A Study on Work Life Balance of Women Working in IT Sectors of Mumbai City.

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ABSTRACT: *Indian economy witnessed a spurt of service sector job opportunity after the opening up of economy in last decade of twentieth century. With automation and computerization an ample opportunity employment scenario was opened up for educated women particularly in IT and software sector where the salary is attractive and the job is mostly desk type in nature. But at the same time these jobs are accompanied with extended work schedule and deadline oriented leading to work place stress. At the same time with domestic commitment the work life balance becomes a challenging issue for women IT executives. In this paper the researcher tries to find out the issues of work life balance of women IT executives of Mumbai city.The study was conducted among 50 women IT professionals through questionnaire survey and issues like working hours, family responsibilities and career growth were considered as parameter of work life balance.The paper also tries to find out causes of work life balance and possible remedial measure.*
Keywords: *Work life balance, Wok pressure, Family obligation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Liberalisation. privatisation and globalization policy of Government of India has brought a sweeping transformation in Indian economy in last twenty five years. Labour market has witnessed increasing employment opportunities for young talented manpower. It has changed the demographic profile of employees accompanied with good pay package and international exposure. A new concept of dual career couple emerged out of it. As a natural fall out of this more and more women are venturing into employment arena who were traditionally seen as home makers. Women have now become a visible part of workplace. There is a paradigm shift from men being treated as bread winner and women as house keeper or child bearer into women as both bread winner and capable of handling household roles too.

But at the same time, employee is becoming more and more ambitious, career oriented, neglecting other aspects of life outside work; like spending quality time with child and family, leisure time and time for own interest. This is accompanied with high job stress, stretchable working hours and target based operation.

The changing social structures arising out of dual career couples (or single parent families) lead to concept of outsourcing the services like childcare and care of ageing parents. There is a felt need to balance and integrate family needs and career requirements. In a transitioning society like India, where the traditional role of women as homemakers and caretakers are deeply entrenched, the work family balance become a challenge for women. Working woman is an institution in herself and aiming at successful career with financial independence, she has to also nurture her growing child to accomplish motherhood. Both these are extremely demanding and doing justice to one without neglecting the other is a formidable task.

Over the last decade Indian society has witnessed a surge in participation of women in labour force, especially in IT industry which is a direct fall out of globalization and brought a lot of opportunity for educated women. In the light of the increasing number of women in IT industry, there is a need to examine the phenomenon of the work-life balance of Indian women IT professional in greater depth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work life balance concept has been gaining importance for the research because it is one of the work related issues affecting productivity of employees in an organization as well as in performing role related to family.With growing awareness of employees for managing the boundary and the interface between their work and non work lives,the provision for effective work life initiatives have been a priority for various organisations in the corporate world.

Many changes in the workplace and in employee demographics in the past few decades have led to an increased concern for understanding the boundary and the interaction between employee, work and non–work lives **(Hochschild 1997; and Hayman 2005).** As more and more women are joining the workforce and dual career couple are becoming increasingly common **(Moorhead et.al, 1997).** One of the major reason for this increasing concern for work life balance is due to technological advancement which has morphed the work and

personal lives of working professionals into a single whole. **Lester (1999)** argued that technology can help and hinder work-life balance by making work more accessible at all times of the day and night; and also in terms of enabling a more flexible approach to when and where to work. **Castells (2000)** observed that technological development may also facilitate social change leading to redefinition of gender relations and social cultural norms. In his pioneering work on Women IT professionals **Ramesh P.V (2004)** mentions that the leave structure has an impact on family life of the women employees in Information Technology sector. The workers are allowed to avail leave only with prior consent of the team leader/manager to ensure that the work is not disrupted. Availing leave without prior consent is treated as unauthorized absence which is a sufficient reason to terminate the service of a worker.

Kelkar (2003) observed that heavy work schedules and 14-16 hours workdays is the norm of IT companies. The employees work long hours in office and 2-3 hours in home. Work Life Balance is the part of HRM jargon of IT companies, but in reality it is only work. There is no such balance between work and family in the industry.

Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce (2009) in their report "**Flexible Working: working for families, working for business**" identified that Women are still the primary careers in our society and, as a result, face the greatest difficulties in reconciling their caring responsibilities with the demands and expectations of full time work.

Vanitha (2011) in her article titled **"A study on Work Life Balance of IT employees through Emotional Intelligence with special reference to Indian context"** states that the degree to which work and personal life activities are prioritized as neither is neglected. High ratings on these behaviors are associated with the emotional intelligence measures of social responsibility, impulse control, and empathy

Vanitha & Meenakumari (2011) in their study entitled **"Family Vs Work Conflict among Working Women in India with Special Reference to IT, Education and Banking Sector"** state that the participation of women employees in modern organizations ranges from priority to service based augments every year in Indian industrial climate. In addition to that women have to play multifaceted roles at family, society and at work places with unprecedented pressures at different climate. The unbalanced co-ordination and support belatedly indulge both family and work conflicts and it also mutually influences each other. The impact of these influences impetus with work and family problems and sometimes leads to undesirable consequences.

Ramanathan & Vanitha, (2011) in their research article titled **"Work- Life Balance-A primitive Channel Source for work culture at workplace with special reference to IT employees in India"** state the work pattern of IT sector. The professional employed at various levels in IT sector undergo various changing issues in terms of organizational policy and individual commitment. The growing competition among various companies in this sector, the job shift, recent economic slowdown, and the market rehabilitation strategies adopted by the companies want the employees of IT sector to contribute more at work places irrespective of time schedule in the form of job expansion, work load enrichment and customer satisfaction. Due to these changes the WLB of IT employees deviates and leads to mismanagement of various overlapping factors among individuals in terms of work, family, social, development and personal. The result of poor WLB leads to ineffective work culture at organizational level. The ineffective work culture affects the individual organizational relationship, individual family and social relationship.

Literature have given various facet of work life balance scenario in IT sector in an generalized manner. However scarce literature is available on work life balance of women IT employees of Mumbai. Mumbai being a huge geographical spread has its inherent problem of residence, commuting and high cost of living. Thus the present study is an attempt made by the researcher to examine the work and family life of women IT professionals' stressful job at their workplace along with their family commitment.

III. OBJECTIVE
a. To study the work and family related factors that influence the work-family balance of Women IT professionals of Mumbai.
b. To understand the challenges they face and the type of coping strategy they use to achieve work family balance.

IV. METHODOLOGY
The study was carried out on the basic observation that ,post liberalization, women prefer to take up IT as a profession due to its inherent perceived benefit of high paying salary and international exposure. But with changing scenario this may hold good for highly structured companies. Majority of IT jobs are time bound, have a different work culture and employers are more demanding. Careful observation can indicate that many young female IT professionals joining at junior level do not make it to top as compared to their male counterparts. In many cases the female gives prime importance to her commitment to family and children by compromising her professional growth. For conducting this study primary data was collected from 50 female IT

professionals of reputed IT companies located in and around Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The data was collected to understand their working hours, commuting time, household commitments and the challenges to fulfill expectations of spouse and kids. The data was analysed using simple bifurcation and using weighted average. A comparative and preferential analysis was done to find the root cause of issues and its repercussion on work life balance. The demography of respondents are as follows.

Type of Respondents	No. of Respondents
Married	32
Unmarried	15
Divorcee	03
Women having kids	17
Women not having kid	15
Average Age	38
Graduate	18
Post Graduate	32
Junior Executives	19
Middle level executives	22
Senior level executives	09
Average Income(INR) Not CTC	4.2 Lakh p.a

V. OBSERVATIONS

5.1 Working days/working hours/commuting time

Figure 1

In this study it was found that IT companies work in five days schedule. The general prescribed working hour is 9 hours per day. But in reality in an average the IT executives work 11 hours per day. This happens because at times, in order to meet deadline of completing project these executives have to stretch the working hours beyond the normal schedule. Further information revealed that one way commuting takes around 2 hours for an IT executive (**Figure 1**).But the high standard deviation shows high variation of commuting time from 4 hrs maximum to 0.5 hrs minimum as observed depending upon the distance between workplace and residence.

Therefore it can be inferred from aforementioned observation that a women working in IT sector in Mumbai is expected to spend minimum 12 hours per day in matter related to professional life in a normal working condition. This affects the normal family life, lead to both physical and mental exhaustion resulting in stress

5.2 Family Liability

The information on employers perspective on family issues has been analysed in this section encompassing the overall employers' perception and family requirement. The rating for different aspects (both positive and negative) are shown in **Table 1**and **Table 2** respectively below.

Table 1 Rating of Respondents on Family and Work (Positive Aspects)		
Policy	Level of Agreement	
	Mean Score (At the rating of 4)	Standard Deviation
Management accommodative to family needs	2.7	0.95
Family members encouraged to join company celebrations	2.6	0.54
Table.2 Rating of Respondents on Family and Work (Non Positive Aspects)		
Policy	Level of Agreement	
	Mean Score (At the rating of 4)	Standard Deviation
Keeping work ahead of family is appreciated	2.6	0.54
Discouragement of leave for family issues	2.2	0.84
Family takes a back seat	2.09	0.95

Figure 2 , Figure 3

The study revealed that management is accommodative to family needs to an extent of 67% rating and also family members are encouraged to join company celebrations(rating of 65%)(**Figure 2**).But at the same time the analysis showed that management appreciates if the employees keep work ahead of family (rating of 65%).The management discourages to avail leave on pretext of family issues(rating of 55%) and family takes a back seat on employers perspective(rating of 52%) (**Figure 3**). Hence though as a whole the rating of issues on positive aspects are more as compared to ratings on negative aspects, but the companies are more concerned about their revenue and make some overtly looking family centric activity like making a family get together. But issues like taking leave for family requirement are not encouraged.

Figure 4

Women employees in Indian scenario are compelled to take break for child care and domestic commitment so also the case for women IT professionals in Mumbai.. Though joining back to job is permitted ,but it is always accompanied with riders in an IT organization.50% of respondents said that the package on return would be less as compared to one's peer who has not taken the break. As there is rapid change in technology the changed technical scenario during the break might make it incompatible for the employee while rejoining as expressed by 19% respondents.31% of respondents felt that on return after a break one has to settle for the available vacancy both in terms of rank and technology platform(**Figure 4**).

5.3 Personal Life and Career
Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7

Though there happens to be some conflict in maintaining professional excellence due to domestic commitment;17% of respondents expressed of sacrificing personal life for professional excellence. A majority 67% experience the same occasionally but not in a regular manner (**Figure 5**). Out of those 67% a majority(i.e 62%) were unmarried young women and another (i.e 38%) having a strong family support like they were mostly staying with their parents or in laws. In the same vane 50% of respondents said that sometimes they could not perform at workplace in a satisfactory manner due to their domestic commitment. For around 33% of respondents it is a regular phenomenon. But 17% respondents were either capable or fortunate enough for not experiencing any such situation(**Figure 6**). As an overall scenario there is definitely some element of compromise while balancing (rather integrating) personal and professional life. Looking at responses we can infer that 67% of respondents agree that there were compromises on professional and personal life. 16% respondents said it was conflicting. Only 17% could make an effective integration of both(**Figure 7**).

VI. ANALYSIS

As observed by the researcher the duration of working hour is not always uniform in case of women IT professionals in Mumbai city. The working hours vary as per nature of project assigned to them. However there is no substantial variation in putting number of hours at work place as per the age, educational qualification and experience of the women employee per se. However young married women employee of early thirties or late twenties having kid are more stressed while interfacing their work and non-work lives. Baby care and managing household chores have been observed as the most pressing demand for them at the family. Along with this they are having their spouse working in 9 to 6 schedule thereby mostly depending on housemaids and some of them put their kids in crèches. Any disturbance in this apparatus leads to conflict and irritation.

Most of the respondents(85%) are suffering from life style diseases like anxiety, mood swing, hypertension and loss of sexual appetite leading to friction between partners. It has also been clearly observed from current study that in order to play dual role rationally, women IT professionals in Mumbai are already seen, in compromising either at family or at the professional life.

VII.   CONCLUSION

In case of a woman professional in IT sector it is very important to understand the ground reality and strike a balance between professional and personal life for achieving professional excellence. Without this the women professional in IT sector would continue to be concentrated at the lower level and would not be able to climb up to the upper echelon of the job hierarchy by competing with their male counter parts.

It is general expectation that employer should be sensible enough towards women employee in IT sector while implementing work flexibility policies especially in a city like Mumbai which has its inherent disadvantages of high cost of living, distance from work place to residence and majority being nuclear family dweller with both the spouse being career centric, work life balance is a biggest challenge. And unfortunately kids are being the biggest causality. They are being deprived of parental care very often. It is a matter of concern for both employer, women employee, their partners and other family members to build a healthy rational society by integrating work and family life. Family which is the primary core value of Indian society should not suffer

as well as women having equal potentialities should also be not hindered or discouraged to realize their career goal.Improper work life balance may have a low quality life style leading to family conflict and unsatisfactory performance at the work places (or a negative impact on quality output at the work place).

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