

## *Indian perspective on Work-Life Balance*

**Prof. Hema Mirji,**

*Lecturer,*

*Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University*

*Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship Development, Pune -38*

**and**

**Prof. Dr. Kirti Gupta**

*Professor,*

*Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University*

*Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship Development, Pune -38*

### **Abstract :**

Research findings suggest that level of work-life balance significantly influences various individual, family and organization relevant outcomes such as employee health, employee commitment, job satisfaction and family satisfaction.

In the case of Indian workforce's work-life balance issue needs to be studied differently, as the Indians have some unique traits than that of western people. Despite the continuous and growing impact of urbanization, secularization, and Westernization, the traditional joint household, both in ideal and in practice, remains the primary social force in the lives of most Indians.

This paper tries to find the various factors that can be studied as the link to understand the Indian perspective on work-life balance.

### **Introduction :**

Work-life balance is an issue of paramount importance to individuals, organizations, families, government and society. Techno-economic changes have increased the pressures on organizations and employees alike. Moreover, the increasing number of women in the workforce, nuclear families and dual earner couples has made work-life balance a crucial concern for employees as well as organizations across industries and occupations. The need for a balance between work and personal life has become an integral element of employee expectations from employers. Career success today is defined not only in terms of promotions and lucrative assignments but also the ability to balance between work and non-work life. In this regard helping employees to have a healthy work-life balance has become a challenge for employers and human resource professionals.

Over the past twenty-five years, there has been a substantial increase in work which is felt to be due, in part, by information technology and by an intense, competitive work environment. Long-term loyalty have been twisted by a performance culture that expects more and more from their employees yet offers little security in return. This is also encouraged by prevailing consumerist culture and expanding horizons of the social changes in Indian influenced by western culture gives more importance to earnings and life style and the low value to parenting.

Over the past decade, rises in levels of absenteeism, poor health, cardiovascular disease, sexual health problems, a weaker immune system and frequent headaches, stiff muscles, or backache, poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, exhaustion, and difficulty concentrating. There are also increase in the level to binge

## ***Human Resource Management***

eating, smoking, and alcohol consumption. They are all evidence of an unhealthy work life balance. According to a recent study for the Center for Work-Life Policy, 1.7 million people consider their jobs and their work hours excessive because of globalization.

### **What Is Work-Life Balance?**

Work-life balance suggests the meaning as “bringing equilibrium or stability of both life and work”. Moreover, this gives rise to the need to recognize that balance can have both an objective and subjective meaning and measurement, that it will vary according to circumstances and that it will also vary across individuals.

- Need and importance of the study /Why it needs to be studied?
- Women with young ones are the fastest growing segment of the work force.
- Eighty-five percent (85%) of all workers have family care responsibilities.
- New challenges from the globalization have disturbed the Indian life style.

### **Evolution of the concept:**

Work-life balance has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life. In the early days of the industrial revolution in Europe (and today in some parts of the developing world) a primary concern was with the impact of child labour. In times of recession and again today in parts of Europe, the concern is with lack of employment and its consequences, graphically illustrated in the early work by Jahoda (1992) at Marienthal and studied in many contexts up to the present day. Yet work-life balance has come to the fore in contemporary debates largely because in affluent societies the excessive demands of work are perceived to present a distinctive issue that needs to be addressed.

The pressures of work, for those in work, have been intensifying in recent decades. Factors such as

- the advances in information technology and information load
- the need for speed of response
- the importance attached to quality of customer service

further, its implications for constant availability and the pace of change with its resultant upheavals and adjustments all demand our time and can be sources of pressure. The evidence from the UK, which has the longest working hours in Europe, shows while the average number of hours worked has been steady for the past twenty years, the proportion working more than 48 hours has increased in the past decade. Also, people report an increase in the intensity of work. Comparative figures for Europe show that the rise in intensity in the 1990s was greatest in the UK closely followed by Ireland, France, Italy and the Netherlands. At the other extreme West (but not East) Germany reported almost no increase in the intensity of work. Intensity was measured through subjective responses to questions about the proportion of time spent working at very high speeds and to tight deadlines. As a result, so the argument goes, the demands of work begin to dominate life and a sense of work-life imbalance ensues.

### **The Indian ‘difference’:**

Values transcend down generations automatically. The Indian are born with some unique genetic traits and simplicity. Indians are highly flexible in the sense they would like to imbibe the changes dictated by western influence and yet clearly affirm their belief in traditions. The trait of flexibility is added with loyalty to family and to the organization where they work is a deeply held ideal for almost everyone.

The joint family is an ancient Indian institution, but it has undergone some change in the late twentieth century. Although several generations living together is the ideal, actual living arrangements vary widely depending on

region, social status, and economic circumstance. Still many Indians live in joint a family, which brings certain advantage of balancing the work-life. Elders at the home are usually take care of the young ones which reduces the burden of the parents, sometimes they also have parents earning the pension through which economic assistance and other benefits are obtained. Otherwise, clusters of relatives live very near each other, easily available to respond to the give and take of kinship obligations. Even when relatives cannot actually live in close proximity, they typically maintain strong bonds of kinship and attempt to provide each other with economic help, emotional support, and other benefits.

With the advent of technology and women emancipation there is a trend to mingle free with the western concepts of dress, belief, work and also get into a secular concept. Indians all over the world are known for their high level of tolerance. Their adaptation power is high which has been proved in the international arena. The ultimate advantage of the Indians is the gift of health and well being through yoga and meditation.

The above mentioned values like flexibility, tolerance, joint family culture and gift of health and yoga are unique for the Indians. These things impacts the way they balance the work and life. This is evident in the study carried out by the researcher.

1. Around 80% of the married people, lying between the age group of 31-40 years working in banks are of opinion that they are able to balance their work life and personal life.
2. Around 72% of the people are of opinion that their working hours are comfortable to work.
3. Around 85% of the have children to look after and their family support their career life.
4. Almost 98% of the people are interested in flexible working hours and would like to share the job. But, no one is interested in part-time working and also do not want career break. All of them would be very interested to utilize the sources of information and advice on health, housing and family care.
5. It is very interesting to know that almost 87% of the people feel their job makes them feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home. Also they feel having a good day on the job makes them a better companion at home.
6. Around 50% of the people feel that their personal and family worries and problems distract them when they are at work.

### **Ways to bring Work-Life balance:**

Today, an employee is not looking at their employer just a job but they want the company to care for their work life balance and their well being. Employees tend to feel motivated when they feel that the organization is putting extra effort in providing a healthy balance between work and life. Motivated employees not only enhance the productivity but also help creating a positive work environment at office. Some organizations have initiatives to provide timely assistance to the employees in a crisis situation rising out of financial or personal problems. Flexible work options is one of the key tools for attracting and retaining employees especially women employees. Our employees have the flexibility to exercise a need based work from option as it helps them more in maintaining balance between work and home. This benefits includes increased productivity, lower attrition, less number of leaves taken, cost savings on infrastructure and of course an extremely happy workforce. If a company addresses these needs, in addition to providing great career opportunities, they can be very successful in providing job satisfaction to the employee.

### **Pay:**

WLB policies must be built around an equitable pay programs so that in future more workers may want to participate in the profits of the firm.

### **Benefits:**

Since workers are now better organized, educated and vociferous, they demand more from the employers all over the world-apart from the pay-in the form of social security and welfare benefits as matter of right which were once considered as part of the bargaining process.

### **Job Security:**

Conditions in the work environment must be created by the employer which will give freedom to all the employees and free from fear of losing their jobs. A system must be created in such away which creates healthy working conditions with optimum financial security.

### **Alternative Work Schedules:**

With a view to tackle job boredom, modern organizations have been experimenting with several forms of alternate work schedules such as four-day work week, flexi-time and part-time work. Compressed work week is a work schedule made between the number of hours worked per day, and the number of days worked per week, 10 hours each day or three days, 12 hours each day are examples of the QWL schedule. In India this is being implemented by a few companies successfully.

### **Participation and Democracy:**

The Quality of Work life department implements programs and practices that encourage a positive and productive work experience at organization. QWL services address the key areas of Work-Life Balance such as Flexible working options, Flextime, Flexi place, compressed work schedules, job-sharing, staff recognition and awards, health and wellness workshops. Change and competition have dramatically increased the work demands in the environments. At the same time, these pressures have impacted the entire Indian organizations workforce. These are some points stressed as essential to improve the QWL in Indian organizations. Let us see how company's carried QWL programs to overcome crisis faced by members of organization. Some of the key area of work life balance is discussed below:

### **Flexible work options:**

Flexible work options respond to significant changes at work and home during the past few decades. Some flexible work options are:

### **Flextime:**

The most requested, easiest to manage and the most affordable FWO is flextime which offers flexibility in arrival, departure and/or lunch times, typically with a designated core-time during which all staff are present. The Flextime in many companies enhances recruitment, reduces stress through the ability to better balance work and personal responsibilities, reduces paid absences and tardiness, reduces turnover, where individuals faces a recurring, unresolvable conflict between work and a personal responsibility. Flextime may offer a solution that enables the individual to solve the problem at hand.

### **Flex place:**

This arrangement allows for a portion of the job to be performed off-site, on a regular, recurring basis. The majority of work time is spent at the office and the off-site work typically is done at home. It may be the most complicated flexible work option to arrange since it generally requires electronic equipment and technological

support. Based on operational needs, a Flex place arrangement is most appropriate for work with clearly defined tasks, measurable work activity, and the individual's presence is not required in the work place. The advantages are can improve the morale, productivity, commitment and retention is possible.

### **Compressed Work schedules:**

Compressed Work schedules have been promoted as a way to extend service hours, reduce shift turnover, or maximize an investment in expensive equipment or high-priced office space. Additionally, these arrangements have supported time off during summer months in order to offer employees more week-end leisure time. More recently, these arrangements have been seen as a way to comply with corporate support for reduced traffic and pollution. A traditional 35-40 hour work week is condensed into fewer than five days of work. This option is more easily applied to non-exempt (weekly paid) staff for whom maximum work hours are identified, but it is not ruled out for monthly paid staff who may work more than 40 hours during the work week.

### **Part - time work:**

Is a regular arrangement for between 17.5 and 28 hours a week. This is different from a temporary work assignment where an employee is expected to have a temporary, non-recurring relationship to the workplace and does not receive paid time off.

### **Job Sharing:**

The time can be split evenly or unevenly depending upon the demands of the job or the needs of the sharing team. The company allows two staff members to share the responsibilities of one full-time position. Each staff member shares a specific proportion of a full-time position. Creative and innovative schedules can be designed to meet the needs of the job sharers and the office. A Job Share arrangement is different from a Part-time position which has a workload that can be managed within 17.5 to 28 hours a week. Working in a shared job also differs from a Part Time arrangement in the following ways:

### **Opportunity for career growth:**

The work should provide career opportunities for development of new abilities and expansion of existing skills on a continuous basis.

### **Balance of work and personal life**

There should be proper balance between work life and personal life of workers. The demands of work such as late hours, frequent travel, and quick transfers are both psychologically and socially very costly and detrimental to QWL.

### **Social relevance of work:**

Work should not be a source of material and psychological satisfaction but a means of social welfare. An organization that has a greater concern for social causes like pollution, consumer protection, national integration, employment, etc., can improve the QWL.

### **Social intergration in work force:**

The worker should be made to feel a sense of identity with the organization and develop a feeling of self-esteem,

## ***Human Resource Management***

Openness, trust, sense of community feeling, scope for upward mobility, equitable treatment are essential for this purpose.

## **Constitutionalization in work organization**

QWL provides constitutional protection to the workers. Management action can be challenged. Constitutional protection is provided to workers on such matters like free speech, equity and due process.

## **Individualism and democracy:**

This means greater authority and responsibility to workers. Meaningful participation in the decision – making process improves the WLB

## **References :**

1. Steven L. Sauter, chief of the Applied Psychology and Ergonomics Branch, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, states
2. American Psychological Association. [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org), July 5, 2007. Robinson BE.
3. The Work Addiction Risk Test: development of a tentative measure of workaholism. *Percept Mot Skills*. 1999 Feb;88(1):199-210
4. Spence JT, Robbins AS. Workaholism: definition, measurement, and preliminary results. *J Pers Assess*. 1992 Feb;58(1):160-78. [www.workaholics-anonymous.org](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org).
5. Thomas Kalliath and Paula Brough, *JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATION* Volume 14, Issue 3, July 2008