

A Study on the Work Life Balance of It Professionals in India

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Abstract

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical concern among IT professionals in India due to rapid evolving job demands, long working hours and increasing organisational expectations. This study examines the key determinants of WLB and explores its consequences on employee well-being, job satisfaction and organisational outcomes. Through various review of literature, the finding indicates factors such as excessive work load, high role stress, and constant connectivity significantly undermine WLB, while supportive management, flexible work arrangements, positive organisational culture contribute positively to balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Achieving work life balance is increasingly considered important for overall wellbeing, mental health, job satisfaction, and sustained performance at work. Research across sectors and context identifies a variety of organisational, personal, and contextual factors that influence work life balance. The study further reveals that poor WLB leads to higher stress levels, burnout, decreased productivity and increased turnover, whereas a healthy balance enhances employee engagement, overall satisfaction and retention. Organisational Policies like flexible work arrangement -remote work, flexi-time, paid time off and better leave policies helps employees manage professional and personal life. Supportive family or social networks can alleviate pressures at home, enabling better balance. Studies highlight social support as a predictor of work life balance. The research underscores the need for organisations to adopt holistic policies and employee-centric practices to promote sustainable work environments in the Indian IT sector.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Stress, IT Industry

1. Introduction

With changing work culture and multiple roles, societal expectations shift, advances in technology, the rise of remote and hybrid work models etc, professionals have made significant changes. This is when Work life balance comes into picture. In early days, it was believed that we needed to keep our work and personal life apart from each other, that way, there won't be any conflict. Life Balance refers to the ability of individuals to manage and harmonize their Professional responsibilities with personal and family life, while preserving their mental and physical wellbeing. It refers to an individual's capacity to maintain a healthy equilibrium between the demands of work (Career, job, deadlines etc) and life (family, health & Personal life). In the Information Technology (IT) Industry, maintaining work life balance has become particularly challenging. The IT sector is typified by rapid technological change, tight deadlines and expectation of constant connectivity. Research shows that poor work life balance in IT can lead to serious consequences like elevated stress levels, burnout and reduced job satisfaction which leads to high Employee turnover. India is seen to score a low percentage of work life balance when compared to other countries. Indians worked 2195 hours a year on average. On the other hand, employees in Hamburg, Germany work for 1473 hours, which has been witnessed to achieve a place in the top three cities with work life balance.(1) As the IT sector continues to grow and evolve, finding sustainability ways to support work life balance become crucial for employees and employer. This study aims to deepen our understanding of the determinants and consequences of work life balance among IT professionals in India.

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The study also emphasizes the strategies and solutions for improving work life balance among Professionals.

The Work Foundation (2003b)(2), 'Work life balance' study acknowledged that employers most prevalent 'Work life balance' policies were part time work (90%), family/emergency leave (85%), overall unpaid leave (78%). Formal strategies are most likely to be found in organisations in Government and voluntary industry (35%) and less likely to be found in production (14%). Resistance to management is the most prevalent challenge encountered in the implementation of 'Work life balance' strategies. 'Work life balance' strategies assist address the low morale and elevated stress levels that lead to issues with retention as staff feel exhausted at home between job and duties. A study undertaken by the Institute of Employment studies (Kodz et al,2002)(3) recognised workers with increasing access to flexible work provisions, stayed longer with their companies. Kodz et al (2002) describes the work life balance principles: 'There ought to be a balance between the work of an employee and the life outside the work place and therefore this balance should be fit and active.

Indian It Industry

The Information Technology (IT) Industry in India has emerged as one of the most significant pillars of the country's economy for the past few decades. From humble beginnings, it has grown into a global powerhouse – providing services, generating exports, creating millions of jobs, and driving technological innovation and digital transformation across India and beyond. The Indian IT and enabled services Industry now contributes a substantial share of national exports and foreign exchange. The industry employs millions. Alongside exports, IT spending within India has been growing reflecting rising digitization, cloud adoption, software use, and demand for services from Indian companies. Over time, the share of IT services in India's GDP has steadily increased, underscoring IT's role in broad economic development. IT has become a key driver for economic growth, foreign exchange, employment and global competitiveness for India.

The strength and advantage of IT sector is the skilled and cost – effective manpower. India offers a large pool of skilled professionals at comparatively lower cost than other western countries. This labor arbitrage – combined with English language capability – made India a preferred destination for outsourcing, offshoring and global delivery centres. Indian IT firms operate delivery centres domestically and across many countries worldwide, serving clients in North America, Europe and beyond. Moreover, the Industry is not limited to one sector. Indian IT firms offer services across banking & financial services, telecom, retail, manufacturing and many other verticals. Government initiatives such as – digital – infrastructure development, regulatory support for IT/BPO and push towards digitalization have helped build a robust domestic market.

The workforce behind Indian IT sector has been a vital pillar of the industry's growth and global competitiveness. Over time, this work force has expanded, diversified and evolved in skills. The share of the IT -BPM sector in the GDP is 7.4 % in FY2022. In the last decade, the industry has grown many folds in revenue terms and relative share to India's GDP is around 7.3% in FY 2024-25. (4) The IT -BPM sector over all employs 5.4 million people as of March 2023. The manpower base is not traditional software services, many global capability centres and specialized teams add to the diversity – indicating employment in newer roles beyond basic outsourcing.

The Indian IT-BPM industry has the highest employee attrition rate. Several factors contribute to the high attrition rate in the Indian IT sector. These include a lack of career growth opportunity, Work life balance issues, high work load and stress and limited skill development opportunities.

2. Literature review

Below are major themes and synthesized findings from existing research.

In pre-industrial and agrarian societies, work and life were often intertwined. Household, farm, craft - much labour was done by family units, and there was rarely a sharp separation between 'work time' and 'life time'. Some scholars point out that early communal living involved shared labour and subsistence, without rigid work boundaries. *ijbm.org* (5)

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution (18th -19th centuries), work changed drastically: large factories, strict clock-time, long hours (10-16 hours /day common), six-day work weeks, child labour-leading to intense pressure on labourers, and little leisure or personal time.

As a response, various labour movements and social reformers began advocating for shorter working hours, rest days, limits on exploitation. The slogan 'eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest', popularised by reformers like Robert Owen in the early 19th century, became a foundational ideal for humane work standards. After the first world war, the International Labour Organisation adopted the Hours of Work Convention in 1919, setting a standard of eight hours per day and forty eight per week for industry. (4)

The United States enacted several major laws governing work life balance, including the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 which provides 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family and medical reasons.

In mid 20th century societies, as economies industrialised and urban middle class life styles emerged, there was growing emphasis on 'quality of life', leisure, family time -sowing seeds for thinking about balance between work and life outside work.

The actual phrase 'Work life Balance' is said to have emerged around the late 1970s/1980s. Initially the focus was largely on 'Work -family balance', especially as more women entered paid employment while still carrying primary responsibility for domestic work and child care. During the 1990s, the recognition of work life balance's significance emerged as a vital issue for all employees, regardless of gender, parental or marital status. The concept of work life balance has evolved from role conflict between family and work, managing multiple roles to work and life enrichment and integration. *Snezaneknezenic, Tamara Gajic* (6)

During the 21st century, on the arrival of digital communication, internet, smartphones, globalized business operations blurred boundaries between work and life. Work could reach people anytime, anywhere -making work life balance more complex. The global pandemic COVID -19 accelerated remote work and hybrid models: many technology-driven companies allowed employees to work from home, offering flexibility but also intensifying challenges of boundaries, burnout, and 'work creeping into life'.

Definition of work life balance

Nowadays, the concept of Work life balance is not new; because of its importance it has been discussed extensively. It has been conceptualised as an individual's orientation across various life roles and inter roles phenomenon. Different scholars have given different views on how they perceive the concept of work life balance. Some of the important definitions are:

As per Kirchmeyer and Kalliath and Brough, Work life balance is defined as the ability to achieve satisfaction and well-being across different life domains by effectively distributing personal resources like time and energy.

Kofodimos has defined work life balance as 'a satisfying, healthy and productive life that includes work, play and love, that integrates a range of life activities with attention to self and to personal and spiritual development, and that expresses a person's unique wishes, interests and values.

Clark views work life balance as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.

Greenhaus & Allen defined work life balance as 'the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in -and equally satisfied with-their work role and family role'.

Frone defined work life balance as 'low levels of inter role conflict and high levels of inter role facilitation between work and family'.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to understand the determinants and consequences of work life balance among IT Professionals in India.

The study also emphasizes the strategies and solutions for improving work life balance among IT professionals.

Method of the study

The database used in the study include Wikipedia, PubMed, Google scholar, Research gate, web of science etc. To discover publications, the researcher has used search statement like WLB aimed at IT sector in India. Various Publications from 2002 to 2025 were collected for the research using keywords like work life balance, IT professionals, Job satisfaction.

This review finds various factors affecting work life balance in IT employees including organisational policies, technostress, burnout, social support and flexible work option.

For collecting various articles that are relevant to the study, Inclusion/Exclusion criteria and screening was done for selection.

Articles that link to Worklife balance are taken into consideration, particularly those that are written in English.

Articles that are linked to IT Industry which is connected to work life balance are taken into account for the research.

For each Article, essential details: author, year, aims, methodology, sample/participants, key findings were taken into consideration.

Determinants of work life balance

Work life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage work responsibilities alongside personal life, family commitments, and leisure activities. Achieving work life balance is increasingly considered important for overall wellbeing, mental health, job satisfaction, and sustained performance at work.

Research across sectors and context identifies a variety of organisational, personal, and contextual factors that influence work life balance. Below are the key determinants, grouped thematically.

1. Organisational/ Job related factors

- **Work Autonomy & Control:** Studies show that employees who have greater control over when, where, and how they accomplish tasks tend to report better work life balance. Flexible work timing and autonomy over one's schedule help in managing personal commitments. (7)
- **Organisational culture and support:** A supportive organisational culture -including understanding supervisors, supportive HR Policies and an environment that respects personal time -plays a strong role. (8)
- **Workload and job stress:** high workload, excessive job pressures disrupt balance. Over work, and job stress are repeatedly associated with poorer work life balance.
- **Work-family interference:** The conflict between work and family roles, where the demand one domain make it harder to participate in the other, which is a major barrier to work life balance.
- **Organisational initiatives:** Organisational Policies like flexible work arrangement -remote work, flexi-time, paid time off and better leave policies helps employees manage professional and personal life.

2. Personal Factors

- **Self management :** Individuals ability to manage their time prioritize task and managing stress affects work life balance.
- **Personal health and well-being:** Physical and mental health, energy levels, stress management, psychological resilience-all affect one's ability to balance demands.(9)
- **Ability to detach psychologically from work:** The capacity to 'switch off' from work after hours, avoid over commitment and maintain separation between work and personal life supports better work life balance.(10)

3. Social and Contextual Factors

- **Social support-family, community, peers:** Supportive family or social networks can alleviate pressures at home, enabling better balance. Studies highlight social support as a predictor of work life balance.(10)
- **Societal norms and cultural expectations:** In many contexts, social/family expectations (especially for certain demographics like working women) affect how easily one can balance work and life demands.(11)
- **Quality of life and Work life balance dynamics:** The broader quality-of-life conditions -such as living conditions, access to welfare facilities, commute time, social amenities -can influence work life balance.(12)

Consequences of good work life balance

Maintaining a healthy work life balance profound a far reaching consequences -for physical and mental health, personal fulfilment, relationships and long term career satisfaction.

- **Improved Mental and Emotional Well-being:** A fundamental benefit of work life balance is its positive impact on mental health. Employees who manage to strike a harmonious balance between work and personal life often experience reduced stress and anxiety levels. The ability to disconnect from work -related concerns during personal time allows individuals to recharge mentally and emotionally , leading to improve overall well-being.
- **Increased productivity :** Contrary to the belief that longer hours equate to higher productivity, studies have shown that over working can actually decrease efficiency. Employees who maintain a work life balance tend to be more focused and productive during their working hours. They can better manage their time, set clear priorities , and avoid burnout , resulting in higher-quality work output.
- **Job Satisfaction:** Job Satisfaction is a critical factor that influences employee retention and engagement. When employees have time to pursue their personal interests and spend quality time with loved ones, they often report higher levels of job satisfaction. A satisfied worker is more likely to remain loyal to an organisation, reducing turnover and recruitment costs.
- **Improved Physical Health :** Work life balance also has a positive impact on physical health. Individuals who prioritize personal time are more likely to engage in regular exercise , maintain a balance diet and get sufficient sleep. These habits contribute to better overall health, reducing the risk of chronic illnesses and absenteeism from work.
- **Better Work Life Integration:** Achieving work life balance allows employees to integrate their professional and personal lives more seamlessly. This integration enables them to meet family commitments, pursue hobbies, and engage in personal growth activities without compromising their careers. It fosters a sense of fulfilment in both domains, leading to a more holistic and satisfying life.
- **Happier Employees:** Happiness is often a direct result of work life balance. When employees have time to nurture their personal lives and pursue their passions, they tend to be happier and more content. This positive outlook can spill over into the work place, creating a more positive and productive work environment.

Impact of poor work life balance

- **Mental health problems: Stress, anxiety, depression, burnout:** When work overwhelms personal life repeatedly, chronic stress builds up. This can lead to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, depression and eventually burnout. (13)
- **Physical health problems & less productivity:** Employee health is the most important factor influencing productivity loss. (14)
- **Lower overall life satisfaction, reduce well-being:** Poor work life balance can lead to increased stress, fatigue and burnout, negatively impact both life satisfaction and mental well-being.
- **Strained personal relationships and social life:** When work takes up most time/energy, family, friendships and social connections often get neglected . This leads to conflicts, isolation, and weakened support networks.(15)

Strategies by the organisation for achieving work life balance

- Provision for Flexible Work Arrangement: Organisations can provide flexible hours, remote work and autonomy and can also adopt supportive Policies like welfare, leave and recognition to accommodate employee's personal lives.
- Organisational Culture: Build a company culture that protects the boundary between 'Duty Time' and 'Personal Time'.
- Encourage regular Breaks: Organisation can discourage working during lunch break and also long hours without breaks, especially if jobs involve long periods of sitting.
- Make work enjoyable: Work is a major part of daily life, so making the work place enjoyable boosts morale and lower stress. Encourage employee feedback on improvements, facilitate team connections and organise social and well-being events.
- Provide Physical Health and Fitness facilities: provide on-site Gym or Yoga sessions. Schedule group exercise or 'walk breaks'.
- Conduct Education & Awareness programs: Organisation can arrange workshops on diet, exercise, and stress relieving programs. Training on healthy habits, wellness news letter or information sessions.

Strategies by the employees for achieving work life balance

- Set Boundaries: Establish clear boundaries between work and personal time. Take official calls only during office hours.
- Time Management: Manage time effectively to maximise productivity during working hours.
- Flexible Work arrangement: Flexible work arrangement helps to maintain work life balance
- Delegate Tasks to subordinates: Delegation of work can lighten work load and can finish the work on time without stress.
- Prioritize self-care: Utilise fitness facilities, mental health services and stress management work shop provided by the organisation.

Findings

The review of Articles has identified several key themes, factors like Organisational culture, personal and social factors. Also consequences of good work life balance and impact of poor work life balance has also been identified.

- Flexible work arrangement: The paper intends to investigate the key factors that influence Work life balance. The findings shows that flexible work arrangement helps to maintain work life balance and employees tend to stay in the organisation. Hybrid and remote work option are the most preferred forms of flexibility.
- Organisational Policies: The study also found that Employeefriendly Policies, supportive leadership, open communication and respect personal time were found to be crucial factors in maximizing the benefits of flexibility.

- **Influence on Employee Retention:** This paper also found that lack of work life balance is also a cause for employee turnover.
- **Poor work life balance affects physical and mental well-being:** Found that poor work life balance causes stress, anxiety, and burnouts.

Recommendations

- **Implement Flexible working Arrangements:** Introduce flexible working hours, compressed workweeks, and hybrid /remote options. Also allow employees to adjust schedules to accommodate family or personal needs.
- **Establish clear Boundaries:** Encourage employees not to work beyond designated hours. Limit after hours email, calls and digital connectivity.
- **Manage workload and set realistic targets:** Ensure unrealistic deadlines and avoid excessive overtime.
- **Strengthen supportive organisational culture:** Recognize employees for results and not for just long hours. Train Managers to be empathetic and supportive.
- **Provide Employee Wellness Programs:** Provide stress management workshops.
- **Provide Training on Time Management:** Train employees to develop skills to prioritize tasks, avoid overload, and manage time effectively.
- **Support working parents and caregivers:** Provide child care support, parental leave and flexible return to work policies. Offer resources for balancing caregiving and work responsibilities.
- **Encourage use of leave and breaks:** Motivate employees to use vacation days, breaks and personal time off. Discourage the culture of `presenteeism` (working even when sick).
- **Monitor and evaluate work life balance Policies:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of work life balance programs. Adjust policies based on employee feedback and organisational goals.

Limitations of the study

The researcher relies on data collected by others, so accuracy, reliability and validity cannot be fully verified.

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