Work Life Balance of Women Executives in Indian IT Companies

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Article History *Published Online:* 02 April 2018 **Keywords** Work life balance, hobbies, community, familty *Corresponding Author *Email: rsvphd2009[at]gmail.com*	Changes in the workforce are accompanied by changes in values, creating a new emphasis on the balance between work-life and family life. Work-life balance assumes great significance for women as they are virtually in two full time jobs - one at home and the other at office. Working mothers often have to challenge perceptions and stereotypes that evolve as a working woman becomes a working mother... When a woman seeks a position of power within an organization, she must consider the toll on other facets of her life, including hobbies, personal relationships and family. Most executive jobs require a substantial amount of time and effort, which a working mother may not be able to devote due to family obligations. So also, it may be nearly impossible for a working mother in a top management position to be the primary care giver of her child. Women often find it more difficult to maintain balance on account of the competing pressures of work and demands at home. Working women have to carefully handle their personal balance and skillfully blend their roles, so as to optimize their potential in all quadrants of life.

1. Introduction

Twenty first century organizations are characterized by persistent changes, uncertainties and excessive pressure to increase productivity. These changes disturb the balance in the lives of employees causing confusion and stress. This is also fuelled by extreme levels of competitiveness in the work sphere posing new challenges and problems to workers. Technological advancements and new inventions have impacted the socio cultural context by introducing multi-cultural life styles in Indian homes. In the midst of all this, the compelling need for growth in all spheres, for individuals as well as for organizations has resulted in imbalance in the lives of the workforce. The incessant demands on their time and effort to enhance productivity have created enormous stress and pressure causing disequilibrium between work life and family life. Most employees either spends long hours at their work place or carry work home thereby compromising on the quality of life.

2. Work – Life balance

In the words of Jim Bird, CEO of worklifebalance.com, work-life balance does not mean equal balance between professional and personal life. It is careful synchronization of an individual's varied pursuits that may include family, work, leisure, social obligations, health, career and spirituality. While some of the pursuits need greater attention, others may require lesser focus. Striking a fine balance by prioritizing these human quests will result in work-life balance. It is individual specific and keeps changing over time. According to Stewart Friedman - Professor of Management and Founding Director of Wharton School's Leadership Program and of its Work –Life Integration project - "a one size fits all; mentality in human resources management often perpetuates frustration among employees. It is not an uncommon problem in many HR areas, where, for the sake of equality, there's a standard policy implemented in a way that is universally acceptable, even though everyone's life is different and everyone needs different things in terms of how to integrate the different pieces. It's got to be customized". Friedman's research indicates that the solution lies in approaching the components of work, family, community and self as a comprehensive system.

3. Women and Work – life balance

Traditionally, women have been looked upon as nurturers and care givers and assigned all roles related to maintaining and managing a family. Men perceive themselves as breadwinners and society also expects them to perform work roles to earn and support the family. However, the nature of work-force has been changing and the percentage of men as wage earners and women as housewives has been rapidly declining. In urban India, the percentage of dual-earner couples is gradually increasing and for most women and men today, their work environment and the family have become the two important institutions in life. Changes in the workforce are accompanied by changes in values, creating a new emphasis on the balance between work-life and family life (Hall 1986). Work-life balance assumes great significance for women as they are virtually in two full time jobs - one at home and the other at office. Working mothers often have to challenge perceptions and stereotypes that evolve as a working woman becomes a working mother... When a woman seeks a position of power within an organization, she must consider the toll on other facets of her life, including hobbies, personal relationships and family. Most executive jobs require a substantial amount of time and effort, which a working mother may not be able to devote due to family obligations. So also, it may be nearly impossible for a working mother in a top management position to be the primary care giver of her child. Women often find it more difficult to maintain balance on account of the competing pressures of work and demands at home. Working women have to carefully handle their personal balance and skillfully blend their roles, so as to optimize their potential in all quadrants of life.

For the past 15 years the overall performance of IT industry depends only on the efficient employees, especially the knowledge of women employees who play a very vital part for the development of the IT industry in global market. In the present scenario, 34% of women employees are working under the categories of various positions of IT sector, the recent survey projects that quality of work life balance of women employees in IT industry is steadily decreasing over a period from 85% to 52% in the last ten years and more over 80% of women employees in this industry have more health issues and they are also not in the position to balance their family as well as high pressure working environment even though the women employees contribution is constantly supporting for the development of IT industry. Hence, the aim of the study is an attempt to analyze the reasons, issues and challenges which hinder work life balance of women employees. For a successful career in the modern world women need to know the strategies and methodology to balance their work and life as the growing technology is defining that work and life are not different but one in such scenario it is the need of the hour to find out the best strategy which will be useful for the women employees working in IT sector.. Hence, the present study is taken up for conducting research under the title "Work Life Balance among Women Executives in Indian IT Companies with Special Reference to Chennai City."

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the influence of working environment towards work life balance.
2. To understand women employee's perception and satisfaction of work life balance.

5. Research Methodology

The present study has adopted both descriptive and analytical methodologies. The descriptive methodology has been focused on review in the literary evidences that are available through external and internal sources. Since the study is based on the expectation, perception and their satisfaction thereon. Measurement of satisfactory level is with respect to work life balance. Hence the analytical process has become inevitable, resulting in the adoption of analytical methodology. A questionnaire has been designed in eight segments consisting of personal data, Institutional and family support, determinant of job stress, and quality of work life balance of women executives in IT Industry. This research has primarily been based on the primary data collected from the select respondent women executives of the selected IT Companies in Chennai. The oral interview has also been conducted wherever necessary to add clarity to certain key issues.

In this study, we have presumed that population size is finite and unknown, the formula was applied to know the sample size, and found the sample size 130 meets the requirements.

6. Design of the research instrument and reliability test

Based on the review of literature available, the scholar prepared the basis for questionnaire and various dimensions of the study is determined and prepared the questionnaire. The questionnaire is prepared in eight dimensions. Based on the above major reviews, we have designed the questionnaire by consulting the industry experts. Later the instrument is tested through pilot study and the reliability test results of the instrument is measured with Corn Bach's alpha of 0.878 and found suitable for the purpose of study.

7. Findings of the Study

1. It is inferred that working from home, official laptops, support from colleagues at work and support from family members are more than the average level for helping the women employees working in IT organizations in Chennai. However bringing their children to work on occasions does not help them balancing their work life.

2. "Negative attitude of family members" and "Negative attitude of supervisors" are the main factors that hinder the women employees in balancing work and family commitments. The women employees felt that "Negative attitude of peers and colleagues at work place" and "Frequently traveling away from home" are the least factors that hinder the women employees in balancing work and family commitments.

3. "Compulsory overtime" and "Meetings" are the main factors that affect balancing work and family commitments and the women employees felt that "Training after office hours" and "Shift work" are the least factors that affects balancing work and family commitments.

4. Out of 64 women employees with age 31– 40 years, 14.7% of employees are having high level balance in work life, 9.6% of employees are having low level balance in work life, and 8.5% of employees are having medium level balance in work life.

5. Significant influence of women employee's years of service towards support from family in IT sector is observed. women employees in IT sector with above 20 years of service are getting more support from family and the women employees in IT sector with less than 1 year of service are getting less support from family.

6. Significant influence of women employee's salary towards support from family in IT sector is observed. Women employees in IT sector earning monthly salary of above Rs. 40,000 are getting more support from their family and the women employees in IT sector earning less than Rs.20,000 as their monthly salary are getting less support from their family.

7. Significant influence of women employee's children towards child care and dependent care in IT sector is observed. Women employees in IT sector having 2 children are giving more importance to the child care and dependent care in IT sector and the women employees in IT sector with nil children are giving less importance to the child care and dependent care in IT sector.

8. Significant influence of women employee's years of service towards balancing work and family in IT sector was observed. Women employees in IT sector with 11 – 20 years of experience are more satisfied towards balancing work and family and the women employees in IT sector with above 20 years of service are less satisfied towards balancing work and family.

9. Positive significant correlation is observed between work place support and personal factors (r = 0.564), which shows that work place support brings satisfaction in personal factor.

8. Suggestions

It is no easy task to achieve work-life balance in today's unpredictable and fast-paced business world. As we grow increasingly more connected through technology and social media, it is becoming more and more difficult to separate work from our personal lives. It is commonplace to check emails at all hours, take business calls at the dinner table and work on our laptops on weekends. Employers expect more from their people, which leads to them feeling more pressure to achieve greater results. Consequently, this leads to longer working hours, and less time spent at home. When we are stressed and over-worked, we run the risk of jeopardizing more than just our social lives – our physical and mental health is in danger too.

1. The most of the women employees having two kids are not in the position to balancing the work and family and also the respondents will have more emotional and stress problems. Thus may affect the productivity of women employees, hence the organization has to arrange to take care of their kids during business hours, if children's age are between one and three the company has to create crèche or play school.

2. Specific Counseling programmes on work life balance can be conducted.

3. Family welfare programmes and family counseling programmes can be conducted.

4. Employers can create awareness about the impact of work life balance

5. A break from work will provide women employees with the chance to switch off and enjoy, it is also a great opportunity to recuperate and recharge. This is essential to help them improve productivity and focus when they return to the office.

6. Numerous studies show that vacations increase company productivity and reduce stress. Larger number of vacations lead to a decline in the psychological distress of people.

9. Conclusion

Indian women IT professionals can achieve the work–family balance by setting priorities in their work and personal lives and by having support systems both at work, formally through HR policies and programmes, or informally through supervisor and co-worker support and at home. The data raised issues that need to be addressed both from an academic and practice point of view. The identified dimensions could serve as a platform for further research on women IT professionals and the work–life balance which will serve as a guide for organizations to address the work–family balance issues of working women by designing and implementing HR policies and practices for facilitating the work–family balance. This, in turn, would go a long way in enabling women to perform better at work, be more committed to the organization, and ultimately contribute to the growth of the economy and positively impact society as whole.

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