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An Empirical Study on Critical Issues of Work Life Balance: A Study of IT Sector

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the various critical issues of work life balance and its impact on the well-being of IT employees. Family and work domains are the two major dimensions of everyone's life. To maintain and sustain balance among them is a major concern of all organisations and researchers. This study emphasises on highlighting the critical factors leading to an imbalance in work life of IT employees. Work life balance is one such HR practice that helps employees prioritize between the work and life roles and reduce the level of conflict to some extent. This present paper on empirical study provides the practitioner with a deep insight of work life balance in IT sector. To overcome these issues few steps have also been suggested which directly affects the organisational performance. An experimental survey of around 203 employees were carried out which were evaluated on Likert scale. The results represented an outline of major difficulties faced in balancing work family roles regarding formal informal support, growth and job prospects, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Keywords: Work life balance, work life conflict, peer support, superiors support, work hour culture and career advancement.

1. INTRODUCTION

A phenomenal transformation has occurred in the lives of most households, families and employees because of the emergence of the need to work for 24 hours globally. Due to the advent of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation the entire world has become a global market where individuals interact with each other having different work styles and life styles during different time zones. The organisational culture allows employers and employees to communicate any time during 24 hours and to cater to their needs at any point

of time (Lingard, Francis, 2009). Work life balance can be stated as an association between paid and unpaid lives of workers, and this balance can be maintained depending on various factors like employees' personal needs and expectations. Further this balance can largely be affected by part time work, work intensity, increased opportunities in service sectors (Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010). There are several impending advantages of work life balance both for organisations and employees. Few of them are improved productivity and customer satisfaction; effective retention and recruitment; decreased absenteeism and turnover (Mayberry, 2006; Morgan, 2009; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills & Smeaton, 2003). Communication during office hours with family and friends causes tremendous pressure and strain in the lives of employees which decreases their level of competency and motivation at workplace leading to poor performance (Holt et. al, 2006). Autonomy of employees can be increased by synchronising and assimilating the non-work and work areas of their livelihood (Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea & Walters, 2002). The major construct of this sector constitutes the knowledge technocrats popularly known as knowledge workers. Employees in IT sector face a lot of threshold in balancing both work and family domain. Long hours of work, night shifts, cultural differences and social changes demand adequate time from the employees at workplace. This leads to blurring of lines between personal life and work life of individuals. Tremendous stress and pressure at workplace also affects their health and recreation at both domains. The work culture is highly strenuous, complicated and demanding.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work life conflict refers to an imbalance state of role conflict that arises due to the interference of work and family domains with one another. It becomes difficult for working professionals to accomplish either of them (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Various disagreeable effects of both organisational and individual significantly leads to work life conflict at both domains (Chandola et. al., 2004). As rightly said by Butler and Skattebo, (2004) work efficiency decreases while job dissatisfaction, absenteeism and turnover increases due to conflict in work and family (Chandola et. al., 2004). Demerouti et. al., 2001; Chandola et. al., 2004 suggested that conflict in work and life domains also decreases physical and mental well-being leading to health issues, mental and family dissatisfaction. In today's competitive and modern society work life conflict has been become one of the hottest topic among the five evolving psycho-social threats in the industrial era (European Agency on Health and Safety at Work, 2010). Literature depicts that upcoming job demands, work pressure, inflexible requirements significantly contributes towards work family conflict. Individuals who are unable to prioritise and differentiate between their working schedule and work hours are prone to work family conflict (Nelson et. al., 2010). One of the most important dimension of work life imbalance is gender which differentiates how men and women perceive their domain roles (Guest, 2002). Lyness & Thompson (2000) in their study signify, that men and women have distinctive career path and reflect that female employees have more barriers than men which hinders their career advancement and growth. Researches also suggest that progressive conditions arise for men whereas negative conditions for women, having spouse and children (Ragins & Sundstorm, 1989). Peer support plays a vital role in maintaining employees work life balance to a great extent. Schieman (2006) clearly stated that the support provided by the peer group closely relates them to the workplace makes them believe that others at the place of work care about their welfare and safety. Superiors support at workplace reflects care, compassion and appreciation (House, 1981). Supportive aid is also provided in the form of instrumental support and other sources of physical help at the place of work (Sakurai & Jex, 2012). Peer group immensely provide a source of significant social signals (Oldham, Kulik, Stepina, & Ambrose, 1986). In the study of empirical

research, SIP literature review determines that peers and superiors support are the most substantial sources of social indicators (J. Thomas & Griffin, 1983). In this study the demographic profile like age, gender, marital status and organisational factors i.e., formal informal support, growth and job prospects and other balancing factors are considered which immensely affect work life of IT employees. Employees those who are committed towards the organisational are the important assets of the organisation and significantly affect organisations productivity and performance. Mowday et. al, (1979, 1982); Meyer and Allen, (1995) stated that researchers are mostly attracted to the commitment indicators because it helps employees to construct and sustain competitive advantage and to accomplish high performance at workplace. Commitment is also considered as a major predictor of employees action which includes OCB (Mathiew and Zajac, 1990), employee turnover (Jaros,1997) and employee absenteeism (Brooke and Price, 1989).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the demographic profile of employees working in IT sector.
- To find out the factors affecting work life balance of IT professionals.
- To examine the consequences of work/life imbalance on personal and professional life of IT employees.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research study is an empirical study based on primary data. The data for this research will be collected through structured questionnaire. The proposed research study is exploratory in nature. Both from primary as well as secondary sources data will be drawn.

Primary Source: The primary source of data will be gathered by administering questionnaire and interviewing the following respondents from the respective IT Sectors.

- Executives
- Non executives

Secondary Source: Relevant literatures sources such as relevant books, journals, magazine, report, records and websites will be referred to collect data from the secondary source.

Sample Size: Questionnaire was distributed among 430 respondents in different IT companies at Bhubaneswar among which 203 responses were complete and was considered for this study.

Sampling Plan: The sampling procedure to be used for the study was stratified random sampling. The stratification was done based on the size of the organization. Again the respondents holding various positions at senior, middle and at entry level were selected.

5. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The instrument which was used for the collection of my primary data is a ready made questionnaire which needs to be coded in order to be analyzed. The questionnaire has to be piloted in a tutorial group, whereby tutors and students will be allowed to critically analyse the questionnaire in case any corrections needed to be made.

Once this will be done, the questionnaire will be ready to be carried out on a sample of different organizational employees. Data will be collected using the personal contact approach. All the responses will be measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree, against the factors, *per se*.

Based on the information collected investigation, evaluation, and discussion were established in the thesis paper. As for the questionnaires, survey data will be analyzed by using SPSS statistical packages. Relevant Statistical tools was applied to analyze the data and arrive at the findings.

The data produced from my developed questionnaire will be processed through analysis and interpretation aided by pictorial evidence which will be used for better understanding.

Descriptive Statistics

Mean and standard deviation for each item has been listed in subsequent table and graphs. Table explains the response of sample respondents with respect to each item.

**Graph: Responses of Age Group below 25 years
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Age Group below 25 Years**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
My work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members.	3.75	1.296
I feel proud of working in this organization.	3.73	1.042
I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.	2.86	1.287
Some relaxation be given for entry time to workplace and the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies.	3.84	0.713
At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	3.02	1.285
My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	2.95	1.363
I have support from co-workers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.	4	0.94
The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.	2.68	1.29
It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.	3.14	1.069
My job requires that I keep learning new things.	4.05	1.056

Interpretation: The table above indicates the responses of IT sector employees at age group below 25 years. The mean and standard deviation of each item is calculated. At, this age group, the respondents agree to a large extent that work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members (mean = 3.75) which leads to work life imbalance. Respondents of IT sector somewhat accept that feel proud of working in their respective organization (mean = 3.73) which signifies that they have a high level of job satisfaction. While, making a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration responses are close to neutral (mean = 2.86). IT sector employees strongly agree for some relaxation to be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies (mean = 3.84). Responses for, employees to choose between advancing in their

jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives are neutral (mean = 3.02). The organisational factors like supervisors support or manager is understanding about personal or family issues that affect their work is significantly close to neutral (mean = 2.95). Responses for having support from co-workers that helps them to manage their work and personal or family life strongly agree to great extent (mean = 4). Other balancing factors where employees disagree that co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact them about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails (mean = 2.68). Responses at this age group agree that it is basically their own responsibility to decide how their job gets done (mean = 3.14). Finally the last item indicates a significantly high factor for career advancement and growth prospects for responses on the job which requires that they keep learning new things at workplace (mean = 4.05).

Graph: Responses of Age Group between 25-35 years
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Age Group between 25-35 Years

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
My work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members.	3.32	1.154
I feel proud of working in this organization.	2.86	1.354
I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.	3.5	1.305
Some relaxation be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies.	3.83	0.931
At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	3.56	1.095
My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	2.68	1.317
I have support from co-workers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.	3.26	1.357
The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.	3.5	1.175
It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.	3.53	1.021
My job requires that I keep learning new things.	4.23	0.926

Interpretation: The table above indicates the responses of IT sector employees at age group between age group 25 to 35 years. The mean and standard deviation of each item is calculated. At, this age group, the respondents somewhat agree that work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members (mean = 3.32) which leads to work life imbalance. Respondents of this age group are somewhat disagree that feel proud of working in their respective organization (mean = 2.86) which signifies that they have a low level of job satisfaction. While, responses for making a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration somewhat agree which indicates intention to leave the workplace (mean = 3.5). IT sector employees strongly agree for some relaxation to be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies (mean = 3.83). Also responses for, employees to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives somewhat agree (mean = 3.56). Supervisors support or manager is understanding about personal or family issues that affect their work responses significantly disagree (mean = 2.68). Responses for having support from co-workers that helps them to manage their

work and personal or family life somewhat agree (mean = 3.26). Other balancing factors where employees disagree that co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact them about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails (mean = 3.5). Responses at this age group agree that it is basically their own responsibility to decide how their job gets done (mean = 3.53). Finally the last item indicates a significantly high factor for career advancement and growth prospects for responses on the job which requires that they keep learning new things at workplace (mean = 4.23).

**Graph: Responses of Age Group between 35-45 years
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Age Group between 35-45 Years**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
My work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members.	3.17	1.262
I feel proud of working in this organization.	3.97	0.89
I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.	2.17	0.791
Some relaxation be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies.	3.57	1.04
At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	3.17	1.44
My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	3	1.414
I have support from co-workers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.	3.73	1.112
The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.	3.27	1.413
It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.	3.53	1.137
My job requires that I keep learning new things.	4.07	1.081

Interpretation: The table above indicates the responses of IT sector employees at age group between 35-45 years. The mean and standard deviation of each item is calculated. At, this age group, the respondents agree to some extent that work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members (mean = 3.17) which leads to work life imbalance. Respondents at this age group have a strong commitment and feel proud of working in their respective organization (mean = 3.97) which signifies that they have a high level of job satisfaction. While, making a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration responses completely disagree (mean = 2.17). IT sector employees strongly agree for some relaxation to be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit-time depending on the exigencies (mean = 3.57). Responses for, employees to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives somewhat agree (mean = 3.17). The organisational factors like supervisors support or manager is understanding about personal or family issues that affect their work is to neutral (mean = 3). Responses for having support from co-workers that helps them to manage their work and personal or family life strongly agree to great extent (mean = 3.73). Other balancing factors where employees closely agree that co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact them about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails (mean = 3.27). Responses at this age group significantly

agree that it is basically their own responsibility to decide how their job gets done (mean = 3.53). Finally the last item indicates a significantly high factor for career advancement and growth prospects for responses on the job which requires that they keep learning new things at workplace (mean = 4.07).

Graph: Responses of Age Group above 45 years
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Age Group above 45 Years

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
My work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members.	3.5	0.577
I feel proud of working in this organization.	4.5	0.577
I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.	2.25	0.957
Some relaxation be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies.	4	0
At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	2.25	0.957
My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	3.25	2.062
I have support from co-workers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.	4	0
The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.	4.5	0.577
It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.	4	0
My job requires that I keep learning new things.	4	0

Interpretation: The table above indicates the responses of IT sector employees at age group above 45 years. The mean and standard deviation of each item is calculated. At, this age group, the respondents agree to a large extent that work stress deprives me from enjoying company with my family members (mean = 3.5) which leads to work life imbalance. Respondents of this age group strongly agree that feel proud of working in their respective organization (mean = 4.5) which signifies that they have a high level of job satisfaction. While, responses her strongly disagree of making any genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration (mean = 2.25). IT sector employees strongly agree for some relaxation to be given for entry time to workplace are the same with exit- time depending on the exigencies (mean = 4). Responses for, employees to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives completely disagree (mean = 2.25). Responses for supervisors support or manager is understanding about personal or family issues that affect their work some what agree (mean = 3.25). Responses for having support from co-workers that helps them to manage their work and personal or family life strongly agree to great extent (mean = 4). Other balancing factors where employees strongly agree that co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact them about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails (mean = 4.5). Responses at this age group agree that it is basically their own responsibility to decide how their job gets done (mean = 4). Finally the last item indicates a significantly high factor for career advancement and growth prospects for responses on the job which requires that they keep learning new things at workplace (mean = 4).

Difference in Responses Irrespective of Ages

The study reveals that respondents of all ages show different responses for the below items.

1. I feel proud of working in this organization.
2. I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.
3. At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.
4. My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work.
5. The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.

Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Overall Age Group

<i>Items</i>	<i>Below 25 years</i>		<i>Between 25-35</i>		<i>Between 35-45</i>		<i>Above 45 yrs</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I feel proud of working in this organization.	3.73	1.042	2.86	1.354	3.97	0.89	4.5	0.577
I will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year taking everything into consideration.	2.86	1.287	3.5	1.305	2.17	0.791	2.25	0.957
At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.	3.02	1.285	3.56	1.095	3.17	1.44	2.25	0.957
My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	2.95	1.363	2.68	1.317	3	1.414	3.25	2.062
The co-workers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact me about work-related matters outside normal work hours through telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and emails.	2.68	1.29	3.5	1.175	3.27	1.413	4.5	0.577

6. FINDINGS

The study reveals that at the age group below 25 years represent a satisfactory level of job satisfaction and commitment at workplace which indicates that they are happy working with their managers but at the same time the working hour culture needs to improvise which shall lead towards a healthier working environment. Respondents of age group between 25-35 years have a high demand for work pressure therefore are significantly affected by various organisational factors leading to work life imbalance. At the group between 35 to 45 years, employees are not much affected by the organisational work hours or work family culture and they subsequently enjoy their work. In the age group above 45 years, employees under survey were few in number who are highly committed and dedicated to their work and do not show any significant dissatisfaction with respect to various factors leading to work life imbalance. The most affected respondents fall between the age group from 25 to 35, these young generation employees are

highly energetic and reactive the current environmental demands and technologies. With the adaptation and implementation of work life balance strategies and policies available these IT workers may have a much better place to work.

7. CONCLUSION

The current paper has contributed in studying critical issues of work life balance and its impact on the performance of employees working in IT sector at Bhubaneswar city. The study investigated work life conflict as one of the major predictor of work life balance. The research identified the presence of many negative effects of poor work life balance due to excessive working hours culture and inflexibility in working schedules.

Findings also suggested that IT sector employees suffer through immense work life imbalance among all other workforce. The informal support of peer and superior was highly recommendable. Implementation of child care, elderly care and family friendly initiatives could significantly improve the workplace culture which shall create a better and healthier place to work.

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