

A Comparative Study on The Work-Life Balance of IT Professionals Before and During the Lockdown Period

PREETHY N. A¹, RENCY JOSEPH²

¹ Student, St.Albert's College, (Autonomous), Ernakulam.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Research Centre, St.Albert's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam.

Abstract- *The research was carried out to find out how IT professionals are managing their work-life balance before and during the lockdown period. The study projects the work-life balance of IT professionals changes with the introduction of work from home. From the introduction of work from home, it becomes difficult to differentiate the professional and personal responsibilities. This research is an attempt to provide feedback on the work-life balance of IT professionals before and during the lockdown period so that they can bring about the changes in their schedules and practices which can help them to increase their productivity as well as not to lose their valuable time with their family.*

Indexed Terms- *COVID-19, IT professionals, Work from home, Work-life-balance*

I. INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus has changed everything overnight. Lockdown was proclaimed and is continuing until now. Schools have been shut to stop the unfold of the virus and it gave way to virtual classrooms. However, what regarding the IT sector?

The Information Technology sector as the name suggests involves the transmission of information or systems that nurture communication. It plays a very important role in the growth of the Indian economy by providing employment to over one million people. IT industry is one of the important foreign exchange earners and it also helps in the development of the service sector. IT industry helps to reduce the dependency on foreign countries for the manufacturing and supply of goods. It comprises the companies that produce software, hardware, providing

internet and other related services. The growth of the IT sector in recent years is tremendous. As the IT sector is expanding by many folds, there is no shortage of job options and it becomes the most alluring part of the IT sector. But due to the current situation, it is not ideal to let more than 2 lakh employees work in the same office. But nowadays, office space is no more important. Thanks to our ever-evolving technologies like Skype, Facetime, Slack, Zoom, Google hangouts, Google meet and not to forget texting and email- it's no longer necessary to be physically present in the office full time to be a productive member of the team. If you have a good internet connection, office space, phone services etc then you can easily work from home.

There comes the importance of Work From Home. Work From Home or the acronym "WFH" is the new arrangement to ensure social distancing in this pandemic situation. But contrary to the popular belief Working From Home is not new. "Working Remotely" that operates far from the standard workplace setting has been popular for many years. But both the WFH and dealing remotely are two ostensibly simple, however totally different ideas.

In remote work, you will never get to meet your employer physically and you are presumably not needed to attend company events or training in person.

In the case of WFH as a full-time worker, you have got the choice to either work at your workplace or within the comfort of your home. Several corporations have adopted the WFH policy. It enables their staff to work from home either full time or once it is most convenient for them.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For understanding the literature gaps, it is very important to review the literature works which have been done by others. Hence, this chapter is to deliver an overview of the relevant literature.

- Tracey Gosbie and Jeanne Moore conducted the study 'work-life balance and working from home (2004)', to understand whether working (or not) from home improves people's capacity to balance their work and life commitments. As we can say, technology is developing day by day, we can use home where we can work, live and seek entertainment rather than, office environment. The study found out that most of the respondents have developed their own strategies for coping up with the work stress. Even then they have to face numerous difficulties like reduced social contact, loneliness and lack of motivation. One of the drawbacks of working from home is that they even have to spend longer hours than they are paid for. The study states that women employees suffer due to personal conflict between their roles as homemakers and workers. The professional women consider both of the roles as equal on the other hand traditional women may prioritise their family over their career. But men don't have this personal conflict to a certain extent. The study suggests that a little progress in the policy is needed in this area. One of the limitations of this project is the sample size to get a full picture of the effect of home working, more research is needed.
- According to Eileen Drew and Eamon M. Murtagh ('Work/Life Balance: Senior Management Champions or Laggards? (2005), male senior managers have delegated their family responsibilities to their spouses and are focusing more on their career. However, the case of female senior managers is the opposite of male senior managers. Hence, they want to avail a more flexible working arrangement for themselves. Reasons for the employers to not introduce work-life balance policy is that they believe it will cause conflicts among the employees. The employers even think that the employees may take advantage of such policies. The female senior managers are compelled to follow the career cycle which was

exclusively constructed for men so that they wouldn't be labelled as less suitable management material. However, the perspective of both male and female senior managers about not availing themselves of the benefits of work-life balance is the fear of it adversely affecting their career or promotional opportunities. The male senior managers disclose that it is difficult to work from home as it may affect their discipline and above all, it will be impossible to control the staff while working from home. In the survey, the male respondents have pointed out that emphasising on performance/output rather than presenteeism may help to promote work/life balance. The working hours can be reduced by increasing the staff levels and also by educating the managers to exercise flexibility. On the other hand, women seniors pointed out that there should be some initiatives for managers to encourage them to reduce working hours and the meetings they have to attend by assisting in time management.

- According to Manisha Purohit (A Comparative Study Of Work-Life Balance In Various Industrial Sectors In Pune Region (2013)), only about 30% of the companies have adopted work-life balance policies in Pune region. It states that 80% of IT companies and 20% of the service sector use flexitime, while no manufacturing companies use flexitime. Almost 40% of IT companies offer work from home as a policy. Neither service sector nor the manufacturing sector offers compressed weeks or job sharing or part-time work while all three sectors offer compensatory leave. Provision of financial planning services was prevalent in 80% of the IT sector and 40% service sector and manufacturing sector each. The study states that 60% of the respondents commented that work-life balance initiatives were adequately available in their organizations, 56.7% of respondents felt that it was made accessible to all employees and 50% of respondents felt that work-life balance initiative is made use of by the employees. By implementing work-life initiatives one can attain both individual and organizational benefits. If the employees can attain work-life balance then he would be content with his career and it will increase his productivity.

- A report on the importance of work-life balance (2015) is a study done by D.Babin Dhas, which provides human resource professionals data and solutions to compliment work-life balance in their organisations. This study states that by using three factors, that is global competitions, personal values and an ageing workforce- human resource professionals can gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Creating and maintaining a healthy work environment can enable the workers to have a work-life balance. It will also increase the employee's loyalty and productivity. Most of the employees today face work-family conflict, especially when they have responsibilities apart from work from the families and communities in which they live. In this society, where everything is a competition, these long work hours and stress will also be associated with major health risks. The paper has suggested some current practises organisations are for reducing work-life conflicts such as stress management activities such as yoga, counselling etc. But there are some issues furthermore when the employees have flexible work hours, which includes lack of face time with their colleagues and not being as available to clients etc. So the researcher concludes that to ensure work-life balance the organisation does not need to always cut short the working hours of employees; instead they can hire new staff, introduce job sharing etc. The paper also provides some useful tips for employees like "seeing a clear boundary between the work and home, saying 'no' to the stressful things, keeping a daily to-do list".
- Dr Shareena P and Muhammad Shahid have assessed the experience of employees who work from home during the covid pandemic (Work from home during covid 19: employees perception and experience (2020). Working from home is not new for most of the IT sector employees as most of the companies have included it in the leave policy to increase their productivity. But covid 19 pandemics have forced a wide variety of employees all over the world to work from home to maintain social distancing norms and slow down the spreading of the virus. But it has both positive and negative consequences. When you work in the comfort of your home you can certainly have quality time with your family. But it will tremendously affect the face to face interaction with your colleagues. From both the employees and the organisation point of view supervision will be troublesome and it may further lead to work avoidance. From the respondents, the researchers have found out that above 60% of them are ready to work from home. Some of them think that the job assigned to them could be only done in the office. While the teachers reckon, having a face to face interaction with the students is one of the essential aspects of teaching. Having an online class lacks the same aspect. The study has found out that the gender of the hypothesis doesn't influence their willingness to work from home and majority of the respondents who are not ready to work from home have kids at home. The study has also found out that the willingness to leave home is based on the comfortable space, quiet environment and good internet connectivity at home.
- The study by Dr Swarnalatha V and Dr Lalitha P, in their article, focuses on the problems and challenges faced by working women professionals (Work life balance in pandemic: A conceptual study of the problems and challenges faced by working women professionals, 2020). The study also provides tips to improve working from home during the pandemic. COVID 19 pandemic situation is very overwhelming that coping up with work-life and domestic life is being stressful, especially in the case of working women. The prominent modification in technology, culture and environment has caused many changes in social and institutional level, which have impacts in the lives of Indian families. This makes them capable of having a work-life balance so that neither work nor home life disturbs each other. In the organisation point of view, their employees need to have a work-life balance as the studies show that healthy and stress-free employees can fulfil their work commitments efficiently. So, the organisations have to provide their employees with adequate opportunities to balance their work life and home life. In return, they will help them to achieve high productivity. This study has focused on explaining the problems faced by the women professionals and provided them with tips about

how they can effectively have a work-life balance in their covid 19 pandemic situation.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

COVID 19 pandemic has endorsed the idea of work from home into an officially mandated and strictly implemented rule that is raising from all sectors, commencing from the IT sector. It is a drastic change from the standard workplace environment; an area where workers assemble on weekdays for 40+ hours per week to work for an organisation. As we can see the importance of Work From Home is increasing, which can additionally cause the importance of Work-Life Balance among the staff. The definition of Work-Life balance involves "looking at how working people manage time to spend at outside work. The time outside work may comprise managing family responsibilities and other outside interests and hobbies".

General operating hours of an IT professional is from 8.00 AM to 5.00 PM. Nevertheless for a person who is practising work from home will not be having this specific time schedule and for a few, work from home additionally suggests that inflated workload.

The aim of this study is to comprehend how IT professionals manage their Work-Life Balance before and during Lockdown.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To compare the work-life balance of IT professionals before and during the lockdown period.
- To identify the determinants of Work-Life balance of IT professionals.
- To determine the aspects that will help IT professionals, to uphold the Work-Life balance.
- To formulate suggestions, if any to pursue the Work-Life balance of IT professionals.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **RESEARCH TYPE:**

The type of research used in this study is descriptive and analytical.

- **DATA COLLECTION:**

For the purpose of data collection, both primary and secondary data collection methods are used

Primary Data:

The Primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire from 75 respondents in Ernakulam, Thrissur, Trivandrum and Palakkad.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data used in this study had been collected from different journals and websites.

- **SAMPLING FRAME AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:**

It is proposed to conduct a sample method of study. The sampling frame chosen for the study is the IT professionals in the districts of Ernakulam, Thrissur, Trivandrum and Palakkad. The sampling technique used for this particular study is convenience sampling.

- **SAMPLE SIZE:**

The size of the sample used is 75 IT professionals in the districts of Ernakulam, Thrissur, Trivandrum and Palakkad working in different companies.

- **TOOLS USED:**

Graphical representation and percentage analysis have been used for the study.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

The study is conducted to evaluate the work life balance of IT professionals in Kerala, when Work From Home became a more popular and important policy due to the pandemic. For this purpose, the data collection was done by distributing online questionnaires to the respondents with the help of google forms. Data was collected from 75 IT professionals, from the different places in Kerala using a convenience sampling method.

The data collected has been analysed, described and interpreted in a systematic manner using tables and graphical representation. Graphical representations include pie diagrams, bar diagrams, line charts etc. On

the other hand, data analysis has been done using a percentage method.

VII. FINDINGS

The following points have been drawn from this study

- During Lockdown more than majority of respondents chose Work From Home and most of them have established a good work routine.
- More than half of the respondents agree that unpredictable working hours, work load, multiple roles, family requirements and health affect their work life balance.
- More than half of the respondents agree that their company follows the policies like flexitime, job sharing, remote working, childcare facilities and emphasising on performance.
- Most of the respondents have a clear understanding about the work from home policy and also the job objectives of each day.
- Some of the respondents agree that there is a lack of adequate communication from the team leaders and members and they lack team spirit and motivation.
- Half of the respondents have separate office space in their home, even then it is difficult to take regular breaks in between and to turn off work mode at the end of the day.
- About half of the respondents are satisfied with the work from home policy while the other half still struggle to maintain work life balance.
- 43 out of 75 respondents agree that they have work life balance. Most of the time, work life balance depends on the project they are working on. Not every project provides them with a great work life balance.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

- All the employees must have a clear understanding about work from home policy as well work life balance.
- Tolerable work load and flexible time might help in having a great work life balance.
- The company and seniors must respect the extra time the employees have to put in Work from Home. The company should encourage

emphasising on performance or output not the time worked.

- Team leaders and team members must have adequate communication. Otherwise, it will adversely affect the motivation and team spirit of the employees.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to know whether IT professionals are able to have Work life balance as work from home policy becomes the norm during the pandemic situation. Even though the work from home policy was there from before, it was really challenging to work from home for a whole year and so on. In the beginning it felt good but in the long run it also brought problems like social isolation, health issues, workload etc. Work From Home was really a blessing at the time of the pandemic. But companies should understand that it comes with a lot of pressure on employees, especially female employees who have to perform so many roles within the family. When kids are also around they have to run madly to meet all their expectations at the cost of health and self care. The companies and the seniors must respect the extra time the employees have to spend while working from home. Trying to keep work and home separate is a challenge but is very much required. Humans are social people so the social interactions are much needed for us. The breakthrough of the pandemic itself was horrifying and stressful. Adding workload and social distancing become more and more stressful. It is no secret that if this situation continues employees will lose their health, mental stability and social life as well. When it becomes difficult to balance work, flexitime is a good option and most of the companies have flexible hours in their policy. Along with it all the required items should be available at home otherwise work from home could be a big flop. Work From Home is a good policy while it is for a short run. Hence if it is a 50-50 work from home-office or optional facility it can be more effective.

REFERENCES

- [1] Gosbie, Moore (2004); et.al, Work-Life Balance and Working from Home.

- [2] Drew, Murtagh (2005); et.al, Work/Life Balance: Senior Managements Champions or Laggards.
- [3] Purohit (2013); et.al, A Comparative Study of The Work Life Balance in Various Industrial Sectors in Pune Region.
- [4] Dhas (2015); et.al, A Report on The Importance of Work Life Balance.
- [5] P, Shahid (2020); et.al, Work from Home During COVID 19: Employees Perception and Experience.
- [6] V, P (2020); et.al, WORK LIFE BALANCE IN PANDEMIC: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKING WOMEN PROFESSIONALS.