

A Study on Emotional Intelligence and Work Life Balance of Employees in the Information Technology Industry in Coimbatore, India

Sumathy.M, Assistant Professor & Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence is a set of qualities and competencies that captures a broad collection of individual skills and dispositions, usually referred to as soft skills or inter and intra-personal skills, that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence, and technical or professional skills. Emotions are an intrinsic part of our biological makeup, and every morning they march into the office with us and influence our behavior. Emotional intelligence consists of five factors: Knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating one self, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships Goleman (1995). Researchers today are interested in finding the effects of emotional intelligence on employees and thereby, organizations, and analyzing the various other facets of EQ. Emotional intelligence improves individual and organizational performance. It plays a significant role in the kind of work an employee produces, and the relationship he or she enjoys in the organization.

Work – Life Balance is a challenging issue for IT leaders, managers and has also attracted the attention of researchers. Work/life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or ‘fit’ between the multiple roles in a person’s life. In this climate managing the boundary between home and work is becoming more challenging. Organizations need to ensure they not just encourage but mandate a practical and workable work/life balance policy, benefiting and meeting the needs of both the organization and its employees. Organizations not providing real opportunity for employees work/life balance are opening themselves up to increasing numbers of dissatisfied and unproductive employees and hence increased attrition rates. Merely creating a work/life policy framework is not enough; fostering an organizational culture that supports the use of available policies is also of great importance. Further there is a need for employers and employees alike to find flexible and innovative solutions that maximize productivity without damaging employees well – being, their family relationships and other aspects of life. The origin of IT industry in India can be traced to 1974, when the mainframe manufacturer, Burroughs, asked its India sales agent, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), to export programmers for installing system software for a U.S. client. The IT industry originated under unfavorable conditions. Local markets were absent and government policy toward private enterprise was hostile. The industry was begun by Bombay-based conglomerates which entered the business by supplying programmers to global IT firms located overseas.

INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY IN INDIA

The origin of IT industry in India can be traced to 1974, when the mainframe manufacturer, Burroughs, asked its India sales agent, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), to export programmers for installing system software. The IT industry originated under unfavorable conditions. Local markets were absent and government policy toward private enterprise was hostile. The industry was begun by Bombay-based conglomerates which entered the business by supplying programmers to global IT firms located overseas.

EMERGING TRENDS IN THE IT INDUSTRY

Globalisation and its effects in the global economy have a profound effect in shaping the global IT industry. There is great, unceasing demand for technology-enabled business transformation constant innovation in technology and technology-intensive products and services across all sectors.

- Off shoring is predicted to increase. This will mean that low-cost nations, such as China, Russia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, will gain a greater proportion of the international technology market. Indeed, China has already become the biggest exporter of IT goods, surpassing Japan, the European Union and the US
- The new challenges presented by technology are likely to be driven by the next generation of ‘digital natives’, the generation that has grown up with technology. They are the ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video gaming and the internet. The rise of social computing, powered by Web 2.0 technologies and the creation of new technologies to form and extend networks will shape future IT products, services and skills. This will have implications for the UK IT industry as the ‘digital natives’ enter the workforce and transform the way in which businesses operate. Increasing environmental concerns will also drive the demand for green IT and environmental computing. Such developments will also be underpinned by communication convergence and integration. This includes the development of the use of consumer-based products such mobile phones and wireless internet access to enable remote working in virtual offices.

NEED AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The concept of work – life balance is gaining importance across IT organizations. This study aims at helping IT organizations build more effective policies with respect to of work – life balance, it also helps the organizations introduce new work – life balance programs and encourages sharing of best practices across IT organizations. Further the study facilitates to build organization wide culture, effective use of policies and programs and also better integration between work and non-work activities. Hence by offering effective policies and encouraging employees to make use of the available policies and programs the organizations will in turn be increasing the employee’s level of satisfaction and also commitment towards the organization.

This will help the organization retain its best people or talent, which will subsequently contribute to cost saving.

The study is an attempt to contribute afresh with a new perspective to the field of human resources and behavioural sciences with special reference to work – life balance in relation to emotional intelligence of employees in IT organizations. It is also an earnest attempt to bridge the gap especially in this area by highlighting the relevance and importance of work – life balance and emotional intelligence to leadership, senior management, individual and organizations and hoping this study will initiate a series of serious and productive discussion on the subject.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify what aspects of work interferes with personal life.
2. To identify the factors that impacts work – life balance.
3. To find out work related factors that interferes with personal life.
4. To identify policies, practices and programs offered by IT organizations with respect to work – life balance.
5. To find out the level of risk inherent in each work – life balance program, on an IT employee’s career.
6. To find out the likelihood of usage of work – life balance programs IT employees.
7. To find out if there are differences across demographics and work – life balance.
8. To find out if there are differences across demographics and emotional Intelligence.
9. To find out Emotional Intelligence of employees.

10. To find out the relationship and influence between emotional intelligence and work - life balance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a documentation of the review of literature that has been carried out. It contains empirical data that has relevance and significance to the present study. The review of literature spans more than five decades. Trends in the review have been highlighted. The review is presented variable wise and in reverses chronological order. The review contains studies on work life balance and emotional intelligence.

Lewis & Humbert (2010) The most important form of flexible work arrangement 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. This, together with a prevalent “good mother” ideology, undermines both gender equity and workplace effectiveness.

Baral (2009) In a study of 730 managerial employees from various organizations in India, it was found that family contributes extensively to work in terms of enhancing performance and positive emotions at workplace. One of the key findings was availability of work-life balance practices. When an organization offers its employees policies, practices, benefits and services to help them integrate their work and family responsibilities, employees feel committed to the organization and indulge themselves in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Golden, Veiga and Simsek (2006) found that in 2005, that around one-third of American employees have entered into telework and telecommunicating work arrangements. Though this arrangement can improve work-life balance, it could have a different impact that reduces Work Family Conflict but increases Family work Conflict. The impact that advancement in the technological environment can have on Work Family Conflict is moderated by family size, job autonomy and flexibility.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Work-life balance has become a universal concern for organizations as well as individuals in the fast paced digital age that we inhabit. Raise in the 365/24/7 Global Operations, coping with the time zones with more and more businesses emphasizing on round the clock customer services the concern for work-life balance for employees has become more essential. Ironically technology has added to the speed of operation, rather than easing the work practice. Employees 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 study focuses on whether employees with better emotional intelligence will have better work – life balance. The concept of emotional intelligence is an umbrella term that captures a broad collection of individual skills and dispositions, usually referred to as soft skills or inter and intra-personal skills, that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence, and technical or professional skills. The analysis of data has been presented in the following order.

1. Descriptive Statistics
2. Differential Statistics (ANOVA)
3. Step – wise Regression on the variables.
4. Canonical correlation between emotional intelligence and work – life balance.
5. Pearson’s correlation analysis for intra correlation within emotional intelligence and work – life Balance variables.

TOOLS ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

The instruments to collect data were

Measurement of Work – Life Balance The work – life balance questionnaire was divided into five dimensions

- Dimension 1 - Work interferes with personal life scale was developed by Fisher-McAuley (2003) and validated by J. Hayman (2005).
- Dimension 2 – Factors impacting work – life balance scale was developed by the investigator based on the objectives of the study.
- Dimension 3 - Work related factors that interferes with personal life scale was developed by Bolino and Turnley (2005)
- Dimension 4 - Level of risk inherent in each program, on an employee's career, scale was developed Catherine C Parker (2007)
- Dimension 5 – Likelihood of usage of work – life balance programs by an employee scale was developed Catherine C Parker (2007)

Measurement of Emotional Intelligence

The Emotional Intelligence questionnaire has four dimensions and is developed by Wong Chi Sum (2007).

Demographic information: Self – developed Performa will be used for measuring demographic variables.

SAMPLING DESIGN Judgmental sampling technique was adopted to collect the data from IT employees representing 23 Indian, Indian multinational and multinational IT companies from Bangalore city.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES ADOPTED

The data was analyzed using the following statistical techniques.

1. Canonical correlation analysis
2. Pearson's correlation
3. Stepwise regression and
4. ANOVA

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY 5.11.1 GENERAL FINDINGS

1. The three major behaviors of work that interferes with personal life were unhappiness with the amount of time for non – work activities followed by missing personal activities due to work and putting personal life on hold because of work. Other aspects of work like juggling or managing both work and non – work activities and job i.e. professional life making personal life difficult had less interference with personal life.
2. The two major factors impacting work – life balance of IT employees are feeling exhausted at the end of days work and quitting their jobs or taking a career break because of work – life balance issues. Other factors like, lack of work – life balance having an adverse impact on an IT employee's career and lack of family support in professional life had less impact on work – life balance.
3. The four major work related factor interfering with personal life were, carrying cell phone or a pager so that the employees can be reached after normal business hours, followed by checking e-mail or voice mail at home after returning from work, stay back at office after normal business hours or working overtime, altering or canceling personal plans because of work. Other work related factors like participating in community activities for the benefit of the company, attending work related functions on personal time, working during vacations and traveling whenever the company asks you to have less interference with personal life.
4. The highest difference was noticed in Work from home all the time, followed by part time work. The least difference was found in paid leave of absence for education and paid paternity leave. In case of paid maternity leave the prevalence of it was found to be higher than the awareness of the work – life balance programs.

5. Usage of work – life balance programs like part time, work from home all the time, career breaks and brief paid sabbatical of 1 – 2 months had higher level of risk involved to an IT employee's position. Whereas flexible work schedules, paid paternity leave, work from home occasionally and paid maternity leave had less risk involved to an IT employee's position.

6. IT employees were more likely to use work – life balance programs like flexible work schedules followed by work from home occasionally, paid leave for sick family member i.e. (parent, child, spouse) and paid paternity leave. Where they were less likely to use programs like, work from home all the time, career breaks part-time work and paid maternity leave. 7. It was found that IT employees were high on regulation of emotion in the self, followed by appraisal and recognition of emotion in others, use of emotion to facilitate performance and appraisal and expression of emotion in the self.

The results of the one way ANOVA reveal that work related factors interfering with personal life and risk in position with the usage of work life balance is more for men than women IT employees. There is a wrong perception that work – life balance programs is meant only for women and not for men. . Employees using such programs are seen as less committed to their work and organization. Life becomes more understanding and meaningful only when, both men and women share family responsibilities equally. When a person enjoys a healthy personal life and when his personal life is filled with joy and happiness and free from conflicts, employees will be in a better position to concentrate in their professional life. They will be able to perform better, their productivity and quality of work will improve and they will be more loyal to their organizations. Hence it is recommended that managers and organizations should not discourage employees from using the work – life balance programs. Organizations should encourage employees to make use of the available work – life balance programs and remove the fear that usage of work – life balance programs will have a negative impact on an employee's career.

Work related factors interfering with personal life were highest for married IT professionals than single IT professionals. It is suggested that IT organizations should offer employee assistance programs (EAP'S), where employees can seek expert advice for a better well being and enjoy a happy personal life. Further IT organizations should also come up with better employee engagement activities and better family friendly programs. These initiatives will create a feeling in the employees that the organization cares and supports for the employees well being. This will also increase the emotional attachment of the employees towards their organization.

IT organizations should clearly define the roles and responsibilities for each every employee so that there is a clear objective laid down by the organization as to who is accountable for what and no does extra work. By doing this IT organizations will help improve the work - life balance across management levels.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has the following limitations

1. The sample was limited to IT organizations in Coimbatore city.
2. The study was conducted under the assumption that the information given by the respondents will be authentic.
3. The outcome of the study cannot be generalized as the data will be collected only from a section of employees and not from all the employees
4. The study is chiefly concentrated only on the IT sectors. Hence it becomes difficult to judge the importance of Work-life balance and Emotional Intelligence across other industries.
5. Time factor was a major challenge.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. A comparative study between work – life balance and organizational commitment can be undertaken.
2. A comparative study between emotional intelligence and ethics at the workplace may be undertaken.
3. This study can also be done exclusively by taking into consideration only the managers and the leadership team of the IT organizations.

CONCLUSION

Work – Life Balance of IT employees is an issue that has attracted the interest of researchers, educationists and the leaders of the IT world. Managing both professional and personal life effectively and efficiently has become a major challenge for the IT employees. IT organizations need to make efforts to develop effective work – life balance policies and encourage their employees to make use of the available policies. This will help increase organizational commitment, improve productivity, efficiency, retain best talent and motivate the IT employees to give their best. This study confirms that both emotional intelligence and work – life balance together create organizational success and develop competitive advantage for IT organizations. Thus the human resources team and the leadership team of IT organizations should take the initiative of enhancing and improving the emotional intelligence skills of their employees. Improved emotional intelligence skills will help an individual understand and manage the emotions of one and others better which will lead to high quality service delivery. It is therefore imperative for IT administrators to strive to create a bridge between emotional intelligence and work – life balance in IT organizations. Emotional intelligence is an effective way to integrate, enhance and provide better work and family life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Antonakis, J. (2003). Why “emotional intelligence” does not predict leadership effectiveness: A comment on the Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, and Buckley (2003). *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 11, 355-364. 135
- Atwater, L.E., & Yammarino, F.J. (1992). Does self-other agreement on leadership perceptions moderate the validity of leadership and performance predictions? *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 141- 164.
- Bachmann, K. (2000). Work – life Balance. Are Employers Listening? Conference Board of Canada.
- Barling, J., Slater, F., & Kelloway, E. K. (2000). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 21, 157- 161.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I): A test of emotional intelligence. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.
- Bhattacharya, M, S and Sengupta, N (2007), Emotional Intelligence Myth or Reality, Anurag Jain for Excel Books
- Bhargava, S & Baral, R (2009). Work – life Balance Practices in India. Working Paper, IIT Bombay.
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: Wiley
- Burke, M.J & Collison, J. (2004). US Job Recovery and Retention Poll Findings for Human Resource Management.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1999). From a presentation to the Linkage Conference on Emotional Intelligence, Chicago, IL, September 27, 1999.
- Brown, F. W., Bryant, S. E., & Reilly, M. D. (2005). Does emotional intelligence—as measured by the EQ-i—influence transformational leadership and/or desirable outcomes? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 27, 330-351. 136
- Carmeli, A., & Josman, Z. E. (2006). The relationship among emotional intelligence, task performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Human Performance*, 19, 403-419
- Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 989-101

- Dex, S & Scheibl, F (199). Business Performance and Family – Friendly Policies, Journal of General Management, 24, 22 – 37
- Delphine Nelis, Jordi Quoidbach, Moïra Mikolajczak and Michel Hansenne (2009). Increasing emotional intelligence: (How) is it possible? Original Research Article Personality and Individual Differences, Volume 47, Issue 1, July 2009, Pages 36-41
- Diane Perrons (2003). The New Economy and the Work–Life Balance: Conceptual Explorations and a Case Study of New Media, Volume 10, Issue 1, pages 65 – 93