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# DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE WORK LIFE BALANCE OF IT PROFESSIONALS IN CHENNAI

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Though Work Life Balance (WLB) studies have been reported from India, there is lack of suitable scales to measure work life balance, especially of IT professionals in Chennai and hence the present work. Chennai continues to be favored location and home for software industry in India attracting IT job seekers from all over the country. An instrument comprising 46 statements with five factors has been developed to measure the WLB of IT professionals in Chennai. The data to develop the scale was collected from 387 IT professionals among premier IT industries in Chennai. Kaiser-Meyer Olkin test and Bartlett's test were conducted to check the sampling adequacy and sphericity of the data and factor analysis confirmed five-factor solution. The WLB measurement scale was found to have adequate reliability and validity. Description of generation of factors and their effect on WLB to measure WLB of IT professionals has been attempted.

**KEYWORDS:** Work Life Balance, WLB Measurement, WLB Scale, WLB Instrument, IT Professionals, Chennai.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) refers[1] to the ability of individuals to pursue successfully their work and non-work lives, without undue pressures from one domain undermining the satisfactory experience of the other. A "good" work-life balance is defined as a situation in which workers feel that they are capable of balancing their work and non-work commitments, and, for the most part, do so[2]. Work and family are the two most important domains in a person's life. Work-life balance is a major aspect of the quality of work and life of individuals and couples trying to manage multiple roles. In India, organizations have recognized the need for and value of Work-Life Balance policies.

From the late 1980's and early 1990's, the IT sector, in India, has been the fastest growing industry in the country with an impressive compound annual growth rate of around 50 per cent during the 1990s. Several challenges are faced by Indian IT industry today[3] and as a result, work norms and work culture of IT industry in India are very different from the conventional manufacturing industries. Working under pressure, working across time zones and working on real time, indefinite and flexible work hours are key differentiators. The IT industry in India is dominated by younger workers with the median age of the IT professional being 28 years and 70 percent of employees are within the age group of 26-35 years. In the IT industry, 76 percent of workers are men and women comprise 24% of the workforce[4]. Marisa D'Mello[5] has highlighted that IT workers in India experience conflict and stress in balancing the work demands that compete with personal and family time. It is not easy to find many references to Work-Life Balance policies and issues in Indian context, which indicates its relative unimportance as a strategic business issue in the country. Nevertheless, attempts were made to study the various aspects of WLB [6-10] and WLB imbalance[11] of different target groups and to develop instruments to measure the WLB[12-21] and some of these instruments were reported to have been validated. The culture of a country is an important determinant of how work-life balance issues prevail and permeate and therefore the instruments cited were developed for different contexts.

Chennai is a heavily favored location and home for software industry in India since mid 1980's, attracting IT job seekers from all over the country. Working late hours, often until midnight, as well as working on weekends, inevitable in this industry, emerged as very stressful for employees in Chennai city[22]. Balancing work and family domains is increasingly becoming a difficult task for various employees and they are concerned about the boundary between their work and non-work lives. It appears that no precise WLB measurement tool had emerged so far for IT professionals in a metropolitan (Chennai) context. Therefore the objectives for this study are (a) generation and description of items relevant to target study, (b) to design and evaluate an instrument to measure the work life balance of IT professionals in Chennai, which will be used to construct dimensionality.

## 2. METHOD

#### 2.1 Data Collection

The city of Chennai was chosen for the purpose of study because Chennai city continued to be the favored location for several software giants like CTS, TCS, Infosys, HCL, Oracle, Wipro, IBM, Accenture, Allsec, Aspire, Alcatel, L & T Infotech, EDS, Syntel, Sun Microsystems etc. The working conditions of the IT employees of Chennai were quite similar to that of IT employees placed in the rest of the locations of the country.

Data was collected from the IT professionals among premier IT industries in Chennai. Non-random sampling method was adopted and a structured, self-administered questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection. The questionnaire was administered and interviews were carried out during the period June 2011 - December 2011. The tool used to collect data from the IT professionals comprised of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire sought to reveal the socio-demograhpic details of the respondents while the second part contained 46 statements altogether to measure the WLB of IT professionals in Chennai. Second part of the questionnaire employed five point Likert's scale ranging from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree to elicit responses. This allowed the standardization of results as well as making it easier for respondents to complete the questionnaire. Out of the 600 questionnaires distributed directly, only 387 duly filled up questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 64.5%. A sample of 50 questionnaires was collected from the targeted respondents before going to the actual data collection. In the case of pre-test sampling size, there is little agreement in the literature[23]. A summary of the sociodemographic profile of the respondents is presented in "Table 1". 46 statements belonging to five

factors(Work Place Support, Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Life Interference with Work, Satisfaction with Work Life Balance and Improved Effectiveness at Work) addressing the issues of WLB were developed based on literature review designed to measure the WLB of IT employees.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents** 

	Category	%
Gender	Male	76.0
	Female	24.0
Age	20-30	68.0
1190	31-40	30.5
	Above 40	1.50
Designation	Programmers	66.7
Designation	Team Leaders	24.0
	HR Assistants	9.30
Marital Status	Unmarried	56.6
	Married	38.5
	Divorcee	4.90
Spouse employment	Employed	19.4
Speuse empreyment	Not employed	19.1
	Not applicable	61.5
No. of children	None	53.0
	1	27.4
	2	17.9
	3	1.70
Living type of respondents	Alone	24.8
	Nuclear Family	14.7
	With dependents other than Children	51.4
	Others	9.10
Annual Income	Up to 2,00,000	12.4
	2,00,000 – 4,00,000	27.7
	4,00,000-7,50,000	32.0
	Above 7,50,000	27.9
Working hours per week	Up to 40	4.40
	41-48	24.0
	49-60	60.0
	Above 60	11.6
Travel outside home location	Yes	26.4
	No	73.6
No. of days of travel in a month	Up to 4 days	60.8
	5-8 days	15.7
	9-12 days	15.7
	Above 12 days	7.80
Total experience	Up to 5 years	49.4
1	06-10 years	27.4
	11-15 years	21.7
	above 15 years	01.5
Current experience	0-3 years	59.4
1	3-5 years	33.1
	5-7 years	5.40
	7-10 years	0.80
	Above 10 years	1.30
Travel time to work place	Less than 1hour	22.5
<b>r</b>	1-2 hour	46.5
	2-3 hour	25.6
	Above 3 hour	5.40

# 2.2 Statistical Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha criterion was applied to test the reliability. 46 statements pertaining to WLB of IT professionals were factor analyzed using principal components analysis with varimax rotation method to determine the underlying factors and their appropriateness. Factor analysis was attempted to identify the important factors and variables having loading greater than 0.5 were retained. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin(KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were undertaken to confirm the appropriateness of the data. Factor analysis transforms a set of variables into a new set of principal components that are not correlated with each other. The relationship between factors and WLB was determined by correlation analysis.

#### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2: Descriptive Ratings of the Factors** 

S. No.	Name of the factor	Minimum Score Obtained	Maximum Score Obtained	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Work Place Support(WPS)	14.00	55.00	32.50	7.36
2	Work Interference with Personal Life(WIPL)	25.00	63.00	42.53	8.21
3	Personal Life Interference with work(PLIW)	25.00	58.00	39.91	8.79
4	Satisfaction with work life Balance(SWLB)	9.00	30.00	17.57	4.56
5	Improved Effectiveness at work(IEW)	5.00	15.00	11.59	2.16

It is evident from "Table 2" that the mean values of the factors range from 11.59 to 42.53. The highest mean score of 42.53 is that of 'work interference with personal life' while the lowest mean score of 11.59 is that of 'improved effectiveness at work'. The consistency in responses as shown by standard deviation is high for 'improved effectiveness at work' (standard deviation = 2.16) and low for 'personal life interference with work' (standard deviation = 8.79) which implies that the IT professionals accepted their work life and personal life to have played important roles in their WLB.

"Table 3" to "Table 7" show factor loadings for each statement and also the eigen values, percentage of variance explained. Eleven statements were loaded in WPS, fourteen statements in WIPL, twelve statements in PLIW, six statements in SWLB and three statements were loaded in IEW. The factor analysis of the statements confirmed five dimensions to the work life balance scale which demonstrates five factor solution.

**Table 3: Factor Analyses of Work Place Support(WPS)** 

S.No.	Statements	Factor
1	I work in an environment that is supportive of my family and personal commitments	0.824
2	My organization allows me to work from home when required	0.790
3	I have adequate technology support (laptops, internet access, VPN connectivity, etc) to be able to work away from office	0.785
4	My organization believes in having healthy WLB Practices	0.777
5	My organization encourages its employees to go on annual vacations/time off	0.724
6	My management believes in having happy people at Work	0.678
7	My Manager is concerned about the welfare of those under him	0.663
8	My privilege leave is never denied by my manager	0.650
9	I have significant support from my manager/supervisor in ensuring that I have a healthy WLB	0.650
10	My colleagues/team members would encourage to use WLB initiatives if required by me	0.641
11	Due to cooperative nature of the coworkers, I do not face difficulties in my personal life	0.639
	Eigen value	11.180
	Percentage of variance	12.562

Aspects used in defining work place support is described in "Table 3(a)".

Table 3(a): Aspects of WPS

No.	Aspects	Statement No. of WPS
1	work environment support	1
2	organizational support	2,3,4,5,6
3	manager support	7,8,9
4	co-worker support	10,11

**Table 4: Factor Analyses of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL)** 

S.No.	Statements	Factor
1	My job requires me to work after hours to  Complete my routine tasks	0.786
2	The number of hours I work is a concern for me	0.770
3	As I have to spend more time in my work domain, I often fail to fulfill my family responsibilities	0.742
4	I am often preoccupied with office tasks even after I get home	0.730
5	I come home from work too late to look after family roles	0.718
6	Customers of my organization are very demanding which requires me to spend more time at work	0.712
7	The demands arising from my work make my personal life stressful	0.710
8	I often feel sleep-starved due to the amount of work that I have to do in a day	0.695
9	I suffer from work related stress which manifests as physical ailments such as headaches, insomnia, depression, blood pressure, etc.	0.670
10	Power, Position and Money define success to me	0.664
11	Work related stress often makes me irritable at home	0.650
12	Sacrificing personal life is the way an individual can grow fast in an organization	0.628
13	My spouse feels uncomfortable due to my preoccupation with the work	0.622
14	I often have to compromise on my social engagements on account of work	0.613
	Eigen value	13.843
	Percentage of variance	15.554

The scale used to measure work interference with personal life(WIPL) was mainly described in terms of time-based conflict, strain-based and behaviour-based. Aspects used in defining WIPL is described in Table 4(a).

Table 4(a): Aspects of WIPL

No.	Aspects	Statement No. of WIPL[24]
1	time-based	1,2,3,4,5,6
2	strain-based	7,8,9
3	behaviour-based	10,11,12,13,14

**Table 5: Factor Analyses of Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW)** 

S.No.	Statements	Factor	
1	I am often preoccupied with home related thoughts during work hours	0.757	
2	I am often distracted by personal/family worries while at work	0.741	
3	My spouse does not understand my work demands which impacts on my marital relationship	0.719	
4	Family/home related stress makes me irritable at Work	0.696	
5	My home responsibilities often hinder my Performance at work	0.663	
6	Many a time I have to postpone things at work due to demands on my time at home	0.661	
7	Due to role overload at home, I am physically tired to discharge my work responsibilities at home		
8	I have had to make compromises on the work front to keep my family happy	0.639	
9	Due to my preoccupation with societal activities, I find it difficult to complete work in time	0.632	
10	I normally have to exceed the amount of leave I am eligible to take in a year	0.629	
11	The needs and demands of my family members interfere with my work related activities	0.617	
12	I cannot concentrate in my work due to the dependent care issues at home	0.616	
	Eigen value	9.155	
	Percentage of variance	10.287	

Aspects used in defining PLIW is described in Table 5(a)

Table 5(a): Aspects of PLIW

No.	Aspects	Statement No. of PLIW
1	stress-related	1,2,4,7
2	marital-related	3
3	time-related	5,6,9,10
4	family intrusion	8,11
5	dependent-related	12

Table 6 Factor Analyses of Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance(SWLB)

S.No.	Statements	Factor
1	I am satisfied with my ability to meet the needs of my job with those of my personal life	0.707
2	I am successful in managing my home and work demands	0.700
3	I am happy with the contributions I make towards my home and family	0.664
4	I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform home duties adequately	0.653
5	I have the time to reach my personal and career goals satisfactorily	0.625
6	I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal life	0.617
	Eigen value	8.537
	Percentage of variance	9.592

**Table 7: Factor Analyses of Improved Effectiveness at Work(IEW)** 

S.No.	Statements		
1	My balanced life gives me ability to function effectively at work	0.660	
2	WLB contributes to improved staff motivation and Commitment	0.660	
3	Satisfaction with WLB helps in building good teams, creative people and positive attitudes	0.638	
	Eigen value	5.631	
	Percentage of variance	6.327	

After verification of the dimensionality, the reliability of the factors was assessed using Cronbach alpha coefficient which resulted in alpha scores surpassing the minimum recommended value of reliability, that is, 0.70, as suggested by Nunnally[25]. The result of the KMO measure was 0.729 which is higher than the threshold value of 0.6. This explains 46 statements that are included in factor analysis are sufficient to conduct this study. Bartlett's Test of sphericity explains the variations among factors which is highly significant at p=0.000, which is less than 0.05. All 46 statements together in this study contributed to 54% of total variance.

This study seeks to understand the aspects of work-life balance which include the causes(determinants) such as Work Demand(WD) and Family Demand(FD), resources such as Work Place Support(WPS) and family support and consequences such as Work Interference with Personal Life(WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work(PLIW), Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance(SWLB) and Improved Effectiveness at Work(IEW). Demands are defined as structural or psychological claims to which individuals must respond or adapt by exerting physical or mental effort. Work related demands contribute to work interference with personal life(WIPL) and family demand is positively related to personal life interference with work(PLIW). Causes contribute towards work-life balance or imbalance. Demands are generally seen as causing interferences and resource(Work Place Support) result in facilitation. Facilitation occurs when engagement in work and home roles contribute positively to and benefit each other. Alternatively, interferences occur when the demand of work and family roles are incompatible in some respect so that meeting the demands in one domain(work or family life) makes it difficult to meet the demands in the other domain. Further, lower levels of interferences and higher levels of resources are likely to be associated with higher levels of work-life satisfaction. Improved effectiveness at work(IEW) can thus be considered to be the consequence of satisfaction with work-life balance.

Work demand and family demand are foremost among the most important yet problematic factors surround work interference with family and family interference with work. Specifically, there has been inadequate conceptual work and measurement on these demand constructs. Moreover, definitions of work demand or family demand have been ambiguous or too narrow. Researchers claimed to have measured work or family demand when they actually measured hours worked, or number of children[26, p217]. The demographic variables of age and marital status were chosen because they have been found to be related to well-being[27, p301]. The work-related variables included were number of work hours, number of years in the present employment, total number of years worked which were objective and straightforward measures[27, p302].

SWLB is a newly developed construct[28] defined as an overall level of contentment resulting from assessment of one's degree of success at meeting work and non-work role demands and it is most suitable construct in evaluating an employee's work-life balance. This construct is unique for reasons: there are both a cognitive and an affective component; does not centre on conflict; distinguished from constructs that describe cross-domain transfer processes, such as work-family spillover, enrichment, or facilitation; differs from constructs that imply directionally from work to family or from family to work; unitary and holistic construct; directly measure individuals' overall satisfaction. Thus the scale used to measure SWLB consisted of six statements.

Work-life balance is about developing practices to encourage a culture in which people are happy about being able to meet the demands of work and responsibilities of interest outside work. The employer recognizes that staff may need to change hours, require special leave or other forms of support to enable them to do this properly. Employees are willing to support this because they recognize that the key benefit is improved effectiveness at work(Work/life Balance). Thus the scale used to measure IEW consisted of three statements. IEW[29] refers to workforce rapidly adapting to its changing profile and how workplaces are supporting their needs through 'work-life' and 'family friendly' programs and policies making one's life at work more effective.

Based on qualitative approach, we generated factors/items for a measure of work-life balance of IT professionals in Chennai. To develop this scale on the whole, some of the reported [12-14,20] ideas were utilized. Nevertheless, individuals and households combine employment and family responsibilities not only on the basis of individual attitudes and aspirations but also under the influence of wider social trends such as developments in the economy, demography, social policy and national cultures[30,31] and hence each context is likely to suit specific target.

Inter-correlations between Work Place Support(WPS), Work Interference with Personal Life(WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work(PLIW), Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance(SWLB) and Improved Effectiveness at Work(IEW) have been computed and presented in "Table 8". The correlation coefficient shows that work place support(WPS) has negative relationship with work interference with personal life(WIPL)(r= -0.360) and personal life interference with work(PLIW)(r= -0.231) which is statistically significant at 0.01 level. It is found that work place support(WPS) is positively related to satisfaction with work-life balance(SWLB)(r=0.658) and improved effectiveness at work(IEW)(r=0.293) which is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Ultimately, work place support contributes to mitigate the effect of WIPL and PLIW and in turn enhances the employees' satisfaction with work-life balance and effectiveness at work.

**Table 8: Inter-Correlation between the various factors** 

	WPS	WIPL	PLIW	SWLB	IEW
WPS	1				
WIPL	-0.360 **	1			
PLIW	-0.231 **	-0.205 **	1		
SWLB	0.658	-0.519 **	-0.152 *	1	
IEW	0.293	0.058 NS	-0.277 **	0.138	1

<sup>\*\*</sup>Correlation is significant at 0.01 level(2-tailed)

NS=Not significant

It is evident that work interference with personal life(WIPL) is not only negatively correlated with personal life interference with work(PLIW)(r= -0.205) but also with satisfaction with WLB(SWLB)(r= -0.519) and this is statistically significant at 0.01 level. There exists negative correlation between personal life interference with work(PLIW) and satisfaction with work-life balance(SWLB)(r= -0.152) which is statistically significant at 0.05 level and negative correlation exist between personal life interference with work(PLIW) and improved effectiveness at work(IEW)(r= -0.277) and this is statistically significant at 0.01 level. It is evident that WIPL and PLIW are inter-related and as well as they form an important combination of factors influencing the overall satisfaction with WLB and IEW. It is clear that there is positive correlation between satisfaction with work-life balance(SWLB) and improved effectiveness at work(IEW)(r=0.138) and this statistically significant at 0.05 level. While WIPL and PLIW have negative effect on SWLB, higher satisfaction with WLB with a positive effect contribute to the improved effectiveness at work(IEW).

<sup>\*</sup>Correlation is significant at 0.05 level(2-tailed)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Unlike traditional occupations and professions of the Indian middle-class, such as teaching, banking or government positions, which are more grounded in local contexts of time, space and place, IT professionals encounter mercurial swings in both global and local cycles and events, almost on daily basis. Salary, status and other benefits promote high commitment to work and long working hours where necessary. Various mobilities coupled with temporal and physical separation of work were seen to compound the blurring of boundaries between work and family spaces. Issues of stress and burnout are often ignored by workers themselves. Although some functional level of stress is necessary to improve employees performance, high or low level of stress is the cause of actions of management. The solution lies with sound planning at individual level and initiatives from the organizations to aid productivity of the new age employees. Work-life balance of an employee is as important for the employing organizations as it is for individual employee. Work-life balance of an individual employee when viewed collectively for the total workforce of an organization results into a colossal impact on the qualitative and quantitative organizational performance. Those who had satisfactory work-life balance with the assistance of the policies implemented by the employing organization, tend to be more effective at work. This five dimensional scale developed with 46 statements can be used to understand the employee perceptions of work and personal life balance and to evaluate the effectiveness of work life balance programs provided by IT organizations, which in turn can impact the HR manager to understand the critical issues of work-life balance and champion work/life programs. The strength of this study is the use of multiple samples from different IT organizations which itself may be a limitation in the sense that all the respondents may not have experienced at juggling multiple life roles. Having confirmed the distinctiveness of these five factors as a construct to work life balance, our next step will be to develop a conceptual model for their interaction.

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