

Emotional Intelligence as a Factor in Creating Work Life Balance

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Abstract

With the changing economic and social environment, the work life balance has come up as an issue both for the individual as well as the organizations. The decline of male breadwinner system and shift of female labour from domestic work to paid employment has been an important social change. Again, due to globalization and increased market competition, there is a drastic change in the work practices. The workforce is under great pressure than ever before. The 'long hours culture', '24/7 lifestyle', dominates lives, especially of highly educated and skilled professionals and managerial personnel. Individuals are finding it difficult to meet the commitments of both work and home, and the result is job dissatisfaction, life dissatisfaction, absenteeism, high turnover, stress and other health related problems. Hence, there is a need to have a balance between work and life outside work.

INTRODUCTION

The approach of work life balance was initially conceived in terms of work family balance (e.g. Hill et al., 2001) or, work family conflict (Kahn et al., 1964). Numerous studies have been reported which improve the understanding of work to family and family to work conflict (e.g. Allen et al., 2000; Frone et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Recently, a broad term has emerged in literature, to refer to work/non-work conflict : Work Life Balance (Fisher, 2001; Hobson et al., 2001), which offers more inclusive approach to study work/non-work conflict compared

to work family conflict. The earliest view of the relationship between work and home was that they are segmented and independent, that work and home do not affect each other. Segmentation treats work and home as separate spheres of life, either because they are inherently independent or because workers actively keep them that way. The Compensation theory proposes that workers try to compensate for the lack of satisfaction in work or home by trying to find more satisfaction in the other (Lambert, 1990). Piotrkowski (1979) also concluded that men "look to their homes as havens, look to their families as sources of satisfaction lacking in the occupational sphere".

The most popular view of relationship between work and family was put forth by Spillover theory. Spillover theory recognizes that either system may have spillover effects on the other.

Several researches suggested that workers carry the emotions, attitudes, skills and behaviours that they establish at work into their family life (Belsky et al., 1985; Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985; Piotrkowski, 1979; Piotrkowski & Crits-Christoph, 1981) and vice-versa (Belsky et al., 1985; Crouter, 1984). Spillover can be positive or negative (Lambert, 1990). Kossek et al. (1999) provided a framework for work-family role synthesis, focused on decision-making regarding boundary management and multiple role to achieve work family role integration. Clark (2000) presented a new work/family border theory – a new theory about work family balance. It explains how individuals negotiate boundaries between separate domains of work and family. People are daily border-crossers, and the borders between domains are physical, temporal or psychological, and have different levels of permeability, flexibility and blending. Organizational border-keepers, usually line managers, have a crucial role in maintaining the commitment and involvement of those who need balance, by managing flexibility over time and work issues.

Work/life balance has been defined as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both person's job and personal life are equal.¹ The term "work/life balance" was coined in 1986, although its usage in every day language was sporadic for a number of years. Interestingly, work/life programmes existed as early as 1930s. Before World War-II, the W.K. Kellogg Company created four six hour shifts to replace the traditional three daily eight-hour shifts, and the new shifts resulted in increased employee morale and efficiency (Lockwood, 2003). Work /life balance, according to Bailyn et al. (2001), "means the harmonious and holistic

¹ Work-life balance (2002), The Word Spy, Retrieved from <http://www.wordspy.com/words/work-lifebalance.asp>

integration of work and non-work, so that men and women can achieve their potential across the domains in which they play out their life roles". UK Department of Trade and Industry suggests that it is simply about co-coordinating the demand of employment with life's other obligations. "Work life balance is about adjusting working patterns. Regardless of age, race or gender, everyone can find a rhythm to help them combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations." A number of analysts (e.g., Lewis et al., 2003; Taylor, 2002) suggest work personal life integration as a working terminology to capture the synergies and connections between different parts of life and the way they flow into each other.

Fisher (2001), in his doctoral work, suggested that work life balance, includes both work/personal life interference as well as work/personal life enhancement. In a nutshell, it can be said that "Work Life Balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work, leading them to be able to enjoy an optimal quality of life." Work Life Balance is achieved when an individual's right to fulfil life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as a norm, to the mutual benefit of individual, business and society (The Work Foundation, University of Bristol).²

The problems of balance are partly due to the structural conditions beyond the control of the individual, but some of the problems may well be assumed to reside in the individuals themselves (Heiligers & Hingstman, 2000). A number of individual factors such as personality, gender, age, life and career stage, personal control and coping with others at work, have an effect on work-life balance of the individual (Guest, 2001). Hammonds (1996) quoted Ellen Galinsky saying that "companies are seeing they have all these programs" (i.e. work family policies), but people are still really stressed out. Certainly, employees bear some responsibility for determining their own family balance. With respect to the role of the individuals, one may expect that high emotional intelligence would help them balance family interference with work.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) : CONCEPT

As noted by Tischler et al. (2002), Emotional Intelligence has its roots in the studies of "social intelligence" in the 1920s and perhaps earlier (Laird, 1925; Moss et al., 1927). It was "discovered" again by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who

² The Work Foundation, University of Bristol. http://www.bris.ac.uk/pwe/work_life_balance.html

first called it "emotional intelligence", and represents two of the seven intelligences theorized by Gardner (1993): interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Goleman (1995) popularized the concept as well as the notion that EI might "matter more" than IQ (which represents one of the Gardner's seven intelligences). Salovey and Mayer (1990, p.189) defined emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Later on, they refined and defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p.5). Bar-On (2000) viewed "emotional intelligence as a non-cognitive intelligence which is defined as an array of emotional, personal and social abilities and skills that influence an individual's ability to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures. Martinez (1997) refers to emotional intelligence as being: an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures. Goleman (1997) defines the construct of emotional intelligence, which is about : knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle those feelings without having them swamp you; being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, be creative and perform at your peak; and sensing what others are feeling, and handling relationships effectively.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has recently been suggested to be a factor of paramount importance in adjustment to life in general, and to work and work performance in particular (Goleman 1995, 1998). Carmeli (2003) found that senior managers who have high emotional intelligence are more likely to effectively control Work-Family Conflict. Compared to low and middle level position employees, senior managers may encounter higher levels of job demands that result in work family conflict. The results indicated that senior managers who have high EI may better and more carefully handle the inherent work/family conflict than those who have low EI.

Sjoberg, L. (2001) hypothesized Emotional Intelligence to be a factor in successful life adjustment, among them, the successful achievement of a well balanced life with little interference between work and family and leisure. Data was collected from a sample of 153 respondents, who were roughly representative of the population. Results showed that both interface dimensions co-related strongly with

emotional intelligence in the hypothesized direction, i.e., high EI was associated with a better balance of life and work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives were :

- To study the correlations between work life balance and emotional intelligence
- To study the differences in work life balance of IT and ITES professionals with varied levels of EI (high, average and low).

SAMPLE

Sample consisted of randomly selected 308 professionals working in Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services companies operating in the National capital Region and Chandigarh area.

MEASURES

Work life balance scale (Hayman, 2005) which consisted of 15 items, designed to assess three dimensions of work life balance, work interference with personal life (WIPL-7 items), personal life interference with work (PLIW-4 items), work/personal life enhancement(WPLE-4 items) was used to measure work life balance.

The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they felt in a particular way during the past three months, using a seven-point time related scale (e.g. 1-Not at all, 4=Sometimes and 7=All the time). The scoring was done as 7,6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (7 for Not at all, 4 for Sometimes, and 1 for All the time) for the dimensions of WIPL (except item 7) and PLIW, since the items were negatively worded.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was measured using 34-item scale by Hyde et al. (2002). The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from (5) Strongly Agree to (1) for strongly disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that scores on emotional intelligence ranged between 91 and 171. The mean for emotional intelligence scores was found to be 131.57. The scores on work life balance total ranged between 48 and 105. The mean was found to be 70.77.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviation of Work Life Balance, its Dimensions and Emotional Intelligence

	Mean (N=308)	Standard Deviation
WIPL	30.69	6.63
PLIW	21.57	3.84
WPLE	18.51	4.61
TOTAL WLB	70.77	11.01
EI	131.57	13.43

Emotional intelligence of IT professionals was found to be significantly and positively correlated with Personal life interference with work (PLIW; $r = 0.28$, Table 2), work personal life enhancement (WPLE; $r = 0.26$) and overall work life balance (WLB; $r = 0.25$) at .01 level of significance, indicating that higher the emotional intelligence lesser is the PLIW and higher is the WPLE and overall WLB. However, correlation between emotional intelligence and work interference in personal life was not significant.

Table 2
Correlations Between Work Life Balance, its Dimensions and Emotional Intelligence

		TOTAL EI****
WIPL***	Pearson Correlation	0.08
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.17
	N	308
PLIW***	Pearson Correlation	0.28*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00
	N	308
WPLE	Pearson Correlation	0.26*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00
	N	308
TOTAL WLB	Pearson Correlation	0.25*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00
	N	308

* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Emotionally intelligent individuals are able to successfully cope up with stressors in personal and work life and thus, they are able to minimize interference of personal life in work. It can be argued that individuals who are able to maintain their cool and stay focused tend to maintain balance between personal and work life and vice versa. Both work and life complement each other in the case of such people.

Findings of earlier studies by Sjoberg (2001) and Carmeli (2003) lend support to the findings of the present study. Sjoberg found emotional intelligence to be significantly but negatively correlated with work interference in family and family interference in work and was positively associated with better balance of life and work. Carmeli found that senior managers who had high Emotional Intelligence may handle work-family conflict more carefully than those who have low emotional intelligence.

Table 3
Work Life Balance of IT and ITES Professionals at Varied Levels of EI

	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
WIPL	Between Groups	90.26	2	45.13	1.03	0.36
	Within Groups	13397.82	305	43.93		
	Total	13488.08	307			
PLIW	Between Groups	168.42	2	84.21	5.89*	0.00
	Within Groups	4359.15	305	14.29		
	Total	4527.57	307			
WPLE	Between Groups	358.37	2	179.18	8.88*	0.00
	Within Groups	6154.60	305	20.18		
	Total	6512.97	307			
TOTAL WLB	Between Groups	848.87	2	424.44	3.56**	0.03
	Within Groups	36372.30	305	119.25		
	Total	37221.17	307			

* Significant at 0.01 level

** Significant at 0.05 level

It is evident from Table 3 that F-ratios were found to be significant for personal life interference with work (PLIW; $F = 5.89$) and work personal life enhancement (WPLE; $F = 8.88$) and work life balance total (WLB; $F = 3.56$). The results indicate that there exist significant differences among IT and ITES

professionals with low, average and high emotional intelligence on two dimensions of work life balance, namely, PLIW and WPLE and on WLB total.

Further, t-ratios were calculated (wherever F-ratio was significant) to find out the significance of differences between means and results. These are given in Table 4.

Table 4

	EI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Group Differences	t-ratios	Sig. (2-tailed)
WIPL	Low	93	31.28		Low-average	na	na
	Average	134	30.08		Low-high	na	na
	High	81	31.01		Average-high	na	na
	Total	308	30.69				
PLIW	Low	93	20.54	3.422	Low-average	-2.41**	0.02
	Average	134	21.74	3.876	Low-high	-3.43*	0.00
	High	81	22.47	4.007	Average-high	-1.32	0.19
	Total	308	21.57	3.840			
WPLE	Low	93	16.96	3.581	Low-average	-3.30*	0.00
	Average	134	18.86	4.679	Low-high	-4.18*	0.00
	High	81	19.72	5.077	Average-high	-1.26	0.21
	Total	308	18.51	4.606			
TOTAL WLB	Low	93	68.77	8.144	Low-average	-1.41	0.16
	Average	134	70.68	11.075	Low-high	-2.70*	0.01
	High	81	73.20	13.208	Average-high	-1.50	0.14
	Total	308	70.77	11.011			

* Significant at 0.01 level

** Significant at 0.05 level

Significant differences were observed between IT and ITES professionals with low and high EI on PLIW (MH = 22.47, ML=20.54, $t = -3.43$), WPLE (MH = 19.72, ML = 16.96, $t = -4.18$) and WLB total (MH = 73.20, ML = 68.77, $t = -2.70$).

IT and ITES professionals with high levels of EI were found to be higher than the professionals with low levels of EI on the two dimensions, PLIW, WPLE and on WLB total. The results imply that in the case of IT and ITES professionals with high level of EI, there is low interference of personal life with work and high work personal life enhancement and they also have higher overall work life balance as compared to IT and ITES professionals with lower EI. This means, in the case

of professionals with high EI, personal life does not drain out energy for work, their work does not suffer on account of personal life, and personal life provides the required energy for work.

No significant differences were observed between IT and ITES professionals with average and high EI on these dimensions of WLB and WLB total. Both these groups exhibited a similar level of WLB. However, the professionals with higher levels of EI showed higher mean scores on PLIW ($M_H = 22.47$, $M_A = 21.74$) and WPLE ($M_H = 19.72$, $M_A = 18.86$) as well as WLB total ($M_H = 73.20$, $M_A = 70.68$).

Further, significant differences were observed between IT and ITES professional with low and average EI with respect to the dimensions of PLIW ($M_L = 20.54$, $M_A = 21.74$, $t = -2.41$ and WPLE ($M_L = 16.96$, $M_A = 18.86$, $t = -3.30$). IT and ITES professionals with average EI were found to be high on the dimension of PLIW and WPLE than the professionals with low EI, meaning that professionals with average EI have low interference of personal life with work and higher work personal life enhancement than professionals with low EI.

Professionals with high level of EI exhibiting less interference of personal life with work and high level WPLE can be attributed to the fact that highly emotionally intelligent persons are able to stay focused on tasks, pursue goals consistently, maintain their cool and are organized. Whereas, persons with low levels of emotional intelligence are not able to stay focused, cannot work under pressure, are not well organized, cannot stay calm under pressure and thus, are unable to maintain the balance between work personal lives.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotional intelligence is a part of health and well-being. It is widely accepted around the world as a key element in our success, family life, physical fitness, self-esteem and creativity. Emotional Intelligence is increasingly relevant to organizational development and developing people, because the EQ principles provide a new way to understand and assess people's behaviour, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. Emotional Intelligence is an important consideration in human resources planning, job profiling, recruitment interviewing and selection, management development. The results of the present paper clearly indicate that emotionally intelligent people tend to create a better work life balance and make more productive and well adjusted employees.

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