Work Life Balance of Women Employees of India

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has become a topic of study for both researchers and business houses in view of the present-dayorganisational changes associated with it. However, not much academic attempt has been made to provide an all-inclusive picture of work-life balance benefits and programmes (WLBPs) offered by various organisations in India. The present paper has made is an to understand the current status of WLBPs in Indian organisations and to identify its future prospects. The paper also discusses the challenges for effectiveimplementation of such policies, which can help HR managers to be careful before introducing WLBPs in the organisations. With time, the scope and coverage of such initiatives have broadened and have become more individual growth and family well-being oriented. However, these policies and practices are more prominent in new economy organisations such as software and services organisations and their absence are seen in Government organisations. Moreover, the range of WLBPs varies across organisations and there is still a long way to go when WLBPs will become strategic HR initiatives in most organisations.

Keywords: Stress Management, Work-Family Balance, WLBPs, Work-Life Balance, Work Place Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

These days work-life balance has become a progressivelypenetrating issue for bothemployers andemployees. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives. In response to these issues the employers have introduced innovative practices that allow employees to find greater work-life balance. Increasing turnover rates and increasing demand for work-life balance have forced organisations to look beyond the ordinary HR interventions. As a result, initiatives such as flexible working hours, alternative work

arrangements, leave policies and benefits in lieu of family care responsibilities and employee assistance programmes have become a significant part of most of the company benefit programmes and compensation packages. Such policies, practices and benefit programmes are generally referred as family-friendly policies(FFPs) or work-life benefits and practices (WLBPs) in literature. The significance and implications of such HR policies are many. Research findings suggest that WLBPs not only help employees better manage their work and family roles, but also affect employee attitude and behaviours such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and intention to quit. Provision of WLBPs also contributes to organisationalperformance and effectiveness.However,employers' concern for employees'personallives is not a new phenomenon. Employers have been providing various welfare measures such as good working conditions, health, safety, and security provisions to employees since industrialization. These welfare practices became norms of most factories and organisations either as a result of employers'sensible concern for employees and their families or unions' conscious bargain for employee welfare. In true sense, World War II brought a considerable interest in employee work-family issues worldwide because of the increase of women employees in defence industries which led the federal government to provide facilities such as child care facilities. Post war era saw the increase of government mandated provisions being offered to employees such as health and life insurance, social security like pension plans, and disabilityprotection in forms of worker's compensation for accidents, and diseases institutionalizing the notion that employers had at least some obligations to provide security to employee's families. In due course of time employers' family friendliness has gone beyond providing merewelfare provisions.

1.1 What is work–life balance?

Work–life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where, and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

1.2 Importance of Work Life Balance to women

Today's career women are continually challenged by the demands of full-time work and when the day is done at the office, they carry more of the responsibilities and commitments at home. In a survey conducted in Osmania University, Hyderabad it is discovered that the majority ofwomen are working 40-45 hours per week and 53% of the respondents report that they are struggling to achieve work/life balance. Women report that their lives are a

juggling act that includes multiple responsibilities at work, heavy meeting schedules, business trips, on top of managing the daily routine responsibilities of life and home. "Successfully achieving work/life balance will ultimately create a more satisfied workforce that contributes to productivity and success in the workplace."

1.3 What does it mean in practice?

It would generally mean more choice about the time and location of work. The most common examples are flexi-time and part-time working for the timing of work, and work from home for the location of work. The move towards flexible working is not only a practical change, but is also a significant cultural shift. It involves trusting staff and measuring outputs and achievements, rather than process.

1.3.1 Flexible working:

Offer a range of flexible working and part-time working arrangements such as extended lunch breaks to enable care of elderly relatives, variable hours to enable staff to complete school pick-up, and a gradual change in hours to facilitate the return to full-time working for parents of young children.

1.3.2 Maternity and childcare:

The organisations canrecruit a dedicated childcare and work–life balance adviser to provide specialist guidance to staff and students, to help them find appropriate childcare solutions or working practices to suit their individual family circumstances. Create a support group to link women planning maternity leave with those who have recently returned from maternity. Allow maternity leaves with research grants to place them in abeyance while the school employs contract research staff (CRS) from the grant as temporary teaching fellows. Re-employ the CRS once the grant is resumed on the staff member's return. Extend contracts for fixed-term research staff to cover maternity leave and enable the individual to return and complete the outstanding months on the original contract. Ensure lighter teaching and administrative loads for women returning from maternity leave to enable them to achieve a work–life balance and re-establish their research base. Develop a childcare package that includes after-school and summer holiday provision, a voucher scheme and a salary sacrifice scheme, and a register of child minders. Implement a maternity leave cover scheme giving schools funding to find replacement cover.Give all staff with caring responsibilities the opportunity to apply for up to two years' unpaid leave under a career break policy, in addition to maternity and paternity leave entitlements.

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN INDIA
2.1 Current Status of WLB in India

As a judicious response to the major changes that have taken place in work and family spheres, Intel India is committed to provide tools and work environment solutions to reduce work and privatelife challenges, maximizing employee contributions and enhancing Intel's—Great Place to Workvalue. Apart from providing five day working and flexible working hours, it also provides certain benefits for employees and their families. Such benefits include;

i. Hospitalization Insurance Policy, which covers reimbursement of hospital expenses, incurred due to illness/injury where all employees and their nominated dependants (spouse, children, parents, or in-laws) are covered under a floater policy of Rs. 500,000 per annum. Intel pays 100 percent of the premium for employees and 80 percent of the premium for dependents.

ii. Under Business Traveler Medical Plan, Intel provides medical coverage to full-time and part-time Indian employees, at no cost, while they travel on business outside of India for a period of up to 90 days.

iii. Group Term Life Insurance ensures payment of a lump sum to the employee's legal heir in the event of the insured employee's death and Intel pays the whole 100% of the premium.

iv. Intel India's Hospitalization Insurance covers maternity insurance for employees and their spouse from day one. In the case of pregnancy, Intel India allows each female employee a paid maternity leave of 84 days.

v. Under Annual Leave Time employees in their first two years with Intel, receive15 working days of leave per calendar year. After two years with Intel, employees receive 20 days of leave per calendar year excluding 12 paid public or festival holidays in a calendar year. Other programs are claimed to be global and they are specifically tailored according to the needs of a specific country, and are based upon the market needs and statutory requirements of each location. The range of options includes flexible work schedules, compressed workweeks and alternate work schedules, telecommuting, home office, part-time employment, childcare assistance, resource and referral services and health and wellness benefits etc.

To best address the unique childcare needs of their employees, Intel takes a site-based approach to childcare. For example, in Israel, Intel has partnered with the community to

support childcare canters located near Intel facilities providing services that match the needs of its employees. In Ireland, Intel has implemented an on-site resource and referral service to help employees locate childcare. In the United States Intel offers resource and referral services, a pretax dependent care spending account and discounts to national childcare chains.

IBM India offers its employees options such as flexible workweek schedules, working from home, part time employment, family counselling, and leave of absence programmes under WLBPs. IBM's policy manual says that the organisation is serious about helping employees achieve career balance. Other provisions include study reimbursements, global opportunities, recreational activities, clubs and helping employees deal with life events, from getting married to taking a career break. Work/Life balance is a strategic initiative that helps IBM to attract, motivate and retain the very best talent in the technology industry.

The TATA Group is one of India's oldest, largest and most respected business conglomerates. Generally known as the most people-focused company, TATA scores high on almost all the welfare parameters. Employees of different strata work in TATA and hence, the initiatives are tailored towards their unique needs and requirements. For example, since a larger proportion of workforce in manufacturing plants of TATA is illiterate and belongs to the lower strata of society, the company has introduced adult education programmes and education about family planning as a part of welfare programme for them. Crèche facility is provided where the percentage of female employees is more than 20. TATA group of companies has extended the domain of welfare practices to outside theworkplace by involving their employees in social responsibilities like community development programs. TataConsultancy Services (TCS) is an emerging new economy organization under Tata group which has a pool of educated executive class employees. TCS provides the options to its employees to work flexi time with certain mandatory hours of work and five-day working provisions. It conducts regular seminars on nutrition, better living, and stress management. Realizing the impact of long working hours, extensive travel and desk-bound jobs that skew the delicate work-life balance of many a TCSers, the company has encouraged the formation of groups with similar interests to come together to conduct various activities like book reading. Maitree'is an initiative

for the spouses of employees and it has helped in bringing together the families of the employees.

Zensar Technologies provides child care arrangements such as crèche facility to its employees. It arranges—Pizza and Coke‖ an informal meeting where associates (they refer employees as-associates‖) can meet their seniors and discuss anything and everything. It has a facility called ―Madat Online‖ a 24/7 service which is available for employees to take care of some of their personal day-to-day activities (e.g. dropping cheques, drawing cash, pay telephone bills and school fees of employees' children). It provides information services such as information regarding housing/education facilities for children. It organises stress management programmes, arranges social events such as family day and fun days at work regularly. In addition to the development of public policies supporting responsibilities outside of paid employment, organisations have increasingly been developing formal policies that attempt to facilitate the work/life nexus. Work/life balance strategies enhance the autonomy of workers in coordinating and integrating the work and non-work aspects of their lives.

Three broad types of work/life strategies have been created to help employees balance their work and non-work lives: flexible work options, specialized leave policies and dependent-care benefits. These include a range of policies and practices such as, Compressed work week, Flexitime, Job sharing, home telecommuting, Work-at-home programs, Part-time work, shorter work days for parents, Bereavement leave, Paid maternity leave, Paid leave to care for sick family members, Paternity leave, On site/near site company childcare, Company referral system for childcare, Program for emergency care of ill dependents, Childcare programs during school vacation, Re-entry scheme, Phased retirement, Sabbatical leave, Professional counselling, Life skill programs, Subsidized exercise for fitness centre, Relocation assistance etc

3. WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

3.1 Key Strengths of Indian Women as Managers
- Ability to network with colleagues
- Ability to perceive and understand situations
- Strong sense of dedication, loyalty and commitment to their organizations
- Ability to multitask
- Collaborative work style—solicit input from others, with respect for ideas
- Crisis management skills
- Willingness to share information (interactive leadership style)

• Sensitivity in relationships (e.g., compassionate, empathetic, understanding)
• Behaving in a gender-neutral manner.

3.2 Work-Life Balance (WLB) issues of Women Entrepreneurs

After getting over many inherent obstacles related to the deeply planted traditional mindset and strictprotocols, nowadays it is found that Indian women are engaged in different types of traditional (e.g., garment-making, beauty care, fashion design) as well as non-traditional (e.g. foundingfinancial institutions, educational institutions, entertainment companies) entrepreneurial activities. In addition to their tough entrepreneurial commitments, many of these women must also perform several roles in theirfamilies. These roles include being a spouse, caretaker, and a parent; managing daily household chores; and providing services to the community and society. Women also must take care of their own well being and other personal activities, which are often neglected because of role overload as well as time limitations. All these situations lead to the absence of WLB and manifestation of many WLB issues.

3.3. Recommended HR management practices to create a "Women-Friendly" Organization

 i. Senior management commitment to gender issues.
ii. Career development programs for women.
iii. Exposure of women to top management.
iv. Leadership development programs for women.
v. Job rotation for women.
vi. Recruitment of women at senior-level positions.
vii. Regular survey of women to assess job satisfaction.
viii. Mentoring programs for women.
ix. Child care facilities at work.

4.   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS

 As cultural roles change and Indian society has more broadly started supportingIndian women in managerial positions, organizations are required to be more open and make the required modifications in their offices. From the Indian research study,"Women in Management in the New Economic Environment: the Case of India", the following are recommendations for Indian organizations to promote a supportive workplace for women.

 i. Develop policies that create a women-friendly workplace environment.
ii. Establish training programs for women, such as mentorships, career guidance and leadership
development.
iii. Promote awareness initiatives that highlight the value of women managers.
iv. Elicit input from women employees regarding policies, promotion, and performance review
processes.

v. Make accommodations for women in areas such as need-based postings. That is, as done in

civil services, have a policy to   post both spouses to the same district or state.

vi. Have a true commitment to hire and promote women and include women in the annual business strategy.

5. CONCLUSION

Work/life balance programmes have the possibility to greatly enhance employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times. In the present global market, as companies aim to reduce costs, it falls to the human resource professional to understand the critical issues of work/life balance and advocate work/life programs.

Classify the working women based on age (25-35, 35-45 and above) the organization concentrate on 25-35 age group because in that age women's have more responsibilities in home as well as in office.

Work life balance programmes create win – win situation for employees as well as employer.

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