

## WORK LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN IN IT SECTORS

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### ABSTRACT

In this research paper, an attempt has been made to find the professional and personal challenges and enhancers for work life balance amongst working women through a survey of 186 women working in the IT sector in India. The main challenges in professional life were found to be extended/odd working hours, travel time between home and workplace and participation in additional jobs and assignments. In personal life, the main stresses were guilty of not being able to take care of self and elders at home. Social media interaction was found to be stress busters for most women. Most women would prefer flexible timing, and supportive spouse, family and friends as well as an environment conducive for work at the office.

**Keywords:** *Work-Life Balance, Professional life Challenges, Personal life Challenges, Professional life Enhancers, Personal life Enhancers, Social Media Involvement.*

### INTRODUCTION

Indian families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization and modernization. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. At the present time, Indian women's exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago, especially in the urban setting. This has opened new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth. This, along with economic pressure, has been instrumental in influencing women's decision to enter the work force. Work life Balance of women employees has become an important subject since the time in today's world where both men and women equally share the responsibility of earning for the betterment of their family life. Hence it is very necessary to know how the women balance very professional and domestic life. In the initial stages, women had to struggle a lot to establish their identity in this competitive world, both in the society as well as in the professional life. In the widely cited article on work-family conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) distinguish three main factors that contribute to work-life conflict. The three components of conflict are behaviour, time and stress. The notion that patterns or behaviours expected in one role may be in opposition with the desired characteristics of another role is referred as behaviour-based conflict. The extra time spent in work precludes individuals from investing that time in personal relationships is defined as Time-based conflict and stress based conflict suggests that one domain is affectedly the stress brought out in another section.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Hyman and summers**(2008) challenged the assumptions and consequences on the Government's approach to help employees balance their work and domestic responsibilities. The identified seven major problems associated with current UK practice over work-life balance. These are concerns of unevenness of adoption of practices across different sectors and organizations, lack of formalization of policies at organizational levels, restricted opportunity of being heard from employees in the origination and execution of policies, the business centric nature of policies, no evidence of working hours reduction, the intrusion of tangible and intangible factors in domestic life and women conducting domestic responsibilities irrespective of their status of employment.

**Grady and McCarthy** (2008) in their study defined that work-life integration is an outcome of the complex relationship between the dynamics of employment and personal factors. They found the balance between work and life is achievable through the funding and coordination of multiple activities which included the organization's interest. Children were given first priority by the respondents exhibiting a deep sense of motherhood. Factors like work stimulation, challenges, achievement and enrichment were given high importance and sought more self-care time to balance work and family.

**Doherty** (2004) in the study on working life balance initiatives for women in the hospitality industry explored the main barriers to advancement into managerial roles. It was found that managerial roles called for long working hours.

**Rehman, and Roomi** (2012) found that achieving work-life balance is one of the key drivers of motivation for women entrepreneurs. The challenges identified were insufficient time, gender bias, social and cultural norms of a patriarchal Islamic society.

**Valk and Srinivasan** (2011) in their study of the work and family related factors in women IT professionals in India revealed six major themes namely family influence on life choices, attempts to negotiate multi-role responsibilities, self and professional identity, work life challenges and the combating strategies, organizational policies and practices and social reinforcement.

**Panisoara and Serban** (2013) in their study examined the impact of marital status on work-life balance in order to enable the organizations to conceive and implement appropriate motivational policies. They found that no significant level of work- balance existed in the four categories of employees namely unmarried, married without kids, married with children under 18, married with children over 18.

**Marcinkus et al.**(2007) found that there is a positive association in work based support for women with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career achievement.

**Valcour and Hunter** (2005) found that greater flexibility and independence can be experienced by working from home, but it can result in people working longer than their office timings which included weekends and evenings. The quality of life is significantly impacted by the home environment. Home working could be stressful, if young children have to be supervised.

## OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The primary aim and objective of this study is to observe how women employees, especially those belonging to the information technology (IT) sector, balance their professional and personal aspect. The objective is studied considering their demographic aspects in relation to a set of factors considered to be challenging and enhancing the work life balance (WLB) in professional and personal aspect. The objectives can be outlined as follows:

- To identify and analyze the profession and personal related factors challenging the work-life balance amongst working women in the IT Companies.
- To identify and analyze the professional and personal enhancers relating to work life balance amongst working women in the IT Companies.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of study 200 questionnaires were circulated among the women employees of various IT companies in Hinjewadi, Pune, India from which only 186 were complete and could be used for the data analysis. The nature and professional routine of the Information Technology organization has become a global concern with regard to the Work-Life Balance for its employees. Coping up with different time zones, 24/7/365 nature of fast paced digital operations contributed to this concern. Ironically technology has added to the speed of operation, rather than easing the work practice. Employees in this knowledge industry are expected to work long hours and cope with tougher deadlines. Today's world literally doesn't go to sleep. With all the above mentioned concerns regarding work – life balance this work focuses on researching on certain key professional and personal challenges and enhancers to work life balance for women employees in the Information Technology Industry. The following are the research questions under consideration.

1. How does the profession or work related factors influence the work life balance of women employees in the Information Technology Companies?
2. How do personal / home related factors influence the work life balance of women employees in the Information Technology Companies?
3. What are the different initiatives to ensure work life balance from both professional and personal perspectives of working women in the IT Companies?

## TOOLS USED

The following tools are used for the findings

- Websites
- Journals
- Research paper
- Articles
- Magazines
- Books

## ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Rotating and irregular shifts most common Shift work has changed through the years (see Shifts over time). Today, it comprises regular night and evening work, rotating and split shifts, casual/on-call jobs, and irregular shifts. In this article, working shift will refer to anything other than a regular daytime schedule.

**Table 1 Workers aged 19 to 64 by shift and work status**

	All workers			Regular day			Shift workers		
	Both sexes	Men	Wo-men	Both sexes	Men	Wo-men	Both sexes	Men	Wo-men
	'000	%		'000	%		'000	%	
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>14,640</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10,547</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>4,068</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>
Full-time	13,139	58	42	9,774	57	43	3,347	63	37
Part-time	1,494	26	74	773	22	78	721	31	69

In 2005, approximately 28% (4.1 million) of the 14.6 million employed Canadians worked something other than a regular day shift (Table 1); the vast majority (82%) worked full time (30 or more hours per week). While women made up approximately 37% of all full-time shift workers, almost 7 in 10 part-time shift workers were women. Because work life conflict and role overload are more likely to affect full-time workers, this article will focus mainly on such individuals (see Part-time workers).

**Table 2 Shift workers aged 19 to 64**

	Both sexes	Men	Women
	'000		%
<b>Evening</b>	523	49.4	50.6
Full-time	385	56.2	43.8
<b>Night</b>	309	60.3	39.7
Full-time	270	63.1	36.9
<b>Rotating</b>	1,345	54.5	45.5
Full-time	1,215	58.2	41.9
<b>Split</b>	160	52.6	47.4
Full-time	131	58.2	41.8
<b>On call or casual</b>	191	51.9	48.1
Full-time	102	67.6	32.4 <sup>E</sup>
<b>Irregular schedule</b>	1,324	62.5	37.5
Full-time	1,052	70.1	29.9
<b>Other</b>	217	61.9	38.1
Full-time	192	64.7	35.3

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

In 2005, rotating shifts and irregular schedules were the most common types of shift work, accounting for 2.3 million full-time workers (Table 2), even though these are considered among the most difficult shifts because the body cannot properly adjust to the sleep pattern changes, rotating child care is difficult to find and health effects can be profound (Costa2003, Rosa and Colligan 1997). Some 385,000 fulltime workers had regular evening shifts and approximately 270,000 had regular night shifts. On call/casual schedules accounted for just over 100,000 workers and split schedules about 130,000.

**Table 3 Full-time workers aged 19 to 64 by occupation, industry and shift**

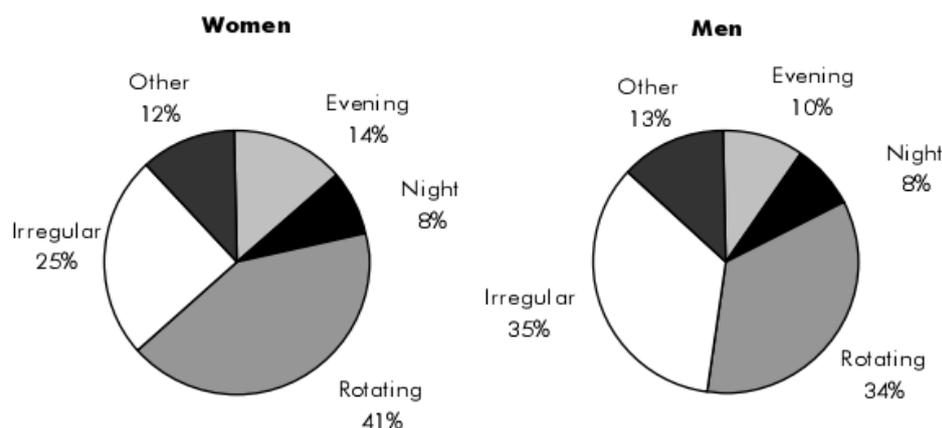
	Total workers	Regular day	Shift
<b>Industry</b>	'000		%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	230	65.3	34.7
Mining, oil and gas extraction	302	67.7	32.6
Utilities	121	89.7	10.3
Construction	888	84.1	15.9
Manufacturing	1,717	73.2	26.8
Trade	1,716	73.8	26.3
Transportation and warehousing	650	60.5	39.5
Finance and insurance	904	81.9	18.1
Professional, scientific and technical	1,079	86.8	13.2
Business, building and other support	448	63.9	36.1
Educational services	817	89.5	10.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,272	68.0	31.9
Information, culture and recreation	607	62.3	37.7
Accommodation and food	620	47.3	52.7
Other services	544	75.6	24.4
Public administration	831	80.7	19.3
<b>Occupation</b>			
Management	1,275	80.1	19.9
Business, finance and administrative	2,479	87.9	12.1
Natural and applied sciences	1,097	90.7	9.3
Health	690	54.7	45.3
Social science and education	990	84.9	15.1
Art, culture, recreation and sport	426	66.3	33.7
Sales and service	2,573	60.5	39.5
Trades, transport and equipment operators	1,900	72.2	27.8
Unique to primary	420	58.5	41.5
Unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	886	63.3	36.7

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Occupation, industry and shift Certain occupations are more commonly associated with shift work because of the nature of the jobs— for example, those occupations providing services

24 hours per day such as doctors, nurses and police officers. Additionally, some manufacturing jobs are also associated with shift work since some firms operate 24 hours per day. The 2005 General Social Survey confirmed this—for example, about 45% of those working in health occupations were shift workers, as were 66% in protective service occupations (police, security guards). Other occupations where shift work was relatively common were sales and service (40%) and those unique to primary industries (42%). Conversely, less than 10% of natural and applied sciences and 12% of business, finance and administrative jobs entailed shift work (Table 3). Not surprisingly, just as certain occupations are more likely to be tied to shifts, so too are certain industries. This may be because they offer services at non-traditional work times or involve continuous production. Health care, accommodation and transport industries come to mind when thinking about shift work. Indeed, in 2005 more than 50% of full-time workers in the accommodation and food industry worked slightly younger than day workers. For example, the average age of a full-time shift worker was about 38, compared with 41 for full-time day workers.

**Chart A Among full-time shift workers, women were more likely than men to work rotating or evening shifts**



Demographics and shift While women make up about 42% of all full-time workers, their share of shift work is slightly lower at about 37%, with only slight differences by type of shift (Chart A). For example, fewer women worked irregular shifts (25% vs. 35% for men), but they were more likely to work rotating shifts (41% vs. 34%) or evening shifts (14% vs. 10%).

## FINDINGS

The initial question that guided our research was: How do work and family related factors influence the work–family balance of Indian women IT professionals and what are their challenges and coping strategies to achieve work–family balance? We sought to understand how work and family related elements influence the work–family balance of these women. Six themes emerged from the narratives: familial influences on life choices, role responsibilities and negotiation, self-identity, work–life challenges and coping strategies, organisational policies and practices, and social support.

In India, women's wishes and desires are expected to conform to those of their family's traditions, honour, and welfare that create tension between the development of personal interests and family expectations, thus affecting the work–family balance of the women.

Married women acknowledged that they have less time and energy to spend on their husbands due to their multiple roles that require time and involvement. Women reported to have less time to spend with relatives due to their busy work schedules combined with the fact that, in some cases, relatives live far away. Lastly, five women reported less leisure time because they are currently enrolled in an MBA programme which takes a substantial amount of time and inhibits a desired work–life balance.

## CONCLUSION

The findings indicate a large majority of married working women working in IT sector, India are able to balance their work and personal life effectively. It is also seen that most of the respondents are happy within their field of work and thus we also see that 50% of the respondents are working in their respective fields for the years. However it can be concluded that even though the respondents are happy, yet they worry about work when they are not at work. Majority of the respondents are living in nuclear families and receive maximum support from not only their spouse but also from their relatives. The study also concludes that most of the married women are satisfied with their personal lives; they are able to get enough sleep and manage their work by doing only what is important to be done. Majority of the respondents faced highest stress from work overload, child care and taking care of elderly parents. The study also concludes that high levels of stress can cause stress related health problems like frequent headaches, high/low blood pressure and obesity. From the study, it can be concluded that majority of the married working women prefer to watch T.V. and movies and take part in recreational activities like yoga, exercises and meditation to release their stress. The major factors that hindered the WLB of the married working women were negative attitude of the superiors, peers and colleagues followed by meetings after work. Spouse and relatives offer a significant amount of support to women.

This, in short, suggests that satisfaction with work-life balance and role overload are related not only to workers' schedules but also to a complex interaction of hours worked, self-perception and general feelings of well-being.

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