Developing Software to amend Work Life Balance among IT Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Work life imbalance occurs when the cumulative demand of many work and non work life roles becomes incompatible. The Information Technology (IT) world tends to compromise on this most important aspect in the pursuit of higher pay check. Hence this study was carried out with the objective of assessing the efficacy of the software developed in amending the work life balance among the respondents. Hundred IT professionals from Databazaar.com, Kolkata, called as the primary sample were assessed for their level of work life balance (WLB) and the professionals suffering from work life imbalance, called the secondary sample were culled out to undergo the enhancement programme. The tools used were the self structured questionnaire to assess WLB, and software designed to provide tips on amending work life balance. The key findings were

- A total of 68% of the sample suffered from poor and fair level of work life balance
- The grand total score of the secondary sample (68) after enhancement was 8492 against the expected score of 9316, which designates that the software developed has very well served its purpose and
- Thirty two per cent and 56% of the secondary sample could accomplish good and fair level of work life balance respectively after the enhancement programme.

Laconically, these findings revealed that the software developed to amend work life balance could improve the life quality of the selected sample by enhancing their resources and productivity.

Introduction

The pressure of work outside home has been intensifying in recent decades. Factors such as the advances in information technology, information load, the need for speed of response, the increasing needs of education, health, demands of present day lifestyles, availability and the pace of change with its results upholds the sources of pressure that results in work life imbalance among all the professionals around the globe today. Work life imbalance occurs when the cumulative demand of many work and non work life roles are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001). Hence, work life balance is much more related to the degree of engagement and importance that is felt in each role than the time spent among the various roles. The Information Technology (IT) world tends to compromise on this most important aspect in the pursuit of higher pay check.

Work – life balance is rightly defined as an assortment of balance wheels, widely available, typically including such an aspects of life as social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and work. (Hache, Redekopp and Jarvis, 2000).

Hence, the challenges of work – life balance is without question one of the most significant struggles faced by modern man in general and IT professionals in particular. Several surveys had found that work life - balance is at or near the top of IT employees greatest personal and professional challenges (Clark, 2000). Hence this study was carried out with the following objectives

- **To find out the level of work - life balance among selected IT professionals**

- **To develop a software to amend the work - life balance of the selected IT professionals and**

- **To assess the efficacy of the software in amending work - life balance among IT professionals.**

METHODOLOGY

Hundred IT professionals from Databazaar.com, Kolkata, called as the primary sample were assessed for their level of work life balance (WLB) and the professionals suffering from work life imbalance, called the secondary sample were culled out to undergo the enhancement programme. A self structured questionnaire of 30 questions was constructed to assess the level of work life balance (WLB). Each question has three to five options that the respondent had to tick according to their choice and it elicits adequate information from the selected sample on their travel time, their personal activities, involvement with their family members, stress related problems, personal health was constructed. Each option has been given ratings from 1 to 5 according to their priorities. The ratings were summed across these questions resulting to a maximum score of 121 and minimum score of 39 for each individual with the higher scores indicating better work life balance. The respondent's score were sorted out within three categories of Good (above 121), Fair (91 to 121) and Poor (below 91). Software was designed with the purpose of amending work life balance among the selected secondary sample. The software developed provided tips for the respondents in planning the day, achieving balance between work and life, planning for household work, stress management strategies, impressing boss etc. The content thus developed was categorized into three major dimensions and its related sub aspects as given in Annexue - 1.

The software was circulated among the secondary sample of IT professionals through mailing method. The beneficiaries were given three weeks time to go through it and two week practice time so that the sample could change or modify them by equipping the strategies and means to amend work life balance as given in the software. The self structured tool to assess the level of work life balance was readministered to the secondary sample to find out how far the software had helped them to improve their work - life balance.

FINDINGS

The findings of the present research are discussed under the following heads

a. General background of the selected IT professionals

b. Level of WLB among the selected sample before enhancement programme
- WLB of the selected sample
- Categorization of the sample based on WLB

c. Level of WLB among the selected secondary sample after enhancement programme
- WLB of the selected secondary sample
- Categorization of the secondary sample based on WLB

a. GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE IT PROFESSIONALS

- Most of the respondents belonged to Hindu religion and their monthly income per month ranges between Rs. 20,000 – 30,000
- Forty five percent of them have had completed their postgraduation before getting employed

b. **LEVEL OF WLB AMONG THE SELECTED SAMPLE BEFORE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME**

Appraising the level of work life balance among the selected sample was hammered out into two heads namely

i. Work life balance score (WLB) of selected IT professionals before enhancement

ii. Categorization of the sample based on their level of work life balance before enhancement

Work life balance score (WLB) of selected IT professionals

The questionnaire assessing the work life balance level of IT employees had 30 questions in total. Table I holds the scores for the statements that unfold the time spent on travel, working hours, working days, time for lunch break feeling regarding travel time, work worries and work timings, negative effect on family life, personal life, social life and personal health etc.

TABLE – I
WORL LIFE BALANCE SCORE (WLB) OF SELECTED IT PROFESSIONALS

S.No		TS	MS	TS	MS	TS	MS
1	Time spent on daily travel	300	3.56	200	5	135	3.37
2	Daily working hours	300	4.23	200	4	157	3.92
3	Weekly working days	240	3.63	160	4	146	3.65
4	Worry about work when not actually at work	240	3.28	160	5	119	2.97

5	Feeling about the time spent at work	300	3.7	200	5	160	4
6	Feeling about the time spent on traveling	300	3.71	200	5	155	3.87
7	Feeling about the time spent thinking work	300	3.8	200	5	143	3.57
8	Time taken for lunch break	300	4.16	200	4	149	3.72
9	Miss quality time with family due to workload	240	3.26	160	4	141	3.52
10	Miss quality time with friends due to workload	240	3.36	160	5	132	3.30
11	Negative effect on personal life	300	4.23	200	5	169	4.22
12	Last time when did something for self	300	3.45	200	5	166	4.15
13	Feel anxious or upset about work	300	3.81	200	5	152	3.80
14	Give up activities because of work	300	3.7	200	5	152	3.80
15	Last time lost temper	300	4.35	200	5	172	4.30
16	Tired or depressed about work	300	3.85	200	5	159	3.97
17	Enough time for sleep	120	1.73	80	2	56	1.40
18	Reason for not getting proper sleep	300	0.96	200	5	58	1.70
19	Scold children after coming from work	300	1.86	200	5	82	2.05
20	Reason for scolding	240	1.28	160	4	56	1.40
21	End up in conflict with spouse	300	2.28	200	5	99	2.47
22	Time for maintaining social circle/society	300	3.48	200	5	143	3.57
23	Holiday trips	300	3	200	5	136	3.40

24	Time to look after family as a whole	300	3.75	200	5	144	3.60
25	Enjoy doing work	300	3.46	200	5	142	3.55
26	Salary, working hour, pressure not proportionate	300	3.63	200	5	139	3.47
27	Time to look after children activities	300	1.68	200	5	99	2.47
28	Time to maintain personal health	300	3.25	200	5	146	3.65
29	Forget appointment, invitation and commitments	300	3.71	200	5	150	3.75
30	Time on phone calls	300	3.51	200	5	144	3.52
	Grand score	8520	93.81	5280	137	4008	97.61

The grand total score obtained by male and female professionals put together was 9874 against the expected score of 13, 800, which establishes the verdict that some programme amending the work life balance of these professionals has to be carried out. This ruling is strongly supported by a DuPont survey which has asked employees about their work life needs, and found those using work life programmes are more committed, more likely to 'go the extra mile' (Dupont, 2001). Hence it could be strongly recommended that every employee should have a work life programmes to refresh themselves and be more productive.

ii.   **Categorization of the selected sample on their level of work – life balance before enhancement**

The Table II depicts the categorization of selected IT professionals' level of work - life balance based on their WLB scores. The sample are marked as having poor work – life balance when they attain a score less than 91 whereas they are categorized as possessing good work – life balance if their score is more than 121. The score range between 91 and 121 indicates fair balance.

TABLE - II
CATEGORIZATION OF SELECTED SAMPLE BASED ON THEIR WORK LIFE BALANCE BEFORE ENHANCEMENT

S.No	Category	Male(60)		Female(40)		Total(100)	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	**Good**	**19**	32	**13**	33	32	32
2	**Fair**	**15**	25	**9**	22	24	24
3	**Poor**	**26**	43	**18**	45	44	44

A quick look into the table concerning the categorization based on the level of work life balance, it was obvious that more than $1/3^{rd}$ of the total beneficiaries (male – 31.66% and female- 32.50%) could make their way in possessing good balance between work and life.

While looking into the other two categories namely fair and poor level of work life balance, the table confirms that a great majority (44%) suffered from poor balance in between work and life, whereas 24 percent of the selected professionals were in between the first and third category of fair work life balance. This percentage of IT professionals is under the threat of falling int the third category of poor work life balance at any time. The reason for this verdict may be due to higher level of work pressure, long hours of travel, unpredictable working hours, excessive work load, lack of leisure time, burden of fulfillment of life's need etc.

By seeing the statistics at this juncture, it is strongly recommended that the IT professionals who fall into the categories of other than good work – life balance need to be transformed to

good category through some enhancement programme to have a healthy, balanced and peaceful life.

c. LEVEL OF WORK – LIFE BALANCE AMONG THE SECONDARY   SAMPLE AFTER ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

Work life balance is considered to be the primary need of the hour for every employee. But till date the employees haven't realized this fact in its true sense. Hence the primary objective of this study was to design software which can help the imbalanced professionals atleast to an extent to improve their balance between their work and life. The efficacy of the software is established by the following two heads

   i.   WLB of the selected secondary sample
   ii. Categorization of the secondary sample based on WLB

In view of the methodology, 68 of the respondents who fall under the category of possessing fair (24) and poor (44) level of work life balance constitute the secondary sample and the enhancement programme of amending work life balance is meant for these beneficiaries. The findings after enhancement is as follows

i.   **WLB of the selected secondary sample**

The Table – III assesses the scores of the selected secondary sample after enhancement programme

S.No	Statement	Total				
		OS				
		MS	TS	MS	TS	M
1	Time spent on daily travel	3.5	135	5	122	4.1
2	Daily working hours	4.4	135	4	118	4.4
3	Weekly working days	3.6	108	4	116	4.3
4	Worry about work when not actually at work	3.7	108	5	102	3.8
5	Feeling about the time spent at work	4.6	135	5	108	4
6	Feeling about the time spent on traveling	3.3	135	5	122	4.5
7	Feeling about the time spent thinking work	3.8	135	5	93	3.4
8	Time taken for lunch break	4	135	4	94	3.5
9	Miss quality time with family	3.6	108	4	111	4.1
10	Miss quality time with friends	3.4	108	5	128	4.7
11	Negative effect on personal life	4.7	135	5	115	4.3
12	Last time when did something for self	4.6	135	5	118	4.4
13	Feel anxious or upset about work	4.2	135	5	123	4.6
14	Give up activities because of work	4.6	135	5	124	4.6
15	Last time lost temper	4.4	135	5	114	4.2
16	Tired or depressed about work	4.7	135	5	102	4.1
17	Enough time for sleep	1.5	54	2	48	1.8
18	Reason for not getting proper sleep	4.6	135	5	119	4.4
19	Scold children after coming from work	4.2	135	5	123	4.4
20	Reason for scolding	3.7	108	4	98	3.6
21	End up in conflict with spouse	4.6	135	5	126	4.7
22	Time for maintaining social circle/society	4.3	135	5	113	4.2
23	Holiday trips	4.4	135	5	104	3.9
24	Time to look after family as a whole	4.7	135	5	109	4.
25	Enjoy doing work	4.3	135	5	119	4.4

26	Disproportionate salary and working hour	4.5	135	5	123	4.6
27	Time to look after children activities	4.6	135	5	130	4.8
28	Time to maintain personal health	3.9	135	5	128	4.5

TABLE – III LEVEL OF WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB) SCORE OF SECONDARY SAMPLE AFTER

| 30 | Time on phone calls | 4.5 | 135 | 5 | 127 | 4.7 |
| | **Grand score** | **121.6** | **3699** | **139** | **3419** | **126.** |

The above table shows that after enhancement there has been only a minimum difference between the expected score and obtained score of each individual in every statement. The grand mean score of both male and female professionals also had boosted up, which is an evidence marking the efficacy of the software.

The professional's scores after the enhancement programme on the basic statement regarding quantity of sleep reflect the fulfillment of the main objective of the software. Both male and female professionals could score 62 and 48 against an expected score of 82 and 54 respectively. The other aspects such as quality time spent with family and friends had seen a incredible hike in the postassessment.

ii. Categorization of the secondary sample based on their level of work life balance after enhancement

Secondary sample (68) was categorized based on heir WLB score after the enhancement programme. The respondents with a score of below 90 were categorized under poor level of work life balance, fair if their score is between 91-121 and good if the score is above 121.

TABLE – IV
CATEGORIZATION OF THE SECONDARY SAMPLE BASED ON THEIR LEVEL OF WORK LIFE BALANCE AFTER ENHANCEMENT

S.No	Category	Male(41)		Female(27)		Total(68)	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	**Good**	**10**	24	**12**	44	22	32
2	**Fair**	**24**	59	**14**	52	38	56
3	**Poor**	**7**	17	**1**	4	8	12

The table elicits the fact that the effort put forward to amend work life balance has worked out and it could lower the number of professionals in the poor category. About 32% and 56% of the secondary sample could make their way of amending work life balance completely and fairly. The effectiveness of the software is undoubtedly proved by having only eight respondents in the poor category.

Laconically, these findings revealed that the software developed to amend work life balance could improve the life quality of the selected sample by enhancing their resources and productivity.

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