

Assessing Work-Life Balance among IT & ITeS Women Professionals

A. Pandu, A. Balu & K. Poorani

Work life balance becoming an area of growing concern in the Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services sector (ITeS). The present paper provides a greater understanding of the work-life balance of women employees in IT and ITeS industries. An experiential survey of 80 IT employees and 80 ITeS employees was carried out. Both the sub-sectors were evaluated on five sub-scales- workload and responsibility, work environment, feelings about work, family dependants and absence from work. The sector wise regression analysis demonstrated that feelings about work, family dependants and absence from work are strong contributors to a sense of balance for an employee. However, no significant relationship has been obtained between work environment and work-life balance.

A. Pandu is Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Pondicherry University Community College, Pondicherry. E-mail: alangayampandu@gmail.com.
A. Balu is Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Loyola College, Chennai. E-mail: balrek77@yahoo.co.in.
K. Poorani is Research Scholar (Commerce), Vels University, Chennai. E-mail: psv1143@gmail.com

Introduction

The roles and expectations of women and men have changed significantly over the past 50 years. One consequence has been a shift in the importance of work relative to family and leisure. More women than ever before are now in the workforce, reflecting the rising educational levels, changing societal attitudes and declining birth rates. The unprecedented increase in number of dual earner households, which has increased the likelihood those both male and female workers, will have domestic responsibilities in addition to work responsibilities. Managing work and family responsibilities can be very difficult for employees in dual income families and now a days women are choosing to delay or forego child-bearing to pursue fulfilling careers.

Defining Work-life Balance

Work-life balance has received much attention in the popular management literature. Work-life balance is about the interaction between paid work and other activities, including

unpaid work in families and the community, leisure, and personal development. Work-life balance is about creating a productive work culture where the potential for tensions between work and other parts of people's lives is minimized. This means having appropriate employment provisions in place, and organizational systems and supportive management underpinning them. Work-life balance for any one person is having the 'right' combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions), and other aspects of their lives. This combination will not remain fixed, but may change over time.

While much has been written about work-life balance, most studies do not explicitly define the concept. Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) defined work-family balance as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role" (Greenhaus et al., 2003 : 513). Participation in multiple roles can contribute to good mental and physical health so long as the degree of "fit" between work and family is satisfactory (Barnett, Garies & Brennan, 1999; Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Greenhaus et al. (2003) operationalized the concept of work-family balance as comprising three components. These are: (1) Time balance, whereby equal amounts of time are devoted to work and family; (2) Involvement balance, whereby an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles exists; and (3) Satisfaction balance, whereby an equal level of satisfaction is derived from work and family roles. Greenhaus et al. suggest that

balance can be positive where inputs to both roles and outputs (i.e. satisfaction) from both roles are high. Alternatively, balance can be negative, where inputs and outputs associated with both the roles are low. Furthermore, Greenhaus et al. report that individuals who were more engaged in work life than they were in family life reported higher levels of work-family conflict and stress. In contrast, individuals who were more engaged in family life than work life reported the highest quality of life and lowest levels of stress.

Conceptual Background of IT & ITeS

According to the Information Technology Association of America IT (Information Technology) is: the study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer-based information systems, particularly software applications and computer hardware, whereas ITeS (Information Technology enabled Services) is a form of outsourced service which has emerged due to involvement of IT in various fields such as banking and finance, telecommunications, insurance, etc.

ITeS are the services which do require the aid of IT but not the hard-core IT. It includes soft skills like communication wherein we do make use of computer to feed in the responses. These services are mainly used in BPOs and KPOs wherein we feed the information of the customers in the database on computer. ITeS is a part of IT. It also has a part called BPO (Business Process

Outsourcing), BPO in itself again is a huge field. The latest development in ITeS field is BPO, Callcenter, Back Office job and now what is coming is KPO (knowledge process outsourcing) & LPO (legal process outsourcing)

Brief Review of Studies

Considerable research has highlighted the importance of stress and work life balance for organizational performance. Among the variables that have been studied, work autonomy, fairness of rewards, work-family conflict and family responsibility have assumed special importance and are consistent with the trend towards providing more autonomy to employees. Since work life balance is an important indicator of a professional's health and well being a number of researchers have attempted to identify the predictors and antecedents of this construct.

Fan Weiland Fend Ying (2011) analyzed professional women's work family conflict and their stress effect. The study comprised sample of 121 professional women. Results indicated that professional women self-role perceived and social-role perceived have conflicts. Education, income ratio and professional experience have influenced the stress. Domesticity satisfaction, family activity, spouse stress, work devotion and work load were the stress factors of professional women. Shahnaz Aziz & Jamie Cunningham (2008) suggested that interventions as on-site child care; flexible work time and telecommuting may reduce stress for women. Katherine. J.C.

Sang & Andrew. R. J Dainty (2009) explained about causes of stress are due to long working hours, job insecurity and poor WLB low professional worth and temporary teams.

Leger (2004) found that most working women who experience depression and generalized anxiety disorder were in age group and 35-55 years. Such symptoms of depression and anxiety retard their success in workplace and household lives. Vashishtha & Mishra (1998) observed that social support from the family, co workers, supervisors and other people could minimize stress among the employees. Pandey & Srivastava (2000) had studied the female personnel working in railway, bank and teaching institutions. A sample of 96 females, 16 subjects in each professional area both from nuclear and joint family were taken. The study identified that respondents belonging to nuclear family had expressed more interpersonal work stress. Amidst these contrasting findings, the present paper provides a greater understanding of the work-life balance of women employees in IT and ITeS industries. To execute this objective the set of hypotheses have been formulated.

Research Methodology

The respondents involved in the study were married women employees from IT and ITeS organizations in Chennai. The selected samples had a minimum of 1 year of work experience. Data were collected from a total of 160 participants through a survey questionnaire. Quota sampling was used to draw IT employ-

ees and an equal number of ITeS employees (i.e., 80 members from each population). Questionnaire were distributed and collected personally. A covering letter describing the reason of the study was attached with each questionnaire. This letter gave details about the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study. Furthermore, participants were assured that their responses would be used only for research purpose and that no individual questionnaire would be shown to any member of the organization.

Unstructured interviews conducted from a few IT and ITeS employees helped in developing the research instrument for the study which was pilot tested. The instrument consisted of six subscales measuring work-life balance, workload and responsibility, work environment, feelings about work, family dependants, absence from work, using a 5-point Likert style scale.

Concepts of Variables & Scales

The IT and ITeS industries employees' questionnaires consisted of seven main sections in the following areas:

1. Demographic Information
2. Work-life Balance
3. Work load and Responsibility
4. Work environment
5. Feelings about work
6. Family dependants
7. Absence from work

Work-life Balance (WLB)

In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked about the extent of their work-life conflict, family management issues and their preferences for work-life balance initiatives. Work-life balance variable was measured by 6 items, based on a five point interval scale.

Workload & Responsibility (WLR)

Workload is the quantity and content of work assigned to the employees and responsibility is taking care of one's duties, answering for actions, accountability for work which has been assigned and being trustworthy to the management. Respondents were asked the time demands of their work, to indicate the extent to which they accurately reflected their level of responsibility at work and to indicate the actual number of hours spent directly undertaking work duties.

H1-workload and responsibility will hamper work-Life balance among the working women. With the increase in workload and responsibility at the work place, the chances of achieving better work-life balance decrease.

Work Environment (WE)

A work environment can be identified as the place that one works. Questions were asked about different types of support in the work environment (i.e. perceived organizational support, supervisor support and co-worker support).

H2-work environment will enhance the work-life balance among the work-

ing women. With the increase in this perception of support, the work-life balance is also likely to increase.

Feelings about Work (FAW)

Having feelings at work is fine, after all our relationships revolve around them. What's important is how we express them. It would be reasonable to assume that high levels of work-to-family conflict would have less positive feelings about their organization and be less emotionally attached to their organization.

H3- work-life balance will be positively related to affective organizational commitment, turnover intentions and intrinsic job satisfaction, i.e. satisfaction with the respect received from people at the workplace.

Family Dependents (FD)

Individuals may have responsibilities to family members other than dependent children, for example, elderly parents, grandchildren, siblings, children of siblings, spouses or significant others and in-laws. It is important that the diversity of family responsibilities is not ignored. Caring for a child or other family dependents, increase the time requirements and strain placed on the family. These time commitments, in turn, can interfere with an individual's work role. Parental status, number of children and family support of the respondents were considered to be important to this study.

H4- Family dependents will negatively influence work-life balance among

working women. With the increase in dependents, the chances of work-life balance reduce.

Absence from Work (AFW)

Keeping the employees themselves away from the work with discharging their duties and responsibilities is called as absence from work. Participants were also asked how many annual, maternity, medical and earned leave days they had off as holidays during the past 12 months. Research suggests that the respite from a demanding job can alleviate some of its negative outcomes, such as burnout (Westman & Eden, 1997).

H5- Absence from work will have a positive impact on work-life balance.

Reliability & Validity Analysis

The data obtained from the filled in questionnaires was subjected to both reliability and validity tests for both IT and ITeS employees. The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach alpha and the results are given in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the factors ranged from 0.696 to 0.827 for IT and from 0.653 to 0.825 for ITeS employees. The alpha values for various scales are quite high and therefore could be used for further analysis. Finally, Cronbach's alpha value for the overall perception scale was 0.898 for IT and 0.856 for ITeS samples and indicates its high reliability. Thus it can be said that the designed instrument could be used with confidence to measure the constructs defined.

All variables measured in the study are known to be multi-dimensional. For this reason, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the validity of the scale both for IT and ITeS employees (Table 2). The KMO and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were found to be significant amongst both the respondent groups (KMO value= 0.818; Sig. = 0.000; and KMO value=0.832; Sig. =0.000, respectively). The KMO values are higher than the suggested 0.60 value (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). Varimax rotation was carried out on the variables and the result revealed six factors (in both the sample

groups) which were largely following the original sub scales designed by the authors. The variance explained by the six reduced factors was 66.94 percent in the IT and 58.65 percent in the ITeS samples. Thus the results were in line with the scales formulated. The values of Cronbach's alpha for most of the variables are above acceptance level, it was decided to test their collinearity. The results reflected that tolerance levels (< or equal to <0.01> and variation inflation factor (VIF) values (below 3.5) were within acceptable range. The results did not indicate multi-collinearity among the variables.

Table 1 Results of Reliability Test Using Cronbach Alpha

Scale	No. of Items in the Scale	IT Employees	ITeS Employees
		Alpha	Alpha
Work load and responsibility	5	0.713	0.658
Work environment	5	0.706	0.664
Feelings about work	6	0.827	0.653
Family dependants	4	0.696	0.825
Absence from work	4	0.715	0.801

Table 2 KMO & Bartlett's Test

Group	IT Employees	ITeS Employees
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.818	0.832
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square)Sig.	297.659.000	218.810.000

Demographic Details

Table 3 indicates the differences in the profiles of the IT and ITeS employees. ITeS employees were much younger than the IT employees. There was no single respondent in the ITeS sector who was on and above 50 years of age. The ages of the sample were ranging from 22 to 51 years. Nearly 93 percent of respondents were less than 40 years old, it

could be due to the sectors started to mushroom since last one and a half decades. ITeS employees had less experience as compared with IT employees. The selected samples had a minimum of 1 year of work experience. The number of years that respondents had worked in the IT industry varied from 1 to 15 years. It is apparent that the hours worked per week (60 hours +) by the number of employees in the ITeS sector was higher

than that of the IT sector. The maximum hours worked per week by the respondents in IT sector was 12.5 percent, and ITeS sector was 20 percent. The IT employees, on an average, have more number of dependent children.

Table 3 Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	IT	ITeS
Age group		
20 – 29 years	44 (55 %)	72 (90%)
30 – 39 years	28 (35 %)	4 (5%)
40 – 49 years	6 (7.5%)	4 (5%)
50 – 59 years	2 (2.5%)	-
Years worked		
1-3 years	24 (30 %)	50 (62.5%)
4-7 years	26 (32.5%)	26 (32.5%)
8-10 years	12 (15%)	4 (5%)
11-13years	14 (17.5%)	-
above 14 years	4 (5%)	-
Hours worked per week		
0 – 29 hours	6 (7.5%)	10 (12.5%)
30 – 39 hours	18 (22.5%)	2 (2.5%)
40 – 49 hours	26 (32.5%)	14 (17.5%)
50 – 59 hours	20 (25%)	38 (47.5 %)
60 hours +	10 (12.5%)	16 (20 %)
Description of household		
Couple with dependent children	26 (32.5%)	10 (12.5%)
Couple with non-dependent children	8 (10%)	6 (7.5%)
Couple without children	46 (57.5%)	64 (80%)

Regression Analysis

The results of regression analysis based on independent variables (work load responsibility, work environment, feelings about work, family dependants and absence from work) are presented in Table 4. The overall model fit for regression equation was determined by F statistics. The model indicates positive and statistically significant relationship. The estima-

tion was carried out for IT and ITeS employees separately.

The results for IT employees indicate that 59 percent of variations in dependent variable (work-life balance) are explained by independent variables. Further, the regression results indicate that all the relationships found were in the hypothesized directions except for the relationship between work load

Table 4 Estimated Regression Results for IT & ITeS Employees

(Dependent Variable: Work Life Balance)

Group	Estimated Co-efficients & t ratios of						R2	Adj R2	F
	Constant	WLR	WE	FAW	FD	AFW			
IT Employees	0.102 (0.049)	0.331 (2.768)	0.063 (0.589)	0.485 (4.789)*	-0.215 (-1.569)	0.312 (1.936)	0.59	0.56	20.822*
ITeS Employees	-2.067 (-0.779)	0.150 (1.359)	0.166 (1.562)	0.249 (1.771)	0.412 (3.258)**	0.424 (3.125)**	0.66	0.64	29.106*

Notes: Figures in parenthesis denote t ratios, *means significant at 1%, ** means significant at 5%.

and responsibility and work-life balance. Feelings about work with highest coefficient (0.485) were found to be significant at one percent. Further, feelings about work have a positive impact on work-life balance. With the increase in commitment, turnover intentions and satisfaction, the chances of achieving better work-life balance increase.

In IT sector 90 percent respondents are youngsters and middle aged (20-39 years), 62.5 percent have less than 7 years experience and almost 52 percent respondents have children so they want more challenging and interesting job which can make them feel better about their job. Better feeling can be created among IT employees by motivating them, they can be motivated by enriching job and job can be enriched by giving opportunities to them for better workload and responsibilities, better work environment, providing moderate leave to be with their family and dependants. There exists negative relation between family dependants and work-life balance. However, it was found that the result was not statistically significant. IT employees are concerned; they are much experienced and older than the ITeS employees. In this sector, almost 32.5 per-

cent respondents have dependent children so that they could not carry out their job without having conflicts between professional life and personal life.

Significant positive relationships were found between absence from work and work-life balance, and family dependants and work-life balance.

The regression result for ITeS employees indicate that 66 percent of variations in dependent variable are explained by independent variables. Further, the regression results indicate that all the relationships found were in the hypothesized directions except for the relationship between family dependants and work-life balance. Significant positive relationships were found between absence from work and work-life balance, and family dependants and work-life balance. This means that increase in absence from work and family dependants, the work-life balance increases. In the ITeS sector 90 employees are youngsters having less than 7 years experience and almost 80 percent respondents do not have children so that they could work without having contradictions between

personal life and professional life. However, no significant relationship between work environment and work-life balance, and between workload responsibilities has been obtained.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Increased work-life imbalance is more pronounced among workers in large organizations, compared to medium-sized and small organizations. In contrast, the groups most likely to be finding it easier to balance work and personal life are older workers, the self-employed, those who work less than 25 hours weekly, and those working no overtime. IT and ITeS employees in India are not much exposed to work life balance (WLB) practices and even their employers have not done much in designing and implementing the work life balance policies and practices. There is impelling compulsion on the IT and ITeS industries to design such policies and programs to enable their employees to balance their profession and personal life so that industry can promote retention and make employees feel that they have safe, secure and happy professional and personal life.

IT and ITeS employees in India are not much exposed to work life balance (WLB) practices and even their employers have not done much in designing and implementing the work life balance policies and practices.

The most significant factor to influence work-life balance was feelings

about work (for the IT employees sample result). Thus, increase in commitment, turnover intentions and satisfaction, the chances of achieving better Work-Life Balance increases. The other two significant positive relationships were found between absence from work and work-life balance, and family dependants and work-life balance (for the ITeS sector). It was expected that work environment would enhance the work-life balance among employees. However, no significant relationship has been obtained between work environment and work-life balance, and workload and responsibility and work-life balance. The main reason for this could be because the sample size was not comprehensive enough to cover large number of employees.

The results indicate that there are differences in the perception regarding the need for work life balance policies based on their background. Bearing in mind this significance the employers need to design and implement WLB policies and practices which will enable the employees to balance their work and personal life needs. The study recommends that the top managements of organizations should take this issue seriously and set some rational objectives for female employees. 5 days work in a week is one such policy which can provide some flexibility to manage professional and personal life effectively along with flexi-time and work from home.

References

Barnett, R.C., Garies, K.C. & Brennan, R. T. (1999), "Fit as a Mediator of the Relation-

- ship Between Work Hours and Burnout”, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 4: 307 - 17.
- Fan Weian and Fend Ying (2011), “The Stressors in Professional Women’s Work-Family Conflict”, *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, 1(7): 129-33.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Collins, K.M. & Shaw, J.D. (2003), “The Relation Between Work-Family Balance and Quality of Life”, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63: 510 - 531.
- Katherine J.C. Sang, Stephen G. Ison & Andrew R.J. Dainty (2009), “The Job Satisfaction of UK Architects and Relationships with Work-Life Balance and Turnover Intentions”, *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, 16(3):288 – 300.
- Leger (2004), “Depression and Anxiety among Canadian Women in the Workplace”, Retrieved on 31 August, 2010 from www.legermarketing.com/documents/spclm/041115eng.pdf.
- Marks, S.R & MacDermid, S.M. (1996), “Multiple Roles and the Self: A Theory of Role Balance”, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58: 417 – 32.
- Pandey, S. & Srivastava, S. (2000), “Copying with Work Stress in Career Oriented Females”, *J.Com. Gui. Res.*, 17(3): 313-23.
- Tabachnik, B.G. & Fidel, L.S. (2001), *Using Multivariate Statistics*, (4th eds), Allyn & Bacon, Needham Hights, MA.
- Shahnaz Aziz & Jamie Cunningham (2008), “Workaholism, Work Stress, Work-Life Imbalance: Exploring Gender’s Role”, *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 23 (8):553- 56.
- Vashishtha, A.& Mishra, P.C. (1998), “Social Support as Moderator Variable of Occupational Stress and Organizational Commitment Relationship”, *Psy. Stu.*, 43(1&2): 33-36.
- Westman, M & Eden, D. (1997), “Effects of Respite from Work on Burnout: Vacation Relief and Fade-out”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82: 516 - 27.