

# WORK LIFE BALANCE OPTIONS & HINDERING FACTORS – AN INVESTIGATION AMONG AN ITES SECTOR FIRM

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of Work life balance gained prominence off late despite being mentioned by researchers in management science as early as 1970s. Work life balance goes beyond statutory entitlements & assist employee to lead a good quality of work life in an organization. This research identifies the inhibiting factors that create hindrance to work life balance and at the same time tries to identify work life options preferred by employees. Further this research provides possible work life options an organization belonging to information technology (IT) and information technology enabled services (ITES) can adopt to better work life balance

**Key words:** Work life balance, IT & ITES sector, career progression.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

The expression “work-life balance” was first used in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual’s work and personal life. Work life balance is about helping employees to better manage their work and non-work time. Work life balance refers to a range of flexible working arrangements that go beyond statutory entitlements and that assist employees to combine employment with their family life, with their caring responsibilities and with their personal life outside the workplace. The development of work life balance policies should reflect the reality of the workplace and identify different options that meet the needs of employers and employees. Work life and personal life are the two sides of the same coin. According to various work /life balance surveys, more than 60% of the respondent professionals surveyed said that are not able to find a balance between their personal and professional lives. They have to make tough choices even when their work and personal life is nowhere close to equilibrium. Traditionally creating and managing a balance between the work-life was considered to be a woman’s issue. But increasing work pressures, globalization and technological advancement have made it an issue with both the sexes, all professionals

working across all levels and all industries throughout the world. Achieving “work-life balance” is not as simple as it sounds.

## 2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-personal life conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible. Obligation of one can force an individual to neglect the other. Perspective, Frone (2003) recommended that a comprehensive understanding of the work–family interface should include both components of conflict and facilitation. He defined work–family facilitation as “the extent to which participation at work (home) is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home (work)”. The shift of gender inequality and gender roles away from traditional to modern gender role expectations has been observed to constitute cultural universals that affect the work–family interface (Watanabe, Takahashi, & Minami, 1997). The increase in the number of educated women in India who participate in the urban, organized, industrial sector in technical, professional, and managerial positions has been accompanied by a steady growth in dual-earner families (Komarraju, 1997; Sekaran, 1992). Research studies on the work–family interface have been precipitated by the negative consequences of work–family conflict on individual and organizational outcomes (T. D. Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). There is research evidence linking affective commitment to job performance (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffine, & Jackson, 1989). Kossek and Ozeki (1998) demonstrated in their study that the work–family conflict to be more strongly related to job satisfaction than to family–work conflict.

Off late many organizations have implemented family-responsive human resource policies and practices (Glass & Estes, 1997; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). A more complete understanding of work–family balance shall provide organizations with the knowledge base to design more effective policies to

promote the work–family balance of the growing number of employees who have family responsibilities. The objective of the research was to ascertain the following:

- To study the work life balance of employees i.e. dilemma of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities.
- To identify the factors that causes hindrances for the employees in balancing their work/family life.
- To find out the coping strategies adopted by the respondents to maintain work life balance.
- To suggest suitable measures that would help the employees in balancing their work/family life.
- To study the impact and work life balance options on both the executives and operative staff

### **3.METHOD**

#### **3.1 Sample & Procedure**

Data were obtained from employees of the ITES Company and the human resource department provided us with a list of employees and 150 employees were selected on a random basis from the list.

**3.2 Instrument** – A questionnaire was used for the purpose of gathering data from the respondents. The questionnaire was used to solicitate information from the employees regarding the work life balance options available to them in context of organizational and Personal factors.

#### **4.DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS**

Descriptive Analysis of Work life rating and understanding was carried out in order to gather information from the employees.

**4.1Employees' rating of Work life balance:** Most of the employees gave high rating for work life balance in their organization and demonstrates that o\the organization provides good work life balance for their employees.

**4.2Family members' response to their spouse work life:** Most of the family members were content with their spouse work life and it is indicated that work - family facilitation is good.

**4.3Career Progression and Work life balance:** Most of the employees (86%) agreed that there was no hindrance in their career & able to strike a balance between home and work commitments

**4.4 Superiors' understanding of commitment towards beyond work & personal life:**

Most of the superior understand and appreciate the need of personal life and commitment beyond work.

This indicates that organization has understanding managers.

**4.5 Work load:** There is mixed reaction to the work load allotted to them as nearly equal number of employees have stated as either burdened or not burdened. There is a clear understanding that organization has given equitable workload & it is at individual capacity one feels burdened or unburdened

**4.6 Burdened by outside pressure:** Most of employees have stated that they are burdened by outside pressure & this reflects on their work performance. This shows that outside pressure influences performance outcomes & organization needs to look into factors contributing to the pressure.

**4.7 Rating of Pay & benefits provided:** Overall most employees have stated that there is satisfaction in the Pay & benefits provided. This indicates that the organization has attractive compensation package & benefits which draws satisfaction among the employees

#### **4.8 Work option Analysis**

Based on the outcome of literature review and consultation with senior HR managers in IT & ITES sector various option generated were included in the research. The questionnaire was piloted tested & validity was worked out. This helped in refining the work life options available for ITES sector. Here in the analysis the arithmetic mean was used to identify the best option.

#### **4.9Working Hour Option**

Here three options were identified namely Flexible working hours (F1), Time off for family emergencies and events (F2), Time off in school emergencies (F3 ) and Reduced working hours on weekends (F4). Flexible working hours (F1) received the mean score of 3.74 followed by Time off for family emergencies and events 3.71. Hence the organization can plan to adopt the option F1- Flexible working hours .

(Refer Table 1)

#### **4.10 Working arrangements facilities option**

Here four options were identified namely Working from home (F6), Provision of productivity tools such as Black berry, laptops etc (F7), Family/friends programs (F8) and Motivational programs (F9). The option F7 i.e. Family/friends programs received a mean score of 3.97 followed by F8 Motivational programs. Hence it is clear that Family/friends program should be called for to appreciate the nature of work carried out by employees & rope them for adjustment & understanding. (Refer Table 2)

#### **4.11Options that enhances Work life balance**

The research had listed out eight options that can be

adopted by ITES sector to bring out better work life balance. Both the superiors and subordinates were asked to rank the best option. The results of the ratings of the employees were Career guidance, Professional counseling and life skill program received the first, second and third rank respectively. (Refer Table 3)

#### **4.12 Factors hindering Work life balance**

Here the factors that hinder Work life balance among the superiors & subordinates were studied by creating cross tables and using percentage analysis. Four factors identified for the research were studied namely Work factors, Time factors, Relationship factors and Personal factors. Work related factor was the most hindering factor for both superior & subordinate as it received 53.5 percent and 58.52 percent. followed by Time factor which received 52.33 percent and 55.6 percent among superiors and subordinates respectively. (Refer Table 4)

#### **4.13 Work related factors hindering Work life balance**

The work related factors that hinder Work life balance are Work pressure, High targets, Lack of role clarity, Lack of job satisfaction and frequent transfers. Among the superiors lack of job satisfaction was the major work related factor (56.67%) followed by Work pressure and High target each receiving 54.17 percent respectively. In case of subordinates Work pressure was the major factor (62.2 %) followed by high target (61.2%). (Refer Table 5)

#### **4.14 Time related factors hindering Work life balance**

The time related factors hindering work life balance identified are Long hours of work, Change in shift timings, Restriction in taking leave, Timings of work meetings/training and Frequent traveling away from home. Both the superiors and subordinates have indicated long working hours 59.73 percent and 56.49 percent, Change in shift timings 57 percent and 54 percent respectively and Frequent traveling away from home being 56.73 percent and 53.65 percent respectively. Nature of working in ITES sector has significant toll on work life balance. (Refer Table 6)

#### **4.15 Relationship related factors hindering Work life balance**

The relationship related factors hindering Work life balance are Gender discrimination, Poor relationship with co-workers, Lack of support from supervisors/subordinates and Poor relationship with top level management. Here both the Superiors and subordinates have pointed out that major personal factor responsible for interference in good work life

balance was Gender discrimination 64.47 percent and 59.58 percent respectively. The second and third factors were poor relation with co workers and lack of support from superiors and subordinates. The percentages are 63.33 percent and 60 percent and 58 percent and 57.08 percent respectively. (Refer Table 7)

#### **4.16 Personal factors hindering Work life balance**

The Personal factors hindering Work life balance are Lack of family support, Marital conflicts, Financial commitments and Frequent change in sleeping patterns. Here both superiors and subordinates faced Lack of family support, Marital conflict and Frequent changes in sleeping pattern. These factors being 57.47 percent and 58.78 percent, 52 percent and 57 percent, 49.08 percent and 53.81 percent respectively for superiors and subordinates. (Refer Table 8)

#### **4.17 Empirical Analysis**

In order to draw significant conclusions from the study the following hypothesis were formulated and tested for significance

- H1 There is no significant difference between superiors and subordinates and the factors affecting their work-life balance.
- H2 To find there is any relationship between age of the respondents and their experiencing work-life balance
- H3 There is no relationship between the cadre type and the respondent's opinion on presence of work-life balance.
- H4: There is no difference between the two grouping variable (Male & Female) and the factors which affecting the work-life balance.

In case of hypothesis H1 it is seen that the significant value of all the factors is greater than the acceptable level of 0.05. So, null hypothesis is accepted. It implies that there is no significant difference between executive and staff level employees and the factors which affect the work-life balance. ANOVA test was used to check the hypothesis formulated. (Refer Table 9)

In case of hypothesis H2 linear regression analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis formulated. The R Square tells us how much of the variance of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Here the significant value of the relationship related factors is less than the acceptable significant level of 0.05. So the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that there is a relationship between the age of the respondents and the relationship related factors. For the other factors

the significant value is greater than 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is accepted for other factors. (Refer Table 10)

In case of hypothesis H3 linear regression analysis was followed to test the hypothesis formulated. The R Square tells us how much of the variance of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Here the significant value of all the factors is greater than the significant value 0.05. So for all the factors the null hypothesis is accepted. It implies that there is no relationship between the type of family and the respondent's opinion about the factors affecting work-life balance. (Refer Table 11)

In case of hypothesis H4, T test was used to test the hypothesis formulated. T-test result shows, the significant value of the Work life balance hindering factors' is lesser than the acceptable significant value 0.05. So, here the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that there is a different between the male and female and Work life balance hindering factors which affecting the work-life balance. For all the other factors the significant value is greater than the acceptable significant value 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is accepted. It implies that there is no difference between male and female and the factors which affecting the work-life balance except relationship related factors. ( Refer Table 12)

**5. CONCLUSION**

This research throws light on factors hindering work life balance and work life options that can enhance work life balance in ITES sector organization. Even though carried out in a single organization, a large scale study shall provide better solution to tackle the work life balance issues prevailing in IT and ITES sectors. This research shows that there is significant understanding about the work life balance the hindering factors identified were work pressure, high target in case of work related factors. In case of time related factors were long working hours, shift time changes & frequent travel. The relationship related inhibiting factors were are Gender discrimination, Poor relationship with co-workers and Lack of support from supervisors/subordinates. The personal factors inhibiting work life balance were Lack of family support, Martial conflict and Frequent changes in sleeping pattern. The Work life balance options identified in this research were flexible working hours, Family/Friends program, Career guidance, Professional counseling and life skill program

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**APPENDIX I Table 1 showing Working hour Options**

Working hrs option	X	Flexible working hours (F1)	F1*x	Time off for family emergencies and events (F2)	F2*x	Time off in school holidays (F3)	F3*x	Reduced working hours on week ends (F4)	F4*x
	5	15	75	13	65	15	75	12	60
	4	93	372	90	360	72	288	48	192
	3	30	90	38	114	39	117	30	90
	2	12	24	9	18	21	42	42	84
	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	18	18
? fx			561		557		525		444
Mean=? fx/n			3.74		3.71		3.50		2.96

**Table 2 Showing Working arrangements facilities Option**

Working arrangements option	X	(F1)	F1*x	(F2)	F2*x	(F3)	F3*x	(F4)	F4*x
	5	6	30	21	105	31	155	27	135
	4	42	168	66	264	63	252	90	360
	3	60	180	30	90	51	153	18	54
	2	30	60	24	48	18	36	15	30
	1	12	12	9	9	0	0	0	0
? fx			450		516		596		579
Mean=? fx/n			3.00		3.44		3.97		3.86

**Table 3 showing Options that enhances Work life balance**

OPTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	WG.AVG	RANK
Flexible work hrs	60	25	30	14	6	9	6	382	36.38	7
Job sharing	27	40	18	35	9	12	9	490	46.66	6
Job rotation	21	49	9	26	27	10	8	495	47.14	5
Career guidance	12	6	14	3	35	36	44	777	74.00	1
Life skill programs	9	16	35	38	21	15	6	619	58.95	3
Professional counseling	9	6	24	27	18	45	18	687	65.43	2
Part time work	12	8	20	7	34	36	58	580	55.24	4

**APPENDIX II CROSS TABULATION**

**Table 4 showing the Cadre and the factors which was hindering them in balancing their work-life balance:**

Factors Cadre	Work factors (in %)	Time factors (in %)	Relationship factors (in %)	Personal factors (in %)
Superiors	53.50	52.33	48.99	48.75
Subordinates	58.52	55.6	49.85	51.35
Average	56.01	53.97	49.42	50.05

**Table 5 showing Work related factors hindering Work life balance**

work factors Designation	Work pressure	High targets	Lack of role clarity	Lack of job satisfaction	Frequent transfers	Avg
Superiors	54.17	54.17	51.67	56.67	50.83	53.50
Subordinates	62.2	61.2	58.6	55.8	54.8	58.52

**Table 6 showing Time related factors hindering Work life balance**

Time factors Designation	Long hours of work	Change in shift timings	Restriction in taking leave	Timings of work meetings/training	Frequent traveling away from home
Superiors	59.73	57	45.83	47.49	56.73
Subordinates	56.49	54	47.92	51.24	53.65

**Table 7 showing Relationship related factors hindering Work life balance**

Relationship factors Cadre	Gender discrimination	Poor relationship with co-workers	Lack of support from supervisors/superiors/ubordinates	Poor relationship with top level management
Superiors	64.67	63.33	58	55.33
Subordinates	59.58	60	57.08	53.75

**Table 8 showing Personal factors hindering Work life Balance**

Personal Factors Cadre	Lack of family support	Marital conflicts	Financial commitments	Frequent change in sleeping patterns
Superiors	57.47	52	47.89	49.08
Subordinates	58.78	57	52.83	53.81

**APPENDIX III HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

**Table 9 showing One way ANOVA- Hypothesis H1**

**Null hypothesis (H0)**

There is no significant different between staff and executive and the factors affecting their work-life balance.

**Alternate hypothesis (H1)**

There is significant different between staff and executive and the factors affecting their work-life balance.

**One way ANOVA**

	Mean Square	Sig.	
<b>Work related Factors</b>	Between Groups	30.484	<b>.090</b>
	Within Groups	10.434	
<b>Time related factors</b>	Between Groups	12.284	<b>.341</b>
	Within Groups	13.429	
<b>Relationship related factors</b>	Between Groups	.548	<b>.800</b>
	Within Groups	8.474	
<b>Personal factors</b>	Between Groups	5.234	<b>.413</b>
	Within Groups	7.756	

**Table 10 Hypothesis H2 using Linear Regression**

**Null hypothesis (H0)**

There is no relationship between age of the respondents and the factors affecting their work-life balance.

**Alternate hypothesis (H1)**

There is a relationship between age of the respondents and the factors affecting their work-life balance.

Factors	R square	Significant value
Work related factors	0.004	0.473
Time related factors	0.008	0.318
Relationship related factors	0.051	0.012
Personal factors	0.019	0.130

**Table 11 hypothesis H3 testing using Linear Regression**

**Null hypothesis (H0)**

There is no relationship between the type of family and the respondent's opinion about the factors affecting work-life balance.

**Alternate hypothesis (H1)**

There is relationship between the type of family and the respondent's opinion about the factors affecting work-life balance.

Factors	R square	Significant value
Work related factors	0.007	0.370
Time related factors	0.003	0.568
Relationship related factors	0.004	0.471
Personal factors	0.000	0.880

**Table 12 Hypothesis testing using T test**

**Null hypothesis (H0):** There is no difference between the two grouping variable (Male & Female) and the factors which affecting the work-life balance.

**Alternate hypothesis (H1):** There is a difference between the two grouping variable (Male & Female) and the factors which affecting the work-life balance.

FACTORS		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Work related factors	Equal variances assumed	.205	.819	.642	-.452	2.091
	Equal variances not assumed	.216	.819	.656	-.492	2.131
Time related factors	Equal variances assumed	.017	1.727	.711	-.320	3.134
	Equal variances not assumed	.023	1.727	.738	-.251	3.203
Relationship related factors	Equal variances assumed	.145	.837	.571	-.293	1.968
	Equal variances not assumed	.125	.837	.539	-.237	1.911
Personal factors	Equal variances assumed	.225	.669	.549	-.418	1.756
	Equal variances not assumed	.191	.669	.508	-.342	1.680