International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7 (3.6) (2018) 142-147

International Journal of Engineering & Technology

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJET

Research paper

A Study on the Work Life Balance of Generation Y Information Technology (IT) Employees in Cochin

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Abstract

This research was performed to better understand the work life balance of Generation Y Information Technology Professionals in Cochin. Data were collected from a sample of 374 participants working in various Software Companies in Cochin using questionnaires, seeking information on socio economic background, job details, quality of work life, work life balance and job satisfaction. The study has helped people to a large extent in understanding the expectations of Generation Y IT employees from their organizations and how their socio economic background influences their work life balance.

Keywords: *Work life balance, generation Y, work force, flexible work arrangements, family friendly work environment, open culture.*

1. Introduction

Information Technology is one of the most popular career choices for the youth in India today. IT professionals are paid relatively well compared to other industries and there is always great demand for highly skilled software professionals. IT industry has transformed the lives of millions of people belonging to Generation X and Y and boosted the economic growth of the country. The high disposable income coupled with international exposure makes IT professionals very confident and outgoing. IT also provides a constant learning curve as there will be new inventions every alternate day that keeps adding to the knowledge base of a professional. The huge demand for new and emerging technologies like cyber security, Big Data Analytics, Internet of Things, cloud, mobile etc., ave created large scale employment opportunities for the young IT professionals.

However, IT professionals by and large are always under tremendous pressure to meet demands of the clients, expectations of the supervisors and the high internal standards they set for themselves. The physical and mental stress at work leads to severe health problems and strained relationships with friends and family members. Organizations in the Information Technology sector have long realized that human capital is their greatest asset and maintaining a healthy work life balance among employees is extremely important for achieving their organizational objectives. Failure to achieve work life balance impacts the personal and social life of an employee and the ability of the organization to attract and retain talent.

India is expected to be the world's youngest country by 2020 with an average age of 29 yrs. Around 65% of the current population is below the age of 35 yrs. For this young generation, popularly known as Generation Y or Millennials, work life balance is one of the top priorities in their professional lives. So, in order to enhance the efficiency and increase the loyalty of their employees, organizations should take extra care in addressing the work life balance challenges.

2. Review of Literature

Work Life Balance

According to Kalliath and Brough (2008)work Life Balance is the individual perception that work and non-wok activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities, while Uba et al (2012) defines work life balance as the optimal ratio between time spent at work and time spent away from work.

Murphy and Doherty (2011) say that it is not possible to measure work-life balance in an absolute way, as there are personal circumstances which influence the way it is perceived. They also state that long hours and presenteeism are part of the job for senior level positions. However, modern technology has reduced the need for managers to be physically present in the office as they are accessible all the time.

Studies conducted by Bowswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007-8) also reveal that increasingly sophisticated and affordable technologies have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work. Their research finds that employees who consider their work roles to be an important component of their identities will be more likely to apply these communication technologies to work while in their non-work domain.

There is greater focus now on balancing multiple life roles and managing the boundary between personal and professional lives than ever before (Simard, 2011). With increasing focus and pressure to balance between work and personal life, there has also been increasing levels of burn out reported by employees (Bacharach, Banberger & Conley, 1991). Such work life balance issues have an impact on the employee's identity, well being and quality of work (Cinamon& Rich, 2010)

Manfredi and Holliday (2004) state that the concept of work life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complimentary elements of a full life. The way to achieve this is to adopt an

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approach that is conceptualized as a two way process involving a consideration of the needs of the employees as well as those of employers.

Former CEO of Coca-Cola, Bryan Dyson once famously said, "imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them - work, family, health, friends and spirit - and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends and spirit - are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life".

Generation Y

According to Waterworth 'Generation Y', also known as Millennials cover people born between the 1980's and the year 2000. They are shaped by the technological revolution that occurred throughout their youth

Generation Y is sometimes labeled as 'entitlement Generation' because the continued reinforcement and praise the Gen Y received from their parents early in life has translated in later life to what some view as optimism, but others consider it as false self confidence and sense of entitlement. (Erickson, 2008).At the workplace, this sense of entitlement means this generation expects to climb the career hierarchy at a rate which is considered unreasonable by the previous generations (Karefalk et al 2007). When their expectations are not met, they show a willingness to move on to new opportunities where they perceive that they will be more appreciated (Brown et al., 2009).

According to Meier & Crocker (2010-12), on the basis of a study conducted at Austin University, USA Generation Y is confident, independent and goal-oriented. Although technological advances began in the Gen X era, Generation Y is born into technology and often knows more about the digital world than their teachers and parents. The enhanced technological knowledge has launched Generation Y into an era that is accessible everywhere to anyone. It has high self esteem and is often known as trophy generation that recognizes every child with a medal or praise, leaving no one behind.

According to Twenge & Campbell(2008), Gen Ys have higher self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression, and a lower need for social approval and more external focus of control. They show loyalty as long as they are accomplishing their goals, then move on for a new challenge (Kerslake, 2005)

Generation Y professionals are both an opportunity and a challenge to their employers. Saxena &Jain(2012) say this generation works smarter and quicker till the work is done. They are strongly team focused, collaborative and seek meaning in work and opportunity to learn. While these attributes are highly appreciated in the work place, managing and supervising, Generation Y population is quite a challenge. Saxena &Jain further state that Generation Y appreciates clear direction, demands immediate feedback on performance, expects to be consulted and included in management decisions and demands constant intellectual challenge. These characteristics are markedly different from those of the people belonging to the previous generation who were individualistic and addicted to work.

Research GAP- Though a lot of research has been done on the work life balance of Information Technology Professionals, not much attention has been given to work life balance of Generation Y population in the Indian IT industry. This paper attempts to identify the factors that influence the work Life Balance of Generation Y IT professionals with particular reference to Cochin.

Statement of the Problem

Information Technology industry is undoubtedly India's largest private sector employer. However, the industry is not big enough to accommodate the 1.5 million engineering graduates passing out of colleges every year. Higher salaries, international assignments and the prospects of permanently settling down in western countries make 'IT' an attractive career choice for young graduates. However, the availability of huge talent pool and the threat of new entrants put enormous pressure on IT professionals to retain their jobs. As organizations move towards cutting edge environments, they prefer to replace existing staff with fresh talent who are easily trainable as it enables them to save cost considerably. Also, the pyramid organizational structure reduces senior level jobs as lesser number of people are required at the top. So, to retain the job and grow in the profession, IT professionals need to consistently exceed their performance targets and learn new skills. These professional demands often make them overlook their domestic responsibilities and sacrifice personal comforts which could lead to potential family stress, low job satisfaction, strained employer - employee relationships and ultimately reduced productivity.

Objective of the Study

To find out the factors influencing the work life balance of Generation Y IT employees

3. Research Methodology

Data

Data required for the study is primary in nature. The primary data have been collected by employing Questionnaire.

Area of Study

The present study is confined to IT professionals in Cochin

Sample Design

By adopting a simple random sampling method the required data are gathered from 374 IT professionals working in Cochin.

Framework of Analysis

The collected data have been analyzed by employing Chi-square and Factor Analysis.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

Work Life Balance of IT professionals have been measured by assigning scores to questions relating to Work Life Balance. Thirty four such questions are included in the questionnaire. Answers to the questions have been rated on a five-point scale. The scores allotted to the answers range from one to five. Thus, the maximum score an IT professional would get is 170. Score obtained by each IT professional is divided by 170 and multiplied by 100 to convert it into an index. This index is termed as 'Work Life Balance Index'. The index ranges between 20.00 and 100.00 and the grand mean of Work Life Balance Index is 66.91. Of the 374 IT professionals, 158 (42.20) are with Work Life indices above the average and 216 (57.80) are with Work Life indices below the average. Based on the Work Life Balance index, the IT professionals have been divided into three groups as those with low, moderate and high level of Work Life Balance. In order to classify the IT professionals into three such groups, quartiles have been made use of. Accordingly, IT professionals with Work Life

index ranging up to 57.34 are termed as IT professionals with low level of Work Life Balance; those with Work Life index ranging between 57.35 and 76.47 are termed as IT professionals with moderate level of Work Life Balance and those with Work Life index above 76.47 are termed as IT professionals with high level of Work Life Balance. Of the 374 IT professionals, 37 (9.90) are with low level of Work Life Balance; 272 (72.70) are with moderate level of Work Life Balance and the rest 65 (17.40) are with high level of Work Life Balance.

Variables	Level of Work Life Balance			Total	Chi-square
	Low (n=37)	Moderate (n=272)	High (n=65)		
Age					
Up to 25	8	45	6	59	15.408**
	(13.6)	(76.3)	(10.2)	(100.0)	
26 to 35	21	188	37	246	
	(8.5)	(76.4)	(15.0)	(100.0)	
Above 35	8	39	22	69	
	(11.6)	(56.5)	(31.9)	(100.0)	
Gender					
Male	26	182	39	247	1.445
	(10.5)	(73.7)	(15.8)	(100.0)	
Female	11	90	26	127	
	(8.7)	(70.9)	(20.5)	(100.0)	
Area of Residence					
Urban	18	120	32	170	1.336
	(10.6)	(70.6)	(18.8)	(100.0)	
Semi-urban	16	116	26	158	
	(10.1)	(73.4)	(16.5)	(100.0)	
Rural	3	36	7	46	
	(6.5)	(78.3)	(15.2)	(100.0)	
Educational Qualification					
Diploma	0	15	6	21	36.515**
	(00.0)	(71.4)	(28.6)	(100.0)	
Under Graduate	2	20	16	38	
	(5.3)	(52.6)	(42.1)	(100.0)	
Post Graduate	7	30	16	53	
	(13.2)	(56.6)	(30.2)	(100.0)	
Professional	28	207	27	262	
	(10.7)	(79.0)	(10.3)	(100.0)	
First Generation Graduates					
Yes	17	148	22	187	9.146*
	(9.1)	(79.1)	(11.8)	(100.0)	
No	20	124	43	187	
	(10.7)	(66.3)	(23.0)	(100.0)	
Total	37	272	65	374	
Type of Family					
Joint	6	65	19	90	2.201
	(6.7)	(72.2)	(21.1)	(100.0)	
Nuclear	31	207	46	284	
	(10.9)	(72.9)	(16.2)	(100.0)	
Total	37	272	65	374	
Marital Status					
Single	13	135	23	171	6.146*
	(7.6)	(78.9)	(13.5)	(100.0)	
Married	24	137	42	203	
	(11.8)	(67.5)	(20.7)	(100.0)	
Monthly Income					
Up to 25000	20	90	19	129	10.868
	(15.5)	(69.8)	(14.7)	(100.0)	
25001-50000	7	102	29	138	
	(5.1)	(73.9)	(21.0)	(100.0)	
50001-100000	9	65	12	86	
	(10.5)	(75.6)	(14.0)	(100.0)	
Above 100000	1	15	5	21	
	(4.8)	(71.4)	(23.8)	(100.0)	
Family Income					
Up to 50000	16	90	20	126	11.414
	(12.7)	(71.4)	(15.9)	(100.0)	
50001-100000	12	95	32	139	
	(8.6)	(68.3)	(23.0)	(100.0)	
100001-200000	5	72	12	89	
	(5.6)	(80.9)	(13.5)	(100.0)	
Above 200000	4	15	1	20	
	(20.0)	(75.0)	(5.0)	(100.0)	
Family Expenditure					
Up to 25000	17	103	27	147	3.203
	(11.6)	(70.1)	(18.4)	(100.0)	

25001-50000	12	127	27	166	
	(7.2)	(76.5)	(16.3)	(100.0)	
50001-100000	7	35	9	51	
	(13.7)	(68.6)	(17.6)	(100.0)	
Above 100000	1	7	2	10	
	(10.0)	(70.0)	(20.0)	(100.0)	
Family Status					
Head	11	63	29	103	12.199**
	(10.7)	(61.2)	(28.2)	(100.0)	
Member	26	209	36	271	
	(9.6)	(77.1)	(13.3)	(100.0)	
Nature of Family					
Joint	6	66	19	91	2.172
	(6.6)	(72.5)	(20.9)	(100.0)	
Nuclear	31	206	46	283	
	(11.0)	(72.8)	(16.3)	(100.0)	
First Job					
Yes	13	113	24	150	0.889
	(8.7)	(75.3)	(16.0)	(100.0)	
No	24	159	41	224	
	(10.7)	(71.0)	(18.3)	(100.0)	
Total Experience					
Up to 5	19	144	30	193	1.621
	(9.8)	(74.6)	(15.5)	(100.0)	
6 to 10	13	101	26	140	
	(9.3)	(72.1)	(18.6)	(100.0)	
Above 10	5	27	9	41	
	(12.2)	(65.9)	(22.0)	(100.0)	
Experience in Present Organization					
Up to 2	22	135	30	187	2.082
	(11.8)	(72.2)	(16.0)	(100.0)	
3 to 4	9	70	18	97	
	(9.3)	(72.2)	(18.6)	(100.0)	
Above 4	6	67	17	90	
	(6.7)	(74.4)	(18.9)	(100.0)	
Working Hours					
Up to 8	15	130	47	192	14.535**
	(7.8)	(67.7)	(24.5)	(100.0)	
Above Eight	22	142	18	182	
	(12.1)	(78.0)	(9.9)	(100.0)	
Traveling Time					
Up to 30	24	153	31	208	2.980
	(11.5)	(73.6)	(14.9)	(100.0)	
Above 30	13	119	34	166	
	(7.8)	(71.7)	(20.5)	(100.0)	
Work Schedule					
General Shift	32	232	40	304	44.563**
	(10.5)	(76.3)	(13.2)	(100.0)	
Morning Shift	3	29	17	49	
	(6.1)	(59.2)	(34.7)	(100.0)	
Night Shift	1	10	0	11	
	(9.1)	(90.9)	(00.0)	(100.0)	
Rotation	1	1	8	10	
	(10.0)	(10.0)	(80.0)	(100.0)	
Designation					
Trainee	3	32	14	49	20.876**
	(6.1)	(65.3)	(28.6)	(100.0)	
Developer	22	187	30	239	
	(9.2)	(78.2)	(12.6)	(100.0)	
Manager	12	45	15	72	
	(16.7)	(62.5)	(20.8)	(100.0)	
Above Manager	0	8	6	14	
	(00.0)	(57.1)	(42.9)	(100.0)	
Nature of Job					
IT	31	237	47	315	8.684*
	(9.8)	(75.2)	(14.9)	(100.0)	
Non IT	6	35	18	59	
	(10.2)	(59.3)	(30.5)	(100.0)	
Quality of Work Life					
Low	22	40	0	62	81.826**
	(35.5)	(64.5)	(00.0)	(100.0)	
Moderate	14	202	43	259	
	(5.4)	(78.0)	(16.6)	(100.0)	
High	1	30	22	53	

	(1.9)	(56.6)	(41.5)	(100.0)	

- IT Professionals, above 35 years of age have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals, below the age of 25 years have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT Professionals with graduate educational qualification have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals with postgraduate educational qualification have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT professionals who do not belong to first generation graduate category have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- Married IT professionals have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT professionals who are heading the family have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT Professionals who work up to eight hours a day have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals who work for more than eight hours a day have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT Professionals who work on rotation basis have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals who work in general shift (9AM-5PM) have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT Professionals who are working as trainees have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals who are working as managers have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- Professionals who perform Non-IT work in IT organizations have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.
- IT Professionals who perceive high level of quality of work life exists in their organizations have high caliber on managing their Work Life Balance. IT Professionals who perceive low level of quality of work life exists in their organization have low caliber on managing their Work Life Balance.

Suggestions to Organizations for Improving Work Life Balance of Employees

In order to help employees attain work life balance, it must be given priority by the organizations. Senior management has the responsibility to create and implement policies that help employees meet the work life challenges and mid and junior level managers should effectively enforce them. A supportive work culture which makes employees feel that they are entitled to utilize the benefits of work life policies is imperative for achieving this goal. Promoting a positive work life culture helps organizations to gain the confidence of their employees and make them feel that their employer is genuinely interested in their well being. Communicating the work life policies and making employees aware of the need and benefits of work life balance is also essential for promoting work life balance. Organizations should encourage managers to lead by example. According to Rife & Hall (2015) if the employees observe their managers setting boundaries between work and non-work domains, they are more likely to follow it.

As part of the study, this paper makes the following suggestions to organizations in the IT sector to improve the work life balance of their employees.

- Encourage younger employees to discuss their work life challenges with older employees and older employees to mentor younger employees, especially fresher's who are just out of colleges.
- Promote flexible work arrangements especially for employees who are required to work for more than 8 hours. However, organizations should ensure that clearly defined flexible work policies, procedures and guidelines are created and communicated across the organization before introducing such practices.
- Ensure that teams are adequately staffed and work is fairly distributed among employees and no employee is overworked and stressed.
- Offer a family friendly work environment. This could include providing in house child care facilities, extending medical insurance coverage for the family, including families in work events etc.
- Encourage employees to embrace technology and occasionally allow them to make use of company facilities such as computers, internet etc., to attend to personal obligations like paying electricity and water bills, income tax, insurance premiums, checking bank accounts, shopping online etc.
- Promote an open and collaborative organizational culture where mutual trust and two way conversations and feedback are encouraged.
- Ensure that employees avail themselves of their annual leave and holidays. Encashment or carryover of unutilized paid leave should not be encouraged.
- Promote a healthy life style and fitness initiatives among employees

5. Conclusion

Work life balance challenges of organizations have changed considerably over the last decade especially with the entry of Generation Y workforce. This could primarily be attributed to the changes in the perception of employees about work. New Generation Employees believe in living a well balanced life where they can do justice to both their personal and professional responsibilities. They want work to be fun and flexible. Their ideal employer is one who provides flexible work schedules, Telecommuting facilities, family friendly work environment, open work culture and tech savvy and friendly supervisors.

Work life balance challenges have important implications not only for the employees and organizations but also to the society as a whole, because raising a family deserves to be given great priority. So, the Governments of the day has a responsibility to make laws that will ensure that organizations address the work life challenges and provides a healthy work environment which will be mutually beneficial. The recent maternity benefit Amendment which increased the paid maternity of women employees from 12 weeks to 26 weeks is an initiative taken by the Government of India to improve the work life balance of women employees. The Act has also introduced an enabling provision relating to "work from home" for women which may be exercised after the expiry of 26 weeks' leave period. The Act also makes it mandatory for organizations employing 50 or more employees to have crèche facility which the women employees can visit 4 times during the day.

This paper is an attempt to understand the factors influencing the work life balance challenges of Generation Y IT employees. The study has revealed some of the expectations of employees from their organizations and how the socio economic background of these employees influences their work life balance. The paper also gives some suggestions to organizations to improve the work life balance of Generation Y. However, further research is required to understand the extent to which organizations are adapting to the changing perceptions, concerns and expectations of the new work force.

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