Work-Life Balance: A Study

Background

With the transition of the economies of the world, from agriculture base to Industry based to Service based, the average time spent by an (average) worker on and for himself and his / her family in relation with the time spent on his daily work activity has been steadily shrinking. The leisurely life that was farm based and family based has transited to a fast and furious life engaged in a daily routine that is required by him / her to maintain a life and life style. In effect it has been a migration of human beings from a leisurely life where self and family took precedence, to a life where out of sheer force and necessity, has resulted in the relegation of one self and one's family to the background and giving prominence to activities outside of these relationships for the sole purpose of earning an income. And now in the modern world the conflict between work and other aspects of life has become an issue. This issue has many serious dimensions owing to its destructive impact both on the individual and the corporate. The work-life conflict, where the individual gets married to the spouse and the job leads to this conflict. The ability to separate the work life and non-work life has severely eroded, starting the later part of the twentieth century. This imbalance has serious repercussions. For the individual it is the destruction of well-being and for the corporate it has led to the deterioration of its results.

Some of the external manifestations of the health problems on account of the stress developed through the imbalance is:

- Cardiovascular disease,
- Sexual health problems,
- Weaker immune system and
- Frequent headaches, stiff muscles, or backache.

Psychologically it can lead to:

- Poor coping skills,
- Irritability, jumpiness,
- Insecurity,
- Exhaustion and
- Difficulty in concentrating.

It can also lead to:

Smoking and alcohol consumption.

For an organization it can mean:

- Absenteeism,
- Migration of talent,
- Insufficient innovation, creativity and initiative,
- Customer dissatisfaction and low level of customer service,
- Low commitment and motivation for the employee and sometimes leading to
- Unethical behavior.

Thus for both the individual and the organization, WLB has become a large question of survival.

It is in this background that the Researchers have proposed a study to identify a Questionnaire and validate it, so that it can be used to assess the WLB in an organization.

A quick survey done by the Researchers threw up a situation, wherein it was found that in the Indian Context, not much research has been done using a validated questionnaire to assess the WLB of employees in Indian organizations. To bridge this gap, this Study has been taken up by the Researchers in one of the leading public sector organization's factory.

History:

The expression "work-life balance" (WLB)[1] was first used in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. (New Ways to Work and the Working Mother's Association in the United Kingdom, 1970).

Definition[2]:

One can define the approach to WLB as: "A balanced life is one, where we spread our energy and effort - emotional, intellectual, imaginative, spiritual and physical – between key areas of importance. The neglect of one or more areas, or anchor points, may threaten the vitality of the whole".

Approach to WLB[3]

Work Life Balance consists of implementation of working arrangements and policies which assist workers in combining employment with other aspects of their lives.

Benefits of WLB[4]:

Employers benefit from WLB policies as they can help to develop a more committed and productive workforce and for the employees it means 'achievement' and 'enjoyment'.

Benefits for employers include:

- improved employee flexibility - supporting innovation, creativity and ability to deal with change.
- increased morale, commitment, and loyalty.
- reduction in absenteeism, sickness and stress leading to reduced costs.
- attracting and retaining high quality staff.
- increased productivity and performance from "engaged" staff.
- improved quality of output.
- more efficient use of training and development resources.

All the above demonstrates the need for WLB and its importance for survival of organizations in today's competitive world.

Objective 1: is to validate a questionnaire for WLB and use the same to test whether there is a WLB for the officers in a leading public sector organization in India

Objective 2: is to examine if Stress is an outcome of work-life imbalance.

Ho: Stress is not an outcome of Work-life imbalance.

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[1] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work-life_balance

[2] http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org/nickhalpinl.php

[3] http://www.worklifebalance.ie/

[4] ibid

Objective 3: is to evaluate if there is a negative impact on an organization's stakeholders on account of work-life imbalance.

Ho: There will be a negative impact on the stake holders of the organization – the customers, the co-employees, the family and the work itself on account of a WLB.

Objective 4: is to test if there is an impact on work on account of personal life.

Ho: There is no impact on work on account of personal life.

Literature Survey:

There is a body of research[5] that supports a positive relationship between work-life balance and productivity. This includes individual case studies, research across a range of organisations and reviews of a number of studies.

In New Zealand[6], a survey of employees found a strong relationship between employees' ratings of productivity practices in the workplace and their own work-life balance.

Similarly, a UK survey[7] of 597 working parents found a correlation between self-rated productivity, flexibility and satisfaction with work-life balance, and between satisfaction with work-life balance and enjoyment of one's job.

Some studies, however, do not[8] support a positive relationship between work-life balance and productivity, for example a study of 732 manufacturing organisations in the US, France, the UK and Germany found no direct relationship between work-life balance policies/initiatives and increased productivity.

The studies referred above have all relied on self-report by either employees or managers of perceived impacts on productivity.

A case study[9] in a US professional services top 100 company with 280 staff and 29 partners demonstrates net financial benefits from investment in childcare**.**

The PNC Bank[10] found a saving of $112,750 in turnover costs in seven months of having a flexibility programme, and IBM and Ernst & Young have seen higher revenues and stock prices connected to employee flexibility options.

The above studies have used actual financial or statistical data to show the impact of positive WLB on organizations.

Studies have also been carried out on between work-life balance and workplace culture.

In New Zealand, the Department of Labour 2006 survey of employees found that an unsupportive workplace culture was associated with poor work-life balance.

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[5] www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/reports/Employee *Engagement 2007 Report Rev...*

[6] Department of Labour 2006, Achieving balanced lives and employment: What New Zealanders are saying about work-life balance.

[7] Working Families, 2005, Is less more? Productivity, flexible working and management

[8] Bloom et al's 2003, Work life balance, management practices and productivity. Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

[9] Hayes, 2005, Outrageous employee benefits. Practice Management case study: staff retention. *Journal of Accountancy* May: 32-37

[10] Working Families, 2006:17, Moving mountains: the culture change challenge.

An Australian study[11] which involved surveys of 1500 employees at three periods 1997, 1998 and 2000 found that uptake of work-life balance initiatives varied from 20% to 80% of employees in an organisation. The Australian research identified two key factors as barriers to work-life implementation and success: organisational inaction and organisational values. The most influential aspects of organisational inaction were lack of communication to staff, ineffective implementation, failure to evaluate/measure the impact of programmes, lack of middle management education and not getting line managers involved.

Thompson et al (1999)[12], have developed a measure of work-life culture based on their definition of work-life culture as "the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives".

They have identified three aspects of workplace culture that affected the use of work-family initiatives: managerial support, career consequences and organisational time expectations.

A New Zealand study[13] of four EEO Trust Employers Group members found that the greater the perceptions of family oriented workplace support by supervisors/managers, co-workers and the overall workplace, the lower the levels of work-family conflict reported by staff.

The researches cited above reveal the importance of organizational culture on WLB.

Zedeck and Mosier (1990) and O'Driscoll (1996)[14] note that there are typically five main models used to explain the relationship between work and life outside work.

The *segmentation* model hypothesizes that work and non-work are two distinct domains of life that are lived quite separately and have no influence on each other. This appears to be offered as a theoretical possibility rather than a model with empirical support.

In contrast, a *spillover* model hypothesizes that one world can influence the other in either a positive or negative way. There is, of course, ample research to support this but as a proposition it is specified in such a general way as to have little value. We therefore need more detailed propositions about the nature, causes and consequences of spillover.

The third model is a *compensation* model which proposes that what may be lacking in one sphere, in terms of demands or satisfactions can be made up in the other. For example work may be routine and undemanding but this is compensated for by a major role in local community activities outside work.

A fourth model is an *instrumental* model whereby activities in one sphere facilitate success in the other. The traditional example is the instrumental worker who will seek to maximize earnings, even at the price of undertaking a routine job and working long hours, to allow the purchase of a home or a car for a young family.

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[11] de Cieri et al 2002, Work/life balance strategies: progress and problems in Australian Organisations. Working Paper 58/02. Dept of Management, Monash University

[12] When work-family benefits are not enough: the influence of work-family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment and work-family conflict. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 54:392-415

[13] McAulay, 1999, Employee perceptions of support for family friendly initiatives in the workplace. MA thesis in Psychology, Massey University

[14] http://www.ucm.es/info/Psyap/enop/guest.htm

The final model is a *conflict* model which proposes that with high levels of demand in all spheres of life, some difficult choices have to be made and some conflicts and possibly some significant overload on an individual occur.

A number of researches have been carried out on WLB and the personality traits of individuals. One research[15] brings about the evidence of the relation between orientations to work and career and life stage. This comes from a longitudinal study of graduates in large organizations. The study reveals that at the point of entry into their organizational career, the issue of work-life balance is seen as very important and they are eager not to get sucked in to a long hours work pattern. As their careers advance, they work longer hours and become more dissatisfied with their work-life balance. They rationalize this by arguing that it is only temporary and that once the current assignment is completed, they will get back into a better balance. In other words, the belief in their ability to control their working lives remains central to their capacity to cope with and tolerate the long hours.

Other research has shown positive impact of WLB for the organization, employers and employees.

According to the findings[16] of the '2007 Deloitte & Touche USA LLP Ethics & Workplace' survey, there is a strong relationship between the two factors of work life balance and work place ethical behavior. The survey, conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Deloitte & Touche USA also showed that the behaviors of management and direct supervisors, coupled with positive reinforcement for ethical behavior, are the top factors for promoting ethical behavior in the workforce. According to the survey, 91 percent of all employed adults agreed that workers are more likely to behave ethically at work when they have a good work-life balance. A combined 44 percent of workers cite high levels of stress (28 percent), long hours (25 percent) and inflexible schedule (13 percent) as the causes of conflict between their work responsibilities and personal priorities, hence contributors to work-life imbalance.60 percent of employed adults surveyed think that job dissatisfaction is a leading reason why people make unethical decisions at work, and more than half of workers (55 percent) ranked a flexible work schedule among the top three factors leading to job satisfaction, second only to compensation (63 percent).

The literature survey shows a lack of a body of research work in the field of WLB in India, which affords an opportunity to the authors to test and validate a questionnaire for evaluating the WLB in Indian organizations. Using the validated questionnaire the authors have identified three objectives for the study the results of which are presented in this paper. The study has been conducted in an engineering organization.

Methodology

The methodology adopted was a self-administered survey, where the Questionnaire was given to the respondent who filled it up and returned it back to the researchers. Structured (Closed) responses with specific alternatives were provided in the questionnaire, for the respondents to

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[15] Sturges, Guest and Mackenzie Davey, 2000, Who's in Charge,?.....,European Journal of Work and Organizational psychology, 9(3), 351-370

[16] http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org/nickhalpinl.php

answer. In addition to the questionnaire to be validated, more questions were added by the authors to study the WLB in the organization.

The questionnaire is of Statement type with high level of structure.

The questionnaire is on a summated rating scale (Likert Scale). A 7 point scale is proposed has been used.

Multiple choice questions are used where more than one alternative is feasible to cover the range of responses.

The questionnaire was then subjected to tests – for testing the internal consistency, validity and reliability.

Sample

The sampling frame is the set of all officers in the target organization. Each officer of the organization is taken as a Sample Element. An unrestricted Simple Random Sampling was adopted for selecting the elements from the sampling frame.

The total size of the population was 360. A Sample Size of 100 was planned. Thus the probability of selection of an element was 0.27 i.e. 27%. However there were only 97 filled-in returns.

Questionnaire used:

The questionnaire that has been used by the authors to measure the work-life balance of the individual is that developed by Hayman[17], (2005)

This 15 item scale is derived from a 19 item scale originally developed by Fisher-McAuley *et al*, (2003)[18] which was designed to assess the three dimensions of work life balance viz., the Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), the Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) and the Work / Personal Life enhancement (WPLE).

The instrument is made of 3 sub-parts.

Sub-Part I is on the Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL). This section has 7 statements.

Sub-Part II is on Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW). This section has 4 statements.

Sub-Part III is on Work / Personal Life enhancement (WPLE). This section has 4 statements.

Each statement is to be rated on a 7 point rating scale by the respondent. The Scale value ranges from 7 for “Strongly Agree” to 1 for “Strongly Disagree”, except for one Question of WIPL which was reverse ordered.

These statements were to be answered by the respondent with reference to a time frame of last one year. Earlier Researchers (Macdermid[19], Barnett, Crosby, Greenhaus, Koblenz, Marks,

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[17] Hayman, J. (2005). Psychometric Assessment of an Instrument Designed to Measure Work Life Balance. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management* , 13(1), 85-91.

[18] Fisher-McAuley, G.,Stanton, J.,Jolton, & Gavin, J., Modeling the relationship between work life balance and organizational outcomes, Paper presented at Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Orlando, April 12, 2003, 1 – 26.

[19] MacDermid, S.M., Barnett,.R., Crosby,. F., Greenhaus, J., Koblenz, M., Marks, S., Perry-Jenkins, M., Voydanoff, P., Wethington, E., & Sabbatini-Bunch, L. The measurement of work life tension:

Perry-Jenkins, Voydanoff, Wethington and Sabbatini-Bunch 2000) have identified the use of a time stem so that all respondents have a same time frame of reference while responding to the questionnaire.

Along with this demographic data for the sample, data about the respondent's job, information about the non-work life of the respondent the respondent's perception about organization's approach towards work-life balance and the outcome of work-life balance as perceived by the respondents was also collected.

Outcome of the Study

Recommendations of a virtual think tank. [on-line]. Available: [2002 August]. http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/csom/cwf/thinktanks/worklife_tension_vtt.pdf.

Table 1:

Demographics % (n = 97)									
Gender		**Education**		**Age**		**Marital Status**		**Grade**	
Male	93.8	Graduate	52.6	Below 30	17.5	Married	85.6	Lower Management (M1)	44.4
Female	6.2	Post Graduate	40.2	30 - 39	10.3	Single	14.4	Middle Management (M2)	27.8
		Diploma	7.2	40 – 49	33.0			Higher Management (M3)	27.8
				Above 49	39.2				

The demographic details of the sample are given in Table 1.

Testing the Objective 1:

Factor analysis was carried out with the data obtained.

Table 2

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance (percent)	Percent cumulative
1	5.52	36.78	36.78
2	2.26	15.04	51.82
3	1.40	9.30	61.13

Taking the eigen values greater than 1, (Table 2) it is found that 3 factors emerge, which is in line with that arrived at by Hayman. The factors are Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), the Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) and the Work / Personal Life enhancement (WPLE). The Reliability factors arrived at are given in Table 3

Table 3

Item Description	Value
PLIW	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.85**

Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.75
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.86
Mean for Test	8.52
Standard Deviation for Test	5.09
KR21	1.83
KR20	1.83
WPLE	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.79**
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.52
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.68
Mean for Test	21.23
Standard Deviation for Test	4.30
KR21	7.93
KR20	7.97
WIPL	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.90**
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.88
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.94
Mean for Test	29.64
Standard Deviation for Test	9.79
KR21	2.33
KR20	2.34

Overall for the Hayman Questionnaire the reliability values are given in Table 4

Table 4

Item Description	**Value**
OVERALL	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.74**
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.78
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.87
Mean for Test	59.38
Standard Deviation for Test	11.19
KR21	2.57
KR20	2.77

Item analysis was done and the t values obtained. These are given in Table 5

Table 5

Statement	**t Value**
WIPL1	10.21
WIPL2	23.30
WIPL3	25.52
WIPL4	27.50
WIPL5	18.68
WIPL6	20.23
WIPL7	2.33

PLIW1	9.22
PLIW2	11.30
PLIW3	6.92
PLIW4	8.74
WPLE1	6.32
WPLE2	13.88
WPLE3	9.29
WPLE4	9.70

From the analysis, it is found that the discriminating power of the Statement 7 under WIPL is weaker. Though researchers have advocated retaining the questionnaire where the t value is greater than 1.75, in this instance it has been proposed to be dropped considering the larger difference between this and the other statements in WIPL.

With the question removed the reliability tests were run again and the results are given in Table 6 and Table 7

Table 6

Item Description	**Value**
WIPL without Q7	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.95**
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.92
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.96
Mean for Test	25.85
Standard Deviation for Test	9.41
KR21	2.36
KR20	2.36

Table 7

Over all with WIPL w/o Q7	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.76**
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	0.82
Spearman-Brown Prophecy	0.90
Mean for Test	55.59
Standard Deviation for Test	11.04
KR21	2.54
KR20	2.73

Comparing the results obtained under Tables 3, 4, 6 and 7 the authors recommend using the Hayman's questionnaire with question WIPL 7 removed.

Objective 2

It is hypothesized that persons with stress have less of work life balance when compared to personnel without stress.

For testing this Hypothesis we carry out a Mann-Whitney U test, the result of which is given in Table 8. The answer given by the respondents on their WLB is tested with respect to their perception of stress and the outcome of stress on them. It can be seen from the table below that

the value of the level of WLB of the Stressed group is higher i.e the WLB is poorer compared to the value of the level of WLB of the Unstressed group.

Table 8

U-Test (Mann-Whitney)			
	n	WLB Level	U
		Mean Rank	
Un Stressed (N)	54	40.111	681
Stressed (Y)	43	60.163	1641
	Z	p	
	-3.49	0.000486	

Since ‘p’ value is less than the level of significance of 0.05 we reject the Null hypothesis.

Thus we conclude that the WLB of the stressed group is inferior top the WLB of the unstressed group.

It is also observed from Table 9 that there is a correlation between the WLB score and the Stress of the individual (0.36). So it is deduced that Stress is an outcome WLB.

Table 9

Spearman Rank Order Correlation	
Statistic	**Value**
Correlation (not corrected)	0.436642
Correlation (corrected)	0.356018
t-Test (n>10)	3.713337
Degrees of Freedom	95
Critical 2-sided T-value (5%)	2
Critical 1-sided T-value (5%)	1.671
D-square value (calculated)	85684.5
D-square value (expected)	152096
Standard Deviation	15523.23
z-Test	-4.2782
Probability	0
Observations	97

The outcome of stress is collected as a part of the Study and the findings are: the top three outcome of stress are:

(1) Fatigue / Extreme tiredness (26%)
(2) Sleeplessness (23%) and
(3) Irritability with Colleagues / friends and / or family members (20%)

The figures given in the bracket are with respect to the sample. With respect to the set that say that they are stressed and whose WLB is found to be poor the percentages are 58%, 51% and 44% respectively.

Objective 3

The respondents were asked about their perception on the impact of a good WLB on the stakeholders. (See Table 10)

Table 10

Impact	Positive	Negative	Neither	Don't Know
Customer	68%	5%	18%	9%
Colleague	70%	7%	18%	5%
Work	74%	8%	15%	2%
Home	78%	6%	12%	3%

As can be seen from Table 10, the overwhelming opinion is that the WLB of an employee will have a positive impact on his / her (1) Family, (2) Work, (3) Co-employees and on the Customers (in that order).

Objective 4

It is hypothesized that there is no Impact on work on account of personal life and the respondents were asked to reply to the question of the impact of their personal life. The statistics are given in Table 11.

Table 11:

Sample Mean	0.278
SD	0.573
Population Mean	0
n	97
t calculated	4.787
d.f.	96
t critical	1.661

Since the calculated t value is greater than the t critical we reject the Null Hypothesis and state that there is an impact of personal life on work-life balance.

Conclusions from the Study:

(1) Hayman's Questionnaire can be used with slight modification for measuring WLB in Indian organizations.
(2) A poor WLB leads to stress in Individuals.
(3) A good WLB has a positive impact on the stakeholders of an organization and
(4) The personal life of an individual has an impact on the WLB.

Post Script:

Other findings

Some of the other findings of the authors in doing this study are collated below:

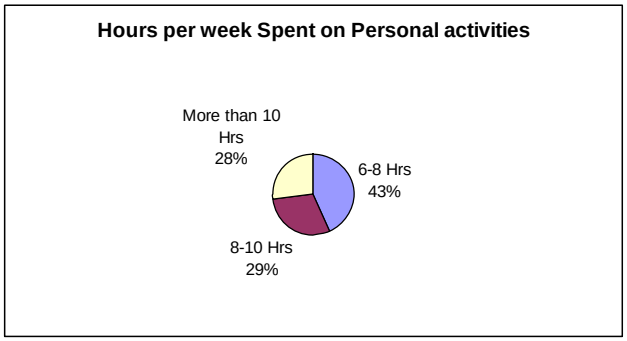
- 71% of the officers spend an average of 2 – 3 hours more in office, over and above the normal working time of an 8 hour per day work time.

- The top three reasons contributing to the over-stay of the officers in the Organization are:

  1) Work-Load (Selected by almost two-third of the respondents),

2) Nature of the Job (Selected by almost half of the respondents), and
3) Lack of Staff (Selected by almost one-third of the respondents).

- The top three outcome of the impact of personal life on WLB are (1) Increased Stress in work-life, (2) Inability to work extra hours and (3) Being late and / or leaving early from work.



The time (hours per week) that respondents are able to spend on their personal activities is given in the figure above.

- 43% of the respondents are able to spend up to 8 hours per week on their personal interests, 57% are able to spend more than 8 hours per week on personal interests.
- To the question on how much time per day is allotted to family, the findings show that almost half (49.5%) are spending between 2 – 4 hours a day with their family and about 30% are spending less than 2 hours with their family. 80% of the respondents are spending 4 or less than 4 hours per day with their family.
- The Hayman's questionnaire output was correlated with the response for the question asking the respondent to rate his WLB. The correlation was found to be 0.51. The output was also correlated with a set of WLB statements where the respondents are to say Yes or No. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.56. Both these results also validate the Hayman's Questionnaire for WLB.

Recommendation

Having conducted the Study, the authors present some key recommendations for the organization where the study was conducted. These being:

(1) Counseling may be undertaken by the Organization, for the officers so that they are able to achieve a balance in their work and life environment.

(2) Since most of the officers are not exposed to WLB training, it is suggested that the organization may plan to hold training sessions for its officers, to expose them to the benefits and requirements of WLB.

(3) Since stress is an outcome of WLB, stress management program, stress management intervention techniques and training can be given to the Officers periodically.

(4) Since the time spent by the executives with their family is less, Training can be given to the officers for time management so that they able to productively use the office time and are able to find more time for their family.

For further reading:

e-books
1} Balance: Real Life Strategies for Work/Life Balance, Isabella Allen, Sea Change Publishing, Dr Jackie Holt and others
2} Manage Your Life with Outlook for Dummies, Greg Harvey
3} Managing human resources: personnel management in transition, Stephen Bach
4} Managing people, Alison Hall
5} Fundamentals of Work-Life Balance
Erica D. Chick
6} MANAGEMENT (8th Ed.)
Schermerhorn
7} How to Balance Your Life
James O'Loghlin
8} The new rules of engagement: life-work balance and employee commitment, Mike Johnson.
9} The human resources program-evaluation handbook, Jack E. Edwards, John Carlson Scott, Nambury S. Raju
10} Families and work in the twenty-first century, Shirley Dex
11} Life is not work, work is not life: simple reminders for finding balance in a 24/7 world, Robert K. Johnston, J. Walker Smith
12} Spirituality @ work: 10 ways to balance your life on-the-job, Gregory F. Pierce
13} Life Balance: How to Convert Professional Success into Personal Happiness, Alan Weiss
Other Books
1} Harvard Business Review on Work and Life Balance, Harvard Business School Press
2} Strategic Human Resources Management
Fred K. Foulkes, (Prentice Hall, 1986, pp 169-170)
3} Human Resource Management in Organizations, Izabela Robinson, (Jaico, 2007, p 177)
4}You don’t have to home from work exhausted!, Ann McGee – Cooper, (Bantam Books, 1992)
5} The Book of Stress Survival, Alix Kirsta
(Gaia books, 1986, pp 65-73)
6} The Human side of Organizations, Stan Kossen, (Harper & Row, 1983 pp 468-470)
7} Executive Stamina, Marty Seldman, (Wiley India, 2009, pp 21-74)
8} Personnel / Human Resource Management
David A. DeCenzo, Stephen P. Robbins, (Prentice-Hall India, 2001, pp340-350)
9} Essential Manager’s Manual, Robin Heller & Tim Handle, (Dorling and Kindersley, 1998, pp 762-829)