfied with company's WLB policies. Hence industrialists have to recognize the affected areas of WBL and take vital steps for its improvement.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Work Life Conflicts, Information Technology Industry, WLB Practices.

Introduction

Whatever happens at the workplace largely influences whatever happens in the personal lives. Likewise, whatever happens outside workplace influences the way a person feels and performs at the workplace? A stressed and work loaded employee is left with no patience and energy to support their little children or look after old parents. Managing work life balance is a challenge for both employers and employees particularly in IT industry where employees are loaded with work at workplace and at the same time they have to balance their personal life. Personal life and work life are 2 sides of the same coin. Managing a balance between the work and personal life is considered to be a work life balance issue in most of the organizations. Increasing work pressure, globalization, hectic schedules and Work-life balance is an emerging issue which includes proper time management and stress management. If the employees are able to manage their personal and professional life, it will not only keep them contented and satisfied but also leads to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness and reduce their absenteeism rate, leading to increase in productivity and higher task overall performance.

Work-life Balance Dilemma: Family, Work, Friends and Self

The term 'work life balance' (WLB) can be defined as the amount of time a worker spend doing his job compared with the amount of time he spend with his family and doing things a worker enjoy. Work-life Balance is an initiative which incorporates right prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "life-style" (fitness, delight, enjoyment, own family, friends and religious improvement/ meditation). Work-life stability does not suggest that there have to be equal stability throughout all factors of an individual's lifestyles. All over the world the corporations are annoying

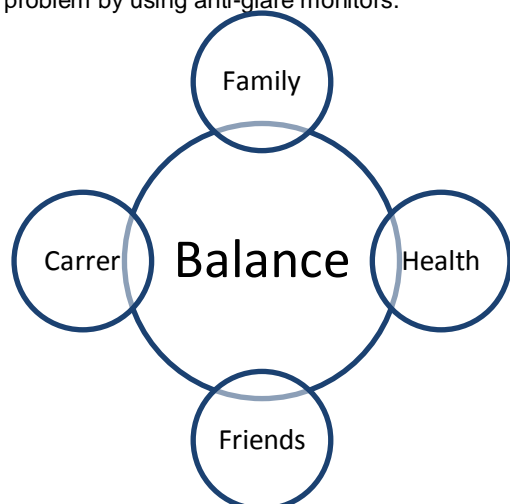
increasingly more from their personnel's work –life imbalances, dissimilar to those, who are focusing more on the recognizing, satisfying and balancing their personnel's' needs to enhance productivity. In an organization, group of workers may include married employees, unmarried employees, dual career couples, single parents whose goal is to find stability among their professional and family roles; is an issue for them as well as the companies. There are certain issues which arise owing to the work/ life imbalances and stress at workplace:

Detachment from the Family

Due to overloaded work, the employees are not able to give adequate time for their families. Problems often arise when they get married and burdened with additional responsibilities of running a family. Many of the employees especially in private companies work on Indian holidays even, and feel frustrated.

Health Problems

The outcome of stressful work leads to many health related problems such as tension, sleeplessness, headaches, eye-strain, backache etc. The gradual awareness that there is limited possibility in making a career owing to fewer growth opportunities may increase the frustration levels among the employees in the organizations; coupled with growing mental fatigue and, depression is the obvious end result. Furthermore, globally, IT industry employees have to face eye related problems. While the quality of monitors might highly affect these disorders, sitting constantly without breaks seems to be the valid reason. This has been a common problem in the BPO and banking sector too, in which some companies have already taken steps to resolve the problem by using anti-glare monitors.



Challenges of Work-Life Imbalance

The imbalance between work and personal life results in many challenges. Some of those are discussed as follows:

Challenges for Employee

Constant struggle to maintain a balance in work and personal life can lead to serious implications. In WLB studies, it has been found that struggling with such situations, a person's health often

suffers. Heart diseases, depression, sleep disorders, irritability, poor concentration, insecurity and even nervous breakdowns are becoming common among the victims of such imbalance. Stress, tension or pressure in work life can lead to bad social life and vice versa.

Challenges for Employer

Employer has to understand the Challenges of Work-Life Imbalance and take steps to balance their work and life otherwise it may cause high rate of absenteeism or staff sickness, high level of staff turnover, high pressure on employees, reduced productivity and profitability.

Significance of Work Life Balance

Work-Life-Balance is a position of equilibrium in which the fulfillment of roles of both personal life and person's job are equal. Work and personal life stability necessitate in achieving equilibrium among professional and personal roles that result in job delight where the attitude of professionals toward their job and the agencies they work for is positive. The quality of work-life balance strategies necessitates dealing with the challenging roles the professionals have to play and utilize their potential for better work performance and commitment at work. Spending more time in workplace, dealing with clients can affect the private lifestyles, once in a while, making not possible to even fulfill their family roles. On the contrary, private life can also be more affected if employees have children, old parents, financial problems, family disturbances or conflicts etc. It can result in absenteeism from work, increased stress and less attention at workplace. This fact and work-life imbalance problems holds the attention of the researchers, policy makers and industrialists to develop the trustworthy standards for the work-life equilibrium attainment and worker's good health. Therefore the significance of studies on managing work-life balance is increasing manifold.

Work Life Balance Management: Benefits

The employees and employers need to manage well both personal and job related stresses for WLB. With the management of this problem in an organization, it can surely reap the following benefits for employer as well as employees:

Table 1: Work Life Balance Management: Benefits

Employee's Benefits	Employer's Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work life balance policies assists to manage work and Individual commitments. • It promotes improvement in personal and family relationships. • Aids in focus towards work and job satisfaction as the family and work commitments are being met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps in reduction of Absenteeism rates. • Work life balance increases employee morale and commitment. • Better teamwork and communication. • Leads to the attraction of highly skilled Employees in the organization. • The policies of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It leads to less distraction and frustration. • Leads to high morale and enthusiasm. • Increased job security due to organizational support through work life balance policies. • Promotes happy and healthy living. 	<p>work life balance assist the decrease in Employee Turnover and thus lower the recruitment and training cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds to Return on Investment as worker stay for a longer period. • Helps in improved productivity and profitability.
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Source: Author's Construction

Work Life Balance Practices

As from the recent researches it has been found that many organizations are practicing the several WLB initiatives for time management and stress management in order to improve their personnel's' Work and Personal roles.

1. Reasonable Working Hours to reduce long work hours or double shifts and not stick to 9 to 5 working hour routine.
2. Flexible Working Hours to let employees select their own hours and offering more flexible working hours arrangements to all employees of the organization, including shift workers.
3. Part-time work facility by offering jobs with less hours or job sharing facility due to reasons like attending children or elderly, pursuing personal hobbies; studying etc.
4. Parental Leave can be taken to look after little kids and child welfare especially in case of working mothers.
5. Family Leave may be taken for the serious illness of any family member on provision of medical certificate.
6. Tele-working/work from home facility for employees to fulfill their additional responsibilities towards self and family. By giving the autonomy to work from home for some times a week, can help to manage stress and promote healthy and happy staff.
7. Access to childcare by offering onsite childcare facilities or regular fixed shifts.
8. Flexible leave arrangements by offering more flexibility in leave arrangements according to employees' personal requirements.
9. Telephone access to make sure employees should receive urgent messages and calls from their family members during working hours.
10. Less rigid lunch schedules by not providing specific lunch break hours and offering reasonable time for their lunch break.
11. Provide equipments/laptops to work from anywhere by training employees on using messaging

programs to keep in touch especially in urgent situations

12. Encourage social activities by having activities, social committees or events like sports teams, movie nights, or after-work dinners etc. can help workers sense more at home at the workplace that can support them being more productive at workplace.
13. Safety and wellbeing by providing safety, security, employee friendly environment and respect for all workers makes a company an attractive workplace.

Review of Literature

Adams et al (1996) developed a model for relationship between work and family from the existing literature and tested empirically. The model variables comprised work-family conflict, family support, job and family involvement to job and life satisfaction. The Data from 163 workers living with at least 1 family member was collected. Results conferred that relationships between work and family have an essential effect on job and life satisfaction. The results also suggested that the relationship between work and family can be characterized by conflict and support simultaneously. High work level interfering with family envisaged low level of family support. High level of family support was connected with low level of family interference in work.

Beauregard and Henry (2009) established link for work-life balance practices influence on the organizational performance. The findings showed that the impact WLB practices can be moderated by factors such as job level, national context, and managerial support. The significance of these practices enhanced social exchange processes, reduced turnover, increased cost savings and improved productivity.

Chandra (2010) emphasized role of women is shifting from domestic life to working domain which causes problem of balancing work and family called as the 'work-family conflict'. The author further criticized that work-family conflict is not only a 'women's problem' as it has been evidenced from studies that men also face work-family conflict as like women.

Oktoatrio, (2018) analyzed the relationship among work-life-balance and motivation in context of public sector employees in Indonesia. The author developed conceptual framework through motivational and work-life-balance theories, and undertaken descriptive research. Sample size of 86 respondents of local government employees of Jakarta, Indonesia was taken through survey questionnaire. Findings conferred that personal life significantly affected the work. Employees prefer flexible work and work from home. Females were found more eager to work from home than males. All employees look for taking holiday in comparison

to extra money or bonus. Working for long hours was the most discouraging job attribute.

Tasnim et al. (2017) enlightened the reasons for work-life imbalance in perspective of women working in different sectors in Bangladesh. The study was based on primary research and a sample of 40 female employees from different organizations was taken using Questionnaire and interviews. The study showed that the reasons for which female employees face regarding work-life balance were mainly long working hours, work overload, job rigidity, responsibilities related to child care, lack of supervisory support, discrimination & biasness at work place, less family support and dominant managerial style.

Naithani, P. (2016) explored the impact of health and recreation on work-life balance and emphasized that significance of expatriates in globalization phase necessitates work-life balance initiatives to help them to contribute effectively. Author investigated the health and recreation areas of expatriate academicians who were working in private higher education institutes in Oman, Bahrain and the UAE. Consequently it was found that health and recreation spheres in relation to the demographic factors of the respondents improve work-life balance of expatriate employees.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the research is to analyze the employees' level of satisfaction with regards to the Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices adopted by IT industry in India and to suggest the measures to improve the Work Life Balance (WLB) in the same context.

Research Methodology

The IT industry is one of the fastest developing sector in India and contributing in

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Employees' level of satisfaction regarding Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices adopted by IT Companies in India (N=114)

Serial No.	Statements	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
1	Reasonable Working Hours	1.69	1.032
2	Flexible Working Hours	1.69	1.256
3	Part-time work facility	2.90	.809
4	Parental Leave for kids care	3.52	.952
5	Family Leave for sickness of family member	1.43	.624
6	Work from home facility	1.77	.765
7	Online Access to childcare from workplace	2.36	.597
8	Flexible leave arrangements	2.54	.811
9	Telephone access with family at workplace	2.42	.861
10	Less rigid lunch schedules	3.24	1.075
11	Provide equipments/laptops to work from anywhere	3.40	1.119
12	Encourage social activities	2.66	.807
13	Safety, Security and wellbeing	2.62	.813

Source: Primary Data

From the results of the analysis of Table1 it can be depicted that IT professionals are highly satisfied by parental leave policy for childcare (mean score= 3.52) and are moderately satisfied by the part time working policy (mean score= 2.90), Flexible leave arrangements (mean score= 2.54), less rigid lunch schedules (mean score= 3.24), provision for

economic growth largely. It is also offering newer job opportunities to diverse groups of the nation. Due to globalisation and challenging job roles, IT employees have to face work life balance problems. Therefore determining the WLB problems among IT professionals and taking measures for its improvement is important. So, the study is conducted to analyze the employees' level of satisfaction with regards to Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices adopted by IT industry in India. The descriptive research design has been used in the study. Primary Data has been gathered with the help of online questionnaire using social networks from 114 IT professionals from various cities in India. Secondary data has been collected from various research papers and websites. The data analysis has been done using statistical software i.e. SPSS Version 21. The level of employees' satisfaction has been measured using 5 points likert scale ranging from not satisfied to extremely satisfied (where 1=not satisfied, 2= slightly satisfied, 3= moderately satisfied, 4= highly satisfied and 5= extremely satisfied). The Chronbach's Alpha reliability indices for all dimensions of Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices are .734 which means there is good internal consistency. The statistical tools namely mean and standard deviation and bar chart are used to examine the level of employees' satisfaction with regards to work life balance practices therein.

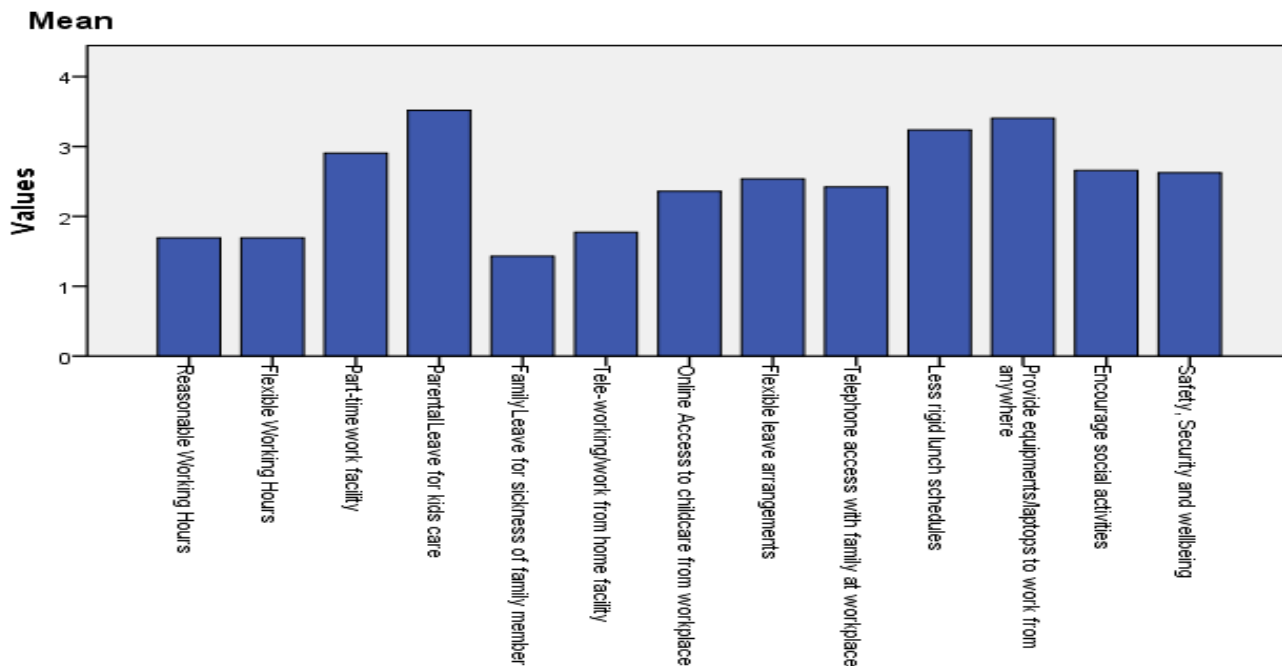
providing equipments/laptops to work from anywhere (mean score= 3.40), encouragement to social activities (mean score= 2.66) and safety, security and wellbeing policies (mean score= 2.62).

On contrary, they are slightly satisfied by the company's reasonable working hour policy (mean score= 1.69), Flexibility in working hours (mean

score= 1.69), work from home facility (mean score= 1.77), online Access to childcare (mean score= 2.36), and telephone access with family at workplace (mean

score= 2.42). However, most of the IT professionals are not satisfied by family leave policy for sickness of family member (mean score= 1.43).

Figure 1: Chart showing Employees' level of satisfaction regarding Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices adopted by IT Companies in India



Source: Primary Data

Note

N=114

Values: 1= not satisfied, 2= slightly satisfied, 3= moderately satisfied, 4= highly satisfied and 5= extremely satisfied)

Conclusion

Sensitivity to WLB is nowadays witnessed as a crucial element of sensible management. A well managed corporation does not focus on work hard but work smart. In this study IT professionals are found highly satisfied by parental leave policy for childcare and moderately satisfied by the part time working policy, Flexible leave arrangements, less rigid lunch schedules, provision for providing equipments/laptops to work from anywhere, encouragement to social activities and safety, security and wellbeing policies. On contrary they are found slightly satisfied by the company's reasonable working hour policy, flexibility in working hours, work from home facility, online access to childcare, telephone access with family at workplace. Whereas, most of the IT professionals are not satisfied by family leave policy for sickness of family member.

As evidenced from the existing literature, effective Work-Life Balance practices are crucial for both employees and employers. WLB is a crucial area of people management function. Therefore, IT companies must give some flexibility to employees with regard to WLB as the employees' dissatisfaction directly effects their performance and has negative impact on overall organizational performance as well

as profitability. Thus companies must focus on rewarding well performing staff, fostering & retaining talent, providing consistent training opportunities, flexi working hours, family-friendly policies, shorter hours, childcare subsidies more holidays etc. for effective WLB.

Implications

The above discussion helped in analyzing the aspects related to the Work Life Balance Practices among IT industry employees. As observed, the WLB directly affects the employees' psychology and satisfaction level. It has eventual impact on the overall performance of business and thus profitability. Hence industrialists have to recognize the affected areas of WBL and take vital steps for its maintenance.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

The employee perceptions regarding Work Life Balance (WLB) Practices have been analyzed in context of IT companies, the study can be undertaken with regard to other sectors also. The study is confined to few cities of India. Other geographical regions in can be considered for the future studies. The results may also not generalize to other countries. Due to time constraint, data has been collected from 114 IT professionals and may also subject to personal biasness of respondents. Larger sample size can be considered to remove the limitation. The other aspects and dimensions related to Work Life Balance can be explored in further studies.

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