

WORK LIFE BALANCE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN SERVICE INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

I examined the Work Life Balance of Gen Y in service sector. At present time the advocates of further reduction in working time and time sovereignty for employees have little say. At the same time the compatibility of work & life has become the increasingly important issue. Today's youth is not aware of the ill effects of this imbalance and organizations are continuously exploiting the ambitious youth of India. This study explores the present Work life balance situation in service sector, time balance (equal time devoted to work and family) and Involvement balance (equal involvement in work & family).

Keywords: Work Life Balance (WLB), Gen Y, Time balance, involvement balance.

INTRODUCTION:

The expression "Work-life balance" was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986. Over the past twenty-five years, there has been a substantial increase in work which is felt to be due, in part, by information technology and by an intense, competitive work environment. Long-term loyalty and a "sense of corporate community" have been eroded by a performance culture that expects more and more from their employees yet offers little security in return.

The early twentieth century laid the groundwork for the idea of work-life balance. Advancements in social sciences would move the focus towards the impact of long hours on the physical and mental health of the employee.

Workers born since the early 1980s (known as millennial, Generation Y or echo boomers) want a work-life balance, which is often at odds with the values of the corporate world. In the fast moving life, there are many pressures that new-age couples have to deal with- running a home, doing daily chores like cooking/cleaning, raising children and handle the tight deadlines at work.

Those who spent more time on family than work experienced a higher quality of life. Over the last few years, the issue of work - life balance (WLB) has been receiving increasing attention in the India but not exactly followed by the organizations resulting in low productive employees.

Laws and Acts are there to safeguard employee interest. Laws are strictly followed in manufacturing sector but not in Service sector. Presently service sector is expanding in India and Organizations policy of long working hours continues which results in imbalance in work and family life.

This study will focus on exploring the reality of WLB, Organizations initiatives, work stress and strategies to cope with this stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The shorter hour's movement began to focus on the fact that an overworked employee is more prone to injury or mistake and becomes less productive. Josephine Goldmark wrote a book in 1912 detailing this fact and the Federal Public Works Act was passed the same year.

In the late 1970s, Professor Robert Karasek of the University of Lowell (now known as University of Massachusetts Lowell) developed a method for analyzing stress-producing factors in the workplace. It has been widely employed to examine workplace pressures and their relationship with research data on coronary heart disease, musculoskeletal illnesses, psychological strain and absenteeism. Karasek explains, "In situations where an individual has high demands on him and low control, the undesirable stress of work and other situations becomes problematic."

The 1980s brought new complaints of work-life balance related stress. This time period was given such names as "the ME generation," "the age of narcissism" and "the pursuit of loneliness." The number of cases of emotional depression in the United States was believed to have doubled between 1970 and 1990.

Steven L. Sauter, chief of the Applied Psychology and Ergonomics Branch of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, states that recent studies show that "the workplace has become the single greatest source of stress". Michael Feuerstein, professor of clinical psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences at Bethesda Naval Hospital states, "We're seeing a greater increase in work-related neuro-skeletal disorders from a combination of stress and ergonomic stressors". Stress results in a weaker immune system and frequent headaches, stiff muscles, or backache. It can also result in poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, exhaustion, and difficulty concentrating. Stress may also perpetuate or lead to binge eating, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

Fiona Wilson, Simmons School of Management professor and co-author of the study agrees: "Organizations may not be recognizing enough the extent to which life outside work plays an important role today for men as well as women."

A lot of people are having a more difficult time finding balance in their lives because there have been cutbacks or layoffs where they work. They're afraid it may happen to them, so they're putting in more hours," says psychologist Robert Brooks, PhD, co-author of *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life*.

In a 2006 study of 1030 mothers, researchers found that working mothers reported lower levels of happiness, health, and satisfaction in their marriages than non-working mothers. A booming economy has resulted in

better jobs and salaries. However, this has brought in long work schedules, leaving individuals with very little time to balance their work and life,” says Sarang Panchal, Nielsen’s managing director, customized research, Asia-Pacific, India, China and Greater China. “It is not surprising that most Indians consider work-life balance as their biggest concern since demanding careers are taking a toll on their family lives.

The US-based Mayo Clinic also recommends the following strategies for learning how to strike a work-life balance:

Track your time. By tracking everything you do for one week, you can truthfully examine how you spend your time, and know which activities you can cut or delegate to others.

Learn to say no.

Leave work at work.

Bolster your support system. Enlist the aid of friends and family, and at work join forces with coworkers who can cover for you, and vice versa, when a family conflict arises.

Nurture yourself. Eat healthy foods, exercise, and get enough sleep. Take time every day for an activity you enjoy, such as going for a walk, reading, or yoga

Working for IBM means having quality-of-life benefits beyond just compensation. And much more. They are committed to helping their employees get the most out of life. They are dedicated to developing the potential of employees.

To allow employees a great deal of flexibility to coordinate their professional and personal obligations, the options they provide include:

Flexible working hours. Employees have a high degree of autonomy regarding their working hours. Depending on the demand of the task, the nature of one's role and other obvious constraints, employees are free to determine when they start and end their working day.

Part-time employment. Employees may have personal reasons to desire a change from full-time to part-time employment status..

Working from home. The use of modern, mobile communication devices allows employees in certain positions to work from home. Regular meetings as well as telephone and online connectivity ensure that employees stay in the loop.

Unpaid leave / sabbatical. Wherever possible with respect to business needs and in the given circumstances, IBM endeavors to accommodate employees' requests for unpaid leave or sabbatical for personal reasons or to pursue professional or personal development.

Compatibility of family and work. They help their employees combine the demands of work and family life by supporting them wherever we can. Their Family Service is there to support in the areas of childcare, homecare and eldercare. At IBM, we grant our employees paternity and maternity leave after the birth of a child. Employees with family commitments are entitled to up to 5 days of paid leave per year to care for family members including parents, spouse, children or other close individuals.

Social activities and well-being. To promote workplace relationships and to promote employees' overall well-being, IBM Research - Zurich offers a variety of activities. For instance IBM Research - Zurich makes a contribution toward memberships at a fitness studio and gives employees numerous opportunities to attend a variety of well-being courses. The services at our Lab also include an excellent cafeteria, an on-site employee lounge, the IBM Hobbyclub – with its social, cultural and sports activities – get-together events as well as annual children's parties.

A recent survey by Regus , 72% of the employees are pegged to work harder, thus benefiting the company, if they could reduce the time spent in commuting. This has alerted most employers to-day and are incorporating ‘working from home’ or ‘flexible working’ alternatives as a part of their HR policies. As per a senior executive at Hindustan Unilever, agile working-an umbrella philosophy, which helps employees work flexibly, anytime, anywhere; whilst continuing to meet business objectives, is akin to ‘working from home’ or ‘working from portals of choice.’ Comprehending that flexible working hours benefit both, the employees and organization, the flexi-working policies can be an effective HR Endeavour to provide a level of flexibility for the employees to manage a better balance of their weekly work schedule and personal time needed for family and individual activities without any negative impact on their business assignments and targets.

More business will be conducted ‘virtually’ and power will shift to employees-particularly the rising class of digital knowledge workers, who can work anywhere,” says Gaurav Lahiri, MD, Hay Group India. Such policies come as a relief to working mothers who get to spend time with their children as well as concentrate on their careers.

A work-from-home policy, if widespread, is good from the environment point of view as it will minimize the

traffic congestion and bring down noise and pollution level. Companies too can benefit by reduced transportation and overhead cost. The benefits of flexible working hours are two fold—on one hand, workers are more relaxed and healthy and on the other, they are also more productive, thus benefiting the business too. Alka Bakaya, Director R.E.D. performance consultancy feels that this trend provides the employee with the time to plan other life's issues, and time wasted in commuting is spent on work. Stating another positive, Shalini Naagar, HR Head, Marks & Spencer India says, “ such policies are primarily implemented by organizations that are employers of choice to encourage their employees manage their time more efficiently, prioritize their responsibilities and maintain the right-life balance.”

While this unorthodox corporate alternative might be on the brink of changing the existing paradigms of being physically present at a workstation, some HR leaders are still harboring apprehensive opinions. Some says, “with freedom, comes the temptation of misuse. Organizations need to develop special metrics and processes to ensure that the productivity is not affected by employees.”

But, is India Inc ready for such a huge step or are we still bound by old-school traditions of having to be physically present at work? “The issue is that if job can be done without being physically present in office, then are we prepared to allow this? The answer to this will vary depending upon the industry,” avers Vinay Deshpande, Sr. VP (HR) Mahindra Finance.

And lastly, would the facility of turning your home into a virtual workspace subjugate coming to an actual office and maintaining a distinction between your personal and professional spaces? The opportunity to work from an alternative workplace often helps foster a sense of fresh thinking . Often splitting time between home and the workplace can be the most productive solution. Time gained from curbing the hours invested in travelling can be an indispensable perk an employer can bestow upon their employees. While there are certain loopholes and ambiguities concerning this trend, one can not deny that slowly and steadily, flexible working is becoming a popular term of the corporate jargon.

The study conducted by Regus ,a flexible work place provider , surveyed over 16,000 professionals in 86 countries . It Shows a 24% rise in work-life balance in 2012 as compared to 2010 with more than 60% saying this balance had improved since 2010.While 69% enjoyed work more than in 2010,59% were happy with the amount of time they spent with their family.Over two fifths felt their companies were actively involved in reducing staff commutes with India ranked no. 2 where professionals felt this way. The biggest improvement in WLB the study found , was for BRIC countries. India tops countries whose professionals say they are achieving more at work now than in 2010.

But India is also high on the list where professionals who had taken on additional work during recession say these duties are yet to be assigned to a new staffer.China & India are the top nations where employees spend more time at work and less with family in contrast to countries like Neatherland and Australia.

“Lack of family time greatly contributes to mental health issues, says B N Gangadhar,professor of psychiatry,Nimhans,Bangalore.But there is a reason why India had poor WLB , R N Sharma ,former professor Tata Institute of Social Sciences says it had much to do with the complete dismantling of Labour Movements in India.”Foot loose labour once meant for hawkers, now applies for white collar workers too. With weakening labour movements, employees don't have bargaining power”.

But Chandrajit Banerjee , DG of CII, says India is at a stage in its economy where the workforce needs to put in more hours.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To find the Time Balance and Involvement Balance.
2. To find the organizations approach towards WLB.
3. To find the employees desires regarding WLB.
4. To find the Employees belief of significance of WLB in success of organisation.
5. Stress and WLB.
6. Strategies to cope the stress from work.

METHODOLOGY:

Area of Research: Service Industry.

Sample: 27 employees of Animation, IT, Education, Banking, Finance and Insurance.

Sampling Technique: Random Sampling

Regions: Jaipur, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gurgaon

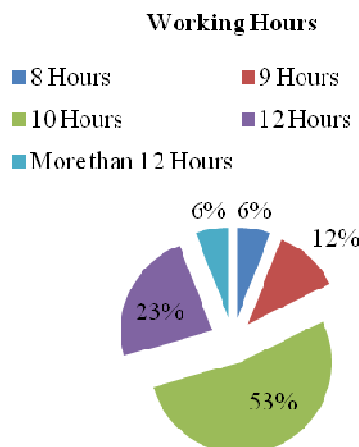
Data Collection: Data is collected with the help of survey.

Research Instruments: Questionnaire and Informal interviews.

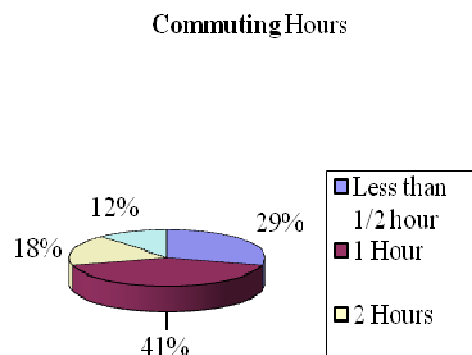
Research Design: Descriptive

ANALYSIS:

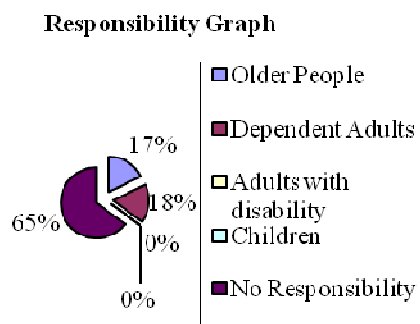
1. 82% of employees are working 10-12 hours which clearly shows the imbalance. When commuting time will be added the situation will become more serious.



2. 71% of employees are taking 1 to 2 Hrs and more than 2 Hrs. Again part of work.

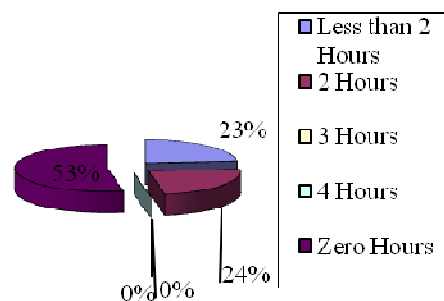


3. 65% of employees selected for research have no responsibility apart from work as most of them are unmarried.



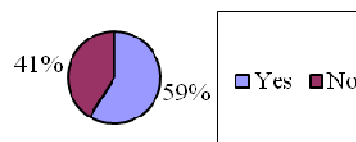
4. 53% spend 0 hrs with family as they are living outside the home region and rest 47% are giving maximum 2 hrs which is the serious situation.

Time spend with Family



5. Most of them are unmarried and because of this reason they are able to manage. When asked about post marriage situation then the answer was negative.

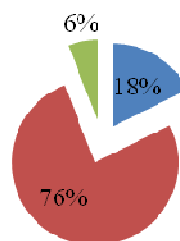
Are you able to balance your life



6. 76% says there is no policy for WLB.

Organisations policy for work life balance

Yes No Not Aware

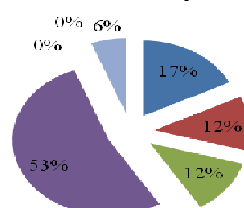


7. 88% says they miss quality time with family.

8. Indian organizations are using “holidays” as the strategy to balance work & Life

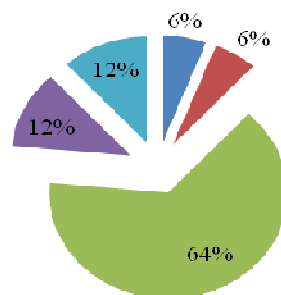
Strategy to balance work life

Flexible starting hours
Flexible finishing hours
Flexible hours
Holidays
Job sharing
Career breaks
Time off for family



Missing quality time with Family

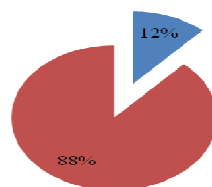
Never Rarely Sometimes
often Always



9. Organisations are not serious to balance Work & Life

Sodal Functions at organisation

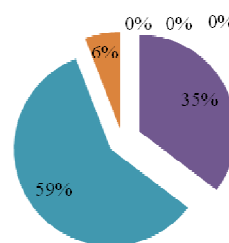
Yes No



10. All respondents are between 25 to 35 Years of age therefore they are able to manage stress. This is the reason why organizations hire youngsters.

Stress problems

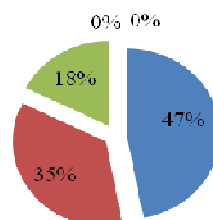
Hypertension Obesity
Diabetes Frequent Headaches
none Other



11. 82% agrees that they give preference to life than money.This result shows that Indians are serious about WLB.

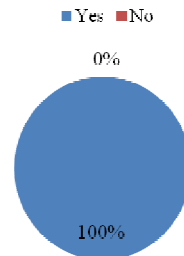
Preferance to life than money

strongly agree agree
neutral disagree
strongly disagree



12. Wake up time for organization as 100% employees agree that WLB makes the organization effective and successful.

WLB makes the Org. effective and successful



CONCLUSIONS:

1. Organizations are presently following the long working hrs strategy.
2. Employees give only 2 hrs for family after working hrs, commuting time, sleeping, eating, chores, leisure time.
3. Most of them are unmarried and because of this reason they are able to manage WLB. When asked about post marriage situation then the answer was negative
4. There is no policy for WLB in Indian service sector.
5. Most of the employees believe that they are missing quality time with family.
6. As most of the employees included in the survey are between 25 to 35 years of age therefore they are able to manage stress and don't have any stress related disease.
7. Indians are serious about WLB.
8. 100% employees agree that WLB makes the organization effective and successful.
9. Flexible starting and finishing hrs and holidays are some of the facilities which most of the candidates desires.
10. Employees gives importance to life than money

Future research can be carried out by comparing this study with married employees or comparison of Gen Y with 40+ employees in WLB context.

1. Comparative study on service and manufacturing industry.
2. Comparative study between men and women in WLB context

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