WOMEN EMPLOYEES ON WORK LIFE BALANCE OF IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR - A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:
   Changes in the social-economic and political fabric of societies have influenced and continue to influence both the nature of employment and its relationship to life outside work. Work life balance has emerged as a hot topic in recent years– fuelled in part by changing trends in women's family and social roles. Whilst labor market participation has increased for women of all ages, women continue to shoulder the main responsibility for organizing and undertaking unpaid caring work. In India, it is taken for granted that economic activities are exclusively the prerogative of males while domestic work, child bearing and child rearing are the sole occupations of women.

KEYWORDS: *social-economic and political fabric, women continue.*

INTRODUCTION:
   Historically, women in India have not enjoyed a good status in workplace settings whether in managerial or operative roles. Since times immemorial, women have been burdened with work of all sorts all through their lives. From reproduction to all household chores and outside, their role as worker is significant, unique and burdensome. But they are discriminated and exploited all over. The Information Technology (IT) Sector constitutes a large part of the Indian economy both in terms of employment potential and its contribution to national income. The IT Sector covers a wide range of activities from the most sophisticated in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to simple services pursued by the informal sector workers. Among fast growing developing countries, India is distinctive for the role of the IT sector.
   The advent of globalization makes people work across countries as a result, concept of fixed working hours is fading away. Instead of just 7 or 8 hours a day, people are spending as much as 12 to 16 hours every day in office. The technological blessings like e-mail, text messaging and cell phones which were thought of as tools to connect them to their work being away from their workplace, have actually integrated their personal and professional lives. Therefore, tension and work related pressure, responsibilities at family makes an individual difficult to find balance between work and personal life. Professional working in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries, top executives, doctors, nurses, bank employees, and IT professionals are the few examples who are facing the brunt of hazards constantly. Today, industries have realized the importance of the work life balance of their employees. Organizations are setting up policies for maintaining a work life balance. They are going in for

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innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes office a better place to work and also positively impact productivity.

Work life Balance is not a new concept. The change in the pattern of work and the concept of the work place after the industrial revolution in the second half of the 18th century gave a new dimension to the concept of Work Life Balance. As time progressed, nuclear families increased. A later change was the fading away of the "ideal home" in which the earning member's spouse took care of the home. With improved education and employment opportunities today, most homes are ones in which both parents work because of necessity and the desire to augment incomes. The need to create congenial conditions in which employees can balance work with their personal needs and desires became a factor that companies had to take note of both to retain them as well as to improve productivity. It was a compulsion that they could not afford to ignore. Having realized that, companies started introducing schemes to attract and retain employees and improve their productivity. Work life balance is the extent to which individuals are equally involved in and equally satisfied with their role and their family role.

EMPLOYER'S ROLE IN WORK LIFE BALANCE

In surveys conducted, it was found that an overwhelming majority of employees support the concept of work life balance (WLB). In fact, it has become a legal necessity where the concept of ―Equal Opportunity Employer is almost mandatory. On the other hand, as brought out in the preceding parts of this paper, it is seen as a business compulsion for them in terms of retention of talent and productivity in all sectors of the industry. In a time when attrition is a major concern in all sectors, they feel it wise to adopt worker-friendly practices. Employer can facilitate work life balance with many schemes that can attract employees and satisfy their needs. Some of these are facilitates for child care, financial planning services for employees who need them, Flexi-timings, Work sharing, Part time employment, leave plans both paid and unpaid to suit employees needs, subsidized food plans and insurance plans.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN INDIA

The country's strength in the form of low staff costs, a large pool of skilled, English speaking workforce, conducive policy environment and Government support has made India a popular choice for customers seeking outsourced services. Indian Government is making assiduous effort for prompting IT. The country is well positioned to derive benefits from the IT market and become a key hub for IT service. IT services offer different services integrated in a single delivery mechanism to end users.

The profile of the Indian IT Services has been undergoing a change in the last few years, partly as it moves up the value chain and partly as a response to the market dynamics. Ten years ago, most US companies would not even consider outsourcing some of their IT projects to outside vendors. Now, ten years later, a vast majority of US companies use the professional services of Indian Software engineers in some manner, through large, medium or small companies or through individuals recruited directly. The market competition is forcing organizations to cut down on costs of products. The professional IT services on the other hand are becoming increasingly expensive. The offshore software development model is today where onsite professional services were ten years ago. There is a high chance (almost a mathematical certainty), that in less than ten years, the vast majority of IT services (software development being just one of them) from developed countries, will be, one, outsourced and two, outsourced to an offshore vendor.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE DOMESTIC IT SERVICES MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Domestic demand for IT in India is witnessing a gradual transformation from being predominantly hardware driven towards a solutions oriented approach - resulting in a growing emphasis on services. In fact, revenue growth in the services segment alone has reported faster growth than that for the overall domestic IT market (including hardware, software and services) over the past few years. The liberalization of Indian economic policy, de-regulation of key sectors and progressive moves towards further integrating India with the global economy has been a key driver of increased IT adoption in the country. This is best reflected in the fact that most indigenous players in telecom and

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banking, two key sectors with significant Multi National Corporation (MNC) participation, have significantly upgraded their levels of IT adoption to offer best-in-class services comparable to those offered by the global competition and these two sectors together account for approximately 35-40 percent of the domestic spend on IT services.

GLOBAL SCENARIO OF THE IT SECTOR

The global business environment is fast changing with technology permeating the functioning of businesses to a great extent. Information technology has started to affect all facets of business, be it customer relations or vendor management or research or marketing etc. Some of the prominent trends that are influencing global business today and will continue to do so in the future include, Increasing Eenablement of businesses, Greater interaction between customers and marketing channels (intermediaries),Rapid convergence of the IT, telecommunication and entertainment medium, Proliferation of numerous mobile devices, resulting in a slow decline of the PC, Greater cost cutting initiatives and derisking of businesses resulting in a proliferation in outsourcing activities Application Service Providers (ASPs) revolutionizing the software sector by changing the pricing dynamics. The rapid generation of data and the rising importance of the same will propel the growth in the storage segment.

ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN WORK LIFE BALANCE

A key issue in work-family interference and family-work interference is time based conflict where time in one role affects participation in the other. Initial analysis of the literature, government guidelines and feedback from employers, suggested that information technology had a positive effect on work life by reducing time-based conflict. Advances in information technology facilitate flexible working practices such as: remote working, tele working and mobile working. Information technology can remove the location dimension as being an obstacle in work-life. In using technology to reduce family-work interference (where work is affected by family issues), work-family interference (where family life is affected by work issues) is increased. Information technology enables work to be conducted remotely, away from the normal working environment. Removing the geographical boundaries between work life and home life poses new challenges within the context of maintaining a healthy work-life. These challenges require social, organizational, legal and technological issues to be addressed in the development of human resource strategies.

WOMEN IN THE INDIAN IT SECTOR

One of the significant changes witnessed in the labour markets in India in the last decade has been the entry of women professionals. The percentages of females in regular employment in urban India, increased from 25.8% in 1983 to 33.3% in 2000 and the labour force participation rates is projected to reach 361 per 1000 females in the year 2026.(McNay, Unni, &Cassen, 2004). In the organised sector, women workers constituted 18.4% as on March 31, 2003, of which about 49.68 lakh (4.96 million) women were employed in the public and private sectors (The Financial Express, 2006). In fact, the largest numbers of women employees are in the IT/ITES sector (Wakhlu, 2008). The phenomenon of Indian Women IT professionals' is the term used to describe the enormous rise of women in the IT/BPO sector(The Indian programmer, 2000).Women accounted for 26.4% of the total India-based workforce in the IT sectorin 2007, up from 24% in 2005 and women comprise 25% of the employee strength of the major Indian IT companies (Ali,2006). Women's participation in the IT workforce is seen as a critical enabling factor for the continued growth of the sector(The Economic Times, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the work life balance among women employees;
2. To assess the influence of personal environment towards work life balance among women employees;

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3. To assess the women employee's perception, expectations and satisfaction work life balance;

METHODOLOGY

The present study based on Secondary data. Secondary data was collected by referring to NASSCOM annual reports, published Indian IT reports, Journals, Magazines and published data of varied nature.

SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

Women of the early centuries were mostly confined to their kitchens and those who were employed worked in factories, farms or shop works. Very few women had the access to higher education and they were forced to be at the mercy of their fathers or husbands attitudes towards women and work. The fast developing knowledge economy has given place for more number of women to be enlightened by higher education. Education has not only empowered them but also has given them robust careers. With brain power being the requisite skill in this knowledge era, rather than endurance or physical strength, the women workers seem to flood into every industry on par with men. But this has indeed become a tough challenge for women as they have to perform a lot of duties in home and office as well. The attempt of working women to integrate, organize and balance the various problems and activities in their different roles simultaneously puts them under tremendous pressure. The hours and times women work have always been subject to change but the pace of this change is now more rapid than ever before.

Sociological considerations plays an important role in moulding the personality of an individual in the society. In the present study which relates to the examinations of work life balance among women employees in IT industry under sociological context requires social strategies to be implemented among the women employees for their well being and social solidarity.

Perception of Career in comparison with Family

The orientation towards one's profession is said to determine the importance accorded to one's career. Hence, it is thought essential to ascertain what kind of orientation women professionals have towards their profession. The intention is to ascertain whether the professional role is perceived as prior to, equal to, or, as secondary to the domestic role.

Job Involvement

By job involvement is meant the extent to which an individual associate himself / herself with the job. It is the degree to which a person identifies physically and psychologically with his or her work. Job involvement reveals the importance of the job to the person. First, when viewed as an individual different variable, job involvement is believed to occur when the possession of certain needs, values, or personal characteristics predispose individuals to become more or less involved in their jobs. The second perspective views job involvement as a response to specific work situation characteristics. In other words, certain types of jobs or characteristics of the work situation influence the degree to which an individual becomes involved in his/her job.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction describes how content, an individual is with his or her job. It is the way an employee feels about his job. Although we know much about the antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction in general, little is known about this phenomenon as it manifests itself among women professionals of IT industry. Especially when such women manifest the characteristics of independence and empowerment, the job satisfaction experienced by them, as well as its determinants, may be unlike that of working women, in general.

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Long working hours

In the present scenario work places are transforming their role more in the journey of time bound into target bound so until they have completed their target of the day they were bound to work. Few years ago it was in fixed order that their working time is 9am -6pm and women employees won't be allowed to work after 6 but after the growth of IT industry it's started to give the sweet pill that says the day's target is this. They can move while they finished their targets of the day but the work target pays its role in prolonging a day time.

Travelling time

Even though women are strong in their psychological attitude everybody will feel difficult if their travelling time increases for there to reach office. By because of the extension of travelling time they are going tired as well as they were not able to spend more time with their family.

Technological Environment

Technological progress has contributed to labour and time-saving devices in many of the activities associated with shouldering family and household responsibilities, ranging from cooking to washing and housekeeping, to name a few. Moreover, it has also contributed to the emergence of virtual work places and flexi work patterns which, to some extent, help cope with work life demands better than before. Telework and telecommuting are becoming increasingly common. In the US, the International Telework Association and Council found that in 2005, approximately one-third of American employees have entered into tele work and telecommuting work arrangements.

Economic Environment

Global competition and global production networks through outsourcing have created relocation of jobs across international boundaries and contributed to new ways of overcoming the human talent deficit. One of the major fallouts of outsourcing is the increase in dual-income families in developing countries, especially the emerging economies.

Socio-cultural Environment

Research has shown that the attitude towards work, as defined in terms of hours worked per annum, varies across countries. Below is the average number of annual work hours in a select list of countries as reported by the OECD (2003), Australia1,814 hours, Japan 1,801 hours, USA1,792 hours, Canada 1,718 hours, UK 1,673 hours, Italy 1,591 hours, Sweden 1,564 hours, France 1,453 hours, Norway 1,337 hours. According to the 1998 Far East Economic Review, in general, urban Asians worked an average of 2,149 hours per annum vis- a-vis 2,068 hours for South Americans, 1,898 hours for North Americans and 1,773 hours in Europe. Berlin, Germany, reported the lowest number of work hours per annum at 1,667, with the average worker getting 30 days off every year. Research in Anglo countries has also found a stronger positive relationship between the number of work hours and work family stressors.

Work-family Conflict or Interference

It refers to simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains that are mutually incompatible in some respect such that meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role. Sometimes referred to as negative spill over, work-family conflict can take different forms and can originate either in the work domain or family domain. Work-family conflict and consequent outcomes can be buffered by various coping behaviours. Some researchers have looked into how Asian women cope with these stressors typology of coping provides a useful way to categorize these coping behaviours

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Leave

More employees are avail all their paid leave days – sick leave, personal leave, funeral leave, parental leave, floating holidays, etc., Sabbaticals, both paid and unpaid, are also making a comeback.

Time-saving assistance

Concierge services, onsite shopping, consumer resources, buying, leasing and maintaining cars, home repairs, real estate listings, house cleaning and other services that help employees save time are gaining in popularity again as the economy surges ahead. They're a win/win, saving time for employees as workloads grow, helping employers get more work done, and acting as an enticement as they recruit new talent.

Emotional well-being

Most employees offer the services of an Employee Assistance Program. Developed in the early 70s to help with employees' alcoholism and addiction issues, their mandate has grown. Still the experts in alcohol and drug intervention assistance, counselling for gambling and eating disorders, they also provide counselling for grief and loss, personal relationships, work relationships, marriage and family issues, divorce and separation, mental health issues, violence and crisis, work life balance and stress management.

CONCLUSION

In the present scenario most of the software employees are under the categories of women, the recent survey insist about quality of work life balance of women employees in software industry steadily shows the decreasing trend from 85% to 52% in the last ten years. More over 80% of women employees in software sector are having more health issues and also not in the position to balancing their family as well as highly pressure working environment, even though the women employees contribution is constantly supporting for the development of software industry. This study on women IT professionals reveal that they are unwilling to relinquish either of their roles, instead, for a viable functioning they resort to coping strategies which are nothing but adjustments that safeguard the interests of the family while enabling their participation in workforce. Hence it is argued that work-life balance hinges on the societal definition of what makes life meaningful and worthwhile. Societal understandings shape our perception of what we owe to our families, to our careers and ourselves. Moreover, these societal norms have real consequences for peoples lives for they help define the expectations of employers, clients, and spouses. Social norms thus shape careers; they open and close off opportunities and they influence couples decision about who is to advance in career and who is to lag behind.

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