

Work Life Balance Practices: A Key Driver of Corporate Sustainability

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Abstract

In this highly competitive and tech savvy world, no organization can survive without addressing work-life balance issues of its employees. As employees devote maximum part of their lives in building corporates, in return, it becomes the social and moral responsibility of these corporates to come forward with innovative work-life balance practices and policies to tame the work-life stress of their employees. It should be the prime concern of organizations to take care of employees and their families and keep them happy. Since, 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, the current paper has made an attempt to understand the present status of organizational endeavours in India in the form of WLBPs in general and of RCF in particular to address work life issues of employees. It has also been tried to explore the significant work life policies and practices by applying factor analysis. The study was carried out at Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala (Punjab). The primary data for study was collected through questionnaire with a sample size of 432 respondents. The findings of the study revealed that RCF and various other organisations are conscious about employees' work life balance and providing them a plethora of work life balance promoting facilities. The study had identified six significant work life practices/ policies which the HR managers must

focus to improve work life balance of their employees. The paper suggests that organizations in India should incorporate WLB policy as a part of their strategic corporate social responsibility pursuits by ensuring an effective congruence between employee needs and organisational values. It also suggests effective communication system and a supportive culture for its effective implementation to have win-win situation for organisation and employees.

Keywords: Work-life balance, HR managers, work-life balance initiatives

1. Introduction

Employee happiness is a key to organisation's success. Employees are the valuable assets of corporate bodies. They are their strength. To face the new challenges on the fronts of knowledge, technology and changing trends in global economy, it is necessary that these employees are managed effectively. In the modern era, employees are being found juggling themselves between multiple demands of life. At one end, there is an urge to excel in professional life, but on the other end, there are equally important personal life obligations which can't be ignored. The stress caused by this work-life conflict is eroding employee happiness. In this highly competitive and tech savvy world, no organization can survive without addressing work-life balance issues of its employees.

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The study of work-life balance involves the examination of people's ability to manage simultaneously the multi-faceted demands/roles of life. It accommodates the growing understanding that participation in multiple roles can contribute to good mental and physical health so long as the degree of "fit" between work and personal life is satisfactory (Barnett, Garies & Brennan, 1999; Marks & MacDermid, 1996). The imbalance occurs when greater time, psychological involvement or satisfaction occurs in one role compared to the other causing work-life conflict (WLC) and stress.

Work-life balance is emerging as a strategic element in the Human Resource Management (HRM) policies of successful organizations for attracting and retaining talented staff and reaping other benefits of HRM programs promoting work-life balance. Employers are now-a-days greatly interested in making their employees happy by making whole hearted efforts for work life balance initiatives to have satisfied and committed workforce resulting in less absenteeism and turnover, increased productivity and quality work. Work-life balance is becoming an increasingly important consideration in job and career decisions. Recent studies reveal that one of the most important lifestyle issues of today is that of work-life balance, and that it will continue to be for many years to come.

2. Review of Literature

Thomas and Ganster (1995)¹ revealed that work life balance initiatives by HR managers help employees to better manage their work and family roles. These initiatives affect employee attitude and behaviors such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction (**Grover & Crooker, 1995**)². **Huselid & Becker (2000)**³ found that HR policies play a strategic role in employee retention through stimulating skilled labour. **Mitchell (2001)**⁴ observed that every organization today is interestingly concerned with selecting and retaining competent, committed people who are exclusively known as knowledge workers. Top executive managers espouse more flexible and responsive human resource practices to attract and retain these skilled knowledge

workers. **Allen (2001)**⁵ determined that a reduction in levels of work-life balance strain through organizational initiatives can result in decreased employee turnover, improved job satisfaction and increased levels of organisational commitment.

Visser, Smets, Oort and Haes (2003)⁶ found that among perceived working conditions, the interference of work on home life and not being able to live up to one's professional standards were most related to stress. The study highlighted the importance of organizational rather than personal factors in managing both stress and satisfaction. **M. Heathfield (2005)**⁷ found that retaining the desirable employees is beneficial to an organization in gaining competitive advantage that cannot be substituted by other competitors in terms of producing highly motivated and satisfied coworkers who will provide better customer service and enhanced productivity, which subsequently resulting in increased sales, customer satisfaction, smooth management succession and improved organizational learning. **Mullins (2005)**⁸ reported that social responsibilities of the firms towards their employees extend beyond the terms and conditions of the contract to include: justice in treatment; democratic functioning of the organisation; training in new skills and technologies; effective personnel and employment relations policies and practices; and provision of social and leisure facilities. **Baral and Bhargava (2011)**⁹ in their study found that only few organizations in India have adopted work-life balance strategies as a part of their core business strategy. Majority of them are multinationals and in software or service sector. Other organisations are increasingly becoming conscious about current need of helping employees in managing work and non-work roles effectively and applying managerial interventions such as WLBP. However, they are still at a nascent stage. **Aggarwal (2012)**¹⁰ emphasized that achieving work life balance should be the joint responsibility of employer and employee. He recommended the arrangement of family engagement programmes and yoga classes by the organisations for better work life balance of their employees. He also

suggested that work life policies should be properly communicated and implemented. **Shukla Amit and Singh Shailendra (2014)**¹¹ made an attempt to study “Employee Involvement and Flexible Role Orientation: A Moderated Mediated Model”. They empirically studied the role of participative decision making and job autonomy in developing flexible role orientation in a moderated mediation model. The study exhibited that the participative decision making and job autonomy were positively related to the flexible role development through physical ownership. The role breadth and self-efficacy has been proved more constructive in strengthening the relationship between organisational inputs. **Julka Tapasya and Mathur Urvika (2017)**¹² in their research work entitled “A conceptual study of work-life balance among women employees”. explored the challenges faced by women employees in maintaining balance in between their personal-life and professional life. The study was concluded that usage of planning, organizing and setting goals at work and home may be helpful for the women in balancing their professional and personal lives. **Gragnano Andrea, Simbula Silvia and Miglioretti Massimo (2020)**¹³ investigated the effect of work-life balance and work-health balance on change in job satisfaction specifically with regard to age, gender, parental status and work ability. The study founded that worker considered both work-life balance and work-health balance a significant factor. The work ability was having a moderate effect of work-health balance on job satisfaction. Moreover, the age, gender and parental status have also revealed a moderate effect of work-family balance on job satisfaction. **Abiodun Adekunle Ogunola, (2022)**¹⁴ made an attempt to study “Quality of Work-Life and Work-Life Balance as Predictors of Employee Job Satisfaction”. The result revealed that both work-life and work-life balance abilities influence the level of job satisfaction among employees of banks under study. They suggested that the banking organizations should take forthright steps to expand and improve the working conditions of their organisations.

3. Research Gaps:

It has been observed that a substantial work has been done on work-life balance practices. But there is a need to carry out research in the emerging dimensions of work-life balance. The following research gaps have been observed in the light of literature surveyed:

- There is lack of collaborative studies in the field of work-life balance in general and in the area under study specifically.
- Furthermore, no efforts have been made to study the influence of high or low state of work-life balance.
- An elaborative evaluation and assessment perception of employees regarding the work-life balance dimensions is missing.

Keeping in view the above research gaps, it can be established that there is a need to study various dimensions of work-life balance particularly for the corporate sustainability. The present study is an attempt to take a note of the above-mentioned observations. Therefore, an attempt has been made to study the work-life balance practices as a key driver for the corporate sustainability in the area under study.

4. Rationale of the study

As employees devote maximum part of their lives in building corporates, in return, it becomes the social and moral responsibility of these corporates to come forward with innovative work-life balance practices and policies to tame the work-life stress of their employees. It should be the prime concern of organizations to take care of employees and their families and keep them happy. Further, by helping employees in effective management of work and personal lives, the quality of life will improve and a happy and healthy society will be created. Since, 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, the current paper has made an attempt to understand the present status

of organizational endeavours in India in the form of WLBP in general and of RCF in particular to address work life issues of employees. The paper will be helpful in providing direction to HR managers of RCF as well as other organisations in framing suitable HR policies as per current need to keep employees happy, healthy and motivated.

4.1 Objectives of the study

1. To study organizational responses towards work-life issues in India.
2. To study work life balance initiatives implemented in Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala.

5. Research Methodology

The research is based on both primary and secondary data. For primary data, well structured questionnaire, personal interviews and observation method was used. The sample size taken through stratified sampling was 432. Factor analysis had been used to analyse data. All books, journals, papers and websites consulted are duly mentioned.

6. Organizational responses to work-life issues in India

There is an increasing interest among organizational stakeholders (e.g CEOs, HR directors) for introducing work-life balance policies in their organizations which offer a variety of means to reduce stress levels and increase employee happiness while enhancing business benefits for the employer. Companies are providing high standard of welfare facilities and benefit programs as a part of employee compensation packages and they advocate these programmes as “family-friendly policies” or “work-life benefits and programmes”. Some of such work-life initiatives and programmes of various organizations have been enumerated as under: -

Merck Sharp and Dohme offers liberal health and hospitalization benefits, reimbursing employee’s health expenses in excess of insurance coverage. Nutrition consulting, health centers, medical camps, and regular well-being events like the annual Wipro marathon are

some of wellness initiatives at **Wipro**. ‘Mitr’ is the most successful Wipro project under which 28 employees, all volunteers, were trained to counsel fellow employees to manage stress. **Procter & Gamble India**, in its attempt to help employees to better manage work-life balance and maximize their productivity, has been offering work from home for its employees, and reduced work schedules. **HCL** believes that only happy employees can keep customers happy. Its Employee First Councils, or EFCs aim to strengthen employees’ bonds with the organization and encourage them to find a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives. The EFCs are basically an effort to encourage employees to pursue hobbies even while they are at work. There are five councils—Grey Cells, Talent, Wellness, Sports and Community Service—which work towards goals that are of common interest to the employees. In order to reduce stress and promote good health, **Price water house Coopers Pvt. Ltd.**, encourages employees to participate in community sport events such as cricket matches, marathons etc. Gymnasium facilities are provided at major office locations. It also offers support for commuting. To empower women employees to manage work-life balance better, it’s program, titled “My Mentor,” aimed at self motivation and taking charge of one’s work and life, has been very well received by participating women employees. The range of WLB programmes offered at **Intel India** includes flexible work schedules, alternate work schedules and compressed workweeks, telecommuting, part-time employment, childcare assistance, and health and wellness benefits. Intel India’s Hospitalization Insurance covers maternity insurance for employees and their spouse from day one.

Infosys Technologies has a wellness initiative called Health Assessment Lifestyle Enrichment (HALE) consisting of a portal for providing information on various stress-related issues and a hotline providing counseling and expert opinions to employees. HR department gets benefitted from the data collected from the portal and the hotline to track absenteeism rates, its causes and to measure the effectiveness of these

initiatives in terms of improvement in productivity. Based on this information, HR takes suitable actions to deal with the prevalent wellness issues in the organization. **The TATA Group** scores high on almost all the welfare parameters. For example, since a larger proportion of workforce in manufacturing plants of TATA belongs to the lower strata of society and is illiterate, the company has introduced adult education programmes and education about family planning as a part of welfare programme for them. Crèche facility is provided for female employees. To fulfill social needs of its employees, TATA group of companies has extended the domain of welfare practices to outside the workplace by involving their employees in social responsibilities like community development programs. **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)**, in addition to offering flexi time with mandatory hours of work and a five-day week for its employees conducts sessions on nutrition, stress management and better living conditions. 'Maitree', an initiative for the spouses of employees, has helped in bringing together the families of the employees.

IBM India offers WLBP to its employees such as flexible workweek schedules, part time employment, working from home, counseling of family etc. They have sabbatical programs, recreational activities and programs helping employees cope up with life changing activities. IBM's work-life balance commitment is depicted in its policy manual which says that the organisation is serious about helping employees achieve career-life balance. Work life balance is strategic HR tool used by the company for talent management. Now and then, the HR in the organization reiterates its commitment to achieving employee work life balance. **Zensar Technologies** refer employees as "associates" which gives them feeling of being valuable part of the company they serve. It arranges "Pizza and Coke" an informal meeting where associates can meet their seniors and discuss anything and everything. It provides child care facilities along with crèche and has a well-known programme called 'Madat Online', a 24hr service. This service is offered to employees to

take care of their daily personal activities like dropping cheques, paying children's school fees, cash withdrawal etc. Employees are given information on housing and educational facilities for children. The company regularly arranges stress management programs, fun at work, family days aimed at employee work life balance. **Agilent Technologies** has been very supportive for employee work-life balance. It provides freedom and flexibility in deciding time and place of work to its employees and rewards employee performance than desk time. It is also identified as one of the great places to work by a survey conducted by Times Group and Great Place to Work Institute in 2008. Another inspiring story is of the famous multinational company '**Shell**'. Like many companies Shell gives flexi time and work from home benefits to its employees. Every year the company conducts Global People Survey which gauges the employee's perceptions on the company's status on how far the work life balance is achieved and what are the steps needed. Working overtime and on weekends is discouraged in Shell and one striking factor is that leaves cannot be carry forwarded. The HR executives in the company put focused efforts to frequently update the various work life balance programs.

7. Work Life Balance Initiatives at Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala

Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala is also conscious about employees' need and try to keep them happy through fulfillment of their diverse needs. It has township area of 838 acres, five schools, Shopping Complex, Community Cultural Centre, Officers Club & Rest House, Subordinate Club & Rest House, Workers Club & Rest House, sports facilities including 18-hole Golf Course, Stadium & Swimming pool, post office, two banks, five ATMs and Kendriya Bhandar. The resident of RCF township is enjoying the best civic amenities. To support their families, a fleet of school buses is maintained for plying the children and college going wards to nearby educational institutions in Kapurthala and Jalandhar. Sustained efforts are made at RCF to keep the safety standards very high and also

to make these standards a part of the work culture. Regular safety seminars and safety committee meeting are being organized. Grievance redressal camps are also organized from time to time in different shops and offices of RCF. It is interesting to note that no representation was received during a Pension Adalat of retired employees organized in 2008, because of timely compliance of all grievances of the retired employees.

Happiness & overall development of employees and their families has never taken a back seat in RCF. RCF Sports Association organizes many local level tournaments and sports events throughout the year to encourage participation from employees, their wards and even senior citizens staying with them. Inter-departmental and inter-club tournaments are held for games like Football, Cricket, and Tug of war. For children, competitions are organized in Swimming and Lawn Tennis, besides organizing inter school athletic events. Wide participation in all events proves that sports is a 'way of life' in RCF. By providing Volleyball nets at various locations in RCF's township, sports culture has been taken to homes.

Health is also a prime concern in RCF. To take care of health of employees and their families, Lala Lajpat Rai Railway Hospital is being operated by RCF as a 60 bedded hospital with 6 bedded ICU and 4 cabins, serving families of about 7700 working and 342 retired employees. Arrangements are also made with other hospitals to provide best medical care to employees and their families, the cost of which is borne by RCF.

Stress management workshops are also organized from time to time at Officers Club, Subordinate Club and Workers Club of RCF in which number of employees and their family members actively participate. For mental and physical development of employees' children, yoga teaching classes have been started in Jack N Jill school of RCF.

Cultural programmes, hiking & trekking, staff holiday camp, yoga shivir, flower show competition, healthy baby competition, hobby classes for children are also organized for enjoying personal and family life apart from work.

8. Work-Life Balance Policies in RCF Kapurthala: A Factor Analysis

In order to explore the work life balance promoting policies and facilities at RCF, the factor analysis has been performed. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO=.833) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity with highly significant value has clearly indicated the appropriateness of the use of factor analysis.

The factor analysis results are depicted in the following tables. Table 1 identifies the proportion of variable explained through extraction method. In the process, initial eigen values and eigen values after extraction are generated (as shown in table 2) which measures the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each factor. Henceforth, six factors have been identified as a result of rotated component matrix (table 3).

Table 1 Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Grievance Redressal System	1.000	.774
Recognition of Better Performance	1.000	.661
Employee with well matched skill	1.000	.685
Employee with more friends at work	1.000	.634
Job Security	1.000	.642
Better employer employee relationship	1.000	.583
Medical Facilities	1.000	.679
Fitness Facilities	1.000	.661
Safety of employee at work	1.000	.674

Safety of women employees at work	1.000	.532
Organizing spiritual seminars	1.000	.711
Meditation/yoga camps	1.000	.675
Recreational facilities	1.000	.590
Housing facilities	1.000	.654
Educational facilities for children	1.000	.593
Child care facilities	1.000	.652
Inviting Family members in reward functions	1.000	.639
Celebrating festivals with employees and their family members	1.000	.589
Organising social functions for families	1.000	.584
Eco-friendly work environment	1.000	.779
Open communication	1.000	.569
Travel facility	1.000	.604

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 2 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.200	28.183	28.183	6.200	28.183	28.183	3.297	14.987	14.987
2	2.586	11.753	39.936	2.586	11.753	39.936	2.570	11.680	26.667
3	1.633	7.422	47.358	1.633	7.422	47.358	2.514	11.427	38.094
4	1.391	6.322	53.680	1.391	6.322	53.680	2.239	10.178	48.271
5	1.345	6.114	59.794	1.345	6.114	59.794	1.960	8.907	57.178
6	1.007	4.579	64.373	1.007	4.579	64.373	1.583	7.194	64.373
7	.902	4.100	68.473						
8	.783	3.561	72.033						
9	.757	3.442	75.476						
10	.703	3.196	78.672						
11	.584	2.656	81.328						
12	.536	2.436	83.765						
13	.497	2.259	86.023						
14	.461	2.094	88.118						
15	.426	1.939	90.056						
16	.401	1.824	91.880						
17	.376	1.709	93.589						
18	.349	1.588	95.177						
19	.313	1.423	96.600						
20	.273	1.239	97.839						
21	.255	1.160	98.998						
22	.220	1.002	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Source: Data compiled through questionnaire

The results of the factor analysis indicates that first six variables that load heavily with the first factor are better employer-employee relationship, recognition of better performance, employees with well matched skills, employees with more friends at work, grievance redressal system and job security. These variables mainly relate to promote better industrial relations and hence named as industrial relation measures. The variables that load heavily on the second factor seem to be relating to health and safety provisions. These are medical facilities, fitness facilities, safety of employees at work and safety of women employees at work. The third important factor contains variables relating to stress busting programmes. These are organizing spiritual seminars / religious camps for employees, meditation / yoga camps and recreational facilities. The

fourth variables that load heavily on the next factor includes housing facilities, educational facilities for children, child care facilities and travel facilities. All these seems to be related to family support facilities. Factor five which can be labeled as social relationships, includes four variables inviting family members of employees in work achievement reward functions, organizing social functions at times suitable for families of employees, celebrating festivals with employees and their families and open communication. The last factor eco-friendly work environment is a unique factor. This shows that all these factors revealed by applying factor analysis contribute significantly for maintaining work life balance and hence consider it as a key driver of corporate sustainability.

Table 3 Rotated Component Matrix

	Components					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Better employer-employee relationship	.800	.100	.220	-.049	-.012	.270
Recognition of better performance	.748	-.007	.092	.017	-.189	.240
Employees with well matched skills	.736	.074	.101	.106	.120	-.318
Employees with more friends at work	.727	.112	.096	.099	.240	-.123
Grievance redressal system	.622	-.003	.010	.253	-.007	.437
Job security	.515	.118	.249	.073	.486	-.004
Medical facilities	.065	.815	.089	.041	-.006	.034
Fitness facilities	.093	.769	.144	.137	.097	.111
Safety of employees at work	.077	.628	.315	.190	.253	-.272
Safety of women employees at work	.034	.590	.200	.348	.018	-.145
Organizing spiritual seminars	.203	.201	.762	.190	.104	.048
Meditation/yoga camps	.153	.174	.738	.172	.216	.029
Recreational facilities	.217	.113	.623	.045	.174	-.332
Housing facilities	.223	.232	.042	.710	.137	-.163
Educational facilities for children	.007	.073	.154	.681	.254	.189
Child care facilities	.033	.168	.496	.591	-.032	.164
Travel facilities	.088	.184	.467	.561	-.129	.113
Inviting family in reward functions	-.042	-.075	.031	.400	.674	-.132
Organizing social functions for families	-.039	.176	.371	.239	.565	.192
Celebrating festivals with employees	.074	.509	.022	-.092	.549	.118
Open communication	.385	.172	.258	-.190	.511	.165
Eco-friendly work environment	.167	-.008	-.012	.087	.133	.852

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 21 iterations.

Source: Data compiled through questionnaire

9. Conclusions & Suggestions

It is seen that the most important factor which promotes employees' welfare and WLB is the better industrial relations. Employees value interpersonal relations and also feel good when their jobs are secured and their conflicts and problems are sorted out properly. The health and safety of employees is also of prime concern and promotes their physical health. The stress busting activities helps in enjoying life more and have been ranked third important factor followed by family support programmes which take care of employees' family lives and thus facilitate their work life balance. Pollution free and eco-friendly work environment also enhance employees' welfare and is considered the important factor for better work life balance. All these factors are correlated with each other. It is suggested that HR practitioners should promote better industrial relations and social relationships in their organisations. For improving employees' emotional and physical health, they should be provided eco-friendly environment, family support facilities and better health & safety provisions. To reduce stress among employees, various stress busting programmes should be organized like yoga, meditation, recreational clubs etc. These initiatives by the management will facilitate work life balance of employees.

Organisations in India have certainly realized the need for work-life balance of employees as a dimension of corporate social responsibility and have started offering policies and programs to keep them happy. RCF is also not an exception to it. Although, these policies and programs differ across organizations, but it surely has provided new directions for organisations in similar sectors to adopt such progressive HR initiatives to recognize and accommodate the diverse needs of the employees. Organisations are increasingly becoming conscious about changing trends and applying managerial interventions such as WLBP. However, it is seen that despite the recognition of the fact that WLBP would create a healthier, happier, productive and motivated workforce, reduce work-family conflict and help position the organisation as an employer of

choice, many organisations in India have not stated formal WLBP. Even RCF has not provided flex-time or compressed weeks option as alternate work arrangements. There is still a long way to see WLBP as strategic initiatives in Indian organisations. More legislative stimulus may be needed to give the work-life balance a stronger foothold. There is also a need of conducive work culture, updating of WLBP, managerial training and stronger communication network to make work life balance measures a great success.

10. Implications of Study and Scope for Research

The study will create awareness among policy makers to focus on specific work life balance policies to promote employees' work life balance and the need for updating various HR policies to keep pace with the changing scenario. The researchers will also be benefitted from the study. The present study has been restricted to RCF to explore significant work life balance policies. A comparative study of different organisations can be carried out by undertaking the specific factors (HR policies/practices) as identified by factor analysis and measuring the satisfaction level of employees with these HR policies.

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