

THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

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***Abstract:** Balancing work life and family life has become a critical issue after globalisation. It is receiving increasing attention from policy makers, organisations, and employees worldwide. This study is conducted among women employees working in BPO Organizations at Chennai. Demographic variables like age, designation, experience, marital status, family structure and number of children significantly influence work-life balance. Therefore an effort is made to understand the difference in the level of work life balance caused by the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The level of work-life balance was found to be high for respondents who are in lower age groups, in the junior levels and with less years of experience. Marital status and parental status were also found to influence work-life balance.*

***Keywords:** Work Life Balance, Demographic variables, BPO JEL Code: J00, I00, M50*

I. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance has evolved as a topic of concern in recent years due to significant increase in the proportion of women in work force, dual income families and workers with elder care responsibility (Bianchi and Raley, 2003; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, and Prottas, 2002; Carnoy, 2001; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Merrill, 1997; Vannoy and Dubeck, 1998). These contemporary demographic developments have made work-life balance an important work place issue and have posed new challenges for employees to simultaneously manage work and family responsibilities.

II. DEFINITIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance has become a popular concept among employees, employers, policy makers and academicians. Despite its widespread academic and practical interest, the term work-life balance lacks a standard and consistent definition. Researchers in this field have come out with several definitions.

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According to Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) work-family balance comprises of three components:

- Time balance – equal amount of time spent for work and non-work roles
- Involvement balance – equal amount of involvement for both the roles
- Satisfaction balance – equal amount of satisfaction derived from both the roles.

Lockwood (2003) defines Work-life balance as “a state of equilibrium in which the demands of a person’s work life and personal life are equal”.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Absence of Work-life balance was found to be related to several negative work outcomes like job dissatisfaction, burnout, turnover intentions and turnover (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Collins, 2001; Howard, Donofrio and Boles, 2004). Several studies establish that work-life imbalance results in psychological distress, life dissatisfaction and marital dissatisfaction (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998; Aryee *et al.*, 1999). Work-life balance is believed to promote well-being of individuals. Kofodimos (1993) expresses that work-life imbalance creates stress in life that affects the quality of work life and effective performance of a job. Marks and MacDermid (1996) suggested that balanced individuals place equal importance to all the roles in life. This balanced involvement reduces the work-life conflict and stress, resulting in well-being (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992).

Researches reveal that work-life imbalance is negatively related to family satisfaction, job satisfaction, well-being, life satisfaction and organisational commitment and positively related to stress related outcomes like anxiety, depression, exhaustion and burnout and other outcomes like absenteeism, intention to quit and turnover. (Frone *et al.*, 1992; Frone *et al.*, 1997; Adams and King, 1996; Xinyuan *et al.*, 2011). Advocates of work-life balance argue that it contributes to individual well-being and good functioning of a society (Diana F. Halpern, 2005). Work-life balance has gained importance as it is viewed as a panacea for several issues the developing societies are facing. The need for work-life balance is driven by the nature of present-day work. Increasing number of working hours and work intensity has resulted in the decline of traditional ‘nine to five’ working day. Average number of hours people spend in paid employment is increasing worldwide. After liberalization, particularly in service sector, there is a need for round-the-clock or extended service periods. IT-BPO industry has contributed much to the economic development and growth of our country This industry has also contributed to the development of various socio-economic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity. The Indian IT-BPO industry has set high standard in gender inclusivity. Women are a key and vital part of the industry’s workforce.

On the other side of the success story of the Indian BPO industry, many studies have highlighted the problems that can seriously impact the high growth rates

predicted for this sector. These include issues such as increasing employee turnover, stressful work environment and poor career development (Walletwatch, 2003; Singh, 2005). Budhwar, Varma *et al.* (2006) and Taylor and Bain (2005) observes that Indian BPO organisations are affected with high levels of employee turnover. The biggest challenge faced by today's employees is to maintain a satisfactory level of work-life balance. The contemporary work place is characterised by long working hours and demanding work, resulting in work-life imbalance. From the home front, child care and elder care responsibility significantly contribute to the work-life imbalance. Though the male breadwinner model is replaced by dual breadwinner model, women still perform a major portion of unpaid work (Lewis, 2001).

The likelihood of women to experience the problems of work-life imbalance is more than men as working women has the double burden of managing the family and work. Particularly, in the Industry like BPO which is characterized by atypical work timings and high levels of work pressure, we can presume that the work-life balance issue will very prominent.

III. METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To Study the Work Life Balance of women Employed in BPO at Chennai.
- 2) To assess the influence of demographic factors on work - life Balance.

Data

To meet the objectives of the study both primary and secondary data are used. Primary data were collected from the respondents through the questionnaire prepared for the study. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, reports, news papers, websites etc.

Sample Size

A survey design was used to obtain the required information. The population for this study comprised of employees working in various BPOs in the Tamil Nadu State Capital Region. A sample size of 711 was chosen for this study.

Sampling Technique

Sampling technique adopted for the study is convenience sampling technique.

Hypotheses of the Study

- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their age
- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their designation.

- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their experience.
- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their parental status
- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their marital status
- There is no significant difference in the level of work-life balance of employees based on their family structure

Measure

To measure the work-life balance, a four item scale developed by Brough, Timms and Bauld (2009) was used. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the statements regarding work-life balance, using a five-point Likert scale which ranged from 5 = 'strongly agree' to 1 = 'strongly disagree'. The Cronbach alpha or reliability value of the scale is 0.931.

IV. RESULTS

One way ANOVA was applied to understand the influence of age, designation, experience, marital status and parental status on work-life balance, Duncan post-hoc analysis was conducted to identify the groups that are homogenous and groups that are different from each other with respect to the variables. Table 3 reveals that there is significant difference in the level of work-life balance (at 1% level of significance) between the respondents belonging to different age group. The Duncan post-hoc analysis shows that the work-life balance of the respondents above 35 years was lower and significantly different from the other groups. The work-life balance of respondents who are below 25 years of age is high. The lowest mean value (9.93) in the above 35 years age group signifies that the level of work-life balance is the lowest in this group. 26-30 and 31-35 age groups exhibit homogeneity regarding the level of work-life balance but significantly differ from other two groups. Work-life balance differs significantly between respondents belonging to junior, middle and senior levels (Table 4). The level of work-life balance was the highest (14.23) for respondents working in junior level and it decreases with the increase in the level. The level of work-life balance significantly vary for respondents with different levels of experience (Table 5). Respondents with less experience (below 2 years) exhibit high levels of work-life balance and those with higher levels of experience (5-8 years, above 8 years) exhibit low levels of work-life balance.

Work-life balance differs significantly between respondents having one child, two children and no child (Table 6). Level of work-life balance is lower (7.69) for respondents who have two children when compared to those who have one child (11.11) or do not have a child (11.46). An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the work-life balance of respondents who are married and single and respondents who

belong to joint family and nuclear family. The Table 7 shows that there is a significant difference in the scores of work-life balance of married (Mean=10.64, SD=3.15) and single (Mean=15.16, SD=3.04) respondents. The higher mean score of work-life balance of unmarried respondents indicate that their level of balance is comparatively higher than the married respondents. The results suggest that marital status do have an effect on work-life balance. Absence of child care and other family responsibilities associated with married role might be the reason for unmarried respondents to have higher levels of work-life balance. Family status was found to have no influence on work-life balance as there is no significant difference in the work-life balance of respondents belonging to joint family and nuclear family (Table 8).

V. DISCUSSIONS

The level of work-life balance was found to be high for respondents below 25 years of age and lower age groups. Concurrently respondents in the junior levels, with less years of experience were found to have high levels of work-life balance. As employees grow old and ascend to higher levels of designation, their responsibilities at work increases in line with the increasing job demands associated with higher positions. Similarly, in the home front, getting married and bearing children adds marital and parental responsibilities. This might have contributed to the lower levels of work-life balance of higher age groups and higher levels of work-life balance of lower age groups. Organisations may introduce programmes like flexible working arrangements, child care programmes employee assistance programmes and wellness and personal development programmes to meet the needs of employees belonging to different age groups and in various stages in the life. Emergency leave, child care leave and dependent care leave need to be provided to the employees to help them meet their responsibilities. Proper family leave policies should address this issue.

Work-life balance programmes may be designed in such a way that it caters to the needs of different employees as the study reveals that level of work-life balance significantly differs among the employees based on their age, designation, experience and marital status. A flexible work-life policies and programs that would allow workers to choose based on their needs will be a better approach rather than 'one size fits all' approach.

Work-life balance was found to decline with increase in number of children as conflict increases with number of children. It is clear that child care is an important determinant of work-life balance. Organisations need to consider child care issues and may provide child care assistance ranging from child care referral services to providing on-site child care/daycare centre. If quality day care services are available to employees, the employers may help the employees by paying child care expenses either partially or fully. . If the BPO organisations' follow work-life balance supportive practices, it would help them in reducing employee turnover, a major problem faced by the industry. They must be sensitive to the problems of the women employees who share major portion of household work and care giving responsibility. Work places

that insist on 'gender inclusivity' shall definitely consider this and introduce policies and practices that encourage women to take part in the paid work.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

<i>Demographic Variable</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age	≤25 years	238	33.5
	26-30 years	228	32.1
	31-35 years	131	18.4
	Above 35 years	114	16
Experience	Below 2 years	210	29.5
	2-5 years	236	33.2
	5-8 years	155	21.8
	Above 8 years	110	15.5
Educational qualification	UG	371	52.2
	PG	340	47.8
Marital status	Married	351	49.4
	Single	360	50.6
Designation	Junior	294	41.4
	Middle	242	34.0
	Senior	175	24.6
Number of children	No child	67	19.09
	One child	229	65.24
	Two children	55	15.67
Nature of Family	Joint family	510	71.7
	Nuclear family	201	28.3

Source: Primary Data

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Work-life Balance

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5)	<i>Agree</i> (4)	<i>Neutral</i> (3)	<i>Disagree</i> (2)	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1)	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>
I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non work activity.	35 (4.9)	130 (18.3)	250 (35.2)	226 (31.8)	70 (9.9)	3.23	1.02
I have difficulty in balancing my work and non work activity	70 (9.8)	129 (18.1)	258 (36.3)	181 (25.5)	73 (10.3)	3.08	1.11
I feel the balance between my work demands and non work activity is currently about right	21 (2.9)	166 (23.4)	216 (30.4)	221 (31.1)	87 (12.2)	3.26	1.04
Overall, I believe that my work and non work activity are balanced	19 (2.7)	137 (19.3)	235 (33.1)	217 (30.5)	103 (14.5)	3.35	1.03

Values within parenthesis indicates the percentag

Table 3
Variance Based on Age

Variable	Age groups				F- value	p value
	Below 25	26-30	31-35	Above 35		
Work-life balance	14.83 ³	12.85 ²	12.21 ²	9.93 ¹	54.602	0.000**

Table 4
Variance Based on Designation

Variable	Designation			F- value	p value
	Junior level	Middle Level	Senior Level		
Work-life balance	14.23 ³	12.58 ²	11.22 ¹	39.112	0.000**

Table 5
Variance Based on Experience

Variable	Experience				F – value	p value
	Below 2 yrs	2-5 yrs	5-8 yrs	Above 8 yrs		
Work-life balance	14.61 ³	13.23 ²	11.63 ¹	10.88 ¹	34.819	0.000**

Table 6
Variance Based on Parental Status

Variable	Children			F-value	p-value
	No child	One child	Two children		
Work-life balance	11.46 ²	11.11 ²	7.69 ¹	34.605	0.000**

Table 7
Variance Based on Marital Status – T- Test

Variables	Marital Status	Mean	S. D	t -Value	Sig Value
Work Life Balance	Married	10.64	3.15	19.46	0.000**
	Single	15.16	3.04		

Table 8
Variance Based on Family Structure

Variables	Type of family	Mean	S. D	t -Value	Sig Value
Work Life Balance	Joint	12.83	4.01	1.08	0.280
	Nuclear	13.17	3.31		

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