

Work life Balance Practices in India

By

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Abstract

Conflict between work and personal life of an employee is a universal concept. Every employee in this competitive market is facing problem while balancing the professional and personal life. IT sectors have recognized the importance of Work-Life Balance Practices and applied some of them to improve employee productivity. This research is an attempt to study work life balance issues. This paper will examine the literature on work life balance policies and practices and work place culture in different industries in order to increase their productivity reduce absenteeism, turn over.

Key words: work-life balance, work life balance practices, benefits

Introduction

In many organizations employees are facing conflict between their work and personal life. To achieve goals they have to work for longer hours thereby compromising their time for personal life which results in a stress full life for employees. With the passage of time the relevance of work life balance becomes very important when family responsibilities increase and care for children and other dependent become priority. Having a well balanced work life will result in a happy, well motivated, committed employee and the sign of a poor work life balance include high stress, overtime, absenteeism and staff turnover.

Definition of work life balance: There is no definite definition of work life balance. It differs according to the individual perception. Followings are some definition given by researchers.

- Work-life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life (Hudson, 2005).
- WLBPs are those institutionalized structural and procedural arrangements, as well as formal and informal practices that make it easier for individuals to manage the often-conflicting worlds of work and family lives (Osterman, 1995).
- WLBPs are increasingly being considered as strategic, innovative, crucial and progressive (Lambert, 2000; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000, Tenbrunsel et al., 1995).
- Gibson et al. (2006: 197-198) offered two explanations regarding the interconnectedness of work and life in the organizational setting: (1) the compensation effect implies that employees tend to compensate for low work or personal life satisfaction by seeking contentment in the other domain; and (2) the spillover view that indicates that job satisfaction spills over into one's work life and vice versa.
- According to Johnson (2005) the employees' age, lifestyle, and environment play important role in one's perception of work-life balance.

Work life balance practices can be categorized into

1. Policies: cover the formal & informal ways by which employees' work & leave schedules are handled, including part time work, flexi time & parental or family leave.
2. Benefits: Benefits cover different forms of compensation that protect against loss of earnings, payment of medical expenses & sponsored vacation.
3. Services: Service include onsite or near site childcare centers, medical facilities & counseling

Reasons that enhanced the demand for work-life balance practices:

In 21st century our lifestyle has been changed drastically. Joint family becomes nuclear family where both husband and wife are working. Their responsibilities also increase. They have to take care of their children and elders. Following are some reasons that enhanced the demand for work life balance practices

1. Increasing number of women in the work place
2. Dual career families
3. Need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives
4. Working mothers:- WLB was considered mainly an issue for working mothers in the 1960s & 1970s as they struggled with the demands of their jobs & raising children. During the 1980s, organization such as Merck, Deloitte & Touche, and IBM were the first to recognize the value and needs of their women contributors and changed their workplace policies, procedures & benefits by providing them with maternity leave, employee assistance programs, flexi time, work from home & child care referrals. (Article, The Hindu)
5. Single parent families: for single parents managing work & personal life(taking care of children & other dependents) becomes very difficult, which results in stress, absenteeism, poor health etc. So companies are taking initiatives by giving maternity benefits, flexi time, compressed work week, day care facilities to help their employees.
6. Employee health and well being: For good health and stress free life, many organizations are giving free health check up, healthy breakfast, yoga classes etc to their employees.
7. Legislation:- According to Indian Law every organization has to give basic benefits to their employees. Benefits include maternity benefit, 48 hrs of work in a week, crèches for children where 30 or more women are working, safety for women employee.
8. Public image of the organization: work life balance has important consequences for employee attitude towards their organizations as well as for the lives of employees. Organizations having good WLB practices have good image in the market & people want to join with the organization.
9. Cost benefit analysis: - researches prove that keeping new parents happy is cheaper than finding new employees, which can cost between 50 & 200% of TCO. Therefore company like Google has increased its maternity leave from 3 to 6 months.

WLBPs found in India:

In India two types of WLBPs are found: Statutory and non statutory. Statutory practices are the compulsory & minimum benefit (WLBPs) given to an employee under Indian labor law. Statutory benefits found under Indian labor legislation are

1. Factories Act, 1948: according to Factories Act, 1948, no adult worker shall be allowed to work in a factory for more than 48 hours in a week, 9 hours in a day & on first day of the week. Every employee who has worked for a period of 240 days or more in a calendar year shall be allowed for leave with wages & it is calculated as one day leave for every 20 days of work performed by the employee. This Act also provides crèches, where 30 or more women are working.
2. Maternity benefit Act, 1961: According to Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, a working woman is allowed for a paid leave of 12 weeks, 6 weeks before delivery & 6 weeks after delivery. This is same for the case of miscarriage. This Act enables the working women financially stable during pregnancy. This Act also provides 2 nursing breaks per day.
3. Indian Penal Code, 1869, section 509(amended): sexual harassment in the work place: this Act provides protection to the working women in the work place.

Non statutory benefits are the optional in nature. It's up to the employer whether he/she is interested to give it to his/her employees. Most IT industries have initiated flexi time, compressed work week, work from home, vacations, child day care facilities etc. following are some examples of WLBPs adopted in India & outside India.

1. A female friendly work place strategy adopted by IBM Australia

Initiatives	Achievements and Benefits
1. Flexible hours- option to work from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology enables women to work & care for children at home
2. Paid maternity leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially stable whilst on maternity

	leave. 97% women have returned from maternity leave over the last 10 years
3. Conducts 3 camps for younger women nationally. Duration :- 1 week & is primarily about the IT industry & what it entails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% of IBM Australia's graduate recruits are female compared to less than 15% studying IT at university.
4. Vacation care program for IBM children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives working mothers' peace of mind that their children are being cared for during the school holidays
5. Flexible leave- offers additional four weeks of annual leave, purchased through salary sacrifice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The additional four weeks gives employees the option to take more leave if required and contributes to less stress and work overload within the organization.

Source:- IBM lauded as most female friendly workplace. 08.11.2006, World Today, The ABC.

2. Some WLBP's provided by Intel India are
- Compressed workweeks (5 working days)
 - Flexible working hours
 - Alternate work schedules
 - Telecommuting
 - Work from home
 - Part time employment
 - Childcare assistance (site care approach to childcare)
 - Hospitalization insurance policy (covers employee & nominated dependants). They are covered under floater policy of 500,000 p.a. Intel pays 100% of premium for employees & 80% of premium for dependants.
 - Under business traveler medical plan: provided to both full time & part time employee at no cost while they travel on business.
 - Group term life insurance
 - Maternity leave: paid maternity leave for 84 days to women employee
 - Annual leave : 15 days for initial 2 years & 20 days after 2 years per calendar year.
 - Resource & referral services
 - Health & wellness benefits
 - Study reimbursements
 - Global opportunities
 - Recreational activities, clubs and helping employees to deal with life event from getting married to taking a career break
3. WLBP's adopted by TATA (manufacturing)
- Adult education programmes
 - Education about family planning
 - Creche facility (provided where number of female employee is more than 20)
- TCS**
- Flexitime with certain mandatory hours of work
 - Compressed work weeks
 - Conducts regular seminar on nutrition, better living & stress management
 - Promotes Group formation with similar interest to come together to conduct various activities
 - Maître is an initiative for the spouses of employees
4. Citi India
- Work from home for 2 days a month if their role permits it
 - Flexible work option e.g. flexi time, remote working
 - Provide concierge service within the office premises, helping free up valuable time for employees

5. HCL Technology
 - flexi timing for women
 - telecommunicating for women
6. pepsico India:
 - free & healthy breakfast
 - day care facilities
7. Marico
 - employees have flexibility to decide their work timings in discussion with their supervisor
 - doesn't have strict working hours
 - contingency leave policy (upto 4 days without written permission)
8. Hindustan lever ltd:
 - flexible work schedule
 - work from home
 - opportunities for women to return after career break
9. ICICI bank:- launched novel women centric initiatives on international women's day (7th March, 2016)
 - iWork@home, allows women employees to work from home initially for a year and then it can be extended.
 - The other initiative aids women managers who travel on business, by covering the travel and stay of young children and their caregivers

Benefits to the employers:-

Followings are the benefits that are being researched by various academicians and researchers.

Work-life balance practices

- reduced staff turnover(Lobel & Kossek, 1996)
- lower recruitment and training costs, due to decreased turnover
- reduced absenteeism due to higher levels of well being
- gaining a reputation as a good employer or an employer of choice
- Improved recruitment and retention rates(allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey & Byerly,2002; Honeycut & Rosen 1997; Konard & Mangal,2002; Kosssek & Ozeki 1998)
- reduced stress levels amongst staff (Thompson & protas, 2006)
- improved morale and job satisfaction
- greater staff loyalty and commitment
- improved productivity(Sands & Harpper, 2007)
- reduced absenteeism(Dex & Scheibl,1999; Lobel & Kossek,1996; Osterman,1995; Thompson,Beauvais & Lyness,1999)

Employees Benefits:

- being effectively manage multiple responsibilities at work, home and in the society without any stress (Thomas & Ganster, 1995)
- reduced stress levels and higher levels of well being(Thompson & protas, 2006)
- control over time management in meeting work life commitments
- autonomy to make decisions regarding work life balance
- Increased focus, motivation and job satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) knowing that family and work commitments are being met.

- Increased job security from the knowledge that an organization understands and supports workers with family responsibilities
- Increased employee engagement (Susi S, Jawaharrani K, 2011)
- Increased employee commitment (Dex & Smith, 2002)

Objectives

1. To study initiatives taken by some selected companies in India.
2. To study the reasons behind the need of work life balance practices in India.
3. To find out the benefits of WLBP to the employer and employees.

Research methodology

The research paper being descriptive in nature has the inputs from secondary data using referred journals, research studies, magazines, news paper articles, Government statistics, websites and internet.

Literature review:-

- Ms. Chanda Kochhar, MD & CEO, ICICI Bank said(International women's Day) : 'Although women form 48% of the population in our country, their representation in the workforce is much lower than men. Many women who join the workforce are sometimes forced to take a break or even leave their jobs, due to various life stage needs like maternity and child care. Lack of support system due to predominance of nuclear families, inadequate infrastructural facilities like crèches and long commute time further accentuates the problem. To ensure that the working women do not leave the workforce, there is a strong need for a robust support system, both at home and at work.
- Deepti Sinha, 2013 (Journal of Management Sciences And Technology 1 (1), Oct - 2013) conducted a study regarding perception of employees towards WLBP in CCIL (Clearing Corporation of India Ltd.) and their agreeableness with it. She found that majority of employees are aware of WLBP and the employees feel that there is a need to improve WLBP in the organization.
- Burke (2002), observes that both women and men prefer working in organizations that support work-life balance. Men appeared to benefit more than women .Men feel more satisfied when they achieve more on the job even at the cost of ignoring the family. On the other hand, women stress that work and family are both equally important and both are the sources of their satisfaction. For them the former is more important. When work does not permit women to take care of their family, they feel unhappy, disappointed and frustrated. They draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the others.
- Burke (1991 & 2010) examined the relationship between the perception of men regarding their understanding of organizational values which favor WLB in their work place & their work experiences. Unlike other studies which focus more on the opinion of women it is a study based on the perceptions of men. The organizational values of managerial men were supportive of work-personal life and report working fewer hours, less job stress, greater joy in work, lower intention to quit, greater job career & life satisfaction, fewer psychosomatic symptoms and more positive emotional & physical wellbeing.
- Valcour and Hunter (2005), the home working can lead to greater flexibility and independence, but it can make people work for longer periods of time, including weekends and evenings. Home environment also plays a very important role in the quality of life. Home working could be stressful, if young children have to be managed.
- Though work-life balance was initially construed as the concern for working mothers, it has been recognized as a vital issue for all classes of employees (Bird, 2006).
- A study conducted by Manisha Purohit, found that only 30% of service sector (software) have WLBP policies and these are the companies having international exposure linkages. Flexible working hours is more common in service sector especially in IT industry (80% of IT industry) and no company in manufacturing industry have such programs. Work from home is not very popular among service and manufacturing sector but only two- fifth(40%) of IT industry offer such policy. Sabbatical, paternity leave, job sharing, part time work are absent in Indian manufacturing and service sector. All companies have provision of maternity leave and it is prescribed by maternity benefit act, 1961.

- Y. P. S. Kanwar, A. K. Singh and A. D. Kodwani (2009) in their study on the impact of work life balance and burnouts on job satisfaction in the context of IT and ITES industry revealed that work life balance and job satisfaction are positively related to each other and to increase the morale and productivity of the employees organizations should play a facilitating role to provide ways to manage work life balance.
- Ioanlazar, Codruta Osoian, Patriciaratiu (2010) in their research study said that availability and use of work-life balance practices, when provided in the context of supervisor and organizational support can reduce work-life conflict and increase positive appraisals of one's organization. These effects are often associated with employee attitudes such as increased job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and increased productivity, organizational commitment and loyalty with higher levels of organizational performance.
- The ILO released a report in March 2013 comparing maternity and paternity leave entitlements in various geographies. Russia and Italy provide the maximum leave entitlements for maternity and paternity leaves with as many as 140 leave entitlements(20 weeks), followed by Brazil (17+ weeks). The ILO also corroborates that India is among the nations where average maternity leave entitlement is among the lowest in the world. Besides that, a majority (50%) of organizations in India provide less than a week's time off for paternity. Some nations such as the UK, provide a maximum of 280 days of maternity and paternity leaves with as much as 90% of pay.
- A survey conducted by People Matters in December 2013 among employers to benchmark leave and vacation practices in India compared to other geographies. A total of 70 CEOs, MDs and HR Heads participated in the survey and the results indicate that in many areas, there are remarkable differences between Indian and global employers when it comes to their approach and commitment toward employee leave and vacations.
- According to ILO, Indian employers lag behind their peers in a majority of the global employment markets purely in the number of formal leaves granted.

Conclusion

From the literature review, we can conclude that our Government has provided very low work-life balance policies for the employees working in various sectors. Our Government needs to revise its policies from time to time so that its employees will be able to get the benefits out of it. Many Private sector industries are adapting new policies for their employee's benefits. But there is a long way to go for both the private and the public sector in this field to provide their employees a good work life balance policies.

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