

The Balancing Act among Officers of Bangalore Based Companies – An Empirical Study

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Abstract:

Work life balance has become a major issue in this economical and technological era. People are moving ahead with lightening pace to achieve materialistic success but leave their peace of mind behind and end up in stress laden life. Work life and personal life are interconnected and interdependent. Spending more time in office, dealing with clients and the pressures of job can interfere and affect the personal life, sometimes making it impossible to even complete the household chores. On the other hand, personal life can also be demanding if you have a kid or aging parents, financial problems or even problems in the life of a dear relative. It can lead to absenteeism from work, creating stress and lack of concentration at work. Some people draw more life satisfaction from their work than from free time activities

This paper will focus on the WLB among men and women, factors which contributes to WLB, whether the balancing act improves

with experience and the upcoming suggestions to strengthen the balancing act.

Key words: Work life, personal life, balancing act, Bangalore Based Companies

Introduction

In one's corporate life, such situations are encountered where people are compelled to make a choice. Albeit a decision is reached, it is not easy to prioritize responsibilities. And this is what most employees face on a regular basis in day to day life: Work life balance.

Work-life balance is a broad concept including 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".

Work life and personal life are inter-connected and interdependent. Spending more time in office, dealing with clients and the pressures of job can interfere and affect the personal life, sometimes making it impossible to even complete the household chores. On the other hand, personal life can also be demanding if you have a kid or aging parents, financial problems or even problems in the life of a dear relative. It can lead to absenteeism from work, creating stress and lack of concentration at work.

Literature Review

The balancing act is the need of the hour to overcome the stress encountered while trying to balance professional and personal life equally. The various aspects of WLB have been studied by many researchers and have been defined differently.

Intrusion of work into private life of workers has a substantial impact on work-related attitudes (D Scholarios and A Marks, 2004). Work-life boundary variables affect trust in the organization which plays a meditational role in these variables' relationship to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Employees in the United States tend to prefer an integration of work and family realms through permeable boundaries, employees in India more often support a separation between work and family spheres through solid boundaries (Winifred R. Posteraud & Srirupa Prasad, 2005). There exists conflict between high-performance practices and work-life balance policies (Michael White, 2003). Job flexibility is related to improved work-family balance after controlling for paid work hours, unpaid domestic labor hours, gender, marital status, and occupational level (E. Jeffrey Hill et al, 2004). Given the same workload, individuals with perceived job flexibility have more favorable work-family balance. Likewise, employees with perceived job flexibility are able to work longer hours before workload negatively impacts their work-family balance. Implications of these findings are presented. For men, levels of work-family conflict were moderately lower in each successive life-cycle stage. For women, levels were similar in the two early life-cycle stages but were significantly lower in the later life-cycle stage (Christopher Higgins, Linda Duxbury and Catherine Lee, 1994). The prevailing corporate atmosphere poses several new challenges and problems for employees in the form of willful, constant change, wide variety of job responsibilities and uncertainties with increasing pressure from the top hierarchy to increase productivity. These changes in the internal and remote environments disturb the balance between the two halves of life of the employees, i.e., work and home, bringing in dichotomy and confusion (Swamy, 2007). Teleworking is seen as having great potential for improvement in the work-life balance which is a significant factor in ensuring employee loyalty and retention. (Rashmi Joshi, 2008).

Defining Work Life Balance

Many people believe that Work/ life balance means quality life, working fewer hours and achieving a much clearer separation between work and personal life. But most academics suggest that this isn't the fact, most people want. Employees want to have some control over where and when they work. The dividing line between work & free time is not distinct. Some people draw more life satisfaction from their work than from free time activities (Kimberly and Richard, 2004).

Work/Life Balance: A state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and Personal life are equal. (Work-life balance. (2002). *The Word Spy*. Retrieved January 30, 2003, from <http://www.wordspy.com/words/work-lifebalance.asp>).

Work/life balance is most usefully described as absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands. (Edy Greenblatt, 2002)

Working Hours

In India at the managerial level, particularly in smaller Indian companies, a person generally works for 11 hours a day and 6 days a week. (Wikipedia). However, many workers and especially managers will stay later in the office due to additional work load. However, large Indian companies and MNC offices located in India tend to follow a 5-day, 8-9h-hour per day working schedule. The Government of India in some of its offices also follows a 5-day week schedule.

Fig. 1: Average weekly working hours for men and women

Country	Average hours for full-time workers***	Legal maximum†
Austria	44.1	50.0
Belgium	42.7	40.71*
Czech Republic	42.9	48.0
France	41.0	39.68
Germany	42.9	48.0
Italy	40.8	45.2
Netherlands	46.0	48.0
Poland	42.2	43.13
Spain	40.8	41.68
Sweden	42.7	48.0
United Kingdom	42.1	48.0††
EU27	42.1	48.0

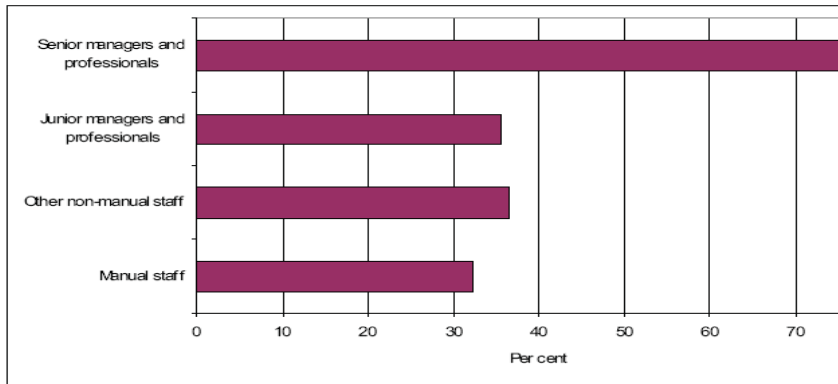
Source: OECD. Legal working hours and real working hours are different. (2008)

Additional Working Hours

Senior level employees face the maximum stress and pressure in the Indian industry. In a recent research conducted by the Assocham (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) on job satisfaction levels, a majority of senior employees in both private and public sectors complained of high tensions, heavy workloads and long working hours (Vijay & Deepa, 2010).

Additional hours of work were common amongst all grades of staff, but managers and professionals were most likely to work them (Work-Life Balance 2000: Results from the Baseline Study, Terence Hogarth, Chris Hasluck and Gaëlle Pierre, Institute for Employment Research with Mark Winterbotham and David Vivian, IFF Research). Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s seminal book (1977), *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*, brought the issue of work/life balance to the forefront of research and organizations.

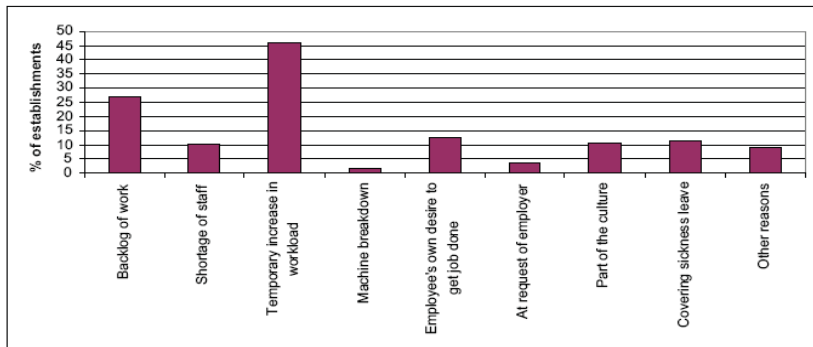
Fig. 2: Additional work allotment as per hierarchy



Note *:percentage of establishments where some staff in the occupational category work additional hours
 Base: All establishments
 Source: WLB 2000: Employer Survey (IER/IFF)

Fig. 3: Reasons for additional work allotment

Reasons for additional hours being worked reported by establishments



Base: All establishments where additional hours worked (establishment weighted base)
 Source: WLB 2000: Employer Survey (IER/IFF)

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to find out “THE BALANCING ACT AMONG OFFICERS OF BANGALORE BASED COMPANIES – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY”.

Objectives

- 1) To study the WLB among men and women
- 2) To study the factors which contribute to WLB
- 3) To study whether the balancing act improves with experience.
- 4) To study the upcoming suggestions to strengthen the balancing act.

Research Methodology

Tools of Data Collection and Analysis

The study employs primary data collected by the executives of the organizations with the help of a structured questionnaire. The respondents were from both public and private sector comprising of manufacturing, IT, Pharmaceutical, FMCG, banking & insurance, defense and telecom sector in Bangalore. The survey was carried out in Bangalore City during January – February 2011. The study employed non-probabilistic sampling. In the sample size of 51, working executives were surveyed from different companies. The analysis of data was carried out using Mini Tab software to reach at a conclusion.

Analysis of Data & Results

Gender distribution

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	29	57
Female	22	43

Fig. 4 : Distribution of gender

Levels of management

Level	Distribution	Percentage
Junior	6	21
Middle	22	76
Senior	1	03
Top		
Total	29	100%

Fig. 4: Levels of Management among men

Level	Distribution	Percentage
Junior	5	23
Middle	17	77
Senior		
Top		
Total	22	100%

Fig. 4a: Levels of Management among women

Commuting

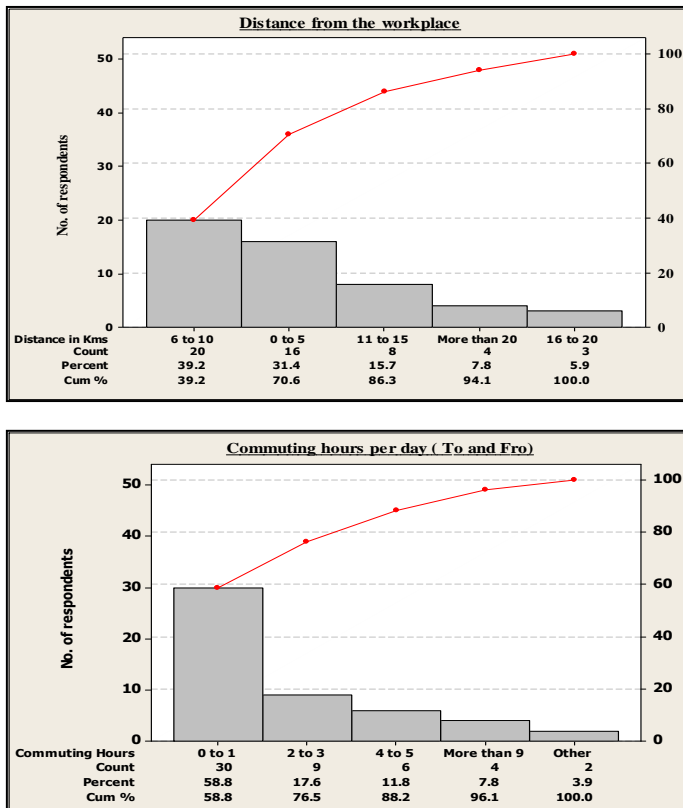


Fig. 5: Commuting distance and hours per day among respondents

39.2 % of the respondents reside within 6 – 10 km from the workplace and only 7.8 % reside beyond 20 km. Majority (58.8 %) spent 0 – 1 hour for travelling to and fro. Hence commuting is not disturbing work life balance as per the survey.

Working hours among respondents

According to labor law, an employee should work nine hours in a day and forty eight hours in a week and no adult worker shall be required or allowed to work in a factory on the first day of the week. The periods of work of an adult worker in a factory shall be so arranged that inclusive of his intervals for rest, they shall not spread over more than ten and a half hours in any day.

According to WLB 2000: Employer Survey (IER/IFF)

Standard working hours – 48 hours/ week

Long working hours – 49 or more/ week

Very long working hours – 60 or more/ week

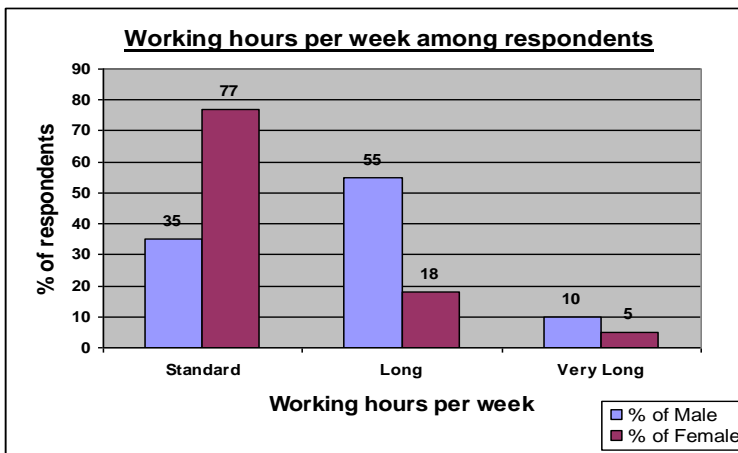


Fig. 6: working hours per week among respondents

Only full time employees are considered for the survey. The extent of very long hours amongst full-time employees varies considerably according to their household situation. Majority of men, whose wife was not working, worked for longer hours. More men worked long and very long hours than women. Around 65% men and 23 % women are dissatisfied with the amount of work they spend at work. The reasons provided by them are:-

Men

- Long working hours
- Meeting/ training after office hours
- Shift work
- Dependent parent care

Women

- Household chores
- Child/ dependent parent care
- Meeting/ training after office hours
- Long working hours

Sleep per day among respondents

An average of 7 - 8 hours per day is necessary for healthy life

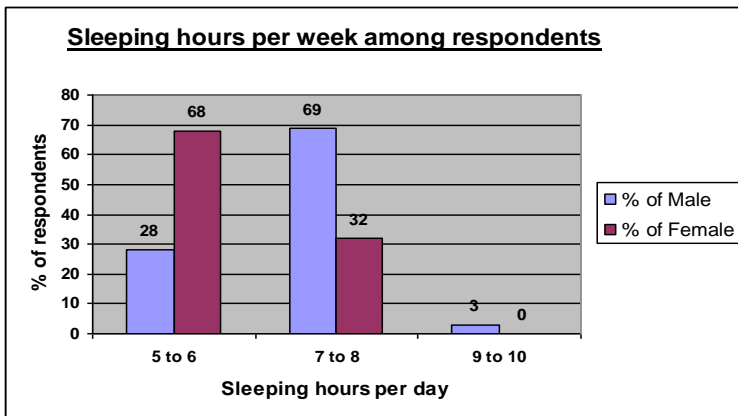


Fig. 7: Sleeping hours per day among respondents

More number of women (68 %) had 5 – 6 hours of sleep per day compared to men (28 %), which is less than the normal hours of 8 hours per day. The reasons contributed were household chores, kids/ dependent parents care and miscellaneous work. 3 % of men even got the privilege to sleep for 9- 10 hours but none of women got that privilege.

Stress related diseases

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	27
No	37	73
Total	51	100

Fig. 8: Stress related diseases among respondents

According to the survey the following stress related diseases were identified:-

- Obesity
- Frequent headache
- Eye irritation
- Constipation
- Backache

Outings per week among respondents

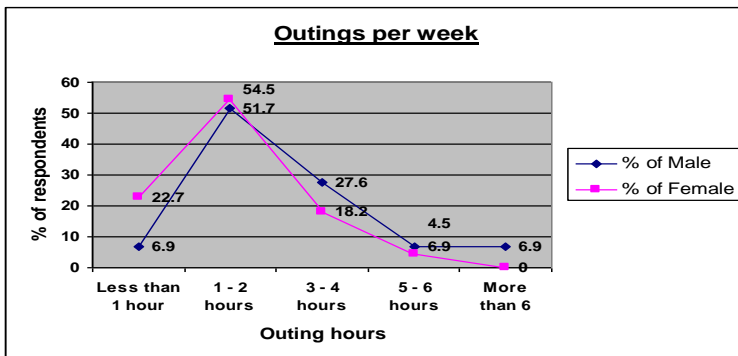


Fig. 9: Time spent on outing per week

More women (22.7%) spent less than 1 hour on outing than men (6.9%). 6.9% men spent more than 6 hours on outing but none of the women spent that much time on outing. 27.6% men spent 3 – 4 hours compared to 18.2% of women on outing. Women spent less time on outing compared to men. The reasons contributed were household chores, kids/ dependent parents etc.

Management of work life

- 1) Food – About 95% of the respondents was aware of healthy food habits and were preferring home made food. Only 5 % of the respondents preferred food from office canteen or organic food.
- 2) Exercise – About 60% of men said that they exercise regularly and about 65% women said that they exercise daily.
- 3) Managing stress – Majority of respondents said that they overcome stress arising from work pressure by entertainment. Many said that they go for meditation or dance/ music. Others stress relieving activities were yoga, walking, playing cricket and keeping pets.
- 4) Company measures to balance work life – Most of the companies provide flexible time and work from home options to balance work life. Other companies go for methods like:
 - Job sharing
 - Holidays
 - Counseling

Many companies particularly PSUs and some IT companies provides medical check up every year.

Factors Contributing To Work Life Balance

The factors that contribute to this issue are:-

- Global competition
- Changing life style
- Increase in dual income earning family.
- Performance and productivity targets
- High ambition to succeed
- Increased pressure from peers.
- Social needs
- Personal expectations

Suggestions to Strengthen the Balancing Act

Many experts have given different solutions to this problem.

- **Time Management** is one of the best solutions which can help to reduce the imbalance between the personal and the work life of the employees. Prioritizing the tasks and planning the activities can help to take out some free time which can be utilized for other purposes.
- Taking some time out for hobbies and leisure activities, spending time with loved ones can help to beat the stress.
- Learn to say "no" if required.
- Sharing the responsibilities will help and don't commit for something which is practically impossible.
- Utilizing the flexible working hours option of the organisations to get some free time.

Work/life programs

A Towers Perrin survey identified more than 100 varieties of work/life programs that fall into the following categories:

- **Time** - Including flexible work arrangements such as flextime, telecommuting, job sharing, and part-time work.
- **Leave** - Paid and unpaid leaves for childbirth, for the care of young or sick children, or for other personal or family matters.
- **Benefits** - Cafeteria-style plans, nontaxed flexible spending accounts, or insurance to pay for the long-term care of oneself, elderly parents, or a spouse.
- **Dependent care** - Resource and referral services to help employees find childcare or elder care, childcare programs that are on-site or nearby, and employee discounts or vouchers to help pay for the cost of care.

- **Counseling and wellness** - Employee seminars about balancing work and family life, peer support groups, and training for supervisors to be more attuned to employee family problems caused by overwork.
- **Personal convenience** - Concierge services, lactation rooms, nap rooms, and food shopping and dinner preparation services.

Conclusion

Work life balance has become a serious issue and is present irrespective of the gender. Men spend more time in office but majority of them take normal sleep of 7 – 8 hours and women in spite of working for standard hours ie. 48 hours/ week could not sleep for normal 8 hours a day. Men whose spouse is not working normally work for longer periods. Men mostly suffer from stress related diseases compared to women. Women comparatively spend less time on outings per week than men. Nowadays people have become conscious of their diet, focusing more on home made diet and exercise.

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