

The Gap between Availability & Expectations of Work-Life Practices

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The current study attempts to find out the gap between various available practices and employee's expectations regarding the same. The study also identified the work-life balance practices provided by various organizations. It relied on the grounded theory methodology (interviews with 21 dual working parents) and collected secondary data for the study. Practitioners may design their policies and practices based on the findings to enhance overall performance of the organization and individual's work-life balance.

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Introduction

“Work-life balance (WLB) is an individual's perception of how well his or her life roles are balanced” (Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). WLB is an important issue for researchers as well as for organizations (Adame-sánchez, González-cruz & Martínez-fuentes, 2016). The growing attention towards work-life balance is the result of changing technological, societal, economic and demographic environment (Šverko, Arambašič, & Galešič, 2002). Increasing work stress, absenteeism, turnover and increasing demand for WLB have compelled organizations to provide work-life balance practices (WLBP) to solve work-life issues of their employees. Kossek, Valcour & Lirio (2014) defined WLBP as “comprehensive, multi-faceted organizational interventions designed to foster a healthy psychosocial work environment by preventing stressors in the organization of work that can lead to work-family conflict”. WLBP can be organized into three major categories, policies, benefits and services.

In a report by Forbes Insight (2011), 97% of companies surveyed

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stated that, despite organizational interventions, women are not staying in IT workforce. NCWIT (2015) reported that 57% of women leave the IT workforce within the first five years of their career. The reason for this may be the gap between the expectation of women and interventions provided by the organizations. Whilst policy initiatives can be effective in helping employees to reconcile dual roles, many individuals still resolve these issues at the individual or personal level and feel that policy has not impacted on their lives in any tangible way. Thus, it is pertinent to study the expectations of employees regarding WLBP and gaps that exist between the employee's expectations and availability of these practices. Most studies on work-family programs and work-family conflicts have been conducted in Western countries (Canada, UK, USA) where such programs are more widespread, with relatively few studies in emerging economies such as in Asia and Africa (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Poster & Prasad, 2005). Research on WLB practices is scant, and more research is needed (Haar & Spell, 2004; Prottas, Thompson, Kopelman & Jahn, 2007). The present study is addressing this gap by adopting the grounded theory approach for understanding Indian employee's perception on WLBP. This study also collected information

from secondary data to identify different practices provided by Indian organizations to enhance WLB of their employees.

Objective of the Study

The research objectives are:

- To explore existing WLBP in different organizations.
- To compare the practices available in Indian organizations with employees expectations regarding the same.

Extant Literature on WLBP

The extant literature shows that most of the (50%) of employees are unaware of the WLBP offered by their organizations (Crompton, Yeandle & Wigfield, 2002) and who utilize WLBP are seen as less committed, thus negatively impacting their appraisal, promotion and increment (Allen, 2001). The outcomes of these work-life practices have been discussed in previous studies: the availability of work-life practices has a negative relation with work-to-life conflict (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Hill, Hawkins, Ferris & Weitzman, 2001; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999), and turnover intentions. It has positive relation with organizational commitment (Aryee, Luk & Stone, 1998; Halpern, 2005; Houston & Waumsley, 2003) and job satisfaction (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). It also results in increased job performance and financial gains (Joshi et al., 2002).

Baral & Bhargava (2011) studied HR interventions for WLB in India and sug-

gested that these policies and practices are more prominent in new economy organizations such as software and services organizations. They also concluded that there is still a long way to go when WLBP will become strategic HR initiatives in most organizations. Gunavathy (2011) also studied WLB interventions prevalent in Indian industry and suggested that there is a need for organizations to adopt human resource strategies and policies that accommodate the work-life needs of their employees. He also found the sector wise differences in work-life balance provisions. Rajadhyaksha(2012) used a qualitative approach (case studies and interviews with HR managers) to study WLB issues in India and found that commonly offered WLBP in Indian organizations address gender equality, flexibility, stress reduction, health awareness and childcare.

Methodology

To understand the employees perspective on WLBP the grounded theory methodology given by Strauss & Corbin (1990) was adopted. The sample comprised 21 dual working parents using theoretical sampling (Table 1). Semi-structured interviews were conducted. We included participants from various sectors to gain insights in to variety of practices provided by different organizations. All interviews were recorded and converted into verbatim. The content analysis was done to identify the views of respondents regarding WLBP. In the interviews respondents were asked following questions:

1. What are the different WLBP adopted by your organization?
2. Do you think that your organization genuinely support to avail WLBP?
3. What do you expect from your organization to manage your work-life?

Secondary data also have been collected from various sources like news papers (Times of India, The Economic Times), company websites and other survey websites (Glassdoor.com, great place to work) to identify various practices provided by different organizations to support employees for managing their work-life.

Findings from Secondary Data

Secondary data suggest that organizations are now realizing the importance of providing WLBP to themselves and to enhance WLB of their employees. Still there is a long way to go to realize and implement the WLBP among Indian organizations. Analysis of secondary data also suggests that, while comparing WLBP provided by MNCs and other organizations, MNCs give more attention towards taking care of work-life of their employees as compared to traditional organizations in terms of providing flexibility, innovative work-places etc. Table 2 gives the details of WLBP provided by various organizations.

The need for qualitative study was felt while doing secondary analysis of WLBP as even though many organizations are providing assistance to their employees for managing their work-life

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Respondent	Gender	No. of Child	Family type	Sector	Education	Age
T1	Female	2	Nuclear	Education	Postgraduate	37
T2	Female	1	Nuclear	Education	Postgraduate	32
T3	Female	1	Nuclear	Construction engineering	Postgraduate	35
T4	Male	1	Nuclear	Construction engineering	Postgraduate	36
T5	Male	1	Nuclear	IT	Postgraduate	33
T6	Male	1	Joint	Heating & Ventilation	Graduate	35
T7	Female	1	Joint	Hospital	Postgraduate	33
T8	Male	1	Joint	Aviation	Postgraduate	32
T9	Female	1	Joint	Plastic industry	Graduate	30
T10	Female	1	Nuclear	Education	Postgraduate	29
T11	Male	1	Joint	Education	Postgraduate	37
T12	Female	2	Nuclear	IT	Postgraduate	34
T13	Male	1	Nuclear	Aviation	Postgraduate	34
T14	Male	1	Nuclear	Telecom	Postgraduate	32
T15	Female	2	Nuclear	Banking	Graduate	36
T16	Male	2	Nuclear	IT	Postgraduate	34
T17	Male	1	Nuclear	Aviation	Postgraduate	37
T18	Female	1	Nuclear	Education	Graduate	32
T19	Female	1	Joint	Education	Postgraduate	34
T20	Male	2	Nuclear	Aviation	Graduate	36
T21	Female	1	Joint	Aviation	Graduate	34

but still employees feel difficulties in managing work-life issues and perceive that their organizations are not supportive of their work-life integration.

Findings from the Qualitative Study

Nature of Leave: Respondents believed that availability of different kinds of leaves make them able to solve work-life problems. Organizations provide different kinds of leaves (like maternity leave, child care leave, and special leave etc.) to their employees to help them in managing work-life. But analysis suggests that only few organizations provide such leaves (special leaves, child care leave etc.). Most of the

organizations provide leaves which are mandatory in law. This gives sense of inequality among employees. Some respondents perceive that the number of leaves they are getting is very less and not sufficient to fulfill their work-life needs. They expect more leaves from their organizations. For example, one respondent stated: "We should have leave on our special days like anniversary and birthday of our child, so that we are able to celebrate our special days. Some organizations already provide these to their employees. Why our organization can't?"(T1)

It was also found that if they avail certain kinds of leaves it negatively af-

Table 2 List of WLBP's Provided by Various Organizations

WLBP's	Company	WLBP's	Company
Accommodation to backend staff	Big basket, Droom	Crèche	TATA Group, Goldman Sachs, HSBC and Hindustan Unilever, Microsoft and HCL, SAP India
Adoption leave	Philips, MTS, Accenture, Snapdeal	Days That Count' scheme,	Nielsen
Alternative work arrangements	Intel India	Dependent care	Qualcomm India Pvt Ltd
Bring your kids at work	CISCO (India)	Discourage overtime and taking work at home	
Career break for one year	Flipkart	Does not monitor entry and exit time	SAP Labs
Casual wear on weekdays	Infosys	Eldercare allowances	Intel India
Child care allowances	Citibank	Employee benefit	PNB MetLife, Intel
Childcare subsidies	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Extended weekend policy	Commonfloor
Compensation against loss of earning capacity		Flexibility in choosing working hours	Big basket, Droom
Compressed week	Intel India	Flexibility to change roles	Big basket, Droom
Counseling sessions for women employees	HCL, Maruti Suzuki, Ford India	Flexible working hours	Intel, GE (India),Qualcomm India PvtLtd,IBM India , TATA, Flipkart, Coca cola, Bacardi, American express, Ericson, Samsung, Amway
Offices near to employees	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Fun at work- recreational activities	IBM India
Onsite daycare or tie up with day care	GE(India),Intel India	Gymnasiums	Wipro
Opportunity to women to return after career break	HUL	Health and hospital benefits	Merck, Sharpe and Dohme
Parental leave		Health centers	Wipro
Part time working	Intel India IBM India	Hospitalization Insurance Policy,	Intel India
Paternity leave	Philips, Accenture, Snapdeal, bank officers	Hotline for counseling and expert opinion	Infosys

	Qualcomm India Pvt Ltd	Hours That Help'	Accenture
Personal leaves cannot be carried over to next year and are not encashable so that employees will use personal leaves for self and family			
Pick up and drop facility	Big basket	Housing facility	IOC, RBI
Reduce business related travel	Qualcomm India Pvt Ltd	Informational assistance for child care and elder care etc.	
Reduced working hours	TCS	Job autonomy	Merck, Sharpe and Dohme
Referral services	Intel India	Job sharing	
Retirement benefit	IOC, RBI	Job to women dropouts	Genpact
Right to adjust the length and distribution of working time	TATA Group	Leadership development program for women	Maruti
Second career program for women	Ford India	Low salary but excellent perks	Reserve Bank of India
Sessions on Guilt free Parenting	HCL	Marriage leave,	Flipkart, Snapdeal
Sessions on managing relationships	HCL	Maternity benefits this year for women employees who opt for surrogacy	PNB, MetLife
Special leave	Flipkart	Maternity leave	Intel India , Philips, Flipkart, Snapdeal
Special parking for women employees	MTS	Medical benefit	IOC, RBI
Sponsored vacation/paid vacation	IOC, RBI, Full Contact	Mentoring and career development of women,	CISCO (India), Accenture
Stress management program	TATA Group	Mom to be parking and lactation room	
Study leave	IBM India	Mom to be relaxation room	GE(India)
Support for school admission of employee's children	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Nutrition consulting	GE(India)
Telecommunicating	Intel India	Unlimited sick leave	Wipro, TATA
Traffic dynamics dictated working hours	Future Group	Work from anywhere	Godrej
Unlimited bereavement leave for loss of family members	Flipkart		KPMG

fects their careers, thus they hesitate to avail those leaves. For instance, one of the respondents stated: “We have sabbatical leaves without pay for two years, but it is not pensionable and availing these leaves impacts our career negatively”. (T15)

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Flexible Arrangements: Organizations provide different kinds of flexibility in terms of work timings and work place to their employees. Analysis identifies that respondents having flexible working hours and work from facility are able to manage their work-life requirements in better ways as compared to those who are not having flexibility. For instance, one respondent said “Thanks to our flexible working hours, I am able to manage my work-life. Whenever my wife needs to go to college early, I stay home to take care of my daughter and adjust my work timings accordingly” (T14). But some respondents have limited flexibility like work from home only once in a month or flexibility of 1 hour in the working hours. They expect more flexibility from their organizations. For example, one respondent stated: “I have work from home facility but only once in a month. I can’t avail it whenever I have the requirement to manage my family issues”(T5).

Autonomy: Respondents believe that participating in goals setting can

reduce their work-life problems. Deadlines and work related goals set by others result in work-stress which impacts their family life also. They believe that they should get freedom to choose their work and their performance should be evaluated in the area in which they love to work. For example, one respondent stated: “I love to do research so I should be allowed to do more research and less teaching. Research work should get more weightage in my key performance area. It will reduce my work tensions and contribute to my work-life balance”(T2) .

Childcare Facilities: Respondents believed that child care facility at work-place in terms of crèche and day care facilities reduced their parental problems and they can easily manage their work and child. For example, one respondent stated: “Our organization has child care center and we can go and see the child during our working hours and also there are CCTVs so we can see our child in our mobile phones also. It reduces our child related tensions and we are able to focus on our work” (T16). Analysis reveals that the most important factor of work-life balance is child care issues and if employees are not able to take care of their children it leads to the conflict in their lives. Some female respondents said that they were about to leave their jobs

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because they were facing problem in taking care of their children.

Working Conditions: Respondents also mentioned that working conditions are also important for managing work-life. They explain that good infrastructure, furniture and suitable electronic gadgets contribute to maintaining good health. One respondent stated: “Our office provides us comfortable chairs, big size desktops and good quality instruments. It prevents us from various health problems” (T3). They explain it further that if employees don’t have good working conditions it negatively affects their health. They need to give more time and energy for taking care of their health. This creates conflict in their work-life. Negative effect on their physical health also may affect their well-being and quality of life.

Organizational Culture: Most of the respondents believed that family-friendly organizational culture determines their work-life balance. Even, in the absence of any formal work-life balance practice good organizational culture helps them to solve work-family problems. Respondents believed that working in a good organizational culture reduces their work related tensions and support them to avail WLBP. It results into experiencing balance in work-life. One of the respondents stated: “We don’t have any formal policy for managing work-life but our culture is very good. Whenever I require my supervisor and my colleagues help me to manage my work-life issues” (T8). Another respondent stated: “we have very good organizational culture, my organi-

zation always supports me to avail WLBP. Because of this I am able to manage my work and family life” (T2).

House Accommodation: Respondents believed that getting house accommodation nearer to the office is very much beneficial for them to maintain their work-life. It saves their time and energy which they can invest in some other aspects of life. In a big city like Mumbai it is very difficult and expensive to get a house. Getting house accommodation from the organization reduces this difficulty and also gives financial benefit to the employees. It contributes towards experiencing work-life balance. But some struggle to get this facility due to shortage of house and very complex procedures. For instance, one respondent stated: “We are lucky to have office accommodation but a few of my colleagues didn’t get and they live very far from our office. They face lots of problem in getting house and also they pay a good amount for that” (T8).

Pick up & Drop Facility: Respondents especially women believed that having pick up and drop facility helps them in managing work-life. Moreover, in big cities it is very essential because of long distances, heavy traffic and huge population. Struggling to get public transport or driving in heavy traffic generates stress on individuals and also it negatively affects their physical and mental health. In some situations like when they become pregnant it is very important. One respondent mentioned: “I am 4 month pregnant and my husband picks and drops me to my office. He has to adjust his duties for

that. If I would have the pick up and drop facility from my office it will be easier for us manage this”(T15).

Recreational Activities: Many organizations started various recreational activities such as gym, playing area etc for their employees. This helps them to reduce work related stress during their working hours. Whenever they feel stressed and need some break they can go and play some games or relax. It gives them pleasure and they get back to work with more energy. It also contributes towards their good health. But we found that only two respondents have these facilities in their organizations. For instance, one respondent stated: “We don’t get time for going to gym or play something but if our workplace has these facilities, we can use. This will be helpful for us to reduce work tensions and promotes good health”(T1).

Informal Meetings: Respondents mentioned that informal get-togethers at work place, family parties, picnics etc contribute towards experiencing work-life balance. It helps them to know their co-workers and their families. When they go for party or picnic it reduces their stress and they have recovery experiences. They get back to work with more enthusiasm. Having these meetings also gives them sense of belongingness to their organization. It strengthens their bonding with their colleagues and supervisors and improves the relationships among them. For example, a respondent stated: “We have informal meetings, parties and get-togethers in our organization. That helps us knowing each other. It in-

creases my social support that contributes in enhancing experience of work-life balance” (T2).

Table 3 shows the details of availability and expectations of WLBP.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the WLBP provided by organizations in India and enlist employees’ perspectives regarding these practices. The results suggest that these practices are not evenly adopted by the organizations. It may generate dissatisfaction among employees when they compare their organization with similar organizations. Study suggests that individuals choose organizations which give them more work-life balance (Baek, Kelly & Jang, 2012). In harmony with literature, this study also found that availing WLBP has negative impacts on employee’s career (Allen, 2001). It was reported that when employees use WLBP to manage their work-life, it negatively affects their promotion, increment and other work related aspects. They are also considered as less dedicated employees in the point of view of their superiors and colleagues. Thus, they hesitate to avail WLBP even when they are available in their organizations. As reported in the extant literature, our results also suggest that only provision for WLBP is not sufficient, supervisor support and work-family supportive culture play important role in availing those practices (Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Frye & Breaugh, 2004). Findings of the study suggest that organizations should consider the work-family needs of their em-

Table 3 Employees' Perceptions on WLBP: Availability & Gaps

WLBP	Description	Qualitative Finding	Gap
Leaves			
Casual leaves	12 days leaves provided to all employees.	All the employees get EL and CL. Most of the respondents said that they get very less number of leaves.	Most of the employees get very less leaves in comparison to their expectations. If they avail some leaves, it negatively affects their career.
Earned leaves	Leaves which are earned in the previous year and enjoyed in the preceding years.		
Maternity leaves	Leaves for women for delivery, miscarriage		
Child care leaves	Leaves for women for taking care of children		
Paternity leaves	Leaves for father when his wife delivers the child		
Unlimited sick leave	When an employee is sick, he can avail unlimited number of sick leaves.		
Unlimited bereavement leave for loss of family members	Leaves given to employee for the death of family member.		
Marriage leave,	Five days leaves for marriage of employee.		
Special leaves	One day leave available annually to enjoy birthday, anniversary.		
Study leaves	Leaves available to study further.		
Adoption leave	Leaves available after adopting a child.		
Flexibility			
Flexibility of working hours	Flexibility in terms of in and out timings, calculate weekly working hours, so that employees can complete required	They get limited flexibility (only once in a week or month they are allowed to work from home).	Very few employees have flexibility. In most of the cases flexibility is limited also.

	working hours as per their requirements. Employees can complete working hours on lesser days and enjoy additional holiday. Employees can work from their homes	
Compressed week		
Work from home		
Autonomy	Employees are free to choose their role at their work-place.	Only a few get participation in goal setting. In most of the organizations supervisors set the deadlines for employees that increase the work pressure.
Freedom to choose work		
Goal setting	Employees get participation in goal setting and fixing the deadlines for work.	
Child Care	Employees can bring their kids at workplace in some situations.	Most of the organizations don't have child care facilities like day care center and school.
Bring your kids at work		
Day care	Day care present at workplace for taking care of children of employees.	Child care facilities are most important for dual working parents to manage their work-life.
Recreational Activities	Playing area is present where employees can play when they get bored from work. Gym for better health of employees.	Only some organizations have these facilities.
Playing area		
Gym		
Informal Meetings	Informal get-togethers and meetings organized for employees, it helps them to understand and knowing each other. Organize family parties and picnics with employees and their family members	More get-togethers should be arranged.
Informal get-together		
Family party/picnic		

<p>Working Condition Instruments at work</p>	<p>Instruments at workplace have no harmful effects on employees' health.</p>	<p>Most of the organizations provide good workplace to their employees so that it should have negative impacts on their health.</p>	<p>Organizations should give attention towards working conditions.</p>
<p>Work-place furniture</p>	<p>Office furniture should be comfortable to employees and has no negative effects on employee's health.</p>	<p>Equality should be there in terms of weekend. Most of the employees either work on weekends or have work related communications.</p>	
<p>Weekend Off Saturday off</p>	<p>Both Saturday and Sunday are holidays as weekend.</p>	<p>Most of the time employees have to do work on weekends.</p>	<p>Equality should be there in terms of weekend. Most of the employees either work on weekends or have work related communications.</p>
<p>No work on weekend</p>	<p>No work related communication on weekends.</p>	<p>Though some organizations don't have formal WLBP, but their informal culture is very supportive of employees in managing their work-life.</p>	<p>Organizational culture should be supportive for work-family integration.</p>
<p>Informal Culture Supervisor and co-worker support</p>	<p>Supervisor and co-workers are supporting for managing work-family issues.</p>	<p>Some organizations provide house accommodation nearby.</p>	<p>House accommodation should be provided to all employees.</p>
<p>House Accommodation Providing house</p>	<p>Provide houses to employees.</p>	<p>Organizations do not provide the facility.</p>	<p>Organizations should provide this facility.</p>
<p>House assistance</p>	<p>Assistance provided for getting house.</p>	<p>Pick up and drop facility to employees from their home to office</p>	
<p>Pick up and drop facility</p>	<p>Pick up and drop facility to employees from their home to office</p>		

employees and design WLBP accordingly. For example, flexible working hours and work from home facility is more important for an employee who has young kids and working wife as compared to the employee who has grown-up kids and non-working wife. Organizations should also create a good work-family culture to promote availing these practices (Budhwar, Biswas & Varma, 2007). The study also gives insights into the important practices which employees want from their organizations such as flexible working hours, work from home, house accommodation and child care facilities, these are most demanding practices from employees' perspective. The extant literature also supports our findings that employees want flexibility in terms of availability for the family, working closer to home or at home, and the possibility to interrupt or reduce work to attend family needs and emergencies (Poelmans, 2005). Guynn (2013) also suggested that work from home is beneficial to employees, particularly married employees having children, in their struggle to balance work and family.

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Conclusion

The study attempts to understand the status of WLBP and employees expectations and adds value to the extant Indian literature by identifying the gaps

between availability and expectations of WLBP. The study identifies various practices provided by different organizations to help their employees in managing work-life. It provides learning to the managers and HR practitioners that they should design policies and practices for human resources to increase their WLB, which will enhance organizational overall performance. The study has suggested that designing customized WLBP according to the requirement of individual employees would be beneficial. One fits all policy may not work in the case of work-life problems. Future studies on different sectors and their comparisons would add value to the work-life literature.

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