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     STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

     OBJECTIVES

     HYPOTHESES

     RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

     RESULTS & DISCUSSION

     FINDINGS

     RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

     CONCLUSIONS

     SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

     ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

     REFERENCES

     APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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WORK LIFE BALANCE: AN OVERVIEW OF INDIAN COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has become a subject of concern for both research scholars and business leaders in view of the contemporary demographic, technological, market, and organisational changes associated with it. However, there has been little academic attempt to provide a holistic picture of work-life balance benefits and programmes (WLBPs) offered by various organisations in India. Work–life balance is the proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. The present paper covers the concepts of work life balance and work life balance practices. The paper has discussed the conceptual paradigm of work life balance. This paper includes various survey reports on work life balance policies and practices stimulating employees. The purpose of the paper is to describe the prevalent work life balance practices in India. The present study is descriptive in nature. The paper gives the details of work life balance practices adopted by the companies in India. These practices are more prominent in new economy organisations. The range of these practices varies across organisations and there is still a long way to go when work life balance practices become strategic HR initiatives in most organisations.

KEYWORDS

Work life balance, Work life balance policies and practices, Retaining, Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

rganisations today increasingly recognise the potential of their employees as a source of competitive advantage. With intensified global competition, improved employee mobility, changing family and work models and many other demographical changes has made organisations think of new strategies in attracting, engaging and retaining employees. Work life initiatives have been identified to be a predictor of attracting and retaining employees (Equal employment opportunities trust, 2007; Konrad & Mangel, 2000). Research further reports, reduction in absenteeism, increase in self reported productivity and improvement in job satisfaction (equal employment opportunities trust, 2007) as a result of organizational work life initiatives, supporting employee work life balance.

Studies on work life balance often concentrate only on the two domains work and family. At the same time work and family have been often considered as two sides of the same coin having a zero sum game (Eiknof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007). It has been often neglected that both work and family can contribute significantly on the overall life satisfaction. Bird (2003) argues that work life balance should essentially concentrated on the four aspects work, family, self and social, due to the fact that an individual's life satisfaction goes beyond family and work.

WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work life balance refers to harmonious or satisfying arrangement between an individual's work obligations and his/her personal life (sverko, et. al 2002). Work life balance, its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life. Although definitions and explanations vary, work life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life.

The concept of work life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen as less competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life. The way to achieve this is to adopt an approach that is "conceptualised as a two way process involving a consideration of the needs of employees as well as those of employers" (Lewis, 2000: p.105). In order to engage employers in this process it is important to demonstrate the benefits that can be derived from employment policies and practices that support work life balance.

Although work life balance has traditionally been assumed to involve the devotion of equal amounts of time to paid work and non-work roles, more recently the concept has been recognised as more complex and has been developed to incorporate additional components.

1. Time balance, which concerns the amount of time given to work and non-work roles.
2. Involvement balance, meaning the level of psychological involvement in, or commitment to, work and non work roles.
3. Satisfaction balance or the level of satisfaction with work and non-work roles.

A CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM OF WORK- LIFE BALANCE

FIG.1- A CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE
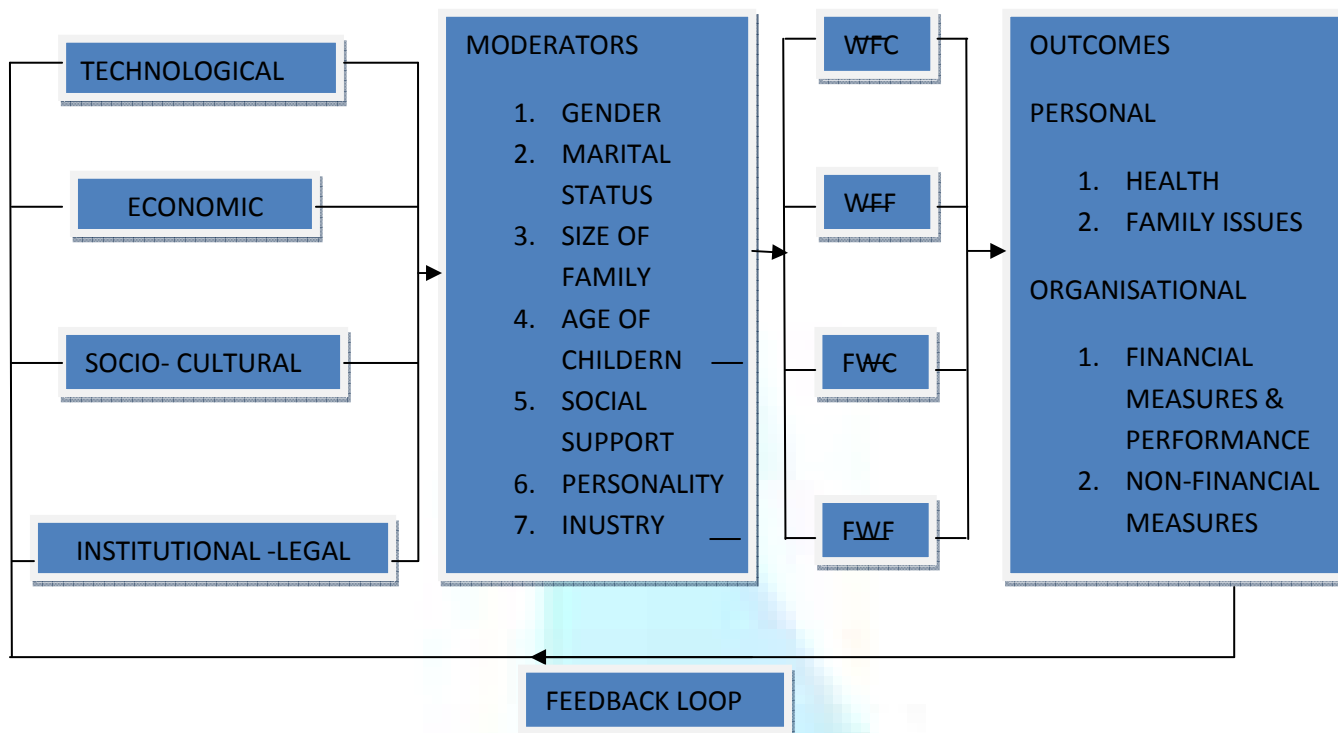
Source- NHRD Network Journal, July 2009

1. **THE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**
A. **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 emergence of virtual workplaces and flexi work patterns which to some extent help cope with work- life demands better than before. Telework and telecommunicating are becoming increasingly common. While this development can enhance work- life balance, it could have a differential impact that lowers work family conflict but increases family work conflict.
B. **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.
C. **Socio- cultural Environment: -** Research has shown that the attitude towards work, as defined in terms of hours worked per annum, varies across countries. According to the 1998 far east economic review, in general, urban Asians worked an average of 2150 hours per annum vis-a-vis 2068 hours for South Americans, 1898 hours for north Americans and 1773 hours in Europe. Berlin, Germany reported the lowest number of work hours at 1667, 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 (Spector, Cooper, Poelmans 2004). Overall the work-Life Balance issues confronting workers in the industrialised countries differ from that in the developing economies. To a certain extent the problems may be a function of the ageing work force in the industrialized west with higher demands on the care of the elderly, whereas in the case of countries like India, It is the younger population that requires greater family care and attention.
D. **Institutional and Legal Environment: -** The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been a pioneer in championing the cause of workers with family responsibilities and has established several international labour standards and recommendations on the subject. The ILO Convention of 156 on Workers with family responsibilities covers all branches of economic activity and all categories of workers. Maternity Protection Convention (adopted in 1919 and revised in 2000) and recommendation No.191 on the subject provide for maternity leave extended from 12 to 14 weeks including paternity leave up to 18 weeks and provides for protection against dismissal of pregnant women and provision for breastfeeding during working hours.
2. **Moderating Variables**: - Work-Life Balance are moderated by several variables including gender, marital status, size of the family, age of children, social support, personality traits and industry/ sector. With regard to gender, Research shows that women tend to derive less benefit from social support from their supervisors/colleagues in comparison to their male counterparts (Van Daalen, Willemsen, Sanders, 2006).
In terms of marital status and family size, those who are single and those with smaller families and / or with grown children generally experience less work-family life tensions than those who are married, have larger families and young children (Tung 1999).
As far as social support is concerned it is usually of two types: **Instrumental support** comes from society and employers in terms of the provision of family care facilities, long maternity/paternity leave, work women hostels and home for the aged to care for the ageing population. **Emotional support** comes from ones family, managers or colleagues. Personality traits can also moderate the relationship between environmental variables and Work- Life Balance.
2. **Outcomes of the Above Factors of Work – Life Balance: -** work family and family work conflicts could adversely affect the employees' career (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). Family issues including increased incidence of divorce are common where work-family conflicts escalate. Work-Family conflict can have disastrous consequences on the organization, both financial and non financial wise. Research shows that firms with better Work – Life Balance practices enjoyed significantly higher productivity. As far as non financial aspects of organizational performance is concerned, research shows that firms that adopt more enlightened Work – Life Balance policies can improve the level of job satisfaction and increase organizational commitment among their employees (Pratt, 2006).

WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICIES & PRACTICES

Work life balance policies and practices enhance the autonomy of worker in coordinating and integrating the work and non-work aspects of their lives. Three broad types of types of work life strategies have been created to help employees balance their work and non-work lives: flexible work options specialize leave policies and dependant- care benefits. These include a range of policies and practices like, compressed work week, flexitime, job sharing, home telecommunicating, work-at-home programs, part-time work, shorter work days for parents, bereavement leave, paid maternity leave, paid leave to care sick

family members, paternity leave, on site/near site company childcare, company referral system for childcare, programs for emergency care of ill dependents, childcare programs during school vacations, re-entry scheme, phased retirement, sabbatical leave, professional counselling, life skills programs, subsidised exercise for fitness centre, relocation assistance, work and family resources kit or library.

Work-life balance policies can assist employees achieving a balance between their work and personal commitments that is right for them. The policies need to be supported by the workplace culture, which reflects the beliefs, values and norms of the whole of the organisation from the CEO to staff members. Other important factors in the success of work life balance policies include proper communication of commitment to the policies to existing and future employees , raising awareness of the policies, education of managers about the importance of policies, and training of managers on 'how to' implement these policies.

WORK – LIFE BALANCE - AN IMPERATIVE FOR BUSINESS

1. SKILL SHORTAGES
In the past, the provision of flexible work options was often viewed by the organizations as an optional 'fringe benefit'. However in the present demographic and economic climate, policies and strategies promoting work/life have become crucial. Many developed countries are facing serious shortages of skilled workers across industries. This is due to the ageing workforce that will grow proportionally over the next 20 years. Research conducted by Australian Government Productivity Commission (2005) shows one-quarter of Australians will be aged 65 years or more by 2044–45, giving rise to economic and fiscal impacts that pose significant challenges for organizations of all types and sizes. Drop in fertility levels in women also contribute to this 'structural ageing'. From an organizational perspective, the adoption of work/life balance practices can help ease the problem of skill shortages by attracting and retaining previously 'untapped' pools of talent – including mothers returning to the labour market, mature workers and certain minority groups – by creating work environments that would have been previously untenable.

2. EXPENSIVE EMPTY DESKS
Work/life balance policies and practices can improve the 'employee experience' and hence help organizations to retain their staff. Turnover is a major issue for many businesses because of the costs of hiring and training new personnel, as well as the costs of not having departed employees working toward organizational goals. The established link between th0e provision of flexible work options and reduction in turnover means that work/life balance is now a strategic human resource issue. Research suggests that where employees preferences for cultures and values are consistent with actual organizational cultures and values, turnover is decreased. This is known as person/organization fit. However, when priorities and goals are incompatible, employees are more likely to seek consistent cultures elsewhere.

3. WHY WORK HERE?
In addition to staff turnover issues, organizations genuinely promoting and supporting work/life balance policies often receive community recognition as 'good' corporate citizens, or 'employers of choice'. Where skill shortages are evident, or where skilled applicants have a number of job offers, the willingness or otherwise of an organization to accommodate employees' work/life balance may well be a deciding factor in accepting a job offer. In this war for talent it becomes very crucial for employers to come up with attractive work – life policies and programs in order to hire and retain their best talent. Environments that support employee's work/life balance have been found to improve organizational commitment, higher job satisfaction, less absenteeism and less inclination to leave the organization directly affecting the bottom line – defined as a belief and acceptance of organizational goals and values, a willingness to put forth efforts toward these goals and a desire to maintain organisational membership.

WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICIES & PRACTICES STIMULATING EMPLOYEE
Although the labour market deteriorated during the economic down turn, there has been an improvement in labour market conditions in recent months. It is anticipated that the growth in employment will continue.

The decline in the number of young people available for employment and the increasing number of employees nearing retirement age will continue to pose significant challenges to obtaining and maintaining sufficient numbers of quality employees. It is important for organisations to have enough employees to deliver on its goals and objectives, hence the importance of attraction and retention. Staff turnover pose a major cost to organisations, which is estimated at between 90 and 200 percent of an employees' annual salary. Thus, measures that improve attraction and retention and reduce staff turnover costs are important for business. Part of being an attractive, competitive employer involves the provision of work life balance policies, which can help retain older workers, as well as attract parents who have been out of the workforce due to caring responsibilities and young workers who want to combine work and study.

For example, a recent survey by the Australian Human Resource Institute (non Queensland government link) amongst 1822 of its members, who are primarily HR managers and professionals, found that 80 percent believed that paid parental leave is significant in attracting good staff and 82 percent believed that offering paid parental leave contributes to employee retention.

The UK Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) outlined in their report, that 6.5 million people in Britain are not using their education, skills or management experience in their labour market. It was suggested that these people could be using their skills more fully if more flexible working were available, either by working or working at a level at which they used to work. The EOC argues that inflexibility in workplaces is creating a massive waste of talent and potential. The EOC found in their investigation that trading down and working under potential can be the outcome of the failure of high level work to offer flexibility and new ways of working. Furthermore, a third of unemployed people could be encouraged back into the workforce if flexible working was available according to the report.

The McCrindle Research Study of 3000 Australians shows that work life balance is the number one factor of job attraction and retention. Employers seeking scare staff are increasingly touting their commitment to work life balance in recruitment advertising. But apart from attracting someone into a job, do initiatives to encourage work life balance also stimulate employee engagement.

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.

A Regus Work-Life Balance Index Survey carried out in May 2012 noted that Indian employees were much happier with their work-life Balance as compared to 2010. In addition to India, nations like Mexico, Japan and Brazil too had a high number of respondents showing increased satisfaction in their jobs and an improvement in their work-life balance than before. The Regus survey collected responses from 16,000 businesses professional in 80 countries. The elements taken into consideration were working hours, commuting time to the workplace, satisfaction in the quality of family time obtained and a comparison to employees' work-life balance in the past. A similar survey was carried out by Regus in 2010.

The results from the 2012 survey have been benchmarked against a base score of 100 from 2010. A clear 15% positive rise was seen in the 2012 results as compared to 2010.

Work-Life Balance Index 2010 and 2012
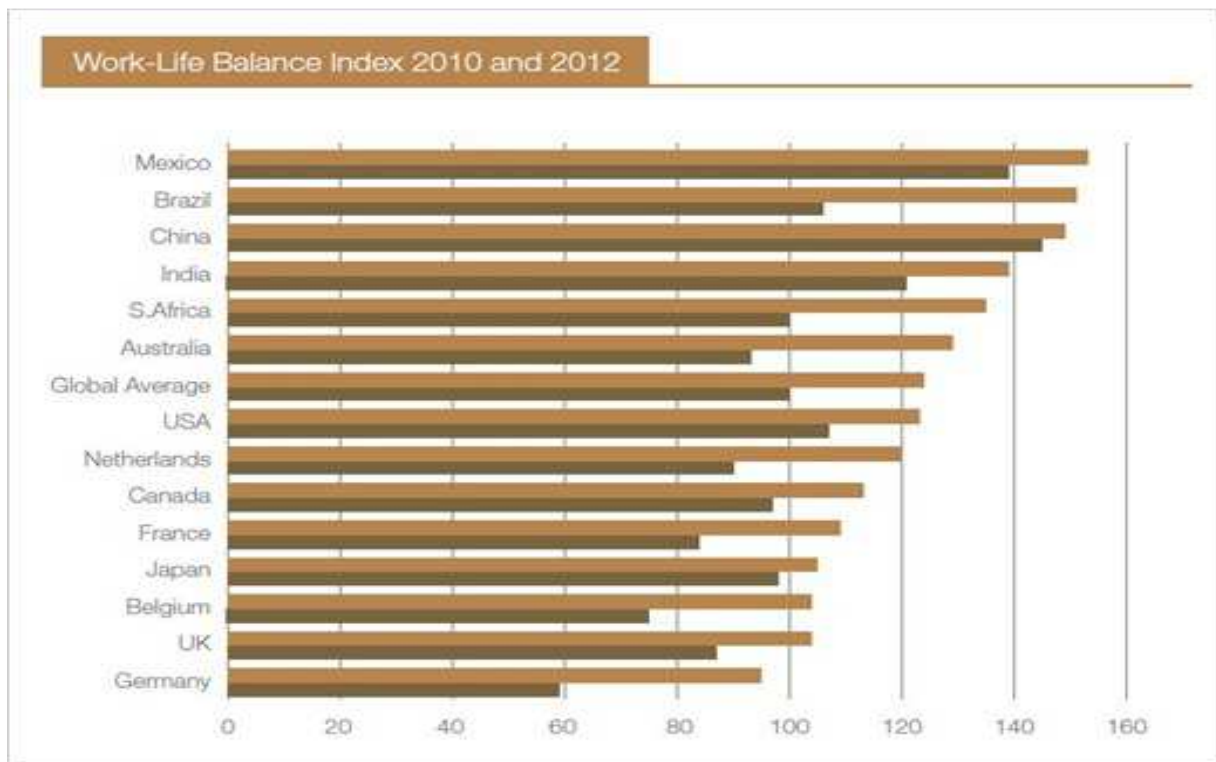
80% employees in India enjoyed their work more in 2012 than what they did in 2010. After Brazil, India stood at the second position in the category that measured how much effort companies were putting to help employees decrease their travel time to work. At 57%, India was well above global average which stood at 42%.

India also ranked fairly well in the category which measured employee satisfaction in the quality of time they spent with their family. India matched the Global Average of 59%. Netherlands topped this category with a whopping 69%.

India topped the charts when it came to work life enjoyment and achievement – 84% Indians believed they achieved more at work today than they did in 2010.

Do you believe that you achieve more at work today than you did in 2010?
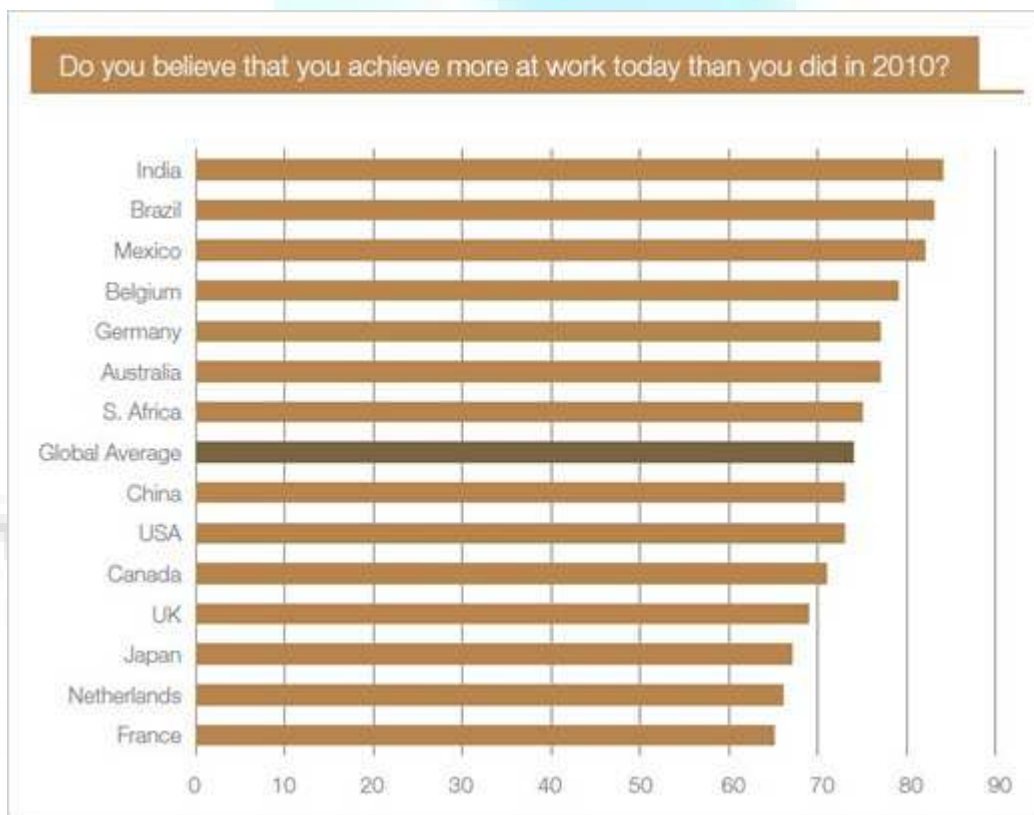
The Ma Foi Randstad Workmonitor Survey 2012 conducted in April 2012 brought forth a unique observation. The survey stated that Indian employees considered technological advancements to be the culprit in eating into their work-life Balance. Reporting on the survey, TOI quoted respondents saying that on one hand technology made their work more efficient but on the other hand it was intruding deeper and deeper into their personal lives.

INDIAN COMPANIES RESPONSE TO WORK-LIFE ISSUES IN INDIA

In general, the response of Indian organisations to work life issues has been limited. The reason for this are, a culture that does not empower women, an assumption and expectation that the joint family is in a better position to provide support than non-family institutions and demographic factors. In India, the most progressive work family programs come from the public sector. Family friendly measure offered include reduced hours, career break leave, responsibility leave and parental leave. In Private sector, most of the companies offering well defined work life programs are multinational and in the IT and ITES sector. The motivation for multinational companies to offer family friendly measure to their Indian subsidiaries is partly to maintain HR practices globally, partly in response to the demands placed on them by younger men and women employees, and partly as a tool to retain talent.

Merck Sharp and Dohme openly advertises on its website the autonomy that can be enjoyed in their managerial and sales jobs as a way of attracting and retaining talent. The company offers liberal health and hospitalization benefits, sometimes picking up the balance of an employee's health expenses when the amount exceeds the insurance coverage. In keeping with the government's family planning philosophy, the company cover expenses for only up to the second child of the employee.

Procter & Gamble India has been offering work from home for its employees, and reduced work schedules, both of which have been a great enabler in maximizing productivity and helping manage work life balance.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Pvt Ltd. Offer support for commuting and have programs covering fun at work, health, and stress reduction. Gymnasium facilities are provided at major office locations. The company encourages employees to participate in community sport events such as cricket matches, marathons etc. As a part of corporate Social Responsibility, PWC has recently taken initiatives in the area of education and sustainability. NGOs at each of the locations have been identified. PWC has also put in place a women's network for senior women. This is aimed at empowering them to manage work life balance better. One of the programs, titled "My Mentor", aimed at self motivation and taking charge of one's work and life, has been well received by participating women employees. Real pressure to offer unique and relevant family friendly measures is being faced by local Indian companies in the IT and Business Process Outsourcing sectors. The rapid growth of theses sector during the last decade has resulted in the employment of young women in large numbers with long working hours.

one local BPO firm near New Delhi acted on an employee's suggestion that mothers would like to see their children being cared for in on-site day care centres by building glass walls for the day care centre and providing electric outlets on the other side of the wall, where women can work while feeling close to their children. Two examples of well known Indian companies offering wellness initiatives to their employees to help manage stress are **Infosys Technologies and Wipro.**

Infosys Technologies, a leading IT service provider, has a wellness initiative called Health Assessment Lifestyle Enrichment (HALE). The initiative consists of a portal for online dissemination of information on various stress-related issues and a hotline whereby employees can directly receive counselling and expert opinions. The data from the portaland the hotline help the HR department to track key indicators like absenteeism rates and link them with causes and resultant billing losses. These data also help to measure the effectiveness of the initiative in terms of improvement in productivity. Based on these inputs, HR takes suitable actions to deal with the prevalent wellness issues in the organization.

Wipro, a leading player in both the IT & BPO sectors, encouraging employee wellness is an integral part of the corporate culture. This is reflected in Wipro's numerous health and safety initiatives which supplement health-related benefits. Some of these are nutrition consulting, health centres, medical camps, and regular well-being events like the annual Wipro marathon. The most successful Wipro project is one called Mitr which means 'friend' in Hindi. In this program, 28 employees, all volunteers, were trained to counsel fellow employees to manage stress. Mitr signifies to employees that they do have a friend in Wipro and that they should be able to share their problems with a safe ally in the company.

Zensar Technologies provides child care arrangements such as crèche facility to its employees. It arranges "Pizza and Coke" an informal meeting where associates can meet their seniors and discuss anything and everything. It has a facility called "Madat Online" a 24/7 service which is available for employees to take care of some of their personal day-to-day activities like dropping cheques, drawing cash, pay telephone bills and school fees of employees children. It organises stress management programs, arrange social event such as family day and fun days at work regularly.

The Tata Group has culture of investing in several community development programs that have the theme of women's empowerment. In the Tata Motors plant at Pune there are several cooperatives managed and run by the wives of company employees. These cooperatives, called Grihini Udyogs, provide the company with a variety of products ranging from cables for vehicles to chapattis for their cafeteria. The cooperatives provide extra income for employees and their families. Most of the cooperative's products are sold to Tata Motors, like pickles, condiments and bags are also sold in the open market.

Cisco set up the Women's Action Network (WAN) in 2004. WAN India has more than 350 members, who strategize and execute activities with the guidance of executive sponsors and thought leaders. Some of the activities organized by Cisco's WAN are the Role Model Leadership Series (RMLS) workshops, community initiatives such as Girls in Technology, adopting charities focused on education, networking events, and 'bring your child to work' day.

Shell being one of the multinational companies believes and practices employee diversity and work life balance. Employees are given options such as flexitime and work from home. Employees' perception about work life balance is assessed every year in their Annual Global People Survey to see where the company stands and what should do to help employees achieve a healthy work life balance. It advocates video or teleconferences to reduce business related travel. It also organises midweek meetings to avoid weekend travel. It discourages overtime work and taking work home on weekends. Personal leaves cannot be carried over to next year and are not encashable so that employees will use personal leaves for self and family. These practices show the organisation's concern for employee work life balance.

IBM India undertakes measures for the advancement of women and for promoting workplace flexibility as part of its global diversity initiatives that are based on the three pillars of equal opportunity, affirmative action and work-life programs. These measures are focused on mentoring and coaching for women, attending internal and external conferences and symposia, participating in steering committees, emphasizing executive and technical resources programs, regularly carrying out work-life employee surveys, and developing diversity-specific hiring programs.

Johnson & Johnson, India established the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) in 2002 with the support of top management. WLI is aimed at removing barriers to the advancement of women within the company and at attracting and developing women leaders in the company. The organization is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion by building the much needed sensitivity around the topic of gender inclusion in the workplace. WLI has taskforces created to work on areas of work-life integration, policy development, learning and career development, and networking. J&J India also undertakes several community initiatives focused on improving awareness of health is-sues surrounding diabetes and AIDS, providing support to street children, orphans and tribal girls, and providing maternity and gynaecological care to women in need.

RESTART is a program initiated at **General Electric**'s Technology Centre in Bangalore oriented at hiring women technologists who are on a career break. RESTART contains a detailed flex program and manager training, access to a day care facility through collaboration with another GE business, and special pre- and post-maternity programs such as a 'Mom to be' relaxation room, 'Mom to be' car park, and a lactation room. RESTART hires are provided with mentors to guide them in "re-learning" the organization. After launching the RESTART campaign, GE has had 1.3 million web site hits, received over 1500 applications, and to date has already hired four RESTART technologists. In 2008, GE won the Smart Workplace Award, which is a national award provided to organizations with effective environments.

CONCLUSION

The socio demographic and economic changes have pressurized employers to look beyond welfare practices and provide more humane and family friendly concerns so that employees can accommodate both their family and work needs. Organisations are becoming conscious about these issues and applying work life balance practices. The paper described the WLB policies and practices. One survey in this paper shows that 80**%** employees in India enjoyed their work more in 2012 than what they did in 2010. The paper concludes that work life balance practices and policies and employee engagement have positive relation. The various surveys report included in this paper shows that WLB practices motivate, retain and engage employees. This paper also highlighted the companies such as Merck Sharp and Dohme, Procter & Gamble, PricewaterhouseCoopers Pvt Ltd., Infosys Technologies, Wipro, Tata Group, Cisco, IBM, Johnson & Johnson and

General Electric's Technology. Work life balance practices have their roots in the statutory and voluntary welfare practices offered by many employers during and post industrialization era.

Multinational organisations are found to be more responsive towards work life balance issues and are found to have provided more WLB practices. Government's intervention to protect employees from exploitative workplace terms and conditions made by employers and in some cases employers' pragmatic concerns for their employees' health, safety and welfare can be considered as the major reasons behind introduction of such policies like canteen facilities, and employee friendly office interiors and programs for family and children of employees. Yoga classes and stress management workshops are conducted on a regular basis as a part of employee well-being programs and providing recreation facility or conducting social events at work place might relieve the stresses of long working hours.

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