

INDIAN IT FIRMS WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES – A SURVEY REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Technology is reshaping everything around us – businesses, consumers, countries – creating opportunities that never existed before. India is no exception and has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the field of Information Technology. This sector has emerged as one of the largest employers in the country. At the same time, the industry is characterized by high attrition rate, low employee commitment level and stressful nature of job. One among the prime cause for this is work-life imbalance. Thus, the IT industry needs to be flexible enough to develop commitment and talent in their workforce. They need to adopt a strategy to improve the employees 'Work-life balance' to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. This paper aims to investigate factors affecting work-life balance, and work-life balance practices followed by some leading Indian IT companies.

Key words:, Work-life balance- Employees- Information & Technology, TCS, Wipro, Infosys

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has revolutionized the world as never before. In the global scenario it undergoes transformation with undreamt rapidity. India is no exception and has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the field of Information Technology. Indian IT industry has been increasingly contributing to the domestic economy over the years. The information technology sector has been growing at compounded annual growth rate of 17 per cent during the last five years (2007-12) and the contribution by the IT sector in India's GDP has increased from 1.2 per cent in 1998 to 8 per cent in 2013 (NASSCOM). At the same time, this sector is estimated to aggregate revenue of USD 108 billion in FY2013, with export touching USD 75.8 billion, growing at 10.2%. During this period, direct employment is expected

to reach nearly 3 million, an additional of 188,300 employees, while indirect job creation is estimated at 9.5 million (NASSCOM). It can be visualized from the above statistics that IT industry in India has been flourishing and contributing significantly to the country's economy. The entire credit for the success and growth of IT industry goes to its knowledge workers. Despite of its high growth rate, the industry is characterized by high attrition rate, low employee commitment level and stressful nature of job. The companies' failure to implement effective and efficient work-life balance practices is one among the prime culprit for this. Similarly, contemporary demographic changes such as increasing number of women in the workforce, dual career and nuclear families have generated

an urgent need of employees to balance work and non-work life. Changes in the markets, ways of working, and labour market conditions have put tremendous pressure on all organizations in general and IT companies in particular to stay competitive and consequently, organizations have put increasing pressure on their employees to deliver the best. It is now accepted that internally motivated people give their best and are also more productive than their counterparts. A healthy balance between professional and personal life is crucial and a matter of strategic concern to the employers as well as employees. Work-life balance is an issue not just for individuals but for employers, the market, the state and society as a whole. To move from a single bread earner family model to one where both parents participate in paid employment has made it increasingly difficult to raise children while the work place continues to be molded on male bread earner workers. Work-life balance is the proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle balance" and "life balance". There is a large individual component in that meaning includes each individual's needs, experiences, and goals, define the balance and there is not a one size which fits all solution. Also, what work-life balance does not mean is an equal balance in units of time between work and life. Work life balance has important consequences for employee attitudes towards their organizations as well

as for the living of employees. A balance between work and life is supposed to exist when there is proper functioning at work and also at home (Santhi T.S & Sundar, 2012). Work-life balance practices are those institutionalized, structural and procedural arrangements as well as formal and informal practices that enable individuals to easily manage the conflicting worlds of work and family lives (Osterman, 1995). Some common statutory policies are maternity benefits and discretionary policies are flexi-time, telecommuting and job sharing. Employee assistance programmes like counseling and stress management also fall under work-life balance practices (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000).

A CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM OF WORK – LIFE BALANCE

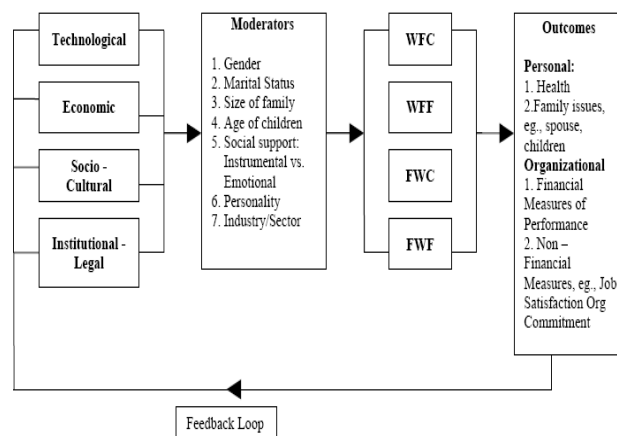


Fig 1: A Conceptual Paradigm of Work – Life Balance. Source – NHRD Network Journal, July 2009.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The core objective of the study is to identify the factors that impact work-life balance in IT companies.

2. To identify policies, practices and programs offered by top IT companies with reference to work-life balance.

METHODOLOGY

The present research paper is mainly focus upon studying the work-life balance practices followed by top leading IT companies. The present study is totally based on secondary data and for this the library method is used. Data and statistics related to the IT industry and selected IT companies are gathered from the ASSOCHAM, Company Annual Reports, online and offline journals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thompson, (2002) classified work-life initiatives into five (5) categories namely, (1) Time-based strategies like flexi-time, telecommuting and job sharing; (2) Information-based strategies like relocation assistance, elder care resources, company work/life balance intranet; (3) Money-based strategies like leave with pay, scholarships for dependents; (4) Direct services like onsite childcare, concierge services and takeout dinners; and (5) Culture-change strategies like training or focus on employees' performance not office face time.

Hyman et al. (2004) observed that organizational pressures, combined with lack of work centrality, result in work intruding into non-work areas of employees' lives. Such intrusions often manifest themselves differently depending on the type of work, extent of autonomy and organizational support.

Ferrer & Gagne (2006) explored that the nature of industry/sector can also influence the work life balance. In general, the large companies and those in more modern/emerging sectors (such as information technology and IT-enabled industries in comparison to the older industries like mining and construction) typically adapt more family friendly policies that can moderate the level of tension between work and life/family.

Sekar N (2009) emphasized that a rising rupee and slowing US economy has forced a number of companies, especially in the IT and IT-enabled services sectors, to optimize existing capacities and increase efficiency. All this has meant that employees are working harder at the expense of their personal lives to meet targets.

Jain (2009) highlighted the challenges faced by the modern day employer because of labour shortage of knowledge workers. In a period of increasing concern over skill shortages, it can also help an organization to become an 'employer of choice', enhancing its ability to recruit and retain employee. For instance, IT industry is facing revolutionary technological changes and many other crises. The most important challenge for organizations in the private sector is a conflict between work and life to the company's "bottom line".

Yasbek (2004) stated that to a large extent in the IT sector, the employee is expected to be engaged on the job almost at all times. So the traditional distinctions between work-life and family-life have disappeared. Even

during selection of employees for an organization, emphasis is placed on the attitudes the person exhibits, more particularly, whether the employee is flexible enough to be available for work at any time.

Perry-Smith et al (2000) found that Software's developers are considered the key occupation to examine in future studies of „knowledge workers“. They are „vanguard“ of emerging work practices. Keeping in mind the long hours working culture and 24/7 support employees in the IT industry are the ones which suffer the most from work-life conflict. It was found that interference of work with personal life has a considerable impact on work-related attitude for this group of workers. They state that work-life boundary variables affect trust in the organization which plays a mediational role in these variables, relationship to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Even though employees in the IT industry are unique in their direction, market oriented and not likely to show attachment to a single organization

Baral (2009) studied the scope and coverage of work-life balance practices in some of the leading organizations in India. Based on review of literature, empirical study and analyses of reports of newspaper articles, research suggests the Indian organizations have to do a lot to treat work-life balance practices as strategic aspect of organizational performance. Organizations offer a lot of benefits in the name of work-life balance. However they do not form an

integral part of the company's policies. In knowledge centric organizations like IT and ITEs industries where women workforce participation is relatively higher, statutory policies such as maternity leave and benefits are common, while practices such as flexi-time, work from home and part-time work are still yet to pick up pace. Stress management workshops and training programs on work-life balance are being conducted by organizations as a part of the welfare provisions, but companies do not follow them as regular practices in most of the organizations. Research shows considerable difference between the responses of HR managers and employees. It was found that even though organizations had quite a few work-life balance programs their employees did not recognize so. This finding shows that HR managers have to put more efforts to properly and effectively communicate about the availability of different work-life balance practices in their respective organizations to their employees.

Galinsky et al (1991) stated that it is time to acknowledge and realize that work life balance practices are of value to all, which attract prospective employees and are tools for employee retention and motivation.

In the light of above literature survey it is very clear that a number of research works has been conducted in Indian and Western context on work-life balance. Most of the research highlighted that work-life imbalance is a prime reason for IT companies worries. However not much research survey has been conducted on work life balance practices of top IT Companies.

Therefore the present study has been conducted to bridge the gap.

SCENARIO FOR INDIAN ORGANIZATION

Comparing with the past, in the present time one can see a noticeable difference in Indian organizations vision, philosophy, leadership style and people oriented HR interventions. Consequently, Indian organizations have started getting respect globally for its contribution to the digital world. HR practitioners are striving to experiment the existing policies and exploring other innovations to motivate and involve large number of employees. However, managing employee work-life balance has still not become a core strategic facet of people management practices in Indian organizations, which have the competitive advantage in terms of young talent in comparison to the west. This demands attention of the policy makers of every organization to tap available talent for superior performance. Work-life balance has improved in 2012 compared with 2010 for all size companies, but it has taken a particular leap forwards in small companies where the index has grown 27 points. Though in India the Work-life balance index has increased from 121 Index points in 2010 to 139 in 2012 (OECD), the number of IT companies having a better WLB practices has decreased to a greater extent. Table 1 provides ranking of companies in worldwide in terms of work-life balance. India's human capital advantage has been one of the prime reasons for the burgeoning growth of the IT sector. Post recession, this sector has seen tremendous growth and today the market has

become extremely competitive. With other sectors also moving on a high growth trajectory, work-life imbalance has become one of the prime cause for high attrition rate in this sector. Information Technology Industry is the sun rising sector where long working hours and work overload are very common. Though most of the IT firms have five-days a week, the workload is going up. After the 2001-02 slumps, companies that downsized did not always hire more people after business picked up. This means that being called to work on weekends and 14-hour working days have become synonymous with the sector. There are also long intervals between projects when many software professionals are sent to training sessions to keep them occupied. They react to such breaks negatively, many feel that they are not competent enough or that their potential is not adequately used (Santhi T.S & Sundar, 2012).

Table 1: Work-Life Balance (WLB) Rating across Companies

Company Name	Rating of WLB
SAS Institute	4.5
National Instruments	4.3
Slalom Consulting	4.1
Mitre	4.1
Orbitz Worldwide	4.1
Scottrade	4.1
Mentor Graphics	4.1
FactSet	4.1
Agilent Technologies	4.1
Nokia	4.1
MathWorks	4.1
Autodesk	4



AOL	4
Citrix System	4
<u>GlobalLogic</u>	4
Yahoo	4
<u>Tieto</u>	4
<u>Mastercard</u>	3.9
Morningstar	3.9
Shell Oil	3.9
Robert Bosch	3.9
Chevron	3.9
REI	3.9
STMicroelectronics	3.9
<u>NetApp</u>	3.9

Source: Glassdoor.com (Glassdoor.com provides a free inside look at company ratings and reviews including employee satisfaction and CEO approval rating. All company reviews posted anonymously by employees). Employer Ratings: 4.51 to 5.0= “Very Satisfied”, 3.5 to 4.5= “Satisfied”

WLB PRACTICES TOP IT COMPANIES

India has gained a lot of interest as a source of software and has emerged as a leader in the software industry. Therefore there is more innovation conceiving work-life balance policies and practices in IT and IT-

enabled companies because of the preponderance of gender balance and resultant increased awareness and concern about family responsibilities. The present paper made an attempt to study the work-life balance practices of three leading IT companies i.e., TCS, Wipro and Infosys. **1.**

Tata Consultancy Services

TCS draws its strength from a highly engaged and motivated workforce, whose collective passion and commitment has helped the organization scale new heights. The Company has a diverse workforce of 2,76,196 employees representing 118 nationalities. TCS provides its employees with the right environment to grow and achieve their career goals. TCS affords the employees with a sense of certainty of a successful career that would be driven by boundless growth opportunities and exposure to cutting-edge technologies and learning possibilities. The work environment at TCS is built around the belief of growth beyond boundaries. Some of the critical elements that define its work culture are global exposure, cross-domain experience, and work-life balance. One among the value proposition that has been offered by TCS to their employees in order to develop employer brand is work-life balance. A part of its work-life balance programme, TCS has introduced 'Maitree' which actively promotes a series of scheduled fun and cultural events and activities, and also keenly promotes community development projects. Maitree was started with an objective of bringing TCS associates and their families' closer and making them feel a part of the TCS extended family. Soon after,

with a view to carry on the TATA tradition of enabling the community, the scope of Maitree was enhanced to include socially relevant activities and endeavors. Over the years, Maitree has become a part of every TCS employee's life. All in all, Maitree provides everyone at TCS the opportunity to establish relationships that extend beyond work and thereby, help build bonds that makes work so much more fun.

2. Wipro

“People are the heart of any business and in the case of the Technology business, people are more than the heart, they are its brain too. We will continue to invest in people and specifically for increasing the diversity of our employees to join and grow in our Wipro team”- Ajim Premji. Wipro believe that employees are the heart of the organization; hence a large part of the management focus is to care and support its employees. Further the company's emphasis is on ‘work balance towards life’ rather than ‘life balance towards work’. For this companies aim is to create and nourish the best in class global leadership and provide them unlimited opportunities for career enhancement and growth. It is the aim of the company to be a truly global company that not only serve global customers but also employs people worldwide. As a part of its Work-life balance practices, Wipro runs a number of wellness and Employee Assistance Programs in its organization covering employees from both the IT as well as the BPO sector.

- **MITR:** an employee counseling initiative

- **Fit Life:** an Employee Wellness Program
- **Employee Advocacy Group:** focused on identifying and addressing Wiproites issues and concerns, providing staffers with a forum to improve the organization from the bottom up.
- **OMBUDS:** A 24x7 multi lingual hotline and online enabled process to provide a strong framework of assurance and protection to women employees.
- **Awareness and self defense sessions for women employees.**
- **Wipro Academy of Software Excellence (WASE) program:** To nurture young talent. “MITR” (friend) is considered to be one of the most successful wellness programmes rolled out in the company. As part of the initiative, 28 people were trained for counseling fellow employees from a psychological perspective to counter stress in the workplace and in their personal lives.

3. Infosys

Infosys believes in bringing employees together through inclusion program. Infosys promotes work-life balance through its three dimensional programme:

- **Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN)**
 - **Infyability**
 - **Family Matters Network**
- Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN) was launched in 2003 to create a gender sensitive and inclusive work environment at Infosys. This network addressed the work-life balance and developmental needs of its women employees. A special mentoring program for women was launched in 2008 in order to

boost up the spirit of female employees. At the same time Infosys believes in supporting and recognizing employee's volunteerism. Further the program of "Infyability", support employees with physical disabilities through the Equal Opportunities team. The company has established a platform to help employees come together and benefit by sharing experience and knowledge which in return leads to skill enhancements. Family Matters Network was launched in 2008 to help employees with parenting and work-life balance issues. Employees are given online expert counseling and provided referral service on daycare and information on schools for their children. In order to recognize the talent of employees' children both in academic and extracurricular activities, Infosys celebrate Petit Infoscion Day.

CONCLUSION

The Indian IT sector persists to be one of the flourishing sectors of Indian financial system indicating a speedy expansion in the coming years. As per NASSCOM, the Indian IT exports are anticipated to attain US\$ 175 billion by 2020 out of which the domestic sector will account for US\$ 50 billion in earnings. Thus, it's high time that IT companies need to be proactive to retain the best brain as attrition is the main worry for this sector and work-life imbalance is one among the prime culprit for this. Thus the company's human resource team along with the active cooperation of the employees should take initiatives to facilitate proper work-life balance policies and see to it that the employees are benefited from such policies. The employee side should practice

self-management so as to reduce some of the work-life imbalances arising out of stress, burnout, family commitments etc. They can probably make use of meditation techniques, yoga, extracurricular events, proper self appraisal of jobs, adequate training for improvement etc. IT leaders should focus on developing, formulating, implementing and reviewing better work-life balance policies in order to build a sustainable and enriching organization. Thus a better work -place as well as a secured and happy family life is possible.

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