WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN IT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Work-Life Balance has attracted the attention of all organisations, top management personnel, strategists, policy makers, and employees alike, irrespective of the industry or a country. It has become a priority area for most Human Resource professionals. In today's competitive and fast paced world, organisations have to retain their talented workforce, increase their productivity and efficiency and use the best of practices to maintain a sustainable and profitable environment. In India, the growth of the services sector has a huge contribution from Information Technology sector. The work parameters in this sector are significantly different from the other organisations and industries. A large chunk of work done in IT sector is outsourced from other countries which have different time zones. An employee has to thus work based on the time zone of the client. This leads to employees facing multiple challenges on their personal and health fronts. A large part of workforce in these organisations is female. The women have to manage their personal and family responsibilities also along with the responsibilities of paid work. This creates pressure in their lives.The level of work life balance of employees has serious implications on employee turnover, job satisfaction, productivity and stress levels of employees. This paper aims to find the factors influencing the work life balance of female employees working in IT sector and to explore the possible solutions to the problems faced by them in maintaining work life balance.

KEYWORDS: *Work Life Balance, IT Sector, Women Employees, Job Satisfaction, Productivity.*
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Introduction

India is a multi-cultural nation with a lot of diversity. In most of the religions, women hold a respectable position. Earlier the role of the women was limited to domestic work and household chores. But with the passage of time, women started going out to work. This might be due to financial support needed by the family or to pursue their own goals. Education helped women in getting more work in main stream jobs. Their participation in the workforce increased and became considerable. But at the same time, they continued to bear the burden of their traditional responsibilities of doing household and domestic chores, taking care of children and elderly etc. They had to manage responsibilities of both family and work domains. This lead to stress in women's lives.Development in the IT and IT services sector has resulted in increase in jobs for both men and women.New expectations towards personal and career development, life-long learning and an increased awareness and need for a balance between work and life, have affected organisations. They have been introducing new policies such as Flexible working and time scheduling, working from home or from satellite locations etc. The paper is aimed at studying the Work-life balance of women in IT sector.

Work-Life Balance and IT Industry

The Work life balance is a concept which helps employees to spend their time and energy in the domains of personal and professional life optimally. It helps in prioritising, setting goals, uncluttering lives and finding time to spend with family, friends, in social functions or doing leisure activities and following hobbies. India is the topmost offshoring destination for IT companies across the world. Havingproven its

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capabilities in delivering both on-shore and off-shore services to global clients,emerging technologies now offer an entire new gamut of opportunities for top IT firms inIndia. Social, mobility, analytics and cloud (SMAC) are collectively expected to offer a US$1 trillion opportunity. The Indian e-commerce segment iswitnessing strong growth and thereby offers another attractive avenue for IT companies todevelop products and services to cater to the high growth consumer segment.The IT and ITeSsector have generated massive employment in the past and continuesthe trend of providing jobs. With online shopping, social media and cloud computingflourishing more than ever before, there is great demand for IT professionals in e-commerceand business to consumer firms. Work-life Balance is an issue of priority in most of the organisations today. With the advancement in technology, more and more employees are using mobiles, social media platforms and have become more dependent on technology. The earlier lines of distinct family and work lives have become blurred andemployees are expected to be available 24×7. Checking mails in bed, tweeting throughout dinner, and attending work calls on theweekends have become regular practices - habitually decreasing time to spend with family or to relax.The sector demands knowledge and has less gender bias as compared to the other sectors. There is also a pressure to complete the task in time due to cut throat competitions. The employees have to work for both Indian and foreign companies/clients/projects which need different work climate, timings etc., which leads to work life imbalance in this sector.

Review of Literature

In a study by **Wentling, R. M. (2003)**, it was found that the dual roles played by the women cause tension and conflict in their lives. This is due to the social conditions still prevalent in our society according to which the family and household jobs are still the responsibility of women. Thus, the women face challenges in managing their work and life. This can be changed with change in the attitudes of the society. Support from family can also help ease their stress.

Vittal (2003) observed that in order to empower women in the IT sector in the real sense, it is necessary to investigate the social impact of IT sector on the women's community. The author has indicated the emergence of „metro-sexual men", men who are sharing the responsibility of the family which might help women to be an active agent in the IT workforce. It is also observed that the dropout rates of women get increased with their marriage and childbirth. It is because childcare and housework remain women's responsibilities, irrespective of her income, educational level or employment. This places a great burden on women and restricts women's choices in terms of better job opportunities.

Ahmad, Aminah (2007) conducted a study on married female production operators. They explored the work-family conflict experienced by them, the support they received from the society and the strategies they used to cope up with the conflict. The respondents had dual-career families. The findings suggested that women experienced more work interference with family than family interference with work. The women in earlier stages of lifecycle faced more conflicts. Many women chose to quit their jobs after having second child. They felt that the superiors did not support them and to manage the conflict, reactive role behaviour and personal role redefinition strategies were used.

A study which aimed to find out the relationship between organisational policies which were made to support the career advancements of women and their psychological well-being was conducted by **Ronald J. Burke, Mustafa Koyuncu and Lisa Fiksenbaum (2010)**. The respondents were from a large Turkish bank. The factors considered were: male dominated standards, fair treatment and equality, barriers faced by women employees in their career, attitudes towards women and support received by them. The findings suggested that the women who received more support in the organisation were more satisfied and involved in their jobs sand indicated greater levels of psychological wellbeing.

Sophia J. Ali (2011) investigated the challenges faced by women employees in Kapsabet Municipality, Kenya with respect to career development. It was revealed that the women faced discrimination in career opportunities and there were no good programs related to development of career. The study suggested to enhance the efficiency of the programs and to increase their reach to the desired section of women by increasing the involvement of top management and organisational commitment.

Babu and Vembu (2014) explored the factors affecting the levels of stress among women employees in Public sector banks. The factors included lack of control in decision making relating to work, poor and unhygienic working conditions, work overload, unclear and ambiguous roles, improper leadership style, inadequate social support, relationship with supervisors and teammates and technological changes in the organisation. High levels of stress affect the mental and physical health of the employees leading to disorientation in work.

A study conducted by **Somasekharam T.M. et al (2018)** revealed the job satisfaction and quality of work-life of private sector bank employees. High focus on customer satisfaction and speedy service has lead to higher work load on the employees. The quality of work life is directly related to the atmosphere at work, relationships with supervisor and other employees and stakeholders, working conditions etc. An improvement in these and better work life policies will result in better efficiency, productivity and higher organisation commitment from employees.

Objectives of Research

- To gain knowledge about the problems faced by working women in IT sector in Pune.
- To analyse the effect of demographic factors on work life balance of women employees.
- To explore the factors related to personal, work and organisational domains that have impact on work life balance of women employees in IT sector.
- To find possible solutions to challenges faced by women employees and improve their working conditions and overall work life balance.

Research Methodology

This is an exploratoryresearch.Data was collected using questionnaire which was administered to 100 women employees from the different companies in IT sector inPune.The study aims to find out the Work-Life Balance of Women workers in IT sector. The questionnaire has statements based on the personal life and work life parameters that may have effect on the work life balance of employees. The demographic factors such as age, marital status, number of dependents in the family, annual income, qualification, designation, years of experience etc have an effect on work life balance.The responses of questions are based on a five-point Likert's scale. The respondents were asked to rate their answers ranging from 'Not at all' to 'Always'. The statements were formed after consulting relevant literature and relevant research conducted in the area. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for checking the reliability of the questionnaire. The value was 0.815, which is good as per standards. Random Sampling technique has been used. Editing, Tabulation and Analysis of data is done. The Conclusions are made from analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The raw data collected from the field was subjected to editing, coding and tabulation. Software used was MS Excel and SPSS. The analysis focused on understanding the Work Life Balance of women in IT sector. Further, attempts were made to understand the relationship between Work Life Balance and various parameters such as demographic differences, personal and work-related factors.

- **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Age Wise Distribution of Respondents

Age in years	Number of Respondents
20-29	35
30-39	39
40-49	21
50-59	5

Educational Qualification wise Distribution of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Number of Respondents
Graduate	23
Post-graduate	67
Others	10

Marital Status wise Distribution of Respondents

Marital Status	Number of Respondents
Married	46
Unmarried	54

Family Type Wise Distribution of Respondents

Family Type	Number of Respondents
Nuclear	67
Joint	33

Work Experience wise Distribution of Respondents

Experience in years	Number of Respondents
< 5 years	16
5-9 years	53
10-14 years	24
>14 years	7

Income wise Distribution of Respondents

Annual Income in years	Number of Respondents
<5 lacs	16
5-10 lacs	33
10-15 lacs	38
>15 lacs	13

Number of Dependent wise Distribution of Respondents

Number of dependents	Number of Respondents
None	34
1-2	36
>2	30

Number of Children wise Distribution of Respondents

Number of children	Number of Respondents
None	13
1-2	21
>2	12

Travel Time wise Distribution of Respondents

Travel Time	Number of Respondents
< 1 hour	41
1-2 hours	49
>2 hours	10

- **Effect of Demographic Variables on Work Life Balance**

| Variable	F/t value	p value
Age	3.165	0.033<0.05
Educational Qualification	1.877	0.128>0.05
Marital Status	2.802	0.041<0.05
Family type	5.787	0.000<0.05
Work Experience	1.432	0.218>0.05
Annual Income	4.967	0.017<0.05
Number of dependents	3.913	0.013<0.05
Number of children	4.935	0.006<0.05
Travel time	3.928	0.045<0.05

The above table shows that there is a significant impact of various demographic variables such as age, marital status, family type, annual income, number of dependents, number of children and travel time on the work life balance of women employees working in various IT organisations in Pune. This can be interpreted from the p value, which was calculated using SPSS 25 software. If the p value is less than 0.05 then the variable has significant impact on the work life balance. On the other hand, demographic variables educational qualification and work experience did not have significant impact on the work life balance of employees. In this case the p value is higher than the level of significance 0.05.

- **Analysis of Responses from Questionnaire**

Statement 1) Do you think family support is important in household/child care activities?
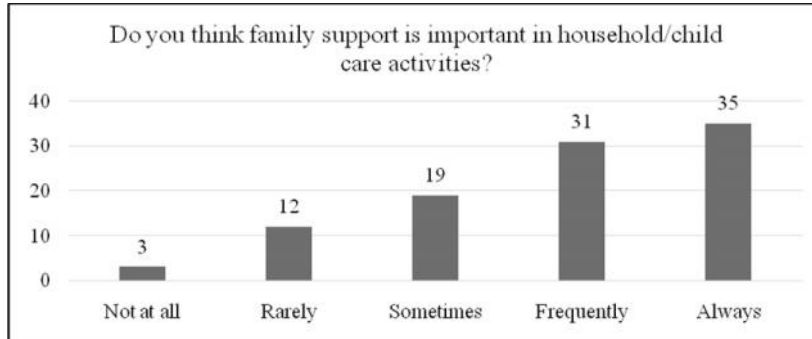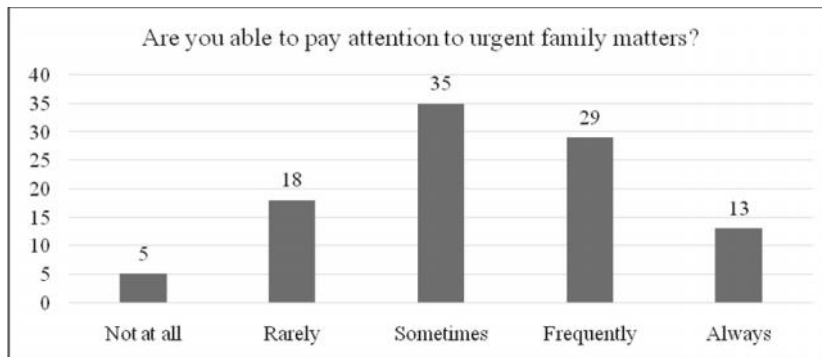

The above table shows the response of women employees regarding the importance of family support in fulfilling the duties of households. The weighted average comes to 3.83 in above case which shows that most of the employees are of the opinion that family support is important.

Statement 2) Do you think that you are able to spend proper time with your children/spouse/family members and taking care of them, cooking, helping them with homework, spending quality time etc?
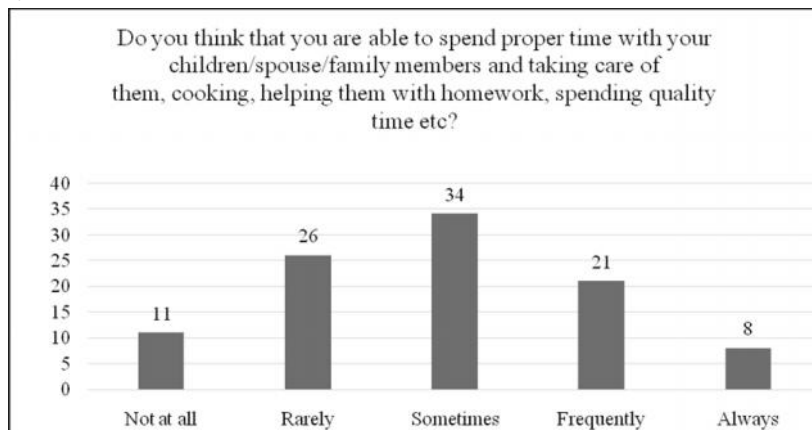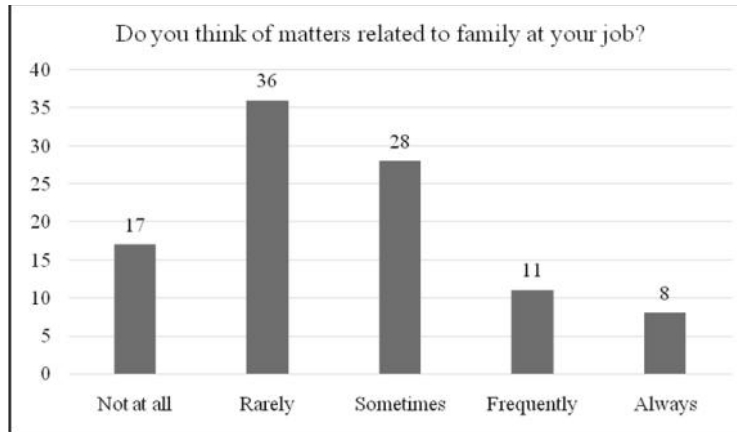

The above table shows the response of women employees regarding time spent with children or other family members. The weighted average comes to 2.89 in above case which shows that most of the employees are not able to spend desired time in child care activities because of work load and lack of time.

Statement 3) Are you able to pay attention to urgent family matters?

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to the question of paying attention to urgent family matters. The weighted average comes to 3.27 in above case which shows that most of the employees are able to pay attention to urgent family matters and emergencies.

Statement 4) Do you think of matters related to family at your job?

Do you think of matters related to family at your job?

| Response	Count
Not at all	17
Rarely	36
Sometimes	28
Frequently	11
Always	8

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to family interference with work. The weighted average comes to 2.57 in above case which shows that most of the employees are able to pay attention to their jobs properly and do not think about family problems when at work.

Statement 5) Do you have specific job responsibilities?

Do you have specific job responsibilities?

| Response	Count
Not at all	14
Rarely	13
Sometimes	24
Frequently	26
Always	23
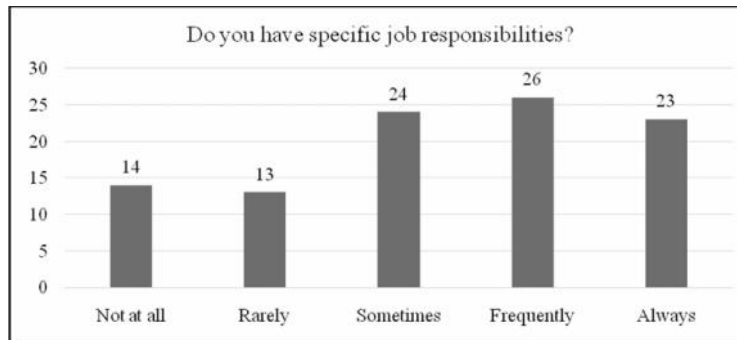
The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to the clarity of responsibilities and duties that needed to be performed by the employee in the job. The weighted average comes to 3.31 in above case which shows that most of the employees have specific key result areas.

Statement 6) Do you have to work for long hours to complete the work or take it home?

Do you have to work for long hours to complete the work or take it home?

| Response	Count
Not at all	4
Rarely	8
Sometimes	24
Frequently	33
Always	31
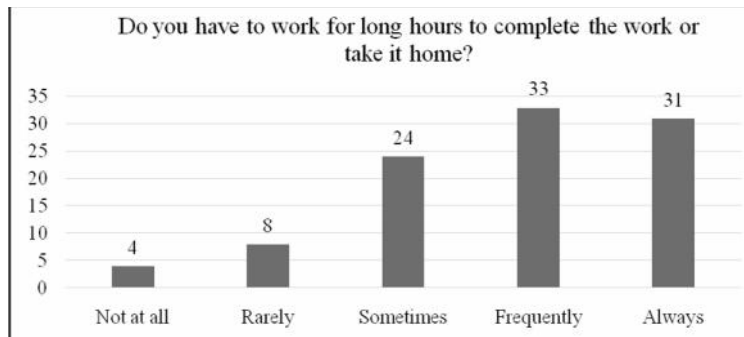
The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to long working hours. The weighted average comes to 3.79 in above case which shows that most of the employees have to work for more hours or have to take work home so as to complete it. This leaves less time to be spent with family.

Statement 7) Do you think that because of excessive work load and shortage of time you are unable to attend social and family functions?
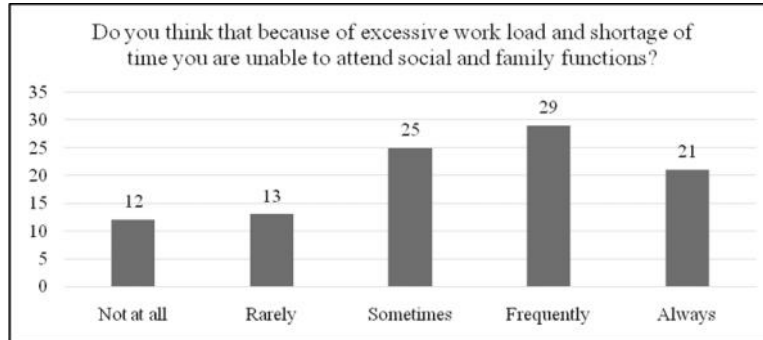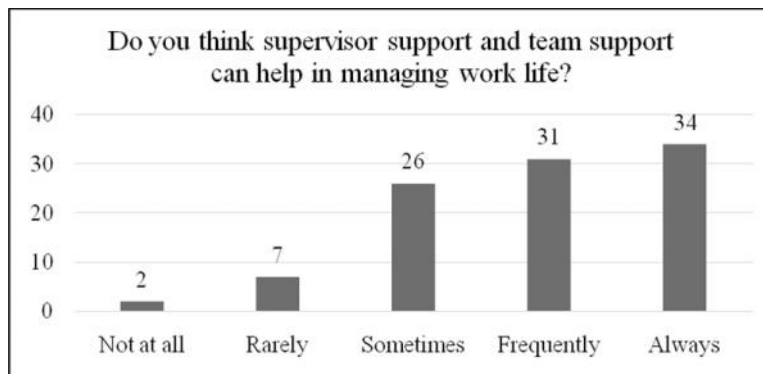

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to excessive work load. The weighted average comes to 3.34 in above case which shows that most of the employees have lot of work and they are left with less time due to this reason. They skip family functions because of work. This causes burnout and increases the stress levels.

Statement 8) Do you think of matters related to job even in your family time?
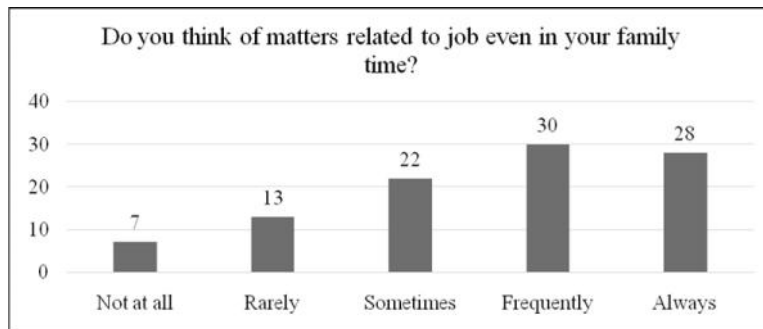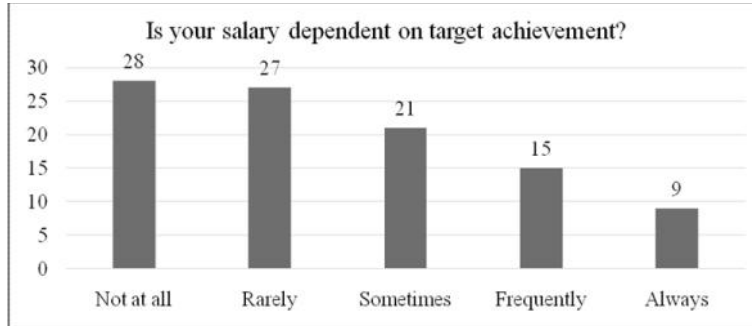

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to work interference with family. The weighted average comes to 3.59 in above case which shows that most of the employees face work interference with family. When the employees are at home then also most of them have matters related to work in the back of their minds. This leads to disorientation and loss of focus on activities at hand.

Statement 9) Do you think supervisor support and team support can help in managing work life?
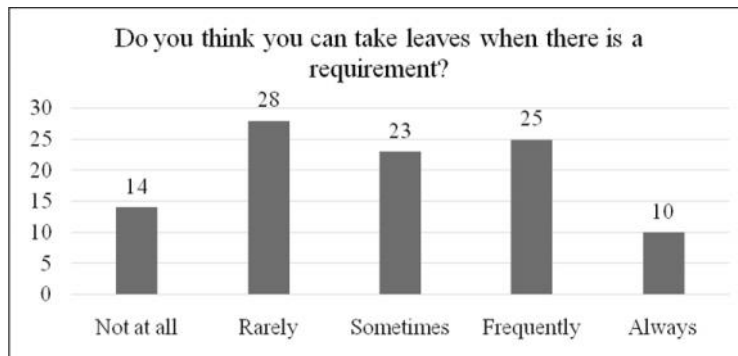
The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to support received from supervisors and team mates. The weighted average comes to 3.88 in above case which shows that most of the employees are of the opinion that if they have a healthy and cordial relationship with their colleagues and bosses then it is easier to manage work and family life.

Statement 10) Is your salary dependent on target achievement?

Is your salary dependent on target achievement?

|	Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
	28	27	21	15	9

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to salary being dependent on targets. The weighted average comes to 2.5 in above case which shows that few employees have their compensations based on target completion.

Statement 11) Do you think you can take leaves when there is a requirement?

Do you think you can take leaves when there is a requirement?

|	Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
	14	28	23	25	10

The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to leave policy in the IT organisations. The weighted average comes to 2.89 in above case which shows that most of the employees are of the opinion that taking leaves in their company is not easy. The leave policies in the companies are properly documented but approval for taking the benefits is difficult to get.

Statement 12) Do you think flexible timings, part time working, job sharing etc can help in balancing work life?

Do you think flexible timings, part time working, job sharing etc can help in balancing work life?

|	Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
	2	14	23	32	29
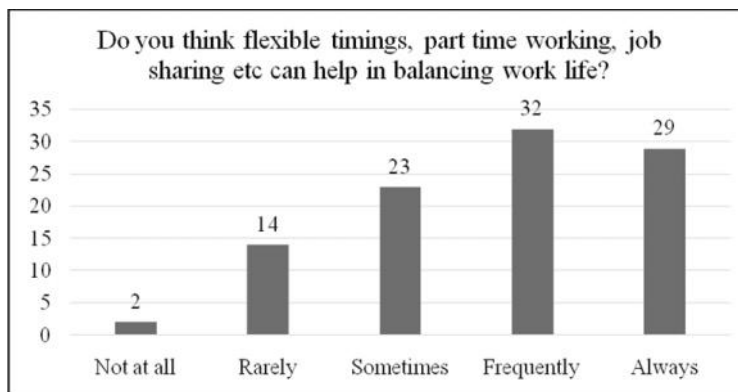
The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to flexible timings, part time working, job sharing etc. The weighted average comes to 3.72 in above case which shows that most of the employees have felt the need to have flexibility in work so that they can manage their work and family life in a better way.

Statement 13) Do you think that women are treated equally and there is no discrimination on the basis of gender?
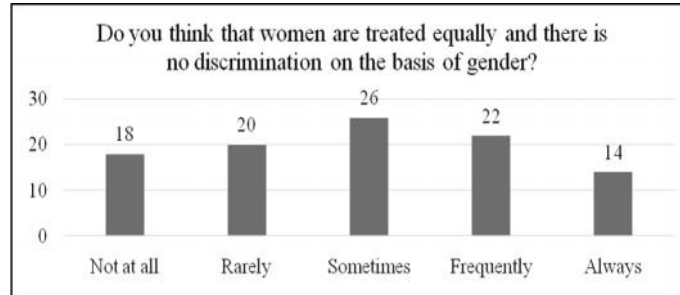
The above table shows the response of women employees with respect to their getting fair and equal treatment in the organisation. The weighted average comes to 2.94 in above case which shows that most of the employees have sometimes felt discrimination on the basis of gender and have felt bias in the dealings with them.

Statement 14) Do you suffer from health problems due to shift working/stress/job demands?
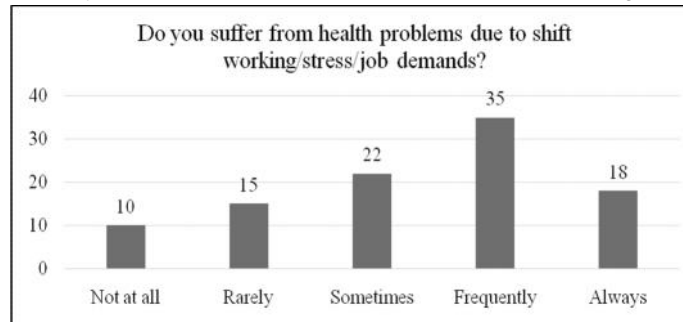
The above table shows that many women have felt that they are suffering from some or the other health issue because of job demands of the IT sector. Many times the employees have to work in shifts which are based on the client's location which in most cases is a foreign country. This leads to imbalance in the lives of the employee. Continuous sitting causes back pain, headaches, eye problems, migraines; stress causes mental health issues and burnout.

Findings and Conclusions

The research revolves round the work-life balance working women in various companies in information technology sector. After analysing the data, it is found that the one of the major challenges is child care. The married women who do not have family support face many difficulties in caring for their children. They often neglect them and face guilt because of the lack of time. The next challenge is the work interference with family. The women in IT industry have high work load and they normally think of work at the back of their minds even when with family. This leads to stress. The work load is higher because the industry is very competitive, and to stay relevant one has to be fast and efficient. The client dealings and work deadlines create a lot of pressure and often leave employees exhausted. The technological advancements which help in keeping the employee available at all times, this also puts pressure on employees. They are expected to reply to the mails and solve programming problems from their locations. The workers face work interference with family more than they experience family interference with work. The women employees constantly think of their jobs and this leads to disorientation. They are not able to focus and draw a line between family and work life. Many women face discrimination in jobs, appraisals, promotions on the basis of gender which leads to inferiority complex and depression. Most of the women employees feel that organisational support, properly implemented leave policy and flexibility of time and workplace may help them manage work life properly.

It is suggested that organisations should train the employees to prioritise their work and set day goals. Employees should be encouraged to take short breaks and long breaks. If the senior employees follow this culture then it will be followed by the employees in lower levels. So, it becomes the onus of senior people to set a culture of maintaining work life balance. It is recommended that leave policies should be properly implemented and the employees should be able to take benefits of these policies. Leaves provisions for career breaks, child care, contingency leaves etc should be provided. Provisions for women with small children to work for lesser number of hours should be implemented. Creche and day care facilities are also helpful in child care. Flexibility of time and workplace may help the women manage their time spent with family and thus reduce stress levels in them. Organisations should implement policies of no discrimination on the basis of gender. Better supervisor support and relationship with team members helps manage work life balance in a positive way. Programs, trainings and workshops regarding employee wellness should be organised. Work life balance policies should be implemented. Most of the women forego promotions because of relocation, if flexibility of workplace is provided to such employees, it may help them advance in their careers. Rotation of shifts can be provided to the employees working in different time zones. Health check-ups, gym facilities, step count programs, fun games and other related activities should be incorporated by the organisations so that the physical and mental health of the employee can be protected.

The work life balance of women employees can thus be improved in several ways and the challenges can be addressed. The employees with positive work life balance and lower stress levels are an asset to the organisation. They are more efficient, have better productivity and are more committed and loyal towards the organisation.

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