Steps to improve the degree of work-life balance – a study on the initiations taken by the corporate

Suresh Babu Bandekar, Research Scholar, R&D Centre, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore
Dr. B Murali Krishna, Professor & Director, Samatha College, Vishakaptanam,

Abstract:

Work Life Balance refers to people spending sufficient time at their jobs while also spending adequate time on the other pursuits such as family, hobbies and community involvement. Work life balance is the interesting phenomenon in the past few years. Work life balance is the degree to which an individual simultaneously balance the emotional, behavioral and time demands of both Paid work and Personal Duties. Work and Life are the important aspects for any person. Maintaining the balance between these two crucial aspects is still important. Increased focus on any of these aspects may collapse the other which in turn brings an imbalance between Work and Life. The concept of Work-Life Balance has become so crucial that even corporates are working on the strategies to maintain the balance of their employees. They frame the policies, procedures, actions and expectations that make employees to balance their Work and Life easily. However, even after a very good structure designed by the companies to maintain the Work-Life Balance in their employees, the focus on strategies to maintain the balance individually has not lost its own importance. This paper gives a brief study on the major strategies by both the corporate and also by the individual to gain a perfect balance between Work and Life.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Corporate, Work Overload, Emotional imbalance, mental imbalance.

Introduction:

In general, a happy worker is considered as a better worker. One who is able to enjoy the work can improve themselves day –by-day and think innovatively. However, it is not one's decision to make them happy at work but it is the collective effort of the entire team in which they are working. There is no any universal strategy to maintain Work-Life Balance. Everyone has to find out their own style to stay away from Work Life Conflicts. Also, there is no any right balance throughout the life, as the age and experience grows the way to achieve it keeps on changing. With the

intervention of Information Technology, the life-style of working people has changed drastically. People are available 24/ 7 for the customers and people are flexible to work from outside office also. The days have come that Physical presence of a person is not much mandatory for the work to progress. On the other side, with the higher degree of flexibility people are not able to focus on their personal life. For e.g. If a professional is on leave for a family function, due to his 24/ 7 availability, he is contacted even during a holiday and he/ she is unable to concentrate in that family function. This is a very simple example that we have taken here. But,

the same is getting repeated even when the staff is on leave on a serious issue as well. This is where, the balance is getting disturbed (Ms. Riddhi Jain and Dr. Rashmi Jain, 2016).

People who are more involved in work tend to have more stress and pressure. In addition, they would show decreased job ability, low performance levels etc. This would eventually lead to many physical and mental health issues like diabetes, back-pain, lack of sleep, heart diseases, loss of appetite, addiction to alcohol, etc. The work life conflict differs based on the gender as well. Working women would have much of house-hold responsibilities due to which she has to maintain the same level of energy throughout the day. Thus they need to take care of themselves and also all in the family. Loss of balance at any point of time would affect the entire family. There are times where one has to work on Saturdays and Sundays, stretch for a longer time, start to work early etc. One must be prepared to undergo and overcome all these kind of situations else they would slowly land into Work-Life conflicts.

Organizational Initiatives:

For any organization, their Work Force is the critical resource. Thus, organizations are bringing up many Work-Life strategies to contribute towards the Work – Life Balance of their Work Force (Y. Gupta and N. Sharma, 2013). Presence of the organization across the globe i.e. Location, gender, marital status, seniority, work shift timings, frequency of travel on work, health conditions, domain of work like

manufacturing, pharmaceutical, mining, oil & gas etc. are the various factors taken into consideration while preparing the Work-Life Strategies. Few organizations also consider physical disability as one of the factor.

Given below are the Work-Life balance practices followed by different companies in India:

IBM: (IBM)

- IBM has Integrated Health Services organization – consisting of occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, safety, health benefits and wellness professionals.

- This service organization is responsible for implementing employee well-being programs that are proactive, relevant, and effective in managing the highly complex, diverse, and ever-changing health and safety needs of our employees around the world.

- IBM has its own Well-Being Management System (WBMS), it ensures proactive planning, execution excellence, measurement and continuous improvement in all areas of employee health and well-being.

- WBMS is first implemented in 1999 and it is a global, centralized system that links the company's occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, safety, wellness and health benefits, strategic initiatives and programs to IBM's strategies covering

manufacturing, research and development, sales and services worldwide.

- IBM's corporate policy, Responsibility for Employee Well-Being and Product Safety, is the cornerstone of IBM's WBMS, which follows the "plan-do-check-act" principles that are common in International Organization for Standardization (ISO) consensus standards.

- In 2007, Bureau Veritas Certification North America, Inc. audited IBM's Well-being Management System (WBMS) and certified that it conforms with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series (OHSAS) — Standard 18001:2007.

- This international standard defines requirements for health and safety management systems. IBM is one of the largest organizations to have obtained OHSAS 18001 certification.

- Advancing the health, safety and well-being of IBM's global workforce is an absolute priority; it's a commitment that encompasses the environments in which employees work and the communities in which they live.

TCS: (TCS)

- As a part of TCS' work-life balance programs, **'Maitree'** 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.

- Over the years, Maitree has become a part of every TCS employee's life. From cracking quizzes to conquering tall peaks, from shaking a leg to bending it like Beckham, employees have reveled in the excitement and fun of all Maitree events.

- This also conducts workshops on theatre, yoga, origami, flower arrangement, chocolate making, and a host of others have allowed the employees to learn and know about things they always wanted to.

- In addition to working towards bringing our associates and their families closer, Maitree also strives to enable the development of the society. This includes working with the differently-abled, aiding under-privileged children across various schools in Mumbai, and helping rural community in Vazapur, employment opportunities for the differently-abled, HIV/AIDS sensitization, peer education, Green Audits to check the excess consumption of energy resources etc.

- All these practices are now been recognized as best practices of TCS.

TECH MAHINDRA: (Tech Mahindra)

- Tech Mahindra has presence in 90 countries and world class offices meet dynamic business needs and are equipped with state of the art amenities.

- Given below is a peek into some of the exceptional facilities that they have across their global locations.

  ➢ Customer Experience Centre

  ➢ Broadcasting Studio

  ➢ Learning Centers

  ➢ Library and E-Library

  ➢ Gymnasiums

  ➢ Swimming Pools

  ➢ Guest Houses

  ➢ Salon

  ➢ Indoor/ Outdoor Game facilities

  ➢ On-campus Creche facility

  ➢ Convenience Store

  ➢ Wellness Center – Sick bay, Pharmacy, Nurse, Snooze Room

- At Tech Mahindra and within the Mahindra group, there are several initiatives to engage, encourage and promote diversity at work place. Some initiatives are listed below:

  ➢ Starting Over: an Initiative encouraging woman who have taken a break in their career and who wishes to re-join the corporate world.

  ➢ Leadership talks: Senior women leaders from across the globe engage in interactive discussions on growth and development of women Associates

  ➢ Women: Fight Back Mobile App, Self-defence workshops, GPS enabled cabs, regular transport surveys, training for bus/cab drivers on female safety, etc.

  ➢ Zero Tolerance at workplace: The Anti-Sexual Harassment policy of the company encourages to report incidences of workplace harassment or discrimination

  ➢ Generational Diversity: they have put in place, differentiated practices and programs catering to the needs of Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y Associates.

  ➢ Cultural Diversity: Localization of talent, Localization of policies and cultural awareness workshops

  ➢ Enable: This is an initiative designed specifically to enable equal opportunities to differently-abled professionals

- There are some unique special programs for accelerating Leadership qualities. Below are few such programs:

  ➢ Young CEO: designed to nurture Young Leaders and help them take on significant roles with 'end-to-end' responsibility

  ➢ 1000 Leaders: includes identifying candidates with high potential and preparing them for future critical roles

  ➢ Shadow Board: It's a board constituted by a team of 10-12 Associates whose role is to challenge conventional ways by bringing in fresh ideas for growth and sustainability.

  ➢ AIM – Achiever in Making: to cultivate the young talent of the organization and provide avenues for transition from delivery / support roles to client facing and revenue generating roles

BIOCON: (BIOCON)

- Safe working environment
- Annual health checks for all employees
- Round-the-clock transportation facilities
- Spacious and efficient cafeteria

- Well-equipped daycare center for employee children
- Highly conducive and enabling work atmosphere
- Well-designed, green, eco-friendly campus
- Well managed Training center
- Well-equipped gym with an experienced trainer

INVESCO: (Invesco)

- Invesco provides 26 days of holidays per year while it rises to 30 days after 5 years of service
- They provide all employees the opportunity to request flexible working and they will try to accommodate requests where possible.
- There is an active Sports and Social committee which is partly subsidized. This gives employees the chance to go on quiz nights, weekends away, themed nights out and sporting events like golf or horse racing.
- A variety of discounts are available from local businesses including eating out, travel, health & beauty, gym membership and car repair.
- They have EAP – Employee Assistance Programme which provides a confidential and impartial counseling and advice service, helping the employee or their family with all types of issues e.g. health, wellbeing, legal and financial advice.

SANDISK: (Sandisk)

- Tuition Reimbursement: SanDisk offers educational assistance so that employees can increase their knowledge and skills, and prepare for potential opportunities for development within the company.

- PTO (Paid Time Off): SanDisk's PTO program gives their employees' the flexibility to take time off for vacation, personal days, and sick days to use as you choose. PTO benefits will increase the longer the person is associated with the company.

- Celebrations and Events: At SanDisk people work hard, and play hard! Celebrations are important. That's why employees and their families are rewarded with celebrations throughout the year: an international festival celebrating their diverse workforce, sporting events, book fairs, and an employee appreciation program etc.

- Health Club Membership: SanDisk provides employees the use of an on-site, company health club at no cost to the employee. Eligible employees have the full use of facilities, including fitness classes, a variety of exercise equipment, and full locker room amenities.

- Discount Coupons/Tickets: Discount coupons for many local and national amusement parks are available to SanDisk employees. SanDisk also partners with local businesses to offer discounts on services and merchandise.

- SanDisk Merchandise: SanDisk employees enjoy both the convenience of online purchasing, and a discount on great SanDisk products and other items, so one can express their pride in the company they are helping to build, by actually using the quality products they build.

- Work/Life Balance Program: SanDisk offers a work/life balance program that includes comprehensive referral services to help employees handle life events such as: child care, elder care, school selection, college assistance, adoption assistance and other programs to help them achieve balance in their life.

- E-Concierge Membership: This program allows one to obtain personal assistance in a wide variety of products and services! It is like having their own personal assistant. You can access these services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the web.

- Community Sharing: SanDisk is committed to being an asset in the communities where their employees live and work. The Community Sharing Committee acts as a facilitator to enable SanDisk to carry out this mission by both providing grants, and encouraging employee participation in the sponsorship of local non-profit, 501C organizations that focus on family and individual support needs, education and youth development, and community enrichment through the arts.

After knowing all these, we can clearly understand that organization wise there is much difference in the strategies. Few are very much flexible in work culture and few are not highly flexible. This all might depend on the factors like company's turnaround, company's head count, companies leave policies etc.

Methodology:

This study has been conducted in Hyderabad. We have selected 5 IT companies and collected the details from their employees randomly based on their interest shown in being a part of the study. Concerned HR managers are consulted to explain the main reason behind the study and also taken their inputs if they are looking for any particular things that they wanted to know from their company through survey. We have totally given the questionnaire to 100 people out of whom there are 60 male respondents and 40 female respondents. Apart from the objectives that we wanted to study, we also tried to find out the respondent's personal perception about the Work Life policies of their respective companies.

Results & Discussion:

Table 1: Prevalence of Work Life Imbalance							
S. No	Prevalence of Imbalance	No. of Respondents					
		Male (N=60)	%age	Female (N=40)	%age	Total (N=100)	%age
1	Yes	35	58.3	22	55.0	57	57.0
2	No	15	25.0	5	12.5	20	20.0
3	Sometimes	10	16.7	13	32.5	23	23.0
	Total	60	100.0	40	100.0	100	100.0

It was observed that most of the respondents i.e. 80% have Work life conflicts in their lives. Out of them, very less female respondents i.e. 12.5% has responded that they do not face any imbalance between work and life which is comparatively less than male respondents which is 25%. This shows that mostly females are the ones who would suffer from Work-Life Balance compared to the males. This is because, in the traditional India, females are the onces who has to look after the family responsibilities, also managing their work. During this multiple shift in roles, she might face stress, lack of time etc.

Table 2: Which of the following factors effects you in WLB							
S. No	Factors	No. of Respondents					
		Male (N=60)	%age	Female (N=40)	%age	Total (N=100)	%age
1	Emotional stress	20	33.3	19	47.5	39	39.0
2	Poor Mental Health	5	8.3	10	25.0	15	15.0
3	Anxiety Levels	5	8.3	1	2.5	6	6.0
4	Less Life Satisfaction	5	8.3	2	5.0	7	7.0
5	Prospect of Drinking	5	8.3	0	0.0	5	5.0
6	Less Physical Support	5	8.3	1	2.5	6	6.0
7	Fatigue	10	16.7	5	12.5	15	15.0
8	No Effect	5	8.3	2	5.0	7	7.0
	Total	60	100	40	100	100	100

Further to the analysis of the data in the above table it has been observed that 39% of respondents felt like Emotional stress is the primary factor followed by Poor mental health, Fatigue, less life satisfaction, etc. The major reason for emotional stress is thinking on different things together. If you are in home, we need to think on the works related to works but not to think of some pending work at office. Also, when you are in office, you need to think on the office related to works but not on something else like children, family issues etc. People knowing this simple technique of keeping work at work and keeping home at home are the one who can balance their Work and Life successfully. Also, &% of the respondents said that they experience no effect of Work Life conflict in their lives.

Table 3: Perceptions of Respondents towards effects of Overtime on Life							
S. No	Type of Effect	No. of Respondents					
		Male (N=60)	%age	Female (N=40)	%age	Total (N=100)	%age
1	Positive Effect	30	50.0	13	32.5	43	43.0
2	Negative Effect	15	25.0	20	50.0	35	35.0
3	No Effect	15	25.0	7	17.5	22	22.0
	Total	60	100	40	100	100	100

From the clear observation of the above table, it is clearly evident that most of the people feel overtime hinders their own Work life balance while few people i.e.

35% feel that Overtime is not at all the factor which hinders their Work Life balance. However 22% of people have no effect of overtime at all. Thus, this would act as a guide for many corporates if they have to implement any over time policies to their employees. Also if they allow the overtime facility, to what extent they should be availed by its employees.

Conclusion:

The present study has identified the various issues related to the Work-Life Balance in various organizations. While the organizations and their management are trying hard to bring in various advanced and unique concepts to maintain the Work-Life Balance of their own Work force, on the other hand, staff is unable to recognize those concepts and utilize them for their use. Because of which, there is much of implementation deficiency seen. This cannot at all the major problem provided the concerned line manager or supervisor take the interference and guide their team regarding when to utilize which kind of policies to get rid of Work Life conflicts. But, at the same time, it is very much important that managers/ supervisors should know the various strategies followed by their organization and also must be willing to open those options to their team members without actually restricting them. Building a sympathetic and motivating work environment is another important initiative to be addressed. If in part of the organization, the superiority or bossism is existing, that has to be traced and re-organization of the levels should happen if needed which will create an environment that organization has an eye on all and will be taking the steps to get the things in place if necessary.

References:

BIOCON. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.biocon.com/biocon_careers_lifeatbiocon.asp

IBM. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.ibm.com/ibm/responsibility/employee_well_being.shtml

Invesco. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://careers.invesco.co.uk/site/careers/benefits.html

Ms. Riddhi Jain and Dr. Rashmi Jain. (2016). Organizational Initiatives towards Work Life Balance: Insights from IT Sector. 510 - 517.

Sandisk. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.sandisk.in/about/careers/why-sandisk/compensation-and-benefits

TCS. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.careers.tcs.com/CareersDesign/Jsps/WorkingatTCSValue.jsp

Tech Mahindra. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://careers.techmahindra.com/Forms/CampusFacility.aspx

Y. Gupta and N. Sharma. (2013). An Empirical Analysis of Work Life Balance in Corporate employees with Special Respect to marital Status in Moradabad Region, Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Management Review. *2*(9), 114 - 119.