

GENDER AND AGE AS CORRELATES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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Abstract *The present research makes an effort to study the relationship between demographic variables (gender and age) and work-life balance of working professionals in IT and ITES Industry. The sample consisted of 308 working professionals in IT and ITES Industry. Significant differences were found between the male and female professionals on the dimensions of work interference with personal life ($t=2.35$, $p=.05$). However no significant differences were found on the dimensions of personal life interference with work, work personal life enhancement, and overall work-life balance. No differences in the work-life balance or any of its dimensions were found among the professionals in different age groups.*

Keywords: *Work-Life Balance, Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Life Interference with Work, Work /Personal Life Enhancement*

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance refers to balancing two broad spheres of work and non-work. Non-work includes the family and personal life. Initially the researchers studied the work family interface and referred to it as 'work family conflict'. Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) defined work family conflict as: "A form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role." Conflict between work and family is bi-directional (Frone *et al.*, 1992). Work to family conflict occurs when work demands interfere with family and individual finds it difficult to meet family responsibilities due to work. Family to work conflict arises when family demands interfere with work. But, family and work are not only the sources of burden and strains, rather they can also be a source of support and growth (Barnett, 1998). Hence, work and family may not always conflict and can be a source of facilitation. Grzywacz *et al.* (2007) laid the conceptual foundation for work family facilitation and defined it as 'the extent to which an individual's engagement in one social system, such as work or family, contributes to growth in another social system'. Hence there can be spillovers (both negative and positive) between the two spheres of work and non-work and there is a need for balancing.

Clark (2000) defines work-life balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with minimum of role conflict. Kirchmeyer (2000) defines a balanced life as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains" and states that to achieve satisfying experiences in all life

domains "requires personal resources like energy, time and commitment to be well distributed across domains". Greenblatt (2002) views work-life balance as "the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands. Greenhaus *et al.* (2003) define work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role. Dundas (2008) argues that work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and all other activities that are important to people, such as, family, community activities, voluntary works, personal development and leisure and recreation.

Natalie Reiter (2007) categorises definitions of work-life balance according to a framework of ethical ideologies. According to him work-life balance has been defined from point of view of four different ethical ideologies, i.e. situationists, absolutists, subjectivists, and exceptionists. Definitions framed from a situationist position focus on a "fitting" definition of balance for a person depending on his or her personal context. This includes their stakeholders, resources, and desires. Using a situationist definition of balance, people could be grouped according to their values and situational variables such as family structure, life stage, gender, career, or income level with varying definitions of work-life balance for different segments. According to subjectivist definition, the only thing that matters is the individual's desires and whether he is happy with his work-life balance. Absolutists' definitions are those which accept that there can be a 'right' formula for balance. Exceptionists' definitions are of a utilitarian nature and seek to reflect the greatest good for the greatest number.

When any of the spheres of life is either ignored or more

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preferred than the other spheres, an imbalance arises, thus leading to a number of undesirable outcomes like health issues, job dissatisfaction, marital dissatisfaction, unhappiness etc. According to Guest (2002) there are some contextual determinants of work-life balance which include demands of work, culture of work, demands of home, culture of home etc. Along with these contextual determinants, there are some individual determinants like personal control and coping, life and career stage, age and gender. As increasing number of women are joining the work force, the gender role demarcation of males as bread earners and females as homemakers is no longer tenable. In fact women are playing a dual role of bread earner as well as a homemaker which puts an extra pressure on them, thus making the balancing act more difficult. Secondly, with age, an individual may get a better understanding of his environment and may be able to balance better or may get exhausted and unable to cope with conflicting demands of different spheres of life, thus leading to a tilted balance.

The present research thus, makes an attempt to study the relationship of these two variables i.e. gender and age with work-life balance and is forwarded with the following objectives:

- To study the relationship between the gender and work-life balance (including its dimensions)
- To study the relationship between the age and work-life balance (including its dimensions)
- To examine the difference in the work-life balance of male and female working professionals in IT and ITES industry
- To examine the differences among IT and ITES working professionals at varied levels of age.

Studies by Gutek *et al.* (1991), Williams & Alliger (1994), Higgins *et al.* (1994), Loscocco (1997), Aryee *et al.* (1999), Rajadhyaksha & Valgach (2009), Fischer *et al.* (2010), Chandrasekar *et al.* (2013) reported gender differences with respect to work family conflict. Gutek *et al.* (1991) indicated that women reported more work interference in family than men, despite spending about same number of hours in paid work as men. Although women spent more hours in family work than men, they reported the same level of family interference in work as men. Williams & Alliger (1994) found that spillovers of unpleasant moods occur both from work to family settings and from family to work, though evidence for the spillover of pleasant moods was weak. Both family to work and work to family spillover were stronger for women than men. Higgins *et al.* (1994) examined the impact of gender and life cycle stage on three components of work family conflict (i.e. role overload, interference from work to family and interference from family to work). The results indicated significant differences for gender and life cycle. Women reported experiencing significantly

greater role overload than men. Again women were found to experience greater work to family interference than men. Interference was highest when the children were young, and lowest in families with older children. Further, women reported significantly higher levels of family interference with work than men in early years, but interferences levels were comparable to men's in the third life cycle stage (i.e. children 10 to 18 years). Loscocco (1997) found that there was gender asymmetry in the permeability of the boundaries between work and family lives. Family intruded more on work among women and work intruded more on family among men. Aryee *et al.* (1999) found that gender was negatively related to family work conflict, suggesting that men did not experience as much family work conflict as women. Rajadhyaksha & Velgach (2009) also found that women experienced significantly higher family interference with work as compared to men. However there were no significant differences between men and women in the experience of work interference with family. Fischer *et al.* (2010) found that females aspire more to balance their work and personal life and are more inclined to consider part-time work or to continue work after a break, for family obligations. Chandrasekar *et al.* (2013) in a study of 305 executives from IT organisation, found gender to be related to work-life balance.

However, Frone *et al.* (1992), Eagle *et al.* (1997), Milkie & Peltola (1999), Hill *et al.* (2001), Wesley & Muthuswamy (2005), and Doble & Supriya (2010) did not find any gender differences. Frone *et al.* (1992) found no evidence of gender differences in the pattern of asymmetry, indicating that the dynamics of work and family boundaries may operate similarly among men and women. Gender main effect was also not found to be significant by Eagle *et al.* (1997). Male and females reported similar levels of family to work and work to family conflict. The plausible reason forwarded for the lack of gender differences was, "greater mutual empathy that couple shares, which might be created from a decrease in time as a resource for each spouse to spend in their respective, traditionally occupied domains in the interest of gaining monetary resources". Milkie & Peltola (1999) found that women and men report similar levels of success in balancing work and family and kinds of work family tradeoffs. Hill *et al.* (2001) too reported that gender was not significantly correlated to work family balance indicating that men and women report similar levels of work-family balance. Wesley & Muthuswamy (2005) also did not find any gender differences in the experience of work to family or family to work conflict and argued that it was because the financial resources were now being used to pay for the household activities which earlier women had to do and moreover, men had also started to share some work at home. Doble & Supriya (2010) studied work-life balance across genders. The results did not show any significant gender differences in spillover of work into family life and both the

genders showed a similar negative spillover from work to family.

Hsieh *et al.* (2005) and Fuß *et al.* (2008) studied variable of marital status and age. Hsieh *et al.* (2005) investigated the perspective of Taiwan hotel managers regarding work-personal life balance and its relationship to various demographic variables, such as gender and marital status and did not find any significant differences between male and female managers, nor were there any significant differences between married and unmarried male/female managers. Fuß *et al.* (2008) found that socio-demographic factor of age group was a significant predictor of work interference in family. The younger was the participant, the higher was the perceived work interference in family. Thriveni & Rama (2012) found significant relationship between demographic variables (age, marital status, income) and work-life balance of women employees. Satyanarayana & Shanker (2012) examined the work-life balance of 100 employees working in IT enabled services and found that among young employees (<25 years) there was moderate to low impact of work on their personal life and again moderate to low impact of personal life on work. The highest impact of work on personal life and personal life on work was found in the age group of 31-35 years of age. Significant association was found between age and work interference in personal life. Mitra (2012) did not find any significant relationship between age of employee and his feeling (happiness/unhappiness) about the amount of time spent at work. Meenakshisundaram & Panchanatham (2012) in a study of full-time employees in a garment industry found that there were no significant differences in the work-life balance of employees of different age groups. The gender differences too were found to be insignificant. Chandrasekar *et al.* (2013) too did not find any relation between age and work-life balance. On the basis of literature reviewed above, the following major conclusions can be drawn:

- There were conflicting results with respect to the gender differences in work-life balance. However, on the basis of the studies which reported gender differences, it can be concluded that women experience more work family conflict.
- Similarly conflicting results were reported regarding relationship of age and work-life balance.

In light of the above review, the following hypotheses were framed:

- H₁ There will be significant correlation between the gender and work-life balance(including its dimensions) of working professionals in IT and ITES industry.
- H₂ There will be significant correlation between the age and work-life balance(including its dimensions) of working professionals in IT and ITES industry.

H₃ There will be significant differences between the mean scores of male and female IT and ITES working professionals on work-life balance and its dimensions.

H₄ There will be significant differences between the mean scores of IT and ITES working professionals at varied levels of age on work-life balance and its dimensions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of randomly selected 308 working professionals selected from fourteen IT and ITES Companies (12 in NCR, 2 in Chandigarh), randomly selected from a list of top 50 IT and ITES Companies (based on revenues). The information pertaining to age was gathered under four categories, namely, less than or equal to 25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years and more than or equal to 46 years. However, it was found that none of the employees included in the sample was more than 45 years of age and only 17 employees fell in the category of 36-45. Thus, for the analysis, only two categories of age (less than or equal to 25 years and 26-45 years) were retained. Out of sample of 308 respondents, 103 were less than or equal to 25 years of age and rest of them i.e. 205 were between 26-45 years.

Tools Used

Work-life balance was measured using Work-life balance scale (Hayman, 2005). The scale consists of 15 items, designed to assess three dimensions of work-life balance, i.e., work interference with personal life (WIPL-7 items), personal life interference with work (PLIW-4 items), and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE-4 items). The first dimension, work interference with personal life (WIPL) included the items e.g. "Personal life suffers because of work" and "Put personal life on hold for work". The content of these items reflect the extent to which work interferes with personal life. The second dimension is personal life interference with work (PLIW). The items included in this component indicate the opposite direction of work personal life interference. Examples of the items include "Personal life drains me of energy for work" and "Hard to work because of personal matters". They depict the extent to which ones' personal life interferes with work. The items of the third dimension work/personal life enhancement (WPLE) involved positive effects of ones' work on personal life or vice versa, the extent to which ones' personal life enhances work. Examples of the items included were, "Personal life gives me energy for my job" and "Better mood because of my job".

Statistical Techniques Used

Point biserial correlations were computed to study the correlation between the variables of age, gender, and work-life balance and its dimensions. In addition, t-test was used to study the differences in work-life balance of IT and ITES working professionals with respect to age and gender.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Significant negative correlation was found between gender and the dimension of work interference with personal life ($r = -.13$, Table 1). However, the correlations between gender and personal life interference with work, work/ personal life enhancement and overall work-life balance were found to be insignificant. The results indicate that work interference with personal life is related to gender. Hence, Hypothesis H_1 that “there will be significant correlation between the gender and work-life-balance (including its dimensions) of working professionals in IT and ITES industry” is accepted for the dimension of work interference with personal life. However, it stands rejected for the dimensions of personal life interference with work, work/ personal life enhancement and for overall work-life balance.

Table 1: Correlations between Gender, Age and Work-Life Balance

	GENDER	AGE
WIPL ¹	-.13*	.02
PLIW ¹	-.03	.04
WPLE	.04	.03
WLB Total	-.07	.01

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

¹ Higher score means lesser interference.

Note: Females coded as 1, Males coded as 0

No significant correlations were found between age and work-life balance or any of its dimensions. The results thus show that there is no relation between age and work-life balance. Hence, Hypothesis H_2 that “there will be significant correlation between the age and work-life balance (including its dimensions) of working professionals in IT and ITES industry” stands rejected.

There were significant differences between mean scores of male and female IT and ITES working professionals on the dimension of WIPL ($t = 2.35$, $p = .05$, Table 2). Work interference with personal life was more in case of female IT and ITES working professionals ($M = 29.51$) than male IT

Table 2: Significance of Differences between Mean Scores on Work-Life Balance of Male and Female IT and ITES Working Professionals

Work-Life Balance	Male (197)		Female(111)		t-ratio
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
WIPL ¹	31.35	6.42	29.51	6.86	2.35(*)
PLIW ¹	21.65	3.96	21.41	3.63	0.53
WPLE	18.36	4.70	18.77	4.44	0.76
WLB Total	71.37	10.98	69.70	11.03	1.27

* Significant at .01 level

¹ Higher score means lesser interference.

Table 3: Significance of Differences between Mean Scores on Work-Life Balance of IT and ITES Working Professionals ≤ 25 years of age and 26-45 years of age

Work-Life Balance	Age(in years)				t-ratio
	≤ 25years (n = 103)		26-45 years (n = 205)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
WIPL ¹	30.49	7.31	30.79	6.28	0.38
PLIW ¹	21.78	3.76	21.46	3.89	0.68
WPLE	18.29	4.81	18.62	4.51	0.59
WLB Total	70.55	11.10	70.87	10.99	0.24

¹ Higher score means lesser interference.

and ITES working professionals ($M=31.35$). The results thus indicate that personal life of female IT and ITES working professionals suffer on account of their work.

Hence, Hypothesis H_3 that “there will be significant differences between the mean scores of male and female IT and ITES working professionals on work-life balance and its dimensions” is accepted for the dimension of work interference with personal life. However, it is rejected for the dimensions of personal life interference with work, work/ personal life enhancement and for overall work-life balance.

No significant differences were found between the IT and ITES working professionals less than or equal to 25 years of age and 26-45 years of age on the dimensions of WIPL ($t=.38$, Table 3), PLIW ($t=.68$), WPLE ($t=.59$) and on WLB Total ($t=.24$).

The results indicate that IT and ITES working professionals of age group less than or equal to 25 years and 26-45 years showed similar levels of work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, work/ personal life enhancement and overall work-life balance. Hence, Hypothesis H_4 that “there will be significant differences between the mean scores of IT and ITES working professionals at varied levels of age on work-life balance and its dimensions” stands rejected.

Significant differences observed with respect to work interference with personal life in favour of women can primarily be attributed to the fact that women, especially in the IT and ITES sector, are career oriented and ambitious and are working in a competitive environment, which compels them to put in more than 100% to prove themselves. Further in IT and ITES industry, there are work pressures in terms of targets set for individuals, and also rapidly changing technology demands a continuous updating of professional knowledge and skills. These pressures, along with career consciousness may adversely affect shouldering of personal responsibilities. For this reason only, no differences have been observed between male and female professionals on the dimension of personal life interference with work. The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Gutek *et al.* (1991) and Higgins *et al.* (1994). Gutek *et al.* (1991) found that women reported more work interference in family than men despite spending about same number of hours in paid work as men. Higgins *et al.* (1994) found that women experience significantly greater work to family interference than men. They stated that this gender difference was consistent with gender role expectations theory. However, no significant gender differences were observed on the dimensions of PLIW, WPLE and on WLB Total. This indicates that both male and female IT and ITES working professionals experience similar levels of personal life interference in work, similar work/ personal life enhancement and also have similar overall work-life

balance. These findings are supported by results of some earlier studies by Frone *et al.* (1992), Eagle *et al.* (1997), and Hill *et al.* (2001). Further, the results of the study did not show any relationship between age and work-life balance. The plausible reason could be that majority of the sample of the study was very young, either less than 25 years, or between the age range of 25 to 35 years. These results are consistent with the findings of Mitra (2012), Meenakshisundaram & Panchanatham (2012), and Chandrasekar *et al.* (2013).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that females perceive higher interference of work with personal life as compared to males. The reason probably being the dual role being played by the females who are both home-makers as well as earners. The results suggest that employers need to provide some flexibility especially to female employees in order to make it possible for them to attend to their household responsibilities alongside their work without feeling any burden/ imbalance. The results further indicate that work-life balance may not be age related and employees of any age, depending upon their life circumstances may perceive work-life balance/ imbalance.

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