

## **WLB: PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN WORKING IN IT SECTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women today are engaged in various sectors of the industry with a large majority serving in the services sector particularly the IT sector. Maintaining Work Life Balance (WLB) has become inevitable for women employees since the women are sharing the earning responsibility for the betterment of their family. The present study tries to identify the perception of women employees towards benefits and challenges of WLB. To find out present practices followed by women employees for WLB. To study the work-life balance problems of working women across their demographic characteristics such as age group, number of children. Descriptive research design was used in the present study and survey method had been employed to collect data from women employees of IT companies located in NCR. A sample of 104 female employees was taken and analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. In order to find the effect of number of children on the problems faced by working women, ANOVA was applied along with Post-hoc analysis. It was found that the number of children had significant impact on lack of communication with family.*

**Keywords: IT Sector, Work Life Balance, Working Women**

### **I INTRODUCTION**

Work Life Balance of Women employees has become an important subject since the women are sharing the earning responsibility for the betterment of their family. Women are getting into jobs and they continue to work even after marriage. A married woman has more responsibility than a man in taking care of young children and family besides her career. Working women efficiently overcome difficult situations by their commitment and perseverance. The participation of women in income generation activities lends them to satisfy their home needs to a greater extent (Sudha and Karthikeyan, 2014)<sup>[1]</sup>.

For working women balancing a challenging career with household responsibilities is a complex task. Working women have to maintain a balance between family, career, health and society. In the current scenario it is very important since more and more women are choosing work outside their homes.

Women in India have struggled to establish an identity and create a space for themselves in their workplace. Women are very stressed by life which seems to keep speeding up on them. They work longer hours and take less holidays. Like a kaleidoscope that produces changing patterns when the tube is rotated and its glass chips

fall into new arrangements women shift the pattern of their careers by rotating different aspects of their lives to arrange their roles and relationships in new ways.

Women today are engaged in various sectors with a large majority serving in the services industry particularly the IT sector. With changing work schedules a larger part of the IT sector is moving from a standard eight-hour a day regime to operating twenty-four hours a day for seven days of the week (Bharat, 2008)<sup>[2]</sup>. Many employees need to work on Saturdays and Sundays too. While some employees work in the standard time some others need to be available for work that normally starts early in the evening and continues well through the night. Increasing workloads have pressurised employees to demonstrate their commitment to work in more obvious ways (Ishaya & Ayman, 2008)<sup>[3]</sup>. Consequently, a larger part of them have tended to be present at their work place for longer periods of time, thereby reducing the time for which they are available at home.

## II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vloeberghs (2002)<sup>[4]</sup> adapted a conceptual and normative framework that included the perspectives of all the members involved. Consequently, there was a need for a practical instrument to measure the present state and after ward steer the situation in the desired direction. The author described the development process of the Family & Business Audit (FBA), within the Flemish context. The main goal was to bring about a win-win situation in which both employees and their families and the companies benefit from a better combination of family life and business life. The way in which the audit had been set up was itself a concrete expression of the stakeholder model, which underlines a continuous co-operation of the different members and partners: the employer, the employees and the government. Drew and Murtagh (2005)<sup>[5]</sup> examined the experience of, and attitudes towards, work/life balance (WLB) by female and male senior managers in a major Irish organisation for which WLB is now a strategic corporate objective. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an electronic questionnaire survey designed to obtain the views of female and male managers on strategies that would contribute to a better gender balance, promote diversity and raise leadership capacity in the organisation. The greatest obstacle to achieving WLB was seen as the “long hours” culture in which availing oneself of flexible options was incompatible with holding a senior management post. Women wanted to avail themselves of more flexible arrangements for family/quality of life reasons. Woodward (2007)<sup>[6]</sup> studied women managers’ coping strategies for reconciling work with their other roles and responsibilities is to provide a complementary perspective. Semi-structured extended interviews were carried out with 16 women managers of academic or “support” departments in eight UK post-1992 universities. These women reported high workloads, requiring long working hours, which consumed time and energy otherwise available for other relationships and commitments and their own leisure. Various strategies were adopted to manage the situation, including establishing rigid boundaries between work and non-work, and shifting these boundaries in favour of work when necessary. Deery (2008)<sup>[7]</sup> examine the literature relating to retention of good employees and the role that work-life balance (WLB) issues have in an employee’s decision to stay or leave an organisation. The paper provides an overview of the key employee turnover literature within the hospitality and tourism industry for

those academics researching in this area, with specific attention given to the role of WLB issues in the turnover decision-making process. The key findings that emerged from the literature review focused on job attitudes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment, personal attributes such as positive and negative affectivity, the role of WLB in employee turnover and, finally, the strategies provided to alleviate high turnover rates. Walker et al. (2008)<sup>[8]</sup> explored self-employment through home-based business ownership as a potential solution to the inter-role conflict experienced by women attempting to balance dual work and family roles. Home-based businesses were surveyed in Western Australia as part of a larger national study. Data were collected on operator and business characteristics, and specific home-based business issues. The analysis revealed that the attraction of home-based business ownership is driven predominantly by the flexibility afforded to lifestyle and the ability to balance work and family. While these advantages were more salient for women than for men, gender per se was not a determining factor in why operators started a home-based business. The more significant determining factor was the issue of dependants. Baral and Bhargava (2010)<sup>[9]</sup> examined the role of work-family enrichment in the relationships between organizational interventions for work-life balance and job outcomes. Data were collected from 216 managerial employees through a structured questionnaire from four organizations in India representing manufacturing and information technology (IT) sectors. Analysis was done using multiple regressions. Job characteristics were positively related to all the measures of job outcomes. Supervisor support and work-family culture were positively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment. No significant association was found between work-life benefits and policies (WLBPs) and any of the job outcome measures. Job characteristics and supervisor support were positively related to work-to-family enrichment. Work-to-family enrichment mediated the relationships between job characteristics and all job outcomes and between supervisor support and affective commitment. Lewis and Humbert (2010)<sup>[10]</sup> examine the impact of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) and particularly reduced hours working arrangements on a Dual Agenda of gender equity and workplace effectiveness, in a case study organization employing a relatively high proportion of women scientists. In-depth interviews based on the initial stages of collaborative interactive action research (CIAR) were used within a case-study approach. The main form of FWA used in the organization, four days a week, is double edged and complex in its effects. It supports mothers, but at a cost because of gendered assumptions. Despite a commitment to flexibility and “work-life balance”, the gendered construction of the ideal worker and ideas of competence conflated with hegemonic masculinity, remain powerful. Tomlinson and Durbin (2010)<sup>[11]</sup> explored the employment trajectories, work-life balance, aspirations, and career mobility of women working as part-time managers. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 female part-time managers and four of their line managers in public and private-sector organizations. Interviews explored women’s career trajectories before and after the transition to part-time work and focused on career mobility, aspirations and work-life balance. It was found that the majority were career focused, worked intensively and felt frustrated with their lack of mobility and career progression while working part-time. The majority worked in excess of their contracted hours and did not experience an appropriate reallocation of work when they reduced hours. Makela et al. (2011)<sup>[12]</sup> analysed female expatriates’ work-life conflicts and enrichments which take place during the international assignment. A total of 20

interviews were carried out with female expatriates. The findings indicated that females have experiences of conflicts but also enrichment during international assignments. Both aspects – the effect of the personal life on the working life and vice versa – are shown to be important for females. Life and career stages appear to be integral to these experiences. This study utilized four metaphors – airport, stage, seesaw, and harbor – as main headings to represent female expatriates' experiences in balancing work and their personal lives. Murphy and Doherty (2011)<sup>[13]</sup> explore the experience of work-life balance amongst senior managers, with particular emphasis on the cause of imbalances. A single case study approach was taken. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all eight members of senior management in Ireland and with five members of senior management based in five sites across Europe. The overall findings of this study pointed towards the effect the economy has on the promotion and adoption of work-life balance initiatives. The findings also show that it is not possible to measure work-life balance in an absolute way, because personal circumstances influence the way this is perceived. Rehman and Roomi (2012)<sup>[14]</sup> explore different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment. Based on the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA), this study explores different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment. The results showed that among other motivational drivers to start their own businesses, achieving work-life balance is one of the most significant ones. Their own businesses give them flexibility, control and freedom to juggle with their family and social responsibilities. Lack of sufficient time, gender bias, social and cultural norms as well as family responsibilities are the most significant challenges women face to achieve balance in a patriarchal Islamic society. Forson (2013)<sup>[15]</sup> explored the work-life balance experiences of black migrant women entrepreneurs, examining the relationship between macro, meso and micro levels of business activity. Qualitative methods are used and the paper draws on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 29 black women business owners in the legal and black hairdressing sectors in London. The analysis revealed that ability of the women in the study to manage their work-life balance was shaped by power relations and social interactions between and within cultural, structural and agentic dimensions of small business ownership. Sudha and Karthikeyan (2014)<sup>[1]</sup> presented the overview of the various challenges and issues faced by Women employees to achieve WLB. Most of the women are coming forward to work in order to support their family. The biggest challenge for women is how to balance the demands of family and career. The literature identifies the various aspects such as career advancement, Work Stress, Career aspiration, Work Family Conflict and Family Work Conflict, Child care in context with Work Life Balance (WLB) and its practices. Uppalury and Racherla (2014)<sup>[16]</sup> studied the relationship between structure and agency of Indian women executives in the area of work-life balance in a developing and globalized context. It examines social production in a collectivist culture. The approach is qualitative and interpretative. Semi-structured interviews of 105 senior women executives from major metropolitan cities in India. The agency of women executives in India is influenced by cultural meta-narratives of marriage and motherhood. They experience conflict in the home front and less at the workplace. Agarwal and Lenka (2015)<sup>[17]</sup> reviewed and explained the work-life balance of women entrepreneurs. Through the secondary data, selected papers had been analysed to prepare a conceptual framework depicting the work-life balance of

women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship has emerged as a global concept and contributed for economic development of the country. It utilizes competencies of entrepreneurs for success of their enterprises. Working women executives suffers the problem of work-life balance. Developing family responsibilities as well as their potential roles, generate the issue of role conflict. In order to overcome role conflict, they need to balance between work and personal lifestyle.

### III OBJECTIVES

- To find out present practices followed by women employees in IT sector for WLB.
- To study the perception of women employees in IT sector towards benefits and challenges of WLB.
- To study the work-life balance problems of women working in IT sector.

### IV METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was used in the present study and survey method had been employed whereby structured questionnaires were distributed to women employees in IT companies located in NCR. The respondents were asked to provide responses to items on a five-point Likert scale to measure the strength of their opinion from 1 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 'Strongly Agree'. The sample for the study comprised 104 women employees who were selected randomly. The data was analysed using mean, standard deviation, ANOVA and Post-hoc (LSD) with the help of SPSS ver. 23.

### V DATA ANALYSIS

**Table 1 :Demographic profile of respondents**

Demographic Factors	Category	%
Age	18-25	37.5
	25-35	41.3
	35-45	18.3
	45-55	1.9
	55 or above	1.0
Marital Status	Unmarried	17.3
	Married	64.4
	Divorced	11.5
	Widow	6.7
Having children	No	25
	Yes	75
Family Structure	Individual	14.4
	Joint	44.2
	Nuclear	10.6
	Partial joint	18.3
	Partial nuclear	12.5

Table 1 shows that majority of the women employees were of 25-35 years' age group with 41.3 % belonging to this category. Most of the women that is 64.4% were married and 75 % had children. Majority of the women lived in joint families that is 44.2%.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>PRESENT PRACTICES FOLLOWED BY WOMEN EMPLOYEES FOR WLB</b>		
1. Is time table management followed by female employee?	3.587	.8315
2. Is family support helpful to female employee?	3.721	.7939
3. Is the technology helpful for female employee?	3.721	.8753
4. Is support from relatives important for female employee?	3.683	1.0817
5. Friends support to female employees is helpful.	3.952	1.0555
6. Is friendly environment in company helpful for female employee?	3.760	.9084
7. Is flexible working hours followed by female employee?	3.750	.9528
8. Is high standard welfare practice followed by working female employee?	3.596	.8979
<b>PERCEPTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES TOWARDS BENEFITS</b>		
9. Are female employees able to balance work and life to achieve high position in company?	3.635	.8251
10. Are you able to make proper balance between work and family life?	3.625	.7398
11. If work life balance is maintained by female employee career progresses.	3.606	.7934
12. If female employee balances work and life then they have better chances of being promoted and building strong financial condition for her family.	3.875	.8324
13. If female employee balances between work and life then she maintains competitive edge.	3.654	.7977
<b>PERCEPTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES TOWARDS CHALLENGES</b>		
14. Family problem cause hindrance in working of female employee.	3.856	.8175
15. Lack of communication problem with family is a problem among working females.	3.817	.8676
16. Social problem is a challenge for female employee.	3.510	.9347
17. Security of female employee in night shift is a challenge for female employee.	3.885	.8847
18. Child care and elder care pose challenges for female employee.	3.606	.9391

From table 2 it was found that majority of the women employees agreed that factors like working hours, work involvement and family responsibilities, affect working women's work-life balance. It was found that

maintaining a work-life balance assists female employees in career progression and achievement of high position in the company. Various challenges are faced by working women employees which include family problems, lack of communication, child care and elder care besides other social problems.

Several practices followed by women employees help them in maintaining work-life balance. These include time table management, use of technology, flexible working hours, support from family and friends.

**Table 3 ANOVA for problems faced by working women and number of children they have**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Family problem cause hindrance in working of female employee.	Between Groups	4.491	3	1.497	2.327	.079
	Within Groups	64.345	100	.643		
	Total	68.837	103			
Lack of communication problem with family is a problem among working females.	Between Groups	6.580	3	2.193	3.092	.030
	Within Groups	70.949	100	.709		
	Total	77.529	103			
Social problem is a challenge for female employee.	Between Groups	2.786	3	.929	1.065	.368
	Within Groups	87.204	100	.872		
	Total	89.990	103			
Security of female employee in night shift is a challenge for female employee.	Between Groups	.647	3	.216	.270	.847
	Within Groups	79.968	100	.800		
	Total	80.615	103			
Child care and elder care pose challenges for female employee.	Between Groups	.212	3	.071	.078	.972
	Within Groups	90.625	100	.906		
	Total	90.837	103			

**Table 4: Mean Score**

Number of children	Mean
No children	4.040
1 child	4.067
2 children	3.553
3 or more	3.545

ANOVA was applied between problems faced by working women and number of children they have with problems faced by working women taken as dependent variables and number of children was taken as independent variable. Results of ANOVA indicate that lack of communication with family is a significant

problem among working females in the IT sector. For other factors no significant relationship was observed. Results of ANOVA are shown in Table-3 and the mean scores of the two factors are shown in Table-4.

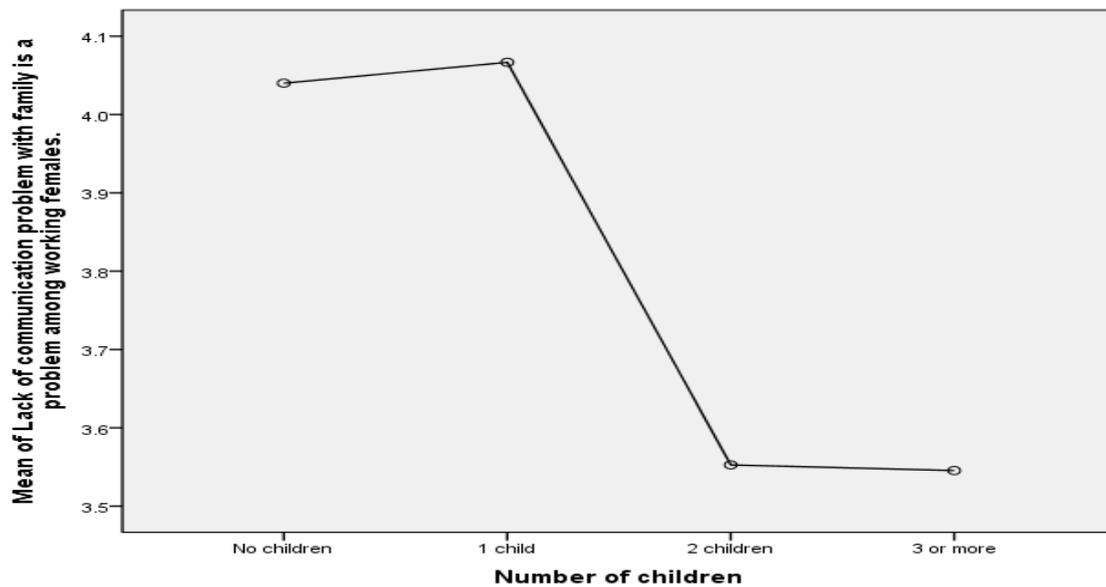
**Table 5: Multiple Comparisons**

LSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Number of children's.	(J) Number of children's.	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Lack of communication problem with family is a problem among working females.	No children	1 child	-.0267	.907
		2 children	.4874*	.027
		3 or more	.4945	.108
	1child	No children	.0267	.907
		2 children	.5140*	.014
		3 or more	.5212	.082
	2 children	No children	-.4874*	.027
		1 child	-.5140*	.014
		3 or more	.0072	.980
	3 or more	No children	-.4945	.108
		1 child	-.5212	.082
		2 children	-.0072	.980

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Further Post -hoc analysis using LSD (Least Significant Difference) was conducted with its results in table 5. It revealed that women employees with 1 child have significantly higher levels of communications problems compared to others as seen in fig. 1. This may be because women with more children can depend on their elder children to communicate and take care of the younger ones.



**Fig. 1 Difference among various groups regarding lack of communication**

## VI CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to study the work-life balance among working females in IT sector. Several aspects of the study included the various factors affecting the women's work-life balance, the benefits and challenges of having work-life balance and also the impact of various practices followed to maintain work-life balance. Mean values for the factors affecting women WLB indicated that the working hours and income had the highest effect. The most significant benefit of WLB was the ability to provide financial support to the family. Regarding the problems faced it can be said that family problems, lack of communication and security issues were considered to be the major problems. ANOVA between problems faced by working women and number of children they have revealed that lack of communication with the family is the most significant problem among working females. Working females in the IT sector have long working hours so they get less time with their children and family. The need to balance the priorities and find a middle path where neither family nor work is neglected.

## VII MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of present study indicate that several practices are followed by working females in the IT sector in order to maintain work-life balance. The most prominent among these was friends support. Hence IT companies should focus on providing peer support system and encourage a friendly environment. There are several benefits of WLB which include developing a competitive edge and having a better chance of being promoted. Lastly, it was seen that lack of communication had a significant relationship with the number of children which shows that working females need to think on this dimension in order to have a better work-life balance.

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