

The Importance of Work Life Balance to Employees and Employers

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual's life and the level to which activities related to their job are present in the home. The ideal work-life balance is open to discussion. Work-life balance is a topical issue due to the increased amount of technology that removes the importance of physical location in defining the work-life balance. Previously it was difficult or impossible to take work home and so there was a clear line between professional and personal.

The increase in mobile technology, cloud-based software and the proliferation of the internet has made it much easier for employees to be 'permanently' at work, blurring the distinction between professional and personal. Some commentators argue that smartphones and 'always-on' access to the workplace have replaced the authoritarian control of managers.

Stress is a common feature of a poor work-life balance. In the information economy mental stress has been identified as a significant economic and health problem, causing by a perceived need of employees to do more in less time. A key issue in the work-life balance debate is where responsibility lies for ensuring employees have a good work-life balance. The general feeling is that employers have a responsibility to the health of their employees; apart from the moral responsibility, stressed-out employees are less productive and more likely to make errors.

KEYWORD- *Work -life, stress, Work-life Balance, family, policies, WLB, Management, Human Resource*

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one's career and the demands of one's personal life. Defining work-life balance involves looking at how working people manage time spent at and outside of work. Time outside of work may include managing relationships, family responsibilities, and other outside interests and hobbies. The methods an individual uses to juggle all their work and life demands constitute their work-life balance. The definition is simple, yet working professionals everywhere struggle to define it for themselves, let alone achieve it. With many people feeling stressed and not "balanced" it is time to look at how we conceptualize work-life balance and the ways in which it will need to evolve for professionals today.

The actual term "work-life balance" first appears in the U.K. in the 80's as a plank in the Women's Liberation Movement. The movement advocated for flexible schedules and maternity leave for women. But while men were socially unencumbered to pursue their career goals without worrying about housekeeping and family-raising, working women were expected to work and maintain responsibility for housekeeping and family rearing. In the 80s a frequent refrain pointed out this obvious work-life imbalance asking could women in the workplace really "have it all". Despite voicing these needs, women experienced little relief or movement towards work-life balance.

It refers to an individual's ability to balance the commitments, responsibilities and goals relating to their paid work (e.g., working hours, expected outputs of the job, career advancement), with personal commitments, responsibilities and desires (e.g., parenting, recreational activities, community commitments, further education). Individuals who maintain a healthy balance between work and life achieve a sense of wellbeing and feel that they not only have

control over their working life (e.g., by being able to determine when and how much they work), but also to lead a rich and fulfilling personal life.

On the contrary, individuals who do not find a healthy balance between work and life experience conflict between work and personal commitments, known as work life conflict. These individuals may have to forgo dedicating time to life in order to fulfil work responsibilities or vice versa.

What influences work life balance?

An individual's ability to maintain a balance between work and life is affected by factors relating to an individual's workplace and working conditions, including the flexibility and quantity of hours worked, sick and holiday leave provisions and availability of support structures within the workplace (e.g., childcare facilities, breastfeeding facilities). Government policies regarding employer and employee responsibilities also exert an influence. For example, government provision or subsidization of childcare or parental leave may make it easier for parents to participate in the workforce without interrupting their work life balance.

In addition, the characteristics of an individual's life are important determinants of their ability to maintain a balance between work and life. Individuals who have many non-work commitments (either permanently or temporarily) face additional challenges when it comes to balancing these commitments with work. For example, those who are involved in community organization's or do voluntary work, those who are studying or pursuing sports and those who spend large amounts of time travelling may find it more difficult to find a healthy balance between work and life. Various aspects of parenting, including child-bearing, breastfeeding and child-rearing also influence an individual's ability to achieve a healthy work life balance. Employee control over work and work flexibility is of critical importance to employees who are also parents.

OBJECTIVES

To study the importance of Work Life Balance to Employees and the Employers.

To study the issues related to Work Life Balance affecting both people and the Organization.

To study how to make a good Work Life Balance ensuring healthy environment.

Literature Review

In current years, the word "work-life balance" has changed what used to be known as "work life balance" (Hudson Resourcing, 2005). This semantic move arises from a recognition that childcare is by no means the only significant non-work responsibility and the problem can be relating to any non-paid activities or commitments and to a diverse range of employees such women, man, parents and non-parents, singles and couples. Other life behavior that require to be impartial with employment may contain study, sport, voluntary work, travel, personal development, leisure or eldercare. From the very establishment it is important to recognize that work-life balance does not mean to dedicate an equal amount of time to rewarded work and non-paid roles; in its broadest intelligence, is defined as a suitable level of attachment or 'fit' between the numerous roles in a person's life.

Why Work Life Balance Is Important

1) Work Life Balance Means Less Stress

2) Work Life Balance Will Improve Your Mental Health

3) Work Life Balance Means Better Physical Health- Part of creating balance for yourself includes taking care of physical health. that includes things like:

- Eating healthy meals,
- Healthy sleep habits,
- Regular exercise.

4) A Balanced Lifestyle Enhances Your Ability to Be Present

5) Work Life Balance Improves Your Relationships A balanced lifestyle means more time with family and friends that is high-quality.

5) A Balanced Lifestyle Increases Engagement At Work: A less stressed, mentally and physically healthy employee who feels connected to co-workers is more likely to be motivated to work harder. And that increased motivation means that you are going to perform at a higher level and be more engaged.

6) Work Life Balance Increases Creative Thinking: When you're stressed, overwhelmed and/or anxious, you have no capacity to think creatively. But with balance comes clear, creative thinking. And that means better work product too.

7) Balance Makes You More Productive: What that means is that you're more likely to perform at a higher level because of your balanced lifestyle.

8) Real Balance Brings Happiness and Fulfillment

9) Work Life Balance Brings Higher Levels of Success: This is done by:

prioritizing and focusing on what is most important to you

By ensuring your own well-being (thereby enabling you to serve others to the best of your ability); and being in control of your life.

Importance of Work Life Balance to Employees & Employers

A 'work life' balance refers to an employee's ability to maintain a healthy balance between their work roles, their personal responsibilities, and family life. Companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of helping their employees to achieve this balance as more staff are experiencing conflict between their work and personal roles. In today's age, many workers are seeing their personal responsibilities increase, from childcare and elderly care, to volunteer work, and family commitments. This comes at a time when their work responsibilities are also increasing, resulting in a conflict between personal and work commitments and an increase in stress.

Another factor which is contributing greatly to the difficulty in achieving a work life balance is the changing landscape in how and where employees are expected to work. As more and more companies embrace the technological age and move into globalization, work is no longer restricted to the workplace. Employees can work from almost any location with the use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones; and telecommuting is on the increase. Employees can access work emails and assignments 24/7, meaning that they can also be accessible to employers and clients. Although there are multiple benefits to this flexible working pattern, it can run the risk of blurring the lines between work and personal life. Remote working also means that staff may now find that their typical work week is no longer restricted to the traditional 40 hours a week.

The result of a poor balance between work and personal life not only affects employees, but it also affects the companies that they work for. Employee stress can increase to the level of burnout, resulting in lower productivity at work, a higher potential for stress related health problems and absenteeism, with the associated costs related to these being passed on to the company. In addition to this, employees may also experience poor personal and co-worker relationships and reduced job satisfaction.

There are several ways in which companies can help to encourage a work life balance for their employees, both in the policies that they implement and in ensuring that managers actively encourage employees to take advantage of these policies. Offering employees flexible working options helps employees design their work pattern to fit their personal commitments, ultimately reducing conflict between work and personal responsibilities. Flexible working options include allowing employees to work from home, adjust their working hours to meet personal commitments, use remote working, compressed work weeks, and job sharing. Managers should encourage staff to use annual leave and help employees to set boundaries by encouraging staff not respond to work related emails and calls during non-working hours. Some organizations are also implementing wellness programs, which include offering stress

reduction and time management workshops, while others are creating wellness centers on the work site, helping to connect employees with physicians, mental health counselors, or on-site gyms.

An employee's satisfaction in their personal life and their ability to meet personal commitments greatly affects their success as a worker, which greatly benefits any company. Helping employees to achieve a good work life balance increases work satisfaction, increases their loyalty to their employer, and helps employers to achieve career longevity. A company which recognizes these benefits and implements policies to promote a work life balance is one which will not only see an increase in the productivity of their workforce, but which also sees increased retention of staff and reduction in costs associated with high turnover.

CHALLENGES OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance was first mentioned in the UK at the end of the 1970s. Obviously, since those days, a lot has happened in the professional and the personal world. Every challenge we encounter adds to pressure, pressure leads to stress, stress leads to emotional and physical unbalance and unhappiness. So, it is important to overcome challenges, in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

1. Unrealistic demands: The demands that work and life throw at us can easily mount up to incredible levels. Unreasonable demands at work, arrangements that are eating into personal time, such as weekend meetings, and technology overload are mentioned as adding a lot of pressure. Demands of personal life are adding pressure to work, as time is required to accommodate family or friends, and are eating into work-time.

Think of family members with intensive schedules, impacting on yours (the mum that needs to ferry the athlete to extra training sessions or matches, or the partner that decides to do an evening course), or when expectations are set by others (like a monthly visit to parents). Meeting too many demands is a threat to the healthy balance.

How to deal with it?

It is important to be clear about what you want from work and life. Are the demands justified in the light of what you want? For every challenge, go through the questions: what do I gain from doing it and what is the price I pay? Who else gains from it and who else pays a price? This gives you a good structure to make a choice.

2. Lack of control

Lack of control is creating pressure, as it leaves you 'hanging in there, with a dark cloud above your head'. It is difficult to deal with the uncontrollable workload or the insecurity of the situation of the company you work in. In personal circumstances aspects as illness, exams, kid issues can feel as if all control is gone and is very stressful.

How to deal with it? The way to respond to lack of control is to find a different internal response. Feeling frustrated by the lack of control makes it worse. Accepting the situation for what it is, at this moment in time, won't sap your energy and make you more efficient. Sometimes, you just have to go with the flow.

3. Unsupportive relationships

Unsupportive relationships at work, aversive behavior or not getting credits, are creating a difficult and unproductive work environment whilst making people feel isolated. Unsupportive relationships at home, where no one helps each other or considers other people's pressures creates frustration and unhappiness.

How to deal with it? This comes down to people management, communication and expectations. Are you asking for support? Are you clear on what support you want? Could it be your expectations are not realistic?

4) Lack of resources

Not enough resources or not the right ones are really affecting how life can be organized. The absence of a PA or a good babysitter are both examples of important lacks.

How to deal with it? Take action and try to be creative. If you can't find a PA, could you outsource part of the tasks? Alternatively, lower your standards in certain areas. Something has to give, and it shouldn't be you.

5. Unhelpful attitude

Resilience in challenging circumstances determines how well someone is coping and finding a way forward. If the energy levels are low and undermined, due to all the different challenges, it can be really hard to find that resilience.

How to deal with it? One of the healthy ways of building resilience is meditation. There are plenty of short and easy ways to bring in a mindfulness meditation into your day.

. 6) No skills

Surviving and managing the challenges above and the personal awareness and behavior that goes with it, are professional and life skills. No skills? Lots of stress.

How to deal with it? When you recognize your weaknesses in certain areas, such as communication, confidence or practical skills, take action to develop skills. This will also make you feel more in control.

7) High-stress levels

All the above challenges can appear in anybody's life and will add to stress levels. Not being able to handle stress will kill any chance of a healthy work-life balance.

How to deal with it? Do not accept stress as a fact of life. You can be very busy, without feeling stressed. Stress is a personal response and you can take control of it by learning skills that will help you to reduce stress, such as mindfulness and meditation and learning to be kinder to yourself.

FINDINGS

Work-life balance plays a key role in employees' performance at work in India, revealed a survey conducted by global recruitment specialist - Michael Page India. Organizations' too, on their part, consider this as an important factor in reducing the attrition rate, the survey showed.

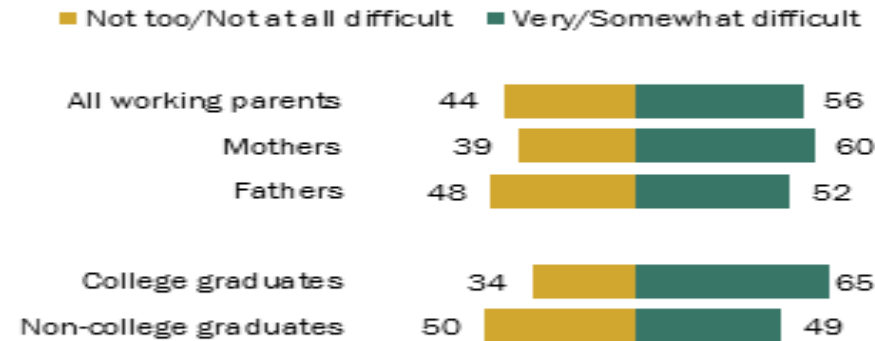
The India@Work report, which surveyed 585 Gen-Y professionals from varied sectors and senior levels across India, showed that 90% employees feel a flexible work environment is important.

The growing 'always-on' work culture among millennials has cost employees their mental health undermining the quality of work," Mohit Bharti, regional director at Michael Page India, stated in a press release. "Performance pressure and fear of losing jobs are the major reasons for extensive stress beyond work hours. Identifying multiple ways to address such problems has become critical for employees as well as organizations," he added.

The research, which looks at how employees carve quality time out of their work weeks for family or to free up their mind to increase productivity, indicated that apart from the scope of responsibilities and tasks in the workplace, other factors such as commuting, employee-employer relationship and flexi-environment all affect the productivity of the employees.

Six-in-Ten Working Moms Say Balancing Job and Family Is Difficult

% saying it is ___ for them to balance the responsibilities of their job with the responsibilities of their family



Note: Based on all full- or part-time working parents (n=1,411). College graduates are those who have a bachelor's degree or more education. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of parents with children under 18, Sept. 15-Oct. 13, 2015

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According to the survey findings 98% of respondents feel that that being on good terms with bosses and colleagues can improve productivity. Comparing workplace relationships, 77% regard colleagues as friends versus only 43% who consider their managers as friends.

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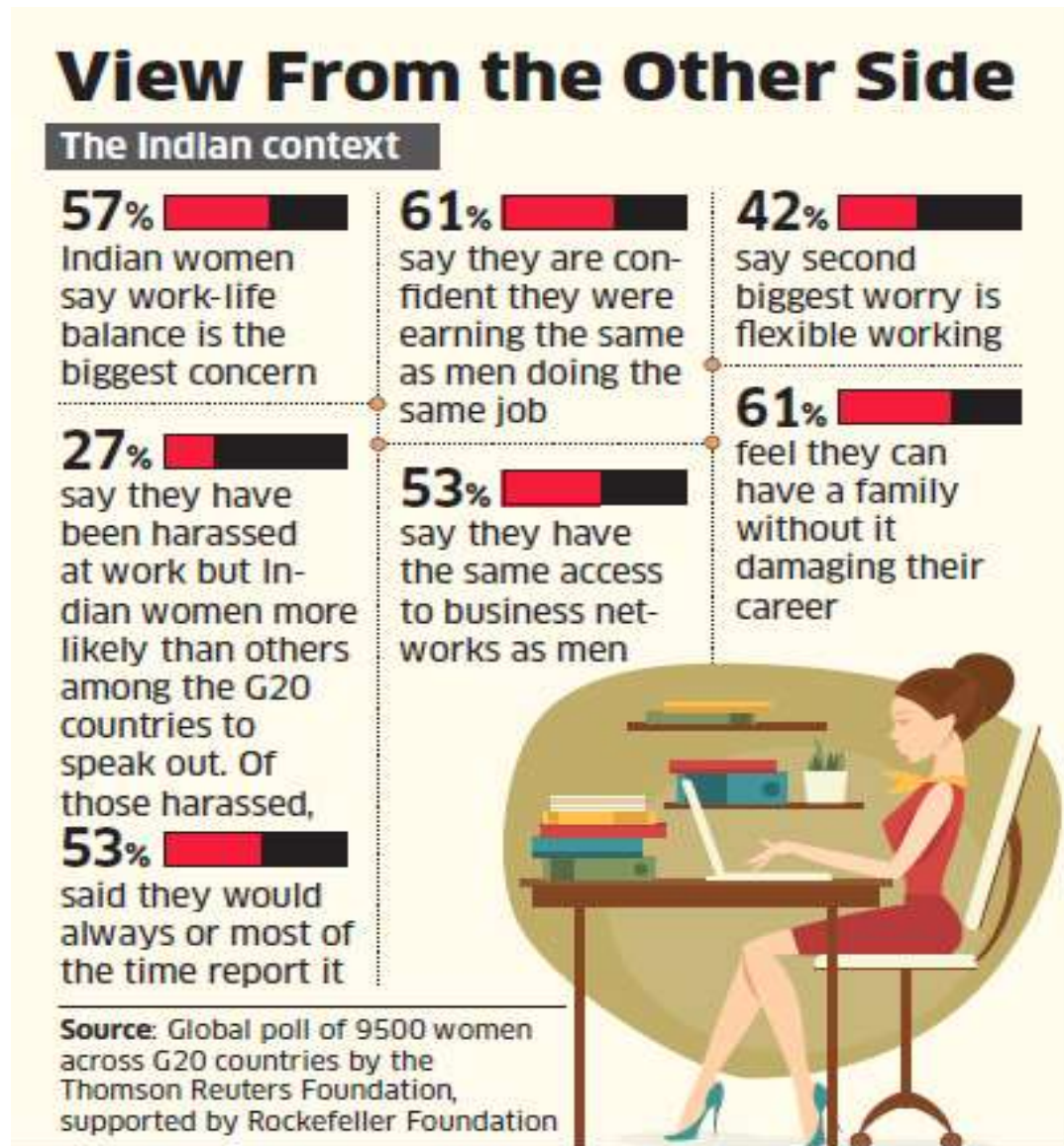
As per the survey, an average 92% spend less than an hour on personal matters at work. 65% employees say they chat with family and friends on messaging apps and 27% send personal emails at the workplace. Nine out of 10 respondents feel a flexible work environment is very important. 60% indicated it gives them better work-life balance, while 34% claim it increases professional productivity.

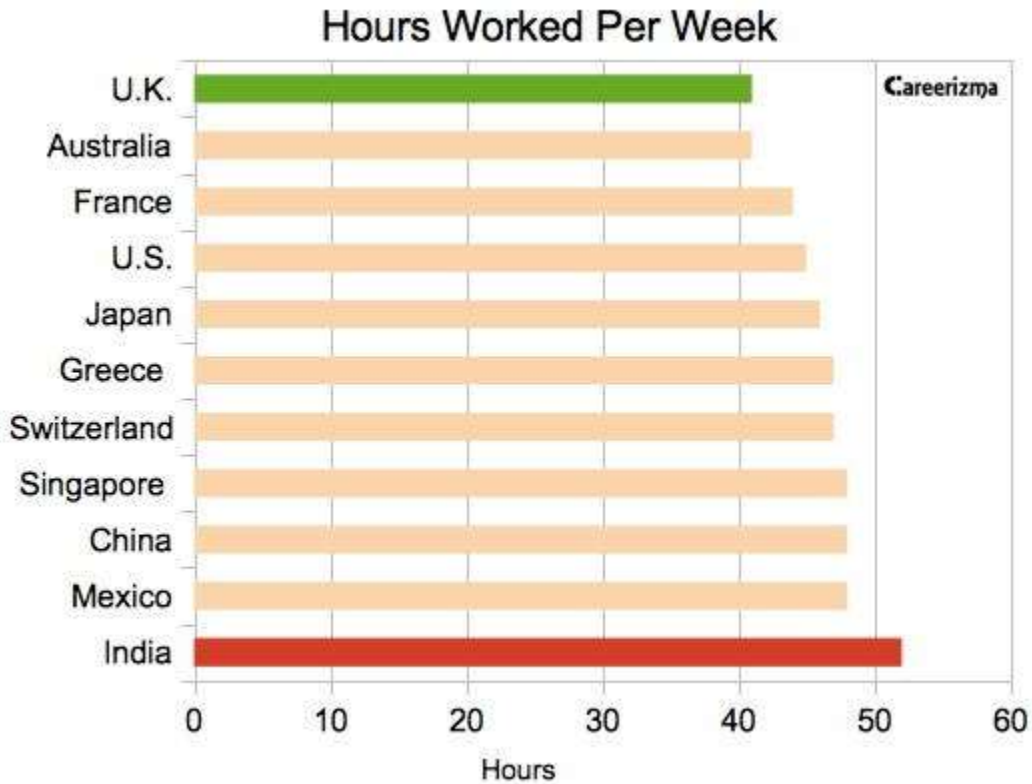
Several companies in India have started modifying their employee policies for a healthy work-life balance and controlled attrition rate," said Bharti. "More than balancing, an integration is required between work and personal life in order to achieve higher productivity leading to a better outcome," he added.

Communication is a key aspect at workplace, and the results of the study have verified that the better relationships are in the office, the happier and more productive employees can be. One in 2 reportedly speak with colleagues daily on personal matters of which economy and politics (46%) are the most common topics of interests followed by

entertainment (26%). The survey also showed that the longer the commute to work, the lesser is the time for family, friends and wellbeing. Nearly 65% of the study state they spend an hour or less travelling to work daily and 76% believe work commute time is an important factor when considering a new job.

Seven out of 10 executives surveyed felt that issuing devices which allow for remote working has a positive impact on work-life balance. About 93% claim to receive a mobile device from work and 55% also use these for personal matters.





Company's stance on remote work for employees who do not recommend remote work



- 32% ● Part of the team is full-time remote and part of the team works out of the same office.
- 23% ● Everyone at my company works remotely.
- 10.5% ● At my company we can work from home as needed.
- 10.5% ● At my company we can work remotely a certain number of days per week/month.
- 5% ● I am a solo business or freelancer and work remotely.
- 19% ● No response

State of Remote Report 2020
buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020



C ONCLUSION

Today, work-life balance has shifted to incorporate both the issues and strategies aimed at effective time management for employees. It has also expanded to include burnout prevention and stress management. Employees today want better time management skills to spend time with their families and on their personal interests. And, unlike the 80s, there is increasing emphasis today in making work-life balance more gender neutral. Work-Life balance should be attainable and evenly distributed across genders. (2015 EY Global Generations Survey).

Even with these strides, there is still a disconnect on perceived work-life balance levels between employees and HR professionals. According to a February 2015 study by Workplacetrends.com, 67% of HR professionals reported that their employees *are* achieving work-life balance, while only 45% of their employees reported the same.

One common and popular way that employers help employees achieve work-life balance is through flexible schedules. Instead of a strict 9am-5pm workday, employees have the flexibility to shift their schedules. Perhaps work 10am-6pm or 7am-3pm with little advanced scheduling or approval. Of course, there are downsides to this. Some argue that this approach simply shifts time units and doesn't address a deeper need for quality time. Others have noticed that flextime, though attractive for recruitment, can lead to disadvantages for younger workers in the form of lower wages, role stagnation, and even termination.

Still, digital integration threatens the freedoms gained from flextime by blurring the lines between work and life. Often, employees find themselves using their flextime to stay digitally connected to work. It's increasingly difficult to know where work ends, and life begins. And the more tech savvy one is, the more difficult it is to draw a line between the two. Since technology and our "always on" culture is not going away anytime soon, the conversation on work-life balance needs to evolve.

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