WORK LIFE BALANCE AN EMERGING ISSUE FOR BOTH MALE AND FEMALE PROFESSIONALS IN IT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed at the theme of work life balance, and in this we have tried to study a various aspects relating to the topic. Work life balance is a key area for quality concern gurus, who believes that balance between work and life is of vital importance when we talk about performance of the work force in any organization. Through this paper we have tried to study the effectiveness of workforce in IT sector. The term work-life balance is gradually becoming common topic to discuss on especially for the IT professionals. It is a state of equilibrium in which the demand of both personal and professional life is equal. An individual plays a number of roles in his life and each role has its different set of demands or requirements and when these demands overlap one has to face multiple problems. While designing the work-life policies an employer should keep in mind that all the factors of an employee’s both personal as well as professional lives.

KEYWORDS: work life balance, women, IT sector, organization policies, India.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization in India has resulted in a boom in every sector whether IT, academics, retail, banking or any other. A drastic revolution has been noticed regarding employment everywhere. Today we have more jobs, more work and less time for our self and for our family. Work-life balance actually is a proper balance between our personal and professional life. But in a
marathon of work there is lack of balance between the two. We can say that everyone is experiencing work life imbalance which is something very serious to be sought out as soon as possible. Major impact of globalization has been found in IT sector. India is among one of the leaders in the world in outsourcing field.

Indian IT industries are providing outsourcing services to the whole world. There is lot of work pressure on the IT professionals which is resulting in Work-Life imbalance. Actually Work-life balance means different to different people and different at different stages of life say for e.g. The work-life of a single may include more work and less personal time, his motive may be only to earn more and more money and achievements whereas this may not be the case of a family person along with money his priorities will be to give proper time to his family and children. (Alma McCarthy, Colette Darcy and Geraldine Grady, 2010) If we talk about different stages of life then we can say that for e.g. a young blood has more energy to work and deal with work pressure but this may not be the case of a middle age person. His age factor may be a reason that he can’t bear that much work pressure. However, any definition for anyone must include the problems of lack of time and exhaustion (Susi. S, Jawaharrani. K, 1998). Work–life balance is a broad concept which includes a proper prioritizing between "work" career and ambition on the one hand and “life" i.e. health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development on the other. Work-life balance is about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments, which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reviewing research related literature is an important step in undertaking a research. It helps in illustrating and defining the issues, asserting objectives, formulating hypothesis, making selection of a suitable design and methodology of research as well as interpreting results considering the research work already undertaken. In this chapter efforts have been made to deliver an outline of various aspects in this study through the review of available literature. The sources referred include various journals, working papers, internet sites, magazines related to human resource, online articles, books etc. As we all know that work life balance means more value and balance in our life, which helps us in understanding our best work life balance. This understanding results in increased productivity, better relationship both on and off the job. When an employee is well satisfied with his work as well as at his home he has a stress free life – a healthy personal as well as professional life.

Most of the progressive organizations especially the IT sector have taken into consideration the issues related to work & life & also they have tried their level best to take care of their employees by separating work from life.

To have a justified and detailed review of the literature, we have arranged the studies under the following headings:

- Work life balance and IT sector
- Issues regarding work life balance in IT sector
• Working women and work life balance

2.1 WORK LIFE BALANCE AND IT SECTOR

In a society full of responsibilities and commitments, a balanced work life seems to be a prime issue. We can say that there can be three major factors contribute to interest in and the importance of, serious consideration of work life balance and they are: cut throat global competition, transformed or changed interest in family values plus personal lives and last but not the least aging work force. Researches suggests that forward thinking human resource professionals coming up with innovative techniques to expand the organization’s competitive advantages into market may come up with solutions to work life challenges and offer a win-win situation. Blood & Wolfe (1996) & Piotrkowski (1998) explained that work & life are ‘integrated rather than separated for typical software professionals. In the discussion of work & life of employees working in some organization it isn’t possible to ignore the other side of the picture that is employer, who are generally responsible for providing the employee with WLB opportunities or facilities.

Employer strategies of ‘respect’, embodied for example in family-friendly policies have shown to have positive outcomes for the IT professionals (Fine gold et al., 2002). On the other hand negative spillover from work to non-work life i.e. emotional exhaustion has been shown to adversely affect organizations in the form of low commitment & high turnover (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). WLB has important consequences for the employee attitudes towards their organizations as well as for the lives of the employees (Scholarios &Marks, 2004). The work-life boundary may be important in the management of the highly skilled IT professional whose commitment may be challenge to employer. While looking at the work & life aspects of IT professional in a metro city like Pune it is well said that a professional is usually married to his/her work. It’s very hard to separate work from non-work activities in case of IT professionals. Factor analysis was performed and it was found that two factors namely psychological and cognitive factor and organizational climatic factor are the causes of work life imbalances among women working in the IT sector. But these factors were not analysed properly. In this study we will try to cover all those aspects which have been left untouched regarding the problems faced by the IT professionals & their nearest possible solutions as well. Previous researchers have found that an imbalance in work-life of women has a negative impact over their marital & family functioning.

Researchers have proved that though Indian market has been offering many job opportunities in the IT field both to men & women and also women have made decisive advances in labour market there hasn’t been much progress in the IT industry. The reasons attributed to this could be multifaceted. It could be because of the practices & policies of the work environment, the organizational climate, the family situations etc. It is usually believed that organizations, which have introduced the concept of work-life balance, their employees would tend to have a more balanced life. But previous researchers have found that only multi-national organizations follow or have adopted extremely progressive work-life balance policies. Thus as compared to local, Indian MNC’s have been more successful in providing a more balanced work life to its employees. Therefore it was hypothesized that men & women in Indian MNC’s have a higher work-life balance than those in local Indian organizations.
Work-life balance comes from being healthy. So when people come to work, it is important that they are healthy. Occupational health can be divided into physical, psychological & emotional. Stress, burnout, work-family conflicts are common. One of the consequences of poor work-life balance in the initial stages is low satisfaction & usually that ends in a stress, burnout etc. Stress has been laid on the importance of understanding the capacity of a person not just as a candidate for a job but with regards to their family life etc. It is not about saying that the IT profession is wrong or bad but that it shouldn’t crowd out the other things that matter to people, like time with family, participation in community activities, voluntary work, personal development, leisure & recreation. Many researches were conducted to determine the reasons for the voluntary turnover of women especially in the IT sector who have just started their family life.

This study will illustrate the current workplace conditions and some of the reasons causing imbalances in work and life. The study will focus on the working women in the IT sector, the hazards and problems they face at work and in family life with special focus on IT companies in India. Hammer (1996) studied that in case where both the partners are working especially when both are in IT sector work family issues have strong limit effecting both males and females, signifying that an individual’s level of work-life balancing conflict is a substantial analyst of his or her partner’s work-life balancing conflict. A study(Williams, K.J.,&G.M.1994) found that work to family issue is more dominant than family to work, suggesting that family limitations are more absorbent to work requirements as compared to the work limitations over family requirements.

According to Alliger (1999) in case of IT professionals the ratio of interference of work over family life is higher than family over work life. (Harsh and Eagle 2000) work and family issues were equally absorptive with work to family conflicts being significantly more predominate than family to work issues.

2.2 ISSUES REGARDING WORK LIFE BALANCE IN IT SECTOR

It is often said that work life balance is vital for everyone for being healthy and stable in life. Quality work cannot be done by working constantly for long hours without any time off on the contrary best output can be given after taking a periodic break.

There are a large number of factors working behind imbalanced work life balance in IT sector some of them are:

- **WORK TIME:** usually the working hours of the IT professionals are long as compared to other professions. Well the work timings vary from company to company and also for different levels in a particular company. The employees usually prefer to work for fixed number of hours per day or week and even per month. The reason behind this is that they want to spend sufficient time with their family.

- **RELATIONS WITH SUPERIORS AND SUBORDINATES:** many times inter personal relations also play an important role in managing a person’s work life schedule. A supportive staff shares your workload and responsibilities which helps the concerned person in managing his personal as well as professional life. In knowledge based industry it is very
much necessary for the managers to take employees suggestions and ideas regarding balanced work life.

This helps to create a healthy superior- subordinate relationships plus a healthy work environment and also improves the quality of work-life balance.

- **WORK PRESSURE AND INSUFFICIENT STAFF**: The IT sector today is facing a cut throat competition in order to increase the revenue companies are taking more and more work from their clients. This in turn has increased work pressure on the employees who in order to meet the dead lines have to work more than the schedules work timings. Also lack of staff exhausts the working staff as the existing employees have to bear all the work pressure.

2.3 WORKING WOMEN AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

The work life balance has been intellectualized as an individual’s coordination with different roles of life (Marks & MacDiarmid, 1989), satisfaction and smooth functioning at work place and at home as well with minimum conflicts and a satisfied, healthy and productive life including work, love and fun that adds a variety of activities in life followed by personal and spiritual development expressing a person’s unique wishes, interest and values Caparas, V.(2008). Various studies have been made in context to different issues related to women and employment—twine role perceptions and performances, organizers and restrictions as well as the surviving strategies women employ for their work life balance. Studies on women in professional field are made with the consideration that though there will be certain issues which are exclusive to the professionals, the general pattern and tendencies will be related to the professional women in different work areas. Whatever women do, they must do it twice as well as to be thought half as good— is a famous saying.

Yet it is now common to find women in almost every system of any industry. Skillfully handling even the toughest of tasks or jobs from a bus conductor to astronaut, women have proved that they definitely are not weak when compared to men. Although studies throughout the world have revealed that women who links themselves with any exceptional occupational field have to face many challenges at personal, family as well as social level. Many scientific researches have defined the concept of stress or conflict among the work life balance of women. The focus of most of the studies was on the work life balance conflict or we can say work life imbalance (Wolfe, Rosenthal & Khan 1992). Though sometimes studies attempted to evaluate conflicts between multiple specific roles like marital, parental, housekeeping, and outside employment (Ayree 1992), majority of studies focused on conflicts arising from an individual’s attempts to meet both family life and professional life (Ismail Ahmad 1994) stated that conflict between work life and family life was strongly observed in life of women in comparison to men. During past few decades there has been a boom in women joining various professions, irrespective of that their position have been noticed remaining marginal in all professions. (Edwin et al 1995) Another factor with which working women especially married and having children are concerned with is the child care facility at their work place. Several studies have proved that there is a possible connection between a professional women’s satisfaction with the child care facility at the work place and her experience of the role stress. Though child care arrangement was not equivalent to job satisfaction in that it affected only single aspect of a person’s role as a parent,
research suggested that it may however have a substantial influence on role strain, especially on working mothers.

Many of the researches on work life balance are based on the principle that roles certainly create strain for working women. Barnett (1996) focused on the importance of overwork for women. They are in general expected to be over loaded with role demands or obligations and as an individual are at times felt unable to perform adequately. On the contrary in some researches it has been found that there is a positive radiate both from home to work and work to home. Through various studies it has been found that the work life balance policies of a women originates from the changing demographic outlook of the potential female work force, changing social roles of the women, her changing responsibilities in the organization plus the legislative pressure.

Various researches have been done and many are in progress for correcting the concept of favouritism of dominating focus on the negative outcomes of work life interface. Increasing number of female work force in IT sector is wishing to combine the personal as well as professional responsibilities which are very obviously a driver for what we call work life balance policy Rajadhyaksha and Velgach (1998) and which is becoming more and more important in the tight work schedule or we can say very busy work life. Work life balance policies and practices are becoming even more important to IT employers as in today’s cut throat competing business world employee’s satisfaction, productivity, motivation and profitability can be increased only if the employee is working with free mind which can be achieved by a balanced work family life only. The working domain of women in India is changing at incredible pace because of remarkable reduction in trade barriers, adoption of modern innovative technologies, globally interconnected marketplace, cut throat competition and changing family and population patterns. Family pattern means changing family structure s i.e. from joint family to nuclear family, changed and different family value systems, reduction in time spent with fam

Most of these factors results in tension into the life of the women and then it is magnified at times in case when both the partners are working, they have growing children plus old age parents. This type of constant worries may cause psychological discomfort on women because of feeling of weakened control over one’s life and a negative thought of lack of time to balance life. Such mentally stressful conditions of women lead to physical stress resulting in ill health, headache, gastritis, body ache etc. or long term problems like high blood pressure, cardiac problems, diabetes or psychiatric problems. According to Sturges J & Guest D.(2004)the structure of families and roles of women vary throughout the world, but on the whole they play a key role for the domestic or we can say house hold and childcare responsibilities. The rapidly increasing number of working women and determination for their career has resulted in increasing attention towards work life balance issues. One of the major changes foreseen in the Indian labour market is the entry of women in different professions into different sectors.

The Indian society has traditionally granted a favoured status to men as a chief breadwinner (Sandeep, Awasthy 2000). The socialization at work, work environments, flexible work time and facilities provided by the employees make many employees to spend more time at office and enjoy the time (Gupta, Krishnan 2008). The role expectation of women is contradictory while at
A professional woman is expected to be soft, sensitive, sweet, gentle, and self-confident and at the same time domesticated (Mishra, Bhargav 2006). A well-managed healthy personal and professional life keeps an individual motivated and engaged. Hence balance work-life is crucial and a matter of strategic concern to employer as well as employees. There has been found a rapid growth in making policies in favour of women juggling in work and family life (Maria, Rao& Glaser 1998). Women entering IT profession traditionally reserved for males have to struggle, face lots of difficulties to make a place and prove themselves. Never less it must be acknowledged that in Indian society the new and expanded role of women with strong occupational identity is putting her under high pressure in terms of time and energy. An imbalanced work-life along with a point of concern is also a major reason of dissatisfaction. Besides it has been also noticed that there is a direct link between issues regarding work-life balance and withdrawal behaviours which includes turnover and non-genuine sick absence (Mark & Allen 2007).

The conflicting work and family life have been abstracted as an individual’s coordination with his different roles in life, an interpersonal phenomenon (Campbell, MacDermid 1994), smooth functioning at work place and at home with very less tension or conflict and a positive, result oriented, satisfying and healthy life including work, entertainment and love, integrating a series of life activities with time for self, family and also for personal and spiritual development (Shaffer, Mark 1989;Japolin & Laural2000). An imbalanced work-life is a major cause of concern for everyone. Most of the IT professionals whether male or female face the problem of work-life imbalance because of work pressure, multiple roles, work environment which involves behaviour of and with subordinates and superiors, family members, cut throat competition at work place, domestic responsibilities and many more. Literature on female IT professionals clearly proves that women in this field feel a sense of empowerment by their work; they develop a different and more confident identity from their profession (Shaffer et al, Fuller and Narasimhan 2001). Since IT is comparatively young field, it had initially been assumed that there may be lots of obstacles for women advancement as compared to other fields. It was assumed that a large pool of more experienced and qualified male professionals, lack of female role models and mentors and traditional discriminatory practices would be same major barriers to the women as an IT professional. Research on work life balance of women in every sector has acknowledged that in comparison to occupational roles, women are supposed to be more committed to their family role (Bhatnagar and Raksha 2002). In addition to that scholars have emphasized that contrary to women in western society the Indian women specially belonging from a joint family owe to take care of elderly family members or relatives. In a study (Pestonjee and Kapoor 1996) it has been found that because of family responsibility married women find it very difficult to maintain balance between their personal and professional life and as a result their career suffers, lack of cooperation from husbands may be one of the reason behind that.

This balancing between work and life further becomes more difficult when a woman becomes mother as along with work and home they now have to manage children too. (Banerjee, Parikh&Dutta 1998) in order to gain support from supervisors women have to prove their competency and capability in comparison to male colleagues at the work place. Today in a society where women as a work force are entering in the IT profession at a faster pace, it seems that the perception of work and family balance may replicate some exclusive elements. The
nature of Indian IT services, which is unique global delivery mode, also poses some unique challenges particularly for women IT professionals.

CONCLUSION

Work life balance has ever been a concern and hot issue for discussion among the researchers and scholars of the IT world. There a number of reasons for that such as indefensible attrition rate, stressful nature of job, frequent health problems, job switching talent pool etc. IT industry is one of the major contributors in the Indian GDP and one of the leading employment provider. The importance of work life balance in dual in nature it provides motivation, job satisfaction, productivity etc. to an employee and controlled attrition and improved retention rates, reduces absenteeism, high performance and efficiency, high commitment to an organization. In conclusion we can say that work life balancing is a vital issue in the IT profession. Given the project base nature of work, the regular use of extended schedule, heavy dependence upon technology and the enhanced timelines of IT operations, the IT employees in particular are subject to both time and strain based conflicts. Employees today expect their organizations to help them in managing their work life balance and in reducing their work related stress. To fight with the issues of dissatisfaction and turnover among the IT professionals, the organizations can play a facilitating role. They should first of all understand how work life balance conflicts can be fed into the undesirable consequences and then take progressive and practical steps to confront these issues.

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