Work Life Imbalance : A Study Among IT Professionals in Bangalore City

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Introduction

Work-life balance has been cited as a standard measurement of quality of life in any organization. Simple definition of work-life balance is "a perceived balance between work and rest of life" (Guest, 2001). The issue as such emerged as the natural outcome of the developments at workplace, which later became a policy issue in the organisations. The 'traditional' work model that allows women to stay at home and men to work has been changed since 1950s (Lingard et.al, 2005). This results in structural changes of the composition of work-life balance too.

As demand on work has intensified after the post-globalised work environment, its reflections are visible in the attitude of the individuals also. More pressure on work in the work place for longer hours result in compromising with quality of life, which lead to work life imbalances especially in private firms (Searles, 2005).

Clark (2000) defines work-life balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict". The relevance of this 'work life balance' was established with different models such as segmentation (work and life work outside of work are mutually exclusive), spillover (work and life are independent), compensation (one sphere makes up for other something lacking in the other field), instrumental (one sphere accentuate the other sphere) and conflict (each sphere has multiple demands leading to choice which results in conflict) (Zedeck et.al 1990, O' Driscoll 1996, Guest, 2001).

Hill et.al (2006) pointed out that the initiatives of IBM from 1986 onwards in conducting work balance survey among the employees show the relevance of the issue. So far IBM conducted seven such surveys and constant improvements were made based on the survey results. The technology driven economy in fact increases the workload and causes more distress among the employees in an organisation according to Espis (2005). The problems related to work life balances are now becoming a global issue. The 'productivity pressure' creates a panic situation in the work place which causes lot of disturbances in the personal life as well, which is a matter of concern.

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Past Studies

Hogarth et al (2000) pointed out that professionals typically, seek fulfillment through work, often working long hours but seek to fit family life somewhere into their lives. However, it may not succeed in most the cases and needs to be seriously thought about to find a solution to this.

As a result of employees spending so many hours in the organisation, 'new time management' in outside the work environment is a real challenge (Brune 2000). This results growing dissatisfaction among the employees at work. ILO's recent announcement also corroborates that in many countries including Asia, the working hours in the organisations increased (ILO 2006). According to Hansen (2002), traditional myths of increasing the working hours in the organisation which enhance the work quality has been challenged over a period of time. On the contrary studies (see Fox, 2001 and Altman 2000) proves that, it only results in increasing stress of the employees and thereby work-life conflict. Khanna (2004) pointed out that, IT professionals prefer flexible working conditions to achieve better work life balance. It's an industry where the professionals prefer to stay long hours and forgo holidays.

Taylor (2005) cited the results of an annual survey of Society of Human Resource Management conducted among the corporate in America in which 56 percent of them offer flexible timing. According to Byrne (2005) work-life balance as a means of tackling the problem of increasing amounts of stress in the work- place. This is significant because as their (people's) life is a culmination of different facets of life such as work, family, friends and health etc, a balancing act of this will definitely improve the productivity of the employees in an organisation. Flaum (2005) in his article discusses that young people in India and China are not bothered about work-life balance, which results in spending less time at home. This results in life imbalances in the years to come. According to Rao (2005), as a result of devoting time more on work even after office hours or traveling during office hours cause stress among the employees results in work-life imbalance. His findings are based on the study conducted among technical and non-technical executives of a Bangalore based public sector unit.

Introduction of flexible timing in the organisation can be the best practice to maintain work-life balance according to Tandukar (2006). Based on the empirical findings from 50 employees from different press media, Roy (2006) establishes that there is a positive relation between good quality of work life and job performance and vice-versa. Based on a survey commissioned by KEY Group Research on workers' attitudes towards their jobs and their companies, Cullen (2006) pointed out that, 18% of workers plan to leave their jobs within the next year to improve their work-life balance. The reason is mainly because their job overpowers their personal lives.

The above literature highlighted the problem of work-life imbalance among the employees in organisations. The problem is very crucial especially among the IT professionals. This study collects empirical evidence to support this argument.

Present Study

This study was conducted in Bangalore city ('The Garden City'), in which Karnataka's IT sector is concentrated. In the early 1980s, the city has seen a major boom in technology after the giant Texas Instruments discovered its potential as a high-tech city. At present there are more than 250 high-tech companies in the city including Wipro, Infosys etc. Today, the city is called the 'Silicon Valley' of India (source: official web site of the department of Information Technology (www.bangaloreit.com))

Objective

To identify and analyse the factors which contribute to 'Work Life Imbalances' among the middle level executives of IT sector in Bangalore City'.

Methods. The study has been conducted among the middle level executives of IT sector in Bangalore city. A sample of 72 were selected randomly. The information about the respondents were collected from different IT companies and from the IT professionals. A well-designed questionnaire was

administered to collect the information. The questionnaire consisted of 12 factors related to the area of research. These factors were further measured by different sets of questions. Responses were placed on graphic rating scale and the overall attitude has been measured through Likert scale with a score of 3 which is given as the highest value and 1 as the lowest. The score 2 is treated as neutral.

The relevance of the topic has been verified through different literatures and a pilot study was conducted for the preparation of the questionnaire. Frequent interactions with the selected respondents were also made to check the authenticity of the information collected. Data is analysed through appropriate tools such as 'Regression and Factor Analysis'. Chi-square is also applied to test the significant association between gender and work life imbalances, where both are taken as independent. SPSS is used for the data analysis.

Measuring Factors of Work- Life Imbalance

Work Excitement
Interval discussion on Work-related Matters
Holiday Work
Work Delegation Difficulty
Work more than 55 hours per week
Overtime Work
Weekend Work
Work Exhaustion
Less time for Personal Life
Work Stress
Regularly doing Office Work at Home
Less time for Family

Analysis and Discussion

The average age of the respondent is 29 years and majority (73.6%) of them are male. The average salary of respondents is calculated as Rs. 25000 per month with an average work experience of 6 years. Among the total respondents 76.4 percent is married. Educational qualifications reveal that BE/B.Tech graduates are more (58.3) (table 1). The average hours of work in the organisation is calculated as 58 per week.

In the following paragraphs, analysis on the various factors of work life imbalances are given. Among the respondents 65.3 per cent pointed out that spending less time for family is a major reason for work life imbalances. Even during the interval time in the office, most of the discussions are concentrated to work only. At many times the professionals are working on an average of 55 hours per week and compelled to sit even after the regular office hours. The opinion on this respect is mainly constituted as 'sometimes' (50% and 55.6% of the total respondents respectively). Many (52.8%) are compelled to work during the weekends and even on holidays. A lot of adjustment problems in the office especially in the delegation of work are pointed out as a reason for this imbalance (50% said 'sometimes' in this case). Certain degree of excitement over work among the professionals seems to causes distress. Respondents admit that there is some amount of stress during the office hours and feel tired at the end of the day. In short, over concentration on work related activities result in less time for family life (table 2).

In table 3, opinion on the above discussed aspect is measured by using the Likert scale. The overall attitude is supportive to work life imbalances. Among the various factors being considered, interval discussion on work (2.39), holiday work (2.22), work delegation difficulty (2.14), work more than 55 hours per work (2.14), weekend work (2.10), less time for personal life (2.00), regularly doing office work at home (2.29) and less time for family (2.53) are favourably contributing to life imbalance. The score is more than two in all these cases (table 3).

Regression model explains 62.9 % of the variations in the dependent variable (Y). Here

dependent variable (Y) is the overall opinion on work life imbalance and independent variables (x1, x2, x3 etc.) are the 12 factors of work life imbalances. The SPSS model summary on regression is given below:

Model

Model	R	R	Adjusted R	Std. of the Estimate
1	.793[a]	.629	.553	.2590

a. Predictors : (Constant), Regularly doing Office Home, Work Delegation Difficulty, Holiday Work, Times for Family, Less Time for Personal Life, Time Work, Work Excitement, Weekend Stress, Work More than fifty five hours per week, Exhaustion, Interval Discussion on Work-Matter.

Further, in order to reduce the data complexity, this study applies factor analysis (principle component method) to derive more concrete conclusions on the empirical findings (table 4 and 4a). The test has identified 5 major factors, which together account 68.733 % of the total variance. From the factor matrices it is derived that work more than 55 hours and interval discussion on work-related matters have a factor loading of .714 and .724, which is closer to 1. In the factor 2 work stress and work exhaustion have a loading of .702 and .701. Factor 3 is basically explained through work during weekends (.525). Regularly doing office work at home has a factor loading of .530 in the factor 4. Spending less time with family has a high loading factor of .814.

In short, from the factor matrices it is derived that work more than 55 hours, interval discussion on work-related matters, work stress, work exhaustion, weekend work, regularly doing office work at home and spending less time for family contribute mainly to work life imbalances among the professionals.

It also signifies that work life imbalances are independent to gender (table 5) as the Chi-Square value 1.152 is less that the table value at 5% significance level of 5.991 (Ho considers both the factors as independent).

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
Person Chi-Square	1.152	2	.562
Likelihood Ratio	1.914	2	.384
Linear-by-Linear Association	.221	1	.638
N of Valid Cases	72		

Source: Computed in SPSS

Conclusion

The empirical evidence on the various factors related to work life imbalance highlights the magnitude of problem faced by the IT professionals, especially at the middle level, irrespective of gender at the early stages of life. This must be discussed further in the context of changing family relations.

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Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Gender	**No of Respondents**
a. Male	53 (73.6)
b. Female	19 (26.4)
Average Age (in yrs.)	**29**
Average Salary (in Rs.)	25000
Marital Status	
a. Married	55 (76.4)
b. Unmarried	17 (23.6)
Qualification	
a. BE/B.Tech	42 (58.3)
b. MCA	8 (11.1)
c. MBA	10 (13.9)
d. Other Degree	12 (16.7)
Average Work Experience (in Yrs)	6
Average Hours of Work (per week)	58

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent the percentage to the total (72)

Table: 2

Opinion on Work Life Imbalances

Factors/ Opinion	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
Work Excitement	6 (8.3)	42 (58.3)	24 (33.3)
Interval discussion on work	37 (51.4)	27 (37.5)	7 (9.7)
Holiday Work	27 (37.5)	35 (48.6)	9 (12.5)
Work Delegation Difficulty	25 (34.7)	36 (50.0)	7 (9.7)
Work more than 55 hours per week	23 (31.9)	36 (50.0)	13 (18.1)
Overtime Work	12 (16.7)	40 (55.6)	19 (26.4)
Weekend Work	21 (29.2)	38 (52.8)	12 (16.7)
Work Exhaustion	12 (16.7)	45 (62.5)	15 (21.8)
Less time for Personal Life	3 (4.2)	46 (63.9)	13 (18.1)
Work Stress	13 (18.1)	34 (47.2)	21 (29.2)
Regular doing Office Work at Home	29 (40.3)	36 (50)	6 (8.3)
Less Time for Family	47 (65.3)	17 (23.6)	7 (9.7)

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent the percentage to the total (72)

Table: 3 Work Life Imbalances-
(Likert Scale Measurement)

Factors/ Opinion	Likert Scale
Work Excitement	1.75
Interval Discussion on Work	2.39
Holiday Work	2.22
Work Delegation Difficulty	2.14
Work more than 55 hours per Week	2.14
Overtime Work	1.88
Weekend Work	2.10
Work Exhaustion	1.96
Less time for Personal Life	2.00
Work Stress	1.78
Regular doing Office Work at home	2.29
Less time for Family	2.53
Total Score (average)	**2.09**

Table 4: Factor Analysis

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			raction Sums of Squared Loadir		
Componen	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.716	22.634	22.634	2.716	22.634	22.634
2	1.774	14.780	37.414	1.774	14.780	37.414
3	1.398	11.652	49.066	1.398	11.652	49.066
4	1.228	10.233	59.298	1.228	10.233	59.298
5	1.132	9.435	68.733	1.132	9.435	68.733
6	.916	7.634	76.367			
7	.666	5.552	81.919			
8	.621	5.172	87.091			
9	.535	4.460	91.552			
10	.423	3.524	95.076			
11	.328	2.733	97.809			
12	.263	2.191	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4a

Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Work Deligation Difficulty	-9.14E-02	.218	.433	.470	-.115
Work Exitement	.615	-.156	-7.49E-02	.163	-9.33E-02
Less Times for Family	.265	.246	-.197	-7.59E-02	.814
Work More than fifty five hours per week	.714	-.239	3.972E-02	2.287E-02	-.302
Holiday Work	.697	-.417	3.769E-02	8.580E-02	-8.42E-02
Interval Discussion on Work-related Matters	.724	-.322	-.165	8.724E-02	.292
Less Time for Personal Life	.419	.302	-.296	-.346	-.405
Work Stress	.220	.702	.269	.319	-.133
Work Exhaustion	.294	.711	-.278	-.338	-5.06E-04
Over Time Work	.485	.235	.486	.261	.260
Weekend Work	.409	.211	.525	-.524	-3.30E-02
Regularly doing Office Work at Home	.162	.342	-.622	.530	-.119

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 5 components extracted.