

Work-life Balance Policies and Practices of IT Industry in India

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The current working environment which is characterized by rapid change and innovation in technology, increased work pressure with constant deadlines, co-existing virtual workplace and changing demographic profile of the employees etc. have encouraged the relevance of the issue of work-life balance in the modern organizations. The economic recession is leading to many cost cutting devices as curtailing and shrinking the work-life balance policies and programs by the organizations. This is leading to the increase in dissatisfaction level of employees at workplace. The changing demographics of employees such as increase of disposable income, improved living standard have resulted into improvement in family and personal life. Hence, there has been an increasing need for a new paradigm so that the modern organizations can fulfill the genuine life related demands of the employees. The work-family initiatives that can be effectively implemented in the companies need to be diagnosed and accepted with divergence and multiple perspectives. Although the issue of work-life balance has gained a higher impetus in recent years, yet lot remain to be done. In the light of this fact, the present study has been undertaken in order to analyze the attitude of employees towards the work-life balance policies and practices followed by the various IT industries in India.

Introduction

The term 'work-life balance' refers to the proper adjustment of work pattern by the employees that enables him to combine work at workplace and his other social obligations effectively. "Work" and "life" have fuzzy definitions in literature (Guest,2002 cited in Tara Shankar et al., 2010) where "work" is paid employment and "life" is anything outside the formal employment but is usually used to connote the realm of family or home life. "Balance" is an equal distribution of work and the rest of life? The work-life balance is in itself a misnomer. Given the fluid nature of needs and responsibilities and their changing nature at different life stages, the division of activity will neither be easy to measure nor equal and therefore notions of negotiations, co-operation and compromise, reciprocity and complementary might be best terms than balance (Ransome,2007). A poor work-life balance has adverse impact on the individual performance at the workplace as well as on his social life. The effective work-life balance policies and practices of the organization influence motivation and satisfaction level of employees. Rigorously enforced safety and health programs, for example, can give employees and supervisors a greater sense of safety from accidents and industrial

health hazards. Good satisfaction level of employee can lead to improvement in his performance and good performance, if recognized, appreciated and rewarded as fair and equitable basis can obviously lead to improvement of job satisfaction level.

The Indian Information Technology IT industry is contributing to the growth of the country's GDP and export earnings as well as providing employment to a significant number of IT professionals. The most prominent IT hub in India is Bangalore. The other emerging destinations are Chennai, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Kolkata, Kochi, Pune, Mumbai, Ahmadabad and NCR. More than 2.50 million people are employed in the sector either directly or indirectly, making it one of the biggest job creators in India and a mainstay of the national economy. India is now home to a number of IT giants. The operations of IT firms like Wipro, Infosys, Accenture, Tata Consultancy Services and many more in different locations of India have changed the entire scenario of the Indian job market.

This industry has great potential of growth in India in future. Since the growth of IT industry in India depend upon the export market, however, keeping

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in view the potential of domestic market, it needs more penetration on the domestic market. IT industry has major share in Indian exports and it is likely to grow in the near future, which will result into increase in exports. Although for the last few years, the US recession have discouraged the Indian IT sector, however, the software exports from India are expected to grow in the future because for the software exports, new markets have been opened in Eastern Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and Middle East. Moreover, Indian IT sector growth model are also being practiced by many developing nations throughout the world. The leading companies in the IT industry of India are Wipro Ltd, Aditya Technologies, HCL Info systems Ltd, HCL Corporation Ltd, Infosys Technologies Ltd, Satyam Computer Services Ltd, Larsen & Toubro Ltd, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata InfoTech Ltd and Mastek Ltd.

Review of Literature

In an environment which is highly competitive, global and rapidly changing, the role of skilled and motivated employees is becoming more and more important in order to meet the emerging challenges and complexities. Shailendra Singh et al.(2008) concluded that the best practices of human resource policies have a positive relationship with organizational performance. Human resource policies and practices first effect employee motivation, engagement, organizational commitment or organizational climate and then employee motivation, engagement, organizational commitment or organizational climate influence organizational performance. Job-satisfaction level of the employees are highly significant for the smooth functioning of the organization. It plays a key role in influencing the attendance of workers, their productivity, work motivation and morale (Scarpello and Campbell, 1983, Srivastava and Roy,1996, Raj Gopal,1965, Newstorm and Davis,1998, Varoom,1964 all cited in Shyam Bhadur et al.(2007). Janssen et.al. (1999) identified four characteristics of work as work content, working conditions, labor relations and conditions of employment that render satisfaction to the workers.

Elisavata(2006) stated that the job satisfaction is an important factor in determining the employee's quality of work life. In his study, the total job satisfaction was proved as a strong determinant in the variance of quality of work life. Rama J. Joshi and J.S. Sodhi(2011), pointed out that the need for the concept of work-life balance has been felt largely because of the high demands of work, quality and productivity. Employees are expected to work much longer. While all this is important for company's wellbeing, it is felt that such pressures and work life may not lead to the neglect of family. Lockwood(2003) stated that work-life friendly policies can improve productivity and quality of work. The employees put their commitment to organizations only if the management recognizes the importance of their personal and family life. Work-life balance has gained its own domain in society, as well as politics. Sanghmitra Buddhapriya(2005) emphasized that work-life balance is not merely work-family balance, moreover it refers to the management of one's professional responsibilities and family responsibilities towards children, aging parents, any disabled family members, or a partner/spouse effectively. One can have work-family balance, but may not have anything left for oneself, for one's community, for one's personal growth and development, rest and relaxation. So, it is possible to have work-family balance and still need to achieve work-life balance. Kossek and Ozeki(1998) highlighted that work-life balance is equally important for both men and women, and that men are equally burdened by the work and family responsibilities. His conceptualization still remains narrow in that though the earlier rhetoric of work-life balance for working mothers has been criticized, it still remains in the purview of work and family.

Perry-Smith and Blum(2000) found work-life balance positively related to both organizational and individual outcomes, such as giving the employees flexibility, information, and financial assistance can improve the organization's financial performance and raise employee satisfaction and labor productivity. Wang and Walumbwa(2007) found that

work-life balance is positively related to employee-organizational commitment and attachment. Naithani and Jha(2009) expressed that the big pay-roll is no more a motivational tool for young generation, but work-life policies matter much to attract educated intellectuals, especially women, and retain employees. Goff, Mount and Jamison(1990) shows that work-family conflicts was related to higher absenteeism levels. Siegel et al.,(2005) reveals that employees who perceive high work-life conflict are likely to experience more dysfunctional forms of stress, leading to the set of harmful personal consequence like emotional strain, alcoholism etc.

Rationale of Study

The growing exuberance in IT industries in India which are people- intensive have resulted in heightened demand for young and skilled manpower. As a result, the organizations of these industries are not only striving for retaining and attracting the young talent but also pre-empting the talent requirements at the workplace. In order to attract the good talent pool, the organizations need to adopt and follow industry best practices of keep an energized work environment with very strong culture across the organization equipped with various development programs. The growth and success of the organizations entirely depend upon the effective work-life balance of employees. From the review of available literature, it was found that the absence of proper work-life balance of employees can lead to stress which can result into loss of commitment and motivation level of employees. Supportive working environment and management can lead to greater productivity among employees. In the light of these facts, through the present study an attempt has been made to analyze the impact of proper work-life balance policies on the job satisfaction and motivation level of employees in IT industry. In the present study, an effort has been made to get insights on the expectations of the employees of IT industries in India on their workplace regarding the implementation of balanced work-life policies and practices.

Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken keeping in view the following objectives:-

- To gain an insight into current policies and practices of work-life balance followed by Indian IT industries.
- To analyze the attitude of employees towards the work-life balance practices followed by Indian IT industries.
- To suggest strategies in order to improve the quality of work life and secure work-life balance of employees through various practices and benefits.

Research Methodology

In order to conduct the present study, both primary and secondary data was used. The primary data was collected through a well designed questionnaire from the sample of respondents, whereas the secondary data was gathered through company brochures and using company websites, internet, journals etc. The total number of IT companies in India is about 500. It was not possible to take all these companies to study, hence, we selected 11 IT companies - Infosys, Ericsson, Instablogs, NIC, DIT, Cellebrum, Cybersolution.com, LNT, Patni Computers, Tech Mahindra and Ciena on the basis of convenient and judgment sampling. These companies were located in Shimla, Parwanoo, Chandigarh, Gurgaon, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune. The sample of the respondents constitutes 150 employees which were selected on the basis of judgment sampling. The different categories of employees like software engineer, programmer/web developers, trainee, HR executives, network administrators., info media executives etc. were assured with the representations in order to construed it as representative sample. In order to get the required information, the respondents were sent the questionnaire through e-mail and hand-outs. The information thus collected has been analyzed with the help of various statistical tools and techniques. Through the Likert Type Scale, the score was calculated, with the help of WAS (Weighted Average Score).

Results and Discussion

The sample of 150 respondents comprises representation of Software engineer (28%), Programmer/web developer (26%), Trainee (10%), HR executive (6.67%), Network administrator (9.33%) and Info-media executives (20%) of IT industries in India located in Shimla, Parwanoo, Chandigarh, Gurgaon, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune. In the study the sample comprised 63.33% of males and 36.67% of females in the age group of 20-25 (26.67%), 25-30 (62%) and above 30 (11.33%) from the working area of MIS, Human Resource, Marketing, Finance and Back end operation.

Job satisfaction level

Job satisfaction level of the employees is usually determined by the pattern of the job design. Jobs which are endowed with the positive behavioral elements like task identity, variety, autonomy and orientation lead to increase the satisfaction level of the employees. In order to assess the job satisfaction level of the different employees of IT industries, seven questions were asked from the respondents (table-2). The information presented in the table shows that the majority of the employees (32%) were found satisfied with the existing work culture facilitating workers participation in management in decision making in their respective organizations. The WAS for this factor was worked out as 3.38. Similarly, 32.67% of the respondents were found satisfied with the stress management techniques viz. yoga, meditation, art of living etc. used by their organizations (WAS=3.31). While assessing the working of grievance handling machinery, it was found that the majority of the employees (31.33%) were found dissatisfied, whereas only 18.67% respondents were found satisfied with the grievance handling mechanism in their respective organizations (WAS=2.90). The majority of the respondents were found satisfied with the policies and components like job security (34%), reward and recognition policies (28.67%), job rotation (24.67%) and time management (28.88%) followed by the different IT industries. On the basis of this information, it can be stated that the employees were found satisfied with job security,

reward and recognition, job rotation, work-culture, stress and time management. Whereas the grievance handling procedure was not found satisfied. Hence the grievance handling mechanism need to be defined properly and given due priority.

Motivational level

High motivational level of an employee can be achieved by creating family atmosphere at work, sense of belongingness, ensuring security, providing opportunities for self actualization, promoting mutual understanding, employees suggestion schemes, reward and recognition and encouraging employees participation in decision making.

Keeping in view the various dimensions of motivational level among the employees in IT industries, seven questions relating to the various aspects of motivation viz. recruitment and selection, counseling, reward and recognition policies, recreational and health facilities, performance appraisal system, job profile, pregnancy arrangements for women in the organization etc. were addressed to them and the response has been worked out in table-3. The information given in table makes it clear that a large majority of employees (52%) were found highly satisfied with the reward and recognition policies followed by their organizations whereas only 2% were found dissatisfied with the same. The WAS for this factor was calculated as 4.40. Similarly a large majority of the respondents (52%) were found satisfied and 40% were highly satisfied with the counseling services and non-monetary benefits (WAS=4.24). The majority of the respondents pointed out that they are satisfied with the recruitment and selection policies, recreational and health facilities and performance appraisal system and the promotional policies of their respective organizations. The majority of the respondents (36%) stated that they are dissatisfied with the parenting and pregnancy arrangements for women employees in their organizations. Hence, the steps need to be taken with this direction so as to maintain the effective work-life balance of the employees.

Parenting and pregnancy arrangements

In order to analyze the importance of the parenting and pregnancy arrangements in the IT industries, the respondents were asked the questions relating to maternity/paternity leave, availability of childcare facilities, parenting and pregnancy arrangements for women employees in the organization. The information thus collected has been analyzed in table-4. A large majority of respondents has pointed out that these arrangements are very important for organization in order

Leave and flexible work arrangements

While assessing the importance of different leave arrangements as the important parameters of work-life balance in IT industries (table-5), it was found that the large majority of the respondents (65.33%) considered the pooling of leave entitlements very important for the employees. The WAS for this arrangement was worked out as 4.45. Similarly, 50% of the employees responded that the arrangement of care leave is very important for the employees (WAS=4.37). The career break which consist of an extended period of paid, or more commonly, unpaid time off with an agreement of a job on return was viewed as important by 28% of the respondents and 20% of employees viewed it as very important. On the other hand the flexibility in leave arrangements provided for convenience in seeking short-term vacation from office was pointed out as unimportant by 48% of the employees whereas only 14.67 % of the employees stated that it is important for the employees. Study and training leave got mixed response from the respondents for which 34.67% of the respondents expressed that it is unimportant whereas 30% of the respondents expressed that it is important for the employees. The WAS for this statement was worked out as 3.15. The large majority of the employees stated that the cap on overtime is very important (51.33%), whereas only 12% of the employees considered it unimportant (WAS=3.91). Similarly, time off in lieu of overtime and for rostered days was also considered important by 28% of the employees. Self-rostering/staggered start and finish which comprises picking your own start and finish which comprises

picking your own start and finish times or days as long as you work on agreed number of hours was felt very important by 47.33% of the employees and 37.33% stated it as important (WAS=4.25)

Conclusion

It is a well established fact that the effective work-life balance policies of the organization can lead to reduce absenteeism, stress and fatigue of employees at the work, involvement in community, cultural and sporting activities, improvement in the mental and physical health of the employee etc. The organizations need to deeply work out the strategies in this direction keeping in view the job satisfaction level, motivational level, parenting and pregnancy arrangements for the women employees, leave and flexible work arrangements for the workers at workplace. IT sector have introduced flexi-time (Rama J. Joshi & J.S.Sodhi,2011) and others have been careful to create cultural bonding, organize religious and recreational activities, family get-together and sports competitions. The employees were moderately satisfied with work-life balance in the organizations. While its manifestations may be multifarious, not many organizations have imbibed work-life balance as a core function of the management. It is therefore, being practiced in most Indian organizations in an ad-hoc manner, except in the IT sector. The managements of the organizations need to comprehend and take care of their employees in their total environment to enable high commitment and performance.

The employees in IT industries were found more or less satisfied with the motivational and job satisfaction level of the employees. While assessing the importance of various aspects of work-life balance policies in the organizations of IT industries, it was found that the majority of employees have expressed that the parenting and pregnancy arrangements, leave and flexible work arrangements are very important at the workplace for improving the work-life balance of the employees. Hence, all those factors which can improve the job satisfaction and motivational

level of the employees in the IT industries need to be implemented properly on the one hand and on the other the necessary arrangements relating to parenting and pregnancy arrangements to women employees and leave and flexible work arrangement policies and programs need to be designed according to the convenience of every employees working in the organization. The policies and the programs like

adoption leave, flexi-time, job sharing, working from home, time-off in lieu of money, self-rostering, career break, maternity leave, parental leave, childcare centers, elder care programs, emergency childcare, family daycare networks, relocation assistance, transportation, cultural, sports and meditation need to be encouraged more in IT industries in India, so that the employees can maintain good balance between their social and work life.

Table-1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

(N= 150)

Item	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	95	63.33
	Female	55	36.67
Age	20-25	40	26.67
	25-30	93	62.00
	Above 30	17	11.33
Location	Shimla	55	36.67
	Gurgaon	28	18.67
	Parwanoo	15	10.00
	Hyderabad	10	06.67
	Chandigarh	10	06.67
	Bangalore	15	10.00
	Pune	17	11.33
Designation/ Position	Software engineer	42	28.00
	Programmer/web developer	39	26.00
	Trainee	15	10.00
	HR Executive	10	06.67
	Network Administrator	14	09.33
	Info media Executives	30	20.00
Working Area	MIS	22	14.67
	Human Resource	36	24.00
	Marketing	48	32.00
	Finance	29	19.33
	Back end operation	15	10.00

Table-2 Job satisfaction level

(N= 150)

S.No	Particulars	HighlyDissatisfied	Dissatisfied	NeitherSatisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	WAS
1	Job security in your organization.	16(10.67)	27(18.00)	39(26.00)	51(34.00)	17(11.33)	3.17
2	Rewards and recognition policies of your organization.	12(08.00)	20(13.33)	64(42.67)	43(28.67)	11(07.33)	3.14
3	Grievance handling machinery.	16(10.67)	47(31.33)	41(27.33)	28(18.67)	18(12.00)	2.90
4	The job rotation initiatives initiated by the organization?	18(12.00)	12(08.00)	59(39.33)	37(24.67)	24(16.00)	3.25
5	The work culture facilitating workers' participation in decision making.	12(08.00)	21(14.00)	42(28.00)	48(32.00)	27(18.00)	3.38
6	Stress management techniques viz. yoga, meditation, art of living etc.	14(09.33)	25(16.67)	37(24.67)	49(32.67)	25(16.67)	3.31
7	Time management initiatives of the organization.	18(12.00)	38(25.33)	144(96.00)	168(112.00)	115(76.67)	3.22

Note:

1. Figures in brackets show percentages to the total number of respondents (150)
2. WAS (Weighted Average Score) was calculated by giving scores as 5 for Highly Satisfied, 4 for Satisfied, 3 For Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied, 2 for Dissatisfied, and 1 for Highly dissatisfied

Table-3 Motivational level (N= 150)

S.No	Particulars	Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	WAS
1	Recruitment and selection policies of the organization.	06(04.00)	18(12.00)	24(16.00)	63(42.00)	39(26.00)	3.74
2	Counseling services and non-monetary benefits for employees.	3(02.00)	06(04.00)	3(02.00)	78(52.00)	60(40.00)	4.24
3	Reward and Recognition Policies based on merit.	00	02(02.00)	12(08.00)	57(38.00)	78(52.00)	4.40
4	Recreational, health/physical exercise facilities (like Gym, Swimming pool, yoga, play ground etc.)	03(02.00)	06(04.00)	39(26.00)	60(40.00)	42(28.00)	3.88
5	Performances Appraisal system and promotional policies.	06(04.00)	21(14.00)	27(18.00)	63(42.00)	33(22.00)	3.64
6	Job profile and commitment level when at work.	22(14.67)	24(16.00)	53(35.33)	33(22.00)	18(12.00)	3.00
7	Parenting and pregnancy arrangements for women in your organization.	15(10.00)	54(36.00)	36(24.00)	30(20.00)	15(10.00)	2.84

Note: 1. Figures in brackets show percentages to the total number of respondents (150)

2. WAS (Weighted Average Score) was calculated by giving scores as 5 for Highly Satisfied, 4 for Satisfied, 3 For Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied, 2 for Dissatisfied, and 1 for Highly dissatisfied

Table-4 Parenting and pregnancy arrangements (N= 150)

S.No.	Particulars	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Don't know	Important	Very Important	WAS
1	Maternity and paternity leave.	00	00	02(01.33)	20(13.33)	128(85.33)	4.84
2	Children care facilities and arrangements of bringing children to office in emergencies.	00	06(04.00)	01(00.67)	45(30.00)	98(65.33)	4.57
3	The provisions of parenting and pregnancy arrangements for women in your organization.	02(01.33)	03(02.00)	08(05.33)	50(33.33)	87(58.00)	4.45

Note: 1. Figures in brackets show percentages to the total number of respondents (150)

2. WAS (Weighted Average Score) was calculated by giving scores as 5 for Highly Satisfied, 4 for Satisfied, 3 For Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied, 2 for Dissatisfied, and 1 for Highly dissatisfied

Table-5 Leave and flexible work arrangements (N= 150)

S.No	Particulars	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Don't know	Important	Very Important	WAS
1	Care leave (e.g. allows employees to take time off to take care of and support a sick family or household member).	01(00.67)	02(01.33)	12(08.00)	60(40.00)	75(50.00)	4.37
2	Study/training leave (allows employees to take time off for study or training).	15(10.00)	52(34.67)	23(15.33)	15(10.00)	45(30.00)	3.15
3	Pooling of leave entitlements e.g. ability to pool all leave entitlements (i.e. sick leave, career's leave etc.) giving employees a larger number of days if they need it for any reasons.	03(02.00)	3(02.00)	16(10.67)	30(20.00)	98(65.33)	4.45
4	Career Break (an extended period of paid, or more commonly, unpaid time off with an agreement of a job on return. Return to work may be phased).	09(06.00)	33(22.00)	36(24.00)	42(28.00)	30(20.00)	3.34
5	Flexibility in leave arrangements provided for convenience in seeking short-term vacation from office.	18(12.00)	72(48.00)	26(17.33)	22(14.67)	12(08.00)	2.59
6	Cap on overtime.	15(10.00)	18(12.00)	10(06.67)	30(20.00)	77(51.33)	3.91
7	Time-off in lieu of overtime and for rostered days(allows employees to take time-off for overtime they worked, instead of payment).	15(10.00)	36(24.00)	27(18.00)	42(28.00)	30(20.00)	3.24
8	Self -rostering / staggered start and finish (picking your own start and finish times or days as long as you work an agreed number of hours).	03(02.00)	05(03.33)	15(10.00)	56(37.33)	71(47.33)	4.25

Note: 1. Figures in brackets show percentages to the total number of respondents (150)

2. WAS (Weighted Average Score) was calculated by giving scores as 5 for Highly Satisfied, 4 for Satisfied, 3 For Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied, 2 for Dissatisfied, and 1 for Highly dissatisfied

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