Comparitive Study On Work Life Balance Of Women Employees In Information Technology

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ABSTRACT:
This article presents the findings of various researches which describes the influence of work life balance of women employees in IT sector. Considerable researches have highlighted the importance of work life balance of women employees in IT sector. Among the variables that have been studied, organizational commitment, Employee motivation, Skill development, Health and well-being and Job satisfaction have assumed special importance and are consistent with the trend towards providing more autonomy to employees. Since work life balance is an important indicator of women professionals a wide coverage on this topic has been given by a number of researchers.

INTRODUCTION:
Information Technology is an organized sector which provides an ample opportunity for women to work and grow. Most organizations in the IT industry recognize the role of women in workplace and are keen on providing a conducive work environment. In a landmark of India, the number of women constitutes 30 percent of workforce in IT-BPO sector. Nowadays, the IT companies in India are stepping up efforts to bridge the gender gap by implementing progressive policies and creating innovative solutions to hire, retain and encourage women talent. 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 the employee loyalty and productivity.

Women employees have undergone a drastic development from home maker to multi task player; they still struggle with the orthodox beliefs and rigid stereotype perceptions of the society. A women has proved her uniqueness by playing multiple roles like, a lovable and caring mother or daughter, a dutiful wife and as a good manager of her family. A major challenge for working women in this 21st century is to balance the demands of work as well as her family, for which she delays or even foregoes child-bearing to achieve their career goals.

PARAMETERS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE:
Technical Competence: Researchers have found evidence of career anchors in the IT workforce, although specific findings have been mixed. Schier 1987 has argued that the majority of IT professionals are either managerially or technically oriented. Crepeau et al’ 1992 found that IT employees possess a wide variety of career anchors that are largely independent of each another. They found that creativity and lifestyle were predominant among women IT employees. Brandth and Kvande 2001 report slightly different results in career anchors that competence and learning were found to be most prevalent among IT employees. Considering the three views of the researchers, it was decided to consider technical competence as a determining parameter in work life balance among women. Working hours, overtime and shift timings: Rutherford' and Greenberg 2001 explained the work-alcoholic nature of women due to overtime and working hours are also a cause of work life imbalances among women and hence the parameter working hours was considered as a parameter affecting work life balance among working women.
**Loss of Health:** White collar workers are highly affected by illness due to lack of correlation of work and family. Peterson and Wilson 1996 indicate that women do not take proper care of their health especially women working in IT industry. Hence health was identified as a determining parameter in work-life balance.

**Gender bias:** Bentsen 2000 suggests 'masculine' and 'feminine* skills are problematic in the workplace as there is more emphasis on the nature of the worker rather than the work. Additionally categorizations and equations relating to skill are deeply ingrained with gender bias, for example men/skilled, women/ unskilled" and further distinctions such as dirty/clean, heavy/light and technical/non-technical.

**Lack of job security:** A person can be happy only if his job is safe & secured" and though in several cases women are not primary, yet women feel safe if their job is safe.

**Emotions:** The mental problems like stress lead to imbalance in work and family life.

**Salary:** Glass ceiling has always been a cause of several problems. Working environment will be conducive only in the case the glass ceiling is broken". Discrimination in Remuneration becomes a cause of imbalance. Though there is an Equal Remuneration Act still due to glass ceiling remuneration may differ.

**Family pressures and interferences:** Abbott et al’ in their research indicate that external pressures from family and friends lead to imbalances resulting in conflict. Lack of supportive working environment: Work culture should be well framed with good team and location for balancing work and family". Occupational climate should be conducive to enjoy life.

**Workload:** Women are not a material to be dumped at all times with work or with family responsibilities. The workload results in stress, strained emotions and other illness.

**Privacy and protection:** Privacy and physical protection are found to be some essential needs of women going to work. With the increasing violence against women there is a need for security

**Grievance Redressal:** Organizational conflicts are today considered healthy for organizational growth. Proper grievance redressal mechanism should be able to resolve conflicts. Communication channel should be fair in the organization to solve women problems

**Multitasking:** Women are efficient to handle more than one task at a time but sometimes it can also lead to imbalances.

**Business travels:** Women need to travel to places outside their home for work. Traveling outside sometimes make women forget their responsibilities at home'

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**Improved Work/Life Balance Measures**

- Reduced turnover
- Broader talent pool available
- Improved employee retention
- Improved performance
- Positive employer branding
- Earlier return to work after maternity leave
- Improved job satisfaction
- Reduced absenteeism
- Better physical and mental health
The challenges faced by a women working in IT sector are;

- Long working hours,
- offshore support leading to night shifts or rotational shifts
- Stringent project deadlines resulting in tremendous mental pressure.
- Marriage, children, family, relocation etc. makes it difficult for most women to pursue a long term career goal.

However, organizations today understand the challenges faced by women employees and are changing their policies on the following areas to make the work environment more flexible.

- Pick-up and drop facilities,
- flexible work hours,
- Work at home option,
- Crèches are the new-age facility arranged to retain more and more women in our workforce.

Women leaders are found to be innovative, disciplined and most importantly they have a good value system, nurturing talent, self-development and try to build a strong network of relationship across organizations. Organizations have realized that they need to provide a better support system for women and runs campaigns encouraging woman to come back to work after their break.

Nowadays, Families are becoming more understanding, supportive and are allowing women to take up the career of their choice rather than sticking to stereotype career choices. The Indian women’s, who were mostly found of socially acceptable employments like teaching, nursing, banking, etc. are diverted and now the majority of them are employees of IT sector.

This new information technology profession with a good pay, night shifts, cultural and social change has brought work life imbalance among the employees in Information Technology sector. Some of the Human Resource related issues receiving considerable attention in the IT sector are work conditions, organizational environment, management-labor relationships, work force empowerment and work-life balance.

Literature reviews: Women professionals and the work family balance:
WLB is the principle, that paid employment should be integrated with domestic life and community involvement in the interests of personal and social well-being. An emerging issue in work life balance literature concerns the role of gender and the awareness about the various policies provided in the different organizations.

Fan Weiand Fend Ying (2011) analyzed professional women’s work family conflict and their stress effect. The sample size of the study is 121 working women’s. The study concludes that there is conflict between self-role perceived and social-role perceived by the professional workers. Education, income ratio and professional experience have influenced the stress. Domesticity satisfaction, family activity, spouse stress, work devotion and workload were the stress factors of professional women. Shahnaz Aziz & Jamie Cunningham (2008) suggested that interventions like crèches; flexible working hours and telecommuting may reduce stress for women.

Katherine. J.C. Sang & Andrew. R. J Dainty (2009) identified that the causes of poor WLB are due to long working hours, job insecurity and low professional worth and temporary teams. Pandey & Srivastava (2000) studied the female personnel working in railway, bank and teaching institutions. A sample of 96 females, 16 subjects in each professional area both from nuclear and joint family were taken. The study identified that respondents belonging to nuclear family had expressed more interpersonal work stress.
Women work due to economic and social reasons. Women primarily take care of domestic tasks, irrespective of their employment status. So, many women employees continue to face difficulties in balancing these two forces (Hyman and Summers 2004).

Work based support to women is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career accomplishment (Marcinkus et al. 2007).

The benefits of work-life balance initiatives, for employers, are better talent attraction, enhanced productivity, better talent engagement, reduced work stress, reduced absenteeism, reduced costs, better motivation, employer branding, talent retention and efficient work practices (Byrne, 2005; Pocock, 2005; and McPherson, 2007).

Baral (2009) studied the scope and coverage of work-life balance practices in some of the leading organizations in India. Based on review of literature, empirical study and analyses of reports of newspaper articles, research suggests the Indian organizations have to do a lot to treat work-life balance practices as strategic aspect of organizational performance. Organizations offer a lot of benefits in the name of work-life balance. However they do not form an integral part of the company’s policies. In knowledge centric organizations like IT and ITEs industries where women workforce participation is relatively higher, statutory policies such as maternity leave and benefits are common, while practices such as flexi-time, work from home and part-time work are still yet to pick up pace.

Perry-Smith et al (2000) found that interference of work with personal life has a considerable impact on work-related attitude for this group of workers. They state that work-life boundary variables affect trust in the organization which plays a meditational role between job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Ray & Miller (1994), Thomas&Ganster (1995) and Warren & Johnson (1995) found that there is an association between family-friendly work environmental and other factors of interest including turnover, absenteeism, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Managers who supported and encouraged employee’s attempts to coordinate work and family demands reported several positive outcomes. Such employees felt less work/family conflict and at the same time reported less turnover, burnout, absenteeism and increased organizational commitment.

Byrne (2005) has highlighted the concept of the work-life balance as a means of tackling the problems of increasing amounts of stress in the work-place.

Morris and Madsen (2007) have shown the importance of work-life balance. By better understanding work-life theory, HR professionals can contribute to the strategic development of policies, practices, programs and interventions.

Moore (2007) conducted a research to compare work-life balance issues among workers and managers of a MNC. It was concluded that many of the managers are not able to achieve work-life balance.

According to Okpara (2004) , job satisfaction in the IT sector can be predicted from personal variables, but not all variables contributed to the same degree of satisfaction. But the study did not reveal clear gender differences in overall job satisfaction. Studies indicating higher job satisfaction among women argue that women, compared to men, have lower expectations of the benefits they could receive from the labour market(Clarke,1997).On the other hand, other studies have shown that professional men have more job satisfaction that professional women ( Chiu,1998). The reason may have equal expectations from their jobs but their expectorations are belied. Research also shows that younger workers are consistently less satisfied with their jobs than older workers (Hall, 1994; Schultz, 1973). Younger workers might have objectively poorer jobs than older employees but they also have higher expectations for their jobs that may lead to lower job satisfaction. (Hall, 1994)

CONSEQUENCES OF POOR WORK LIFE BALANCE:

- **FATIGUE**- When employees are tired in performing their task it may lead to dangerous or costly mistakes because their thinking ability to think clearly and performance will be reduced.

- **LOST TIME WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES**- If an employee is always working she may miss some important family function which in turn creates some family problem and this may lead the employees to feel isolated from their family.
• **INCREASED EXPECTATIONS** - An employee will be assigned with extra tasks if the management feels that she is a sincere and dedicated worker. This in turn results in overburden of the worker and leads to stressful situation.

• **INCREASED ABSENTEEISM** - Poor health increases employee absenteeism and thus is a costly problem for employers. There are hidden and direct costs that must be paid when an employee is absent from work.

• **INCREASED EMPLOYEE TURNOVER** - The main reasons that leads an employee to withdraw and begin looking for other opportunities are low employee morale, absence of a clear career path, lack of recognition, poor employee-manager relationships, lack of satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

• **REDUCED PRODUCTIVITY** - Creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity.

• **REDUCED JOB SATISFACTION** - Job satisfaction is the positive emotional reactions and attitudes an individual has towards his/her job. A satisfied work force is essential for the success of organizations and their businesses. Job satisfaction and work life balance are the important variables that drive employees to remain with their current employers.

• **INCREASED MANAGERIAL STRESS** - Job stress often arises when an employee feels he/she has too much to do in a given time. This can include both work-related and personal matters that need to be attended to reduce their stress level.

• **DAMAGE FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP** - Women employees often face problems to balance their family and work life. If they fail to balance these properly then their family and social relationship will be damaged which leads to increased stress level.

( Sourced: Work life balance amongst the working women in public sector banks – a case study of SBI, International letters of social and humanistic sciences, 7(2013) 1-22, ISSN – 2300-2697)

**SUGGESTIONS TO BALANCE THEIR WORK AND FAMILY:**

- Analyze the daily work and identify the activities which require your personal attention, which are not important and the activities which increases your satisfaction level. So that the employee can avoid unnecessary and simple works which can be delegated to others.

- Request the employer for Flex hours, i.e., compressed work week, job sharing or work at home.

- Conscious decision has to be taken to separate work time and personal time.

- The house hold activities or tasks need to be efficiently organized by scheduling the family events on the calendar and keep a daily to-do-list.

- Good rapport should be maintained with the co-workers who can protect you, when family conflicts like child care or other house hold responsibilities arises.

- Working women should eat healthy diet; include reading or exercising to get enough or sound sleep. They can find out the activities that can be performed with their friends, family and loved ones to make their mind lite.
CONCLUSION:

Work-life Balance has ever been a concern and hot issue for discussion among researchers and scholars of the IT world. The reason could be an unjustifiable attrition rate, stressful nature of job, frequent health problems, job switching talent pool etc. IT industry as such is one of the major contributors to the Indian GDP and leading employment provider. The importance of work-life balance is dual in nature-

- It provides motivation, job satisfaction, productivity etc. to an employee
- It controls attrition, improves retention rates, reduces absenteeism, increases performance and efficiency, improves the morale of an employee and increases his commitment towards an organization.

The above study confirms that a proper work-life balance will provide job satisfaction of employees which in turn will create organizational success and develop competitive advantage for IT organizations. Thus the company’s human resource team along with the active cooperation of the employees should take initiatives to facilitate proper work-life balance policies and see to it that the employees are benefited from such policies. On the other hand, the employees should practice self-management so as to reduce some of the work-life imbalances arising out of stress, burnout, family commitments etc. They can probably make use of meditation techniques, yoga, extracurricular events, proper self-appraisal of jobs, adequate training for improvement etc. IT leaders should focus on developing, formulating, implementing and reviewing better work-life balance policies in order to build a sustainable and enriching organization. Thus a better work-place as well as a secured and happy family life is possible. The idea of work-life balance is based on the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of needs which a worker as a human being has to satisfy. If people due to their working time arrangement feel unable to honour or are forced to abandon the commitments related to these various role identities they may be said to be suffering from an inner conflict.

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