

Contemporary Challenges of Work-Life Balance in the IT Sector

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Abstract: This research paper sheds light on innovations that have developed post Covid-19 for achieving the work-life balance of employees in the Information and Technology Industry. During Covid the challenge was how to maintain the productivity of the organization without hampering the employees physical and mental health. So, a new concept of remote working evolved. The new trends in work life balance have been taken from the analysis of the current literature review. Around fifty-eight papers have been studied as research methodology to know the changes post pandemic. Outcomes suggests that with expanded accessibility of internet the HR policies have been reviewed and revised for the employee benefits. Work from Home and Flexi work timings have been included for employee welfare. It is commonly seen that employees were happier and productive as employers allowed them with the telecommuting, remote team building and other family-friendly policies.

1 INTRODUCTION

The IT industry has become an important player in the ever changing 21st century impacting not only how businesses operate but also how people incorporate technology into their daily lives. As the demand for dedicated professionals in this field continues to rise there is an increased focus on scrutinizing the work life balance of IT workers. Ensuring that employees maintain an equilibrium between their personal and professional lives obligations has become essential in retaining top talent boosting productivity and fostering workplace satisfaction.

Work life balance refers to achieving a blend between professional responsibilities. The benefits of maintaining a work life balance are numerous; it positively impacts mental wellbeing, job satisfaction and overall quality of life (Kelliher et al. 2018). Studies have shown that reducing stress levels, increasing productivity, enhancing performance and improving employee retention are all outcomes linked to prioritizing work life balance.

Consequently, IT industries are acknowledging the importance of work-life-balance and cultivating an environment where employees can achieve this equilibrium and can sustain a healthy relationship.

2 ANALYSIS

The lives of IT where they do not need to commute to work, but they can perform it on a remote basis. Gradually it has blurred the line of personal and professional life for the employees. It has also brought the critical juncture in the work-life-balance of employees. IT industry has seen more intense competition for talent than ever before (Al Awadhi et. al. 2023). Additionally, some talent pools were less inclined to relocate to their employers' locations than they were in the past (Bhalla 2021). As a result, IT companies restructure their work processes and quickly analyzed the level of work they can shift remotely and which roles they could prioritize and to what extent. This led to their remote working system. As the work had shifted, remote and new methods may be adopted by company encompassing ideas, followed by a multi-hour debate and refinement session on an open video conference on a digital platform such as Zoom, Google meet or any preferred platform. The IT sector now also consider their values and culture, as well as the interactions, behaviors that support their work culture (Gupta 2022). In this sector upskilling played a very crucial role. When the employee before the pandemic could commute to the office it was easier to upskill them on a personal basis, but now Employers had to find new ways to upskill their employees and to ensure that it may continue in digital platforms too.

As the workforce had become more distant, now HR have increased their passive tracking of employees. According to a Gartner poll conducted in April, 16% of firms are passively watching employees through tactics such as virtual clocking in and out, tracking work computer usage, and monitoring employee emails or internal communications/chat. Furthermore, they are also expecting to have much greater access to their employees' health data. Employers, for example, will want to know if any of their staff have COVID 19 antibodies. Even before the pandemic, organizations were increasingly employing atypical employee monitoring techniques, but this trend will be amplified by new distant worker monitoring and data collecting (Jensen et. al. 2021).

The Employers were involved in their employees' lives during and after the covid-19 pandemic by giving them more help with their mental health. They ensured to give more health care coverage, and helped them to pay for their health care during and after the pandemic. They were taking the critical measures to keep their employees away from stress and burnout which happen to them during the excess working hours during the pandemic.

2.1 New Trends and Its Benefits to an Organization

Remote Work and Collaboration Tools: The Covid-19 pandemic work from home regulations leads to accelerated adoption of collaboration tools. It has given the much needed resilience to IT employees who can work from anywhere. It is cost saving for the IT companies as office space requirements lead to lower expenses for businesses and now companies have availability of a global talent pool at their beck and call. Collaboration tools played a significant role in boosting the productivity of the employees as it allowed the real-time messaging and video conferencing opportunities to the employees in IT companies, which led them to efficient modes of communication. Moreover, it provides the time zone flexibility to the employees working across India or globe as it helps in enhanced collaboration. It has also given the IT companies the much-needed impetus to centralize the whole protect data and collaboration in a single accessible location.

Flexible Work Hours: Modern day IT companies are looking to set their employees work hours is a crucial aspect of fostering a healthy work-life balance in the modern workplace. It enables flexible approaches and empowers employees to align their professional commitments with personal

responsibilities, leading to a myriad of positive outcomes. By properly managing their office work hours, employees can attend to family needs, pursue hobbies, and manage personal obligations more effectively and it is crucial to maintain a healthy work life balance. It helps IT companies to maintain a healthy relationship with their workforce, fostering a happier and more motivated workforce.

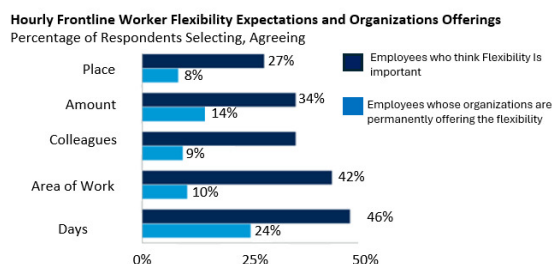


Figure 1: IT Employee Online Flexibility. Source: Gartner Research (2023).

Flexible work hours leads IT employees with reduced stress, their job satisfaction naturally increases. They start to be motivated and feel valued, supported, and have the freedom to create a schedule that suits their unique needs and preferences. It improves the efficiency and output of the entire workforce. As an added bonus, enforcing set working hours helps employees keep the right balance between their professional and personal lives, which in turn minimizes the likelihood of burnout and boosts their emotional and psychological health.

The Disappearing Line Between Personal and Professional Life: IT workers now have more options for when and where they work thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it has complicated the issue of work-life balance for employees by erasing boundaries between work and personal life. Work-related stress, burnout, and decreased productivity and well-being are all consequences of the blurring of work and personal life that is facilitated by the modern office (Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2021). New management and methods for achieving work-life harmony are needed to address and overcome this pressing problem. Businesses and individuals in the IT sector are adopting practices including arranging regular breaks to refuel, designating specific work spaces at home, and enforcing strict office hours. In addition, managers and workers benefit from improved knowledge of one another's needs and more efficient workload distribution when open lines of communication are established.

Resilience and Coping Strategies: The Covid-19 leads to unforeseen challenges to the workforce in the IT sector, underscoring the vital importance of resilience and coping mechanisms for employees. As during the pandemic employees were faced with uncertainties, remote work, and potential health risks. Employees had to adapt rapidly to new circumstances as work from home was becoming the new normal for them. Resilience became a vital trait for employees to sail the uncertainties and maintain productivity amidst disruptions. (Ramakrishnan 2020). The company employees had to cope with the pressures of balancing work, family, and personal well-being during unprecedented times. The IT sector has recognised the importance of supporting their workforce's mental health and well-being, implementing well-being initiatives, virtual counseling, and flexible work arrangements.

Each individual employee also sought to acknowledge the personal coping strategies like mindfulness, exercise, and maintaining social connections remotely. Accepting the importance of mental health in overall productivity, IT companies promoted open conversations and provided resources to tackle stress and anxiety to their respective employees. As the world moves forward in Pre-covid era, the lessons learned continue to emphasize the necessity of fostering resilience and nurturing coping mechanisms within the workforce, ensuring a more adaptable and supportive work environment.

Task Prioritisation: One effective method for lowering employee stress and workload is encouraging workers to focus on what matters most. Employees can make better use of their time and efforts if they place more emphasis on recognizing and focusing on tasks that correspond with the goals and objectives of the company (Dolot 2020).

When management establishes open lines of communication about project priorities, employees have a better idea of where to focus their efforts and are less likely to feel overwhelmed by their task. Time blocking and task prioritizing are two examples of efficient tools and approaches for job management that help employees stay on top of their game and concentrate on what matters most. Eliminating the extra hours from employees schedule has multiple benefits, including protecting employees from possible burnout and boosting his productivity and job satisfaction. Task Prioritisation can encourage employees to strike a good work-life balance by giving them meaningful work to do. It creates a productive workplace where workers feel appreciated and respected, which benefits the company in the long run.

Supportive Organizational Culture: IT firms are coming around to the idea that a healthy work-life balance is important for both productivity and morale in the modern workplace. IT firms can foster a happy and supportive work environment among their employees by promoting a healthy work culture that stresses the well-being of their workforce. Businesses that value their employees' time off, encourage telecommuting, and set firm boundaries between work and personal life tend to have happier, more productive employees. To combat stress and employee burnout, these businesses provide wellness programs, mental health resources, and encourage frequent time off (Roy et. al. 2020).

IT workers who report feeling more encouraged to strike a good work-life balance report being happier in their jobs and are more likely to remain with their employers for the long haul. Increased productivity, creativity, and employee engagement can all result from an office that promotes a positive culture and atmosphere. To thrive and flourish in today's highly competitive business environment, companies need to create a work environment that appreciates employees' personal lives as much as their work lives.

Reduced Meeting Times: IT firms increasingly advocate for shorter, more focused meetings as a means of encouraging workers to keep a better balance between their professional and personal lives. Since the pandemic has caused many people to switch to working from home and since the demands on their time continue to rise, it is crucial that meetings be as productive as possible. Meetings that are brief and to the point allow workers to save time and focus on what really matters on the job. By keeping meetings to a manageable length, participants are more likely to stay focused on the issues at hand and less likely to wander off on unproductive tangents. When workers are less stressed out by their jobs, they are better able to balance their professional and personal responsibilities.

When meetings are productive, it allows employees more time for their personal life. Shorter meetings allow folks more time to recharge their batteries and spend a memorable and quality time with loved ones (Kossek & Ozeki 1998). Because of this, workers are more content and productive.

Virtual Team-building Activities: After Covid-19, interactive virtual team-building activities became an important tool in the IT industry for fostering cooperation and unity among members of geographically dispersed teams (Kanike, U. K. 2023). As teams tend to be geographically dispersed, gatherings like these make remote members feel more

connected to the whole. Teleworkers can communicate and collaborate with their coworkers in the same virtual environment through the use of interactive games, challenges, and events. Activities like these strengthen teams, promote open communication, and boost morale, all of which contribute to a more enjoyable work experience (Anderson et al. 2022). Team members can get to know each other better through virtual team-building activities. Employees are more likely to trust and cooperate with one another when they believe they know each other on a personal level.

Using the virtual platforms by IT companies allows its employees to develop meaningful relationships with one another. By constantly interacting with each other allows employees to feel less lonely and isolated and to take part in enjoyable online activities. It helps the IT companies by fostering a sense of belonging and community among their respective employees, these events enhance mental health and workplace participation. Fostering the team-building exercises assists the individuals acknowledge the latent talents and abilities that can be leveraged to enhance future collaboration.

3 CONCLUSION

The research paper is about how workers in the IT sector juggle their professional and personal life in the fast-changing world and it also highlights the complexity and diversity of this pressing issue in today's workplace. The purpose of this research paper was to examine the impact of various individual, organizational variables on the work-life balance. It is evident that after the Covid-19 the rules and practices of IT companies have a significant impact on the work-life balance of IT professionals. It is commonly seen that employees were happier and productive at companies that allowed them with the telecommuting, flexible hours, and other family-friendly policies. These rules and regulations demonstrate concern for employee's well-being and have the potential to increase both job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

This research allows businesses to increase efficiency, simplify operations, and facilitate distant cooperation by having technological Upgradation. As a result, it allows employees to find a better balance between personal and professional life. It allows them to avoid possible burnout and stress, as the employees have to adapt with the rapidly changing IT companies working environment.

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