

# *Work Life Balance in Indian IT & BPO Industry*

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## **<<< Abstract**

*Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between “works” on the one hand and “life” on the other. Related, though broader terms, include a “lifestyle balance” and “life balance”. The purpose of this paper is to study the styles that have been used for balancing work and family by the professionals working in Indian IT and BPO sectors and the kind of support they are getting from their organizations. Professionals may face many problems in balancing their work and life due to many demands of their careers and also fast paced life and stress in today’s competitive world.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In today’s world, every professional engages himself/herself with more activities in and out of the office than usual as this seems to be supported by the adoption of flexibility measures in the workplace. The availability of technology anywhere which aids in the connectivity of people 24/7 further delineates the boundaries between work and personal life.

An earlier research on WLB indicates that parameters like morale, satisfaction, and performance are improved among employees who have received work/life balance training programs. Now organizations are paying more attention to work and personal/family life-friendly programs, and are developing other benefits and activities that may help to alleviate workplace stress and conflict between work-life.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to examine the work-life balance of employees working in BPO/IT sectors in India. Specifically, the present paper intends to address the following research problems:

- a What are the available benefits and programs for the IT/BPO employees?
- b Do these existing benefits and programs promote work-life balance?
- c What is the IT/BPO workers’ perception of their work-life balance conditions in their respective organizations?
- d What do IT/BPO workers want to achieve in terms of work-life balance programmes?

This paper is an attempt to contribute to existing literature on work-life balance in general and for the employees working in BPO/IT Sectors in India. Moreover, the conflict between work demands vis-à-vis personal and family needs is needed to be delved into in order to have sufficient institutional support at

the employer, more so at the Governmental level. This paper is also an attempt to contribute to literature in three ways. First, it takes a critical look at the workplace setting and organization in BPO/IT sectors. Second, the paper examines the different benefits in IT/BPO companies and whether employees perceive them to foster work-life balance. Lastly, it discusses the recommendations from the BPO/IT employees themselves in how to limit and alleviate the work-life disconnect and promote genuine work-life balance.

### 3. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

After analysis of the study on employees we find some of its strength and limitations. This research is intended to ascertain the work-life balance conditions and perceptions of selected employees working in BPO and IT Sectors in India. Given the limited time and the descriptive nature of the study, it did not include an in-depth review of the work-life balance in a particular BPO/IT sector. Another limitation of the study is the sample.

- This is limited only to the fifty survey respondents.
- For this study, we found the employees were hesitant to respond.
- The employees were not being open to research may stem from their implicit concern that the responses may be construed as official responses of their own organizations, as well as revealing existing benefits and programs may negate the human resource departments' competitive advantage over other companies especially with the growing problem of the inadequacy of a talent pool for the BPO/IT industry.
- The study focused on worker's condition, that's why the researchers did not expand participation of administrators and executives in BPO/IT companies.
- The nature of the information and responses obtained from respondents were affected by participants' openness and willingness to respond.
- Some respondents were reluctant to answer questions related to monetary benefits and their

level of satisfaction with the work organization.

### 4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a descriptive study along with the Mixed method indicates "the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of research process".

### 5. SOURCES OF DATA

A survey questionnaire was prepared for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire also delved into different aspects like work-life benefits, programs and policies. A total of fifty (50) respondents responded to the survey. The respondents came from twenty five (25) BPO and twenty five (25) from IT companies.

### 6. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the self-management styles used for balancing work and family stress by the IT and BPO professionals. The study focused on the practices these professionals follow to balance their work and family life, the challenges they are facing and also the support they get from the Organization.

#### a) How many days in a week do you normally work?

In the present study, it was seen that 70 per cent of professionals work for 5 days a week and only 30 per cent of them work for 6 days a week.

#### b) How many hours in a day do you normally work?

20 per cent of respondents work for more than 10 hours, 50 per cent work for more than 8 hours and 30 per cent respondents work for less than 8 hours in a day.

#### c) How many hours a day do you spend in travelling to work?

In the present study, it was seen that 75 per cent of respondents spend less than 2 hours per day in travelling to work. Twenty-five per cent spend 2-3 hours per day in travelling to work.

#### d) Being an employed man / woman, who is helping you to take care of your children?

In Fifty –five percentage cases, employee's spouse were taking care of children whereas in 45

per cent cases, respondent's parents were taking care of their children.

**e) Do you regularly meet your child's teachers to know how your child is progressing?**

Ninety per cent of Respondents respond that they meet their kids teachers once in a month time and other ten per cent don't have kids.

**f) How often do you think or worry about work when you are not actually at work or travelling to work?**

Fifty per cent of the total participants responded that they sometimes feel unhappy about the time spent at work, travelling to work or thinking about work. 30 per cent responded that they rarely feel unhappy about the time spent at work. And 20 per cent of the employees responded that they feel unhappy about the time they spend for work.

**g) Do you generally feel that you are satisfied and able to balance your work life with the help of WLB policy present in your organization?**

72 per cent of employees feel that the organization's existing policy regarding work life balance with the help of That they can easily balance the stress in their life related to balancing but 28 per cent feel they can't balance with the help of existing policy of WLB.

**h) Do you ever miss out any quality time with your family or your friends because of pressure of work?**

Twenty-five per cent of the respondents responded that they don't miss out on quality time with their family and friends because of work pressure whereas as much as 53 per cent responded that they often miss out on quality time with their family or friends because of pressure of work. Five per cent of the respondents responded that family comes first and 2 per cent responded that they have no time for friends due to pressure of work. Fifteen per cent of the total participants responded that they all the time miss out on quality time with their family or friends because of work pressure.

**i) Do you personally feel any of the following will help you to balance your work life?**

42 per cent of respondents feel giving flexible hours for work will help them to balance their

work life and 21 per cent feel they can bust their stress if organization will give them paid holidays and 37 per cent feel they are fine with some time off for family engagement.

**j) Does any of the following help you balance your work and family commitments?**

Employees of BPO and IT sectors feel that work from home concept and calls on phone and Technological help like laptop will give them some space to work from their place and then they will feel no rush to go to office everyday and they can work from home in spite of feeling sick.

**k) Does any of the following help you balance your work and family commitments?**

When asked how often work has a negative effect on their personal life, 33 per cent responded not very often. Fifty-one per cent of the participants responded that often work has a negative effect on their personal life and 6 per cent responded that it's only a job. None of the participants complained that they have no personal life because of work. Ten per cent of the respondents responded that work has a negative effect on their personal life all the time.

**l) Do you think that if employees have good work-life balance, the organization will be more effective and successful?**

89 per cent of employees feel that if organization have good work life balance in organization then they can work more effectively and properly with less stress in their minds. 1 per cent disagreed with this statement and 10 per cent responded they can't say about this statement.

**m) Do you feel work life balance policy in the organization should be customized to individual needs?**

In the relation of work life balance policy in the organization 97 per cent of employees are in favour of 2 per cent feel that there should be no policy customized to individuals need and only 1 per cent felt that they can't decide.

**n) Do you suffer from any stress-related disease?**

- Frequent headaches
- Obesity

Above two health complaints have been raised by most employees who are facing work related stress in their lives.

**o) Does your organization provide you with yearly Master health check up?**

In this response respondents told that 92 per cent of them are getting health check up plan from organization but 8 per cent aren't getting this facility which should be the part of their employees benefit in every organization.

**p) Does your company organize social events / functions at times which are suitable for your families?**

50 per cent of respondents felt that their organizations doesn't organize social event which should be present for them and other 50 per cent felt yes, their organization organizes some functions for them.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This part summarizes the results of the study and form conclusions based on analysis and interpretations made. Finally, practical and academic recommendations have also been formulated. As various studies have shown work organization in the Indian BPO and IT sectors compose of unusual demanding work schedule, overbearing and irate callers, excessive work targets, and daily quality assurance and service performance measurements. Earlier results showed that most Indian BPO and IT companies provides high compensation for its employees and money-based strategies they offer surpassed those of other sectors as this comprised of meal and transportation allowances, performance incentives and bonuses, salary increase, overtime and night differential pays and other incentives. Moreover, their non-monetary benefits in the form of leaves with pay, health programs, flexible schedules, off-setting, opportunity to negotiate part time work, relaxing rooms, health programs, career leaves and breaks, study/training scholarship, entertainment, club and library membership and cultural/religious leave.

With the existence of the different benefits programs, respondents perceived that these are sufficient to foster work-life balance. Health

programs ranked highly as benefits that promote work-life balance, this may be ascribed to the health risks involved in BPO settings as well as the importance of being healthy and health-related concerns to the employees. Paid maternity / paternity /career leaves and breaks, as well as flexible work schedules – like flexitime and offsetting - are commonly considered as also important in promoting work-life balance as these may contribute to time spend with the family.

Findings revealed that most of the respondents experienced difficulties in work-life balance. A thin demarcation in terms of percentage separates those who encounter problems in terms of their personal life against their workload and those who are not. In terms of family life, majority of the respondents experienced some difficulty in adjusting their family life.

## 8. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results and the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are submitted:

- Despite of the relatively high compensation package, the different benefits they enjoy, and the various programs the companies offer, the integration of work-life balance in the respective BPO/IT organizations is essential.
- The organizations should examine existing work-life policies and programs vis-à-vis workload and general working conditions.
- There is a need to review the existing policies in terms of work-life balance policies and legislature.
- As indicated earlier, little is known about the work-life balance needs of those in the workplace who are not married / are parents as yet, nor about their experience of accessing such working arrangements would be an influential factor in reproductive decision-making. An insight into their attitudes and experiences of work-life balance policies would assess whether these policies have been successful or not in including all workers, and not just working parents. The study would also

need to sample those working non-parents that do not currently have access to flexible working policies in order to assess the demand among this cohort for work-life balance policies, and what specific policies would benefit them best. Results would be expected to be diverse, but trends in needs could be established which would be useful to enterprises with a young and/or non-parent demographic in their workforce.

- Finally, the existence of work-life balance programs, policies and initiatives at the organizational level is significant but it is not

sufficient. IT/BPO workers have to be knowledgeable about, and appreciative of, policies provided at the organization level, and should continue to protect their welfare.

The significant limitation is the focus on work organization and work-life balance in the BPO/IT setting. There are reasons to believe other types of employee relations and human resource practices would portray different challenges and opportunities for work-life balance. Moreover, a look into organizational structure, hierarchical functions, as well as social and cultural factors affecting work-life balance in these companies may reveal important information.

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