3.1 INTRODUCTION

The business environment in India has been witnessing deregulation accompanied by foreign direct investments over the last two decades. The ensuing global competition has made it imperative for Indian organizations to achieve global standards of performance, to gain and maintain competitive advantage and with it grows the demands on people to serve their businesses with drive and commitment.

Concomitantly the role of work has been changing throughout the world due to economic conditions and social demands. Initially, work was a matter of necessity and survival but throughout the years, the role of work has evolved and the composition of the workforce has changed. Today, work still is a necessity but it should be a source of personal satisfaction as well.

The scenario portrayed above has necessitated a fundamental transformation in the conduct of business. Organizations are left with no options other than re-organizing their resources by developing appropriate design and re-structuring of activities and functions. At the forefront of strategic initiatives to improve organizational performance is the personnel management division. Personnel managers have responsibility for the development and implementation of strategic policy initiatives that promote business growth, while at the same time; they have the knowledge and understanding of the need to treat people as human beings rather than as human capital alone.

A study conducted by Drew, Humphreys and Murphy (2003) says that “that personal fulfillment is important inside work and that satisfaction outside work may enhance employees’ contribution to work”. Therefore the need to create congenial conditions in which employees can balance work with the personal needs and desires of their life become a factor that organizations have to take note of both to retain them as well as to improve productivity.
Dedication of people’s lives to their working environment brings pressures to bear on employees and their families. In such circumstances when a balance has to be struck between hard business objectives and the softer human concerns the work life and family life integration emerges as a key area. Well known in the management literature as work-life balance, the proper regulation of this work-life integration is critical for success in today’s modern business world.

3.2 WORK-LIFE BALANCE – DEFINED

Work-life balance is an expression involving the quality of work and life of individuals trying to manage the numerous roles one has to play in their day to day life. Fisher-McAuley and coauthors (2003) describe work-life balance as “a competition for both time and energy between the different roles filled by an individual”. Someone’s life can be considered unbalanced when the amount of time one works causes some sort of conflict or stress in other areas of life.

However modern work has become knowledge based and intellectual, consequently overworked people think about work all the time and for them work has become an intrusion in their thought process. Studies have revealed that knowledge workers and professionals are often preoccupied with work when not working, and when in the company of family and loved ones, experience an inability to be meaningfully engaged in non-work spheres. In such instances work-life balance is all about a balance in their thought process necessary to organize and respond to various thinking demands of life including work and personal life rather than finding physical time to take care of various demands of their life. Therefore it is essential to note here that the term balance does not denote an equal division of time, energy or other resources between the work and non-work domains in economic sense, but is a distinct and impulsive function of managing one’s work, family and leisure life in a self-fulfilling way.
In practice, work-life balance involves “adjusting work patterns so that everyone, regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations” (Phillinger, 2001).

3.3 WHY WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION AND NOT WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Even though the term “work-life balance” is widely used, it is by and large linked to an avoidance of conflict between the need arising from paid work and family responsibilities and implies a severance between the two and seems to say the two worlds - work and life are not intended to collide. Some authors argue that the term ‘balance’ is outdated and a new approach should be used – work personal life ‘integration’ (Rappoport et al., 2001; Lewis and Cooper, 2005) which goes beyond the dichotomy between home and work life and underlines the role of organizations and supervisors in providing a family-friendly environment.

Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles (2003) defines work-life integration as the degree to which a person is able to successfully combine paid work with other aspects of personal life.

Even though the term “Work-life integration” is not much used or explored, it evokes the coalition of one’s professional and personal lives. Conversely, the term, “work-life balance” implies a separation and seems to say the two worlds are not meant to collide. It is further suggested that if people are inclined to think about a balancing act between their ‘work life’ and their ‘other life’ like a scale that has to be leveled, then they most probably would be disappointed because they constantly have to give up something. But work-life integration means finding ways to blend the work life and personal life, so that one can have a meaningful experience with both of them.

From the contention a conclusion can be drawn that, for the harmonious existence one must stop trying to achieve ‘work-life balance’ but have to focus on the goal of achieving and maintaining ‘work-life integration’. Even though this study
focuses on the concept of work-life integration other terms such as work-life interface, work-life spillover and work-life balance are often used interchangeably along with work-life integration but with the same connotation.

3.4 MILESTONES IN THE MAKING OF WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

It is interesting to note that work-life programs existed as early as the 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. But formalized work life programmes were introduced far later in the history and some of the significant milestones are marked below.

Up to the early 1950’s since the male of the species took upon himself the clear-cut role of the breadwinner, the wife stayed at home and took care of the kids but also took upon herself the ever important role of running the family. This division of labour enabled the male member of the family to increase his focus on work. The working hours, too, even when they explicitly involved shift duties, were predictable and enabled the male spouse to spend sufficient time with the family and plan for periodical vacations, both to recharge his batteries and to keep the family happy with a sense of togetherness.

The societal and technological changes since the 1950’s along with the significant increase in women entering the work force in the 1960’s and 1970’s brought an end to this nearly watertight separation of duties and obligations between the husband and the wife. Those changes had blurred the gender boundaries that defined who was responsible for work issues and who is responsible for life issues.(Quick, Henley & Quick, 2004) As both male and female members of the family had to deal with aspects of homemaking and breadwinning, it had resulted in people experiencing more worry about life issues during work hours and more worry about their job during
life hours and the issue of work-life was raised by the working mothers during that time initially in the United Kingdom.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s seminal book ‘Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy’ published in the year 1977, brought the issue of work-life balance to the forefront of research and organizations. During the mid 1980s, the issue was also taken into consideration by the US government.

The term “work-life balance” was coined in 1986, but its usage in everyday language was sporadic till the 1990s when the recognition of work-life balance as a main human resource management issue was confirmed (Bird, 2006) in other parts or the world as well. While the first wave of these programs were primarily to support women with children, today’s work-life programs are less gender-specific and recognize other commitments as well as those of the family.

### 3.5 DRIVERS OF WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION POLICIES

Integrating the private life and hectic work schedule of employees in an organization may be the responsibility of the human resource department. But the priority for providing work-life benefits not completely rests on the organization alone. Various factor both within and outside the organizations determine the work-life interface of employees working in an organization. Often the impel for deriving and executing work-life integration policies by the organization and the inclination of the employees to make use of it fall within any one or all of the following categories

#### 3.5.1 External Drivers

External drivers for work-life balance arrangements are motivating factors outside the organization that stimulate the organizations to implement work-life balance policies. Some of the major external drivers are given below.

Customer relations at a local level: Organizations that implement flexible working arrangements can respond to demands from customers at a local level for
extended opening hours. They can also increase production by using flexible working arrangements to operate on a 24-hour basis, thereby suiting the needs of a workforce engaged in diverse working patterns. For instance, late-night shopping can accommodate shift-workers or others engaged in flexible working practices.

Public image of the organization: Work-life balance policies are often promoted to positively enhance an organization’s public image, and the motivation for implementing such policies is linked to the internal driver of being identified as an employer of choice.

Competition from other organizations: Work-life balance policies, particularly in relation to flexible working arrangements, can help an organization to compete within the global economy by offering flexibility in supply of goods and services. They may also help to respond to increased or decreased supply of goods on a demand basis. Flexible working arrangements also allow organizations to operate across time zones, thus increasing the chances of international business.

3.5.2 Internal Drivers

Internal drivers are those factors within the organization that motivates the management to introduce work-life benefits.

**Employer of choice:** Being identified by employees and potential employees as an employer of choice is a concept that has gained in popularity in recent years. Identification as such an employer not only attracts high caliber employees; it also helps in the retention of existing experienced and talented staff, as well as enhancing corporate image.

**Cost benefit analysis:** The introduction of work-life balance policies has been shown to have tangible, cost related benefits for organizations, particularly in terms of recruitment and training costs, which may be minimized if working practices help to retain experienced staff. Flexible working arrangements can also lead to greater
productivity among staff, as well as a reduction in staff absences due to sickness or being unable to balance work and childcare arrangements.

**Employee health and well being:** Many employers are incorporating work-life balance policies as part of their health promotion policies, particularly in relation to a reduction in negative stress and consequent absenteeism. An important factor to consider is the stress experienced by those who have to contend with long commuting times, an occurrence that can be avoided or minimized by the adoption of flexible working times.

**Organizational Culture:** A major determinant of work-life integration in an organization is the organizational culture which incorporates shared norms, values and assumptions that underpin actions of employers, managers and employees in that organization. The organizational culture encompasses formal policies and informal practices, official discourses and hidden beliefs about the ideal worker which determines the employees’ inclination towards making use of work-family benefits. Supervisors and colleagues are also important as they may help or hinder the development of a family supportive organizational culture (Lewis, 2003)

### 3.5.3 Social drivers

Social drivers are those facilitating factors that exist due to the characteristics of society or those that motivate a company due to socially responsible attitudes towards workers. The following are the major social drivers which are responsible for introducing work-life balance options in the organization.

**Demographic change:** Female participation in the labour force has partly fuelled the economy in recent years. Work-life balance policies that meet the needs of women, particularly mothers, are necessary to attract and retain women in the labour force. Flexible working arrangements may also appeal to older cohorts of workers

**Corporate responsibility:** Finally the decision to introduce flexible working policies by organizations is not always due to cost-benefit analyses, but rather as a response to
how the company feels it should behave as an employer. Decisions in relation to the introduction of flexible work arrangements by some firms are taken for reasons of value, for example, a belief in the value of family life or the desire to treat employees in a 'holistic' way through recognizing their need for work-life balance.

3.6 WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION – BENEFITS

Having a positive outcome from a work-life integration programme is not without its challenges because the company’s needs are unique and dynamic and the people who stand to benefit from the work-life integration programmes may be of a varied sort having distinctive requirements.

3.6.1 People Who Benefit From Work-Family Programmes

There is a deep-rooted notion that family-friendly policies of work-life integration merely support women employees particularly those with young or school-age children. But in a society where gender equality and dual wage earner couples have become a norm work-life practices cannot be considered solely a women’s issue. Men too stand to gain a lot from work-life integration options both as a fathers and an individual. With an aging population in which eldercare places increasing concerns and demands upon the working population, maintaining healthy work-life integration emerges as a positive approach for the employees in managing their various social responsibilities. Caregivers of the disabled and those with community commitments also stand to benefit from the positive aspects of work-life integration. Finally work-life integration practices prudently benefit those who look for time and space for themselves in order to study, travel, or pursue other leisure activities.

Once established, properly thought-out work-family policies enable greater flexibility to the employee and to the organization. The outcome of such a programme is equitable and mutually beneficial to both employee and the organization.
3.6.2 To the Employee

The flexibility to go outdoors and have the telephone bill settled or keep the appointment with the physician during the office hours and the guarantee that no one will not be penalized for coming in late to work may be because of a traffic jam have all resulted in a newfound freedom for employees.

Mothers have the obvious benefits of spending more time with their children, fathers find more time to do household chores and unmarried men and women get more time to socialize with their friend.

Consequently the benefits gained by employees working in organizations that provide Work-life balance options are:
Reduce stress and anxiety
Improve concentration and sustain task focus longer
Increase energy and vitality
Decrease unproductive time leakage
Improve staff health levels
Increased Morale, Motivation and Job Satisfaction

3.6.3 To the Organization

The paybacks that organizations have got in implementing work-life integration policies have been tremendous. Individual energy and creativity are unleashed when changes in work practices benefit employees’ personal lives. A work family approach offers companies a strategic opportunity to achieve a more equitable and a more productive workforce (Allaire,1996). Success has been reported by organizations across all industries.

In a very recent report on employers surveyed in the UK, most reported that the overriding benefit in providing Work-Life Balance policies was a “happier” workforce. Other benefits included a positive impact on recruitment and retention, improved labour relations, increased staff productivity, lower absenteeism and higher levels of staff
commitment, motivation and loyalty, not to speak of the opportunities for a more diverse workforce. Organizations have also recognized that besides creating a more committed and motivated workforce, work-life integration policies have helped them build a competitive advantage and an overall enhanced image.

3.7 WORK-LIFE CONFLICT - THE ANTONYM OF WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

Spending more time in office and the pressures of job can interfere and affect the personal life of employees. On the other hand, personal life can be demanding creating stress and lack of concentration at work. This imbalance and conflicts in the lives of employees show that work life and personal life are inter-connected and interdependent.

Work-life conflict is defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985). This definition implies a multi-directional relationship where work can affect family and vice versa.

3.7.1 Forms of Work-Life Conflict

Work-life conflict can be broadly categorized into various types and forms. Studies by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), have distinguished between three forms of work-family conflict. They are time-based, strain-based and behavior-based

**Time-based conflict:** This type of conflict is experienced by employees when time devoted to one role, either work or life, by them makes it difficult or prevents them to participate in another role

**Strain-based conflict:** This strain-based form describes the conflict experience when one’s performance in life domain is constrained due to strain or fatigue from the other life domain.
**Behavioural-based:** This conflict occurs when behavioural patterns are applied, which are favourable in one role, but are incompatible with requirements of another role.

Work-life conflict can flow in two directions. The first one happens due to work interfering with family and another due to family interfering with work.

**Work-to-family interference:** This type of role conflict occurs when work demands and responsibilities of employees make it more difficult for them to fulfill family-role responsibilities. This is a situation of work spilling over to home. When there is too much work spilling over to home, it can result in work overload.

**Family-to-work interference:** This type of role conflict occurs to employees when their family demands and responsibilities make it more difficult for them to fulfill work-role responsibilities. This is a case of family issues spilling over work. Organisations seem to tolerate spillover from home to work as long as it does not adversely affect one’s job performance.

### 3.7.2 Causes of Work-Life Conflict

The lack of integration between the work life and personal life of an individual is the foremost cause of a conflict. But the lack of integration cannot be ascribed to a limited number of factors alone. From individual career ambitions to a pressure to cope up with external forces beyond the organization, the reasons are wide-ranging and can be situational and industry specific.

**Global Economy:** Just a couple of decades back, employees used to have fixed working hours or rather a 9 to 5 job from Monday to Friday. But with globalization and people working across countries, the concept of fixed working hours is fading away and the line between work and nonworking time has become blurred, creating personal conflicts and stress (Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002). As more skilled workers enter the global labor market and companies outsource or move more jobs to reduce labor costs, people feel pressured to work longer and produce more just to protect their jobs.
International business: The establishment of International organizations signifies that their world never sleeps. At any time and on any day, for the global firms, thousands of workers would be working somewhere. The need to consult with colleagues or customer eight or ten time zones away, for troubleshooting or consulting, means that many employees of such organizations are “on call” 24 hours a day.

Increased work pressure and Longer Hours: The business world is more competitive than ever. Technological Customer expectations have increased which leads to increased work pressure. Many businesses now have to work longer hours or provide a 24 hour service. Employers commonly ask employees to work longer hours than they are scheduled to. Often, overtime is mandatory. If the employers hope to move up the career ladder, they may find themselves regularly working more than 50 hours a week these days to achieve and exceed expectations.

The ever-increasing working hours leave the individuals with less time for themselves and to pursue his hobbies or leisure activities. The above mentioned factors hinder the growth of the person as an individual in terms of his personal growth as well as the growth of his dependents in their education or career.

Changing Household Pattern: Women are fast becoming the equal of men in educational and professional attainments, and they naturally look for scope to put them to use and earn the some additional income besides, instead of merely keeping the home fires burning. But, unfortunately, it is taking a heavy toll. In such conditions, the working couple has to have its children looked after by parents and relatives, with no guarantee of their being available all the time or in all cases. They are also unable to fulfill their children’s essential emotional needs during their formative years or serve as their counselor or companion during the different stages of their education.
3.8 ICT AND WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION – THE POSITIVE ASPECTS

Advancements in information and communications technology have provided numerous opportunities for people to stay connected both at work and in their personal lives. And connectivity brings increased flexibility to the workers which in turn give control over when and where they are able to work by enabling the micro-coordination of time, tasks, and schedules. This option allows the workers to take better advantage of their time, thus allowing them to mesh personal life and work life in a more harmonious way.

Besides the ‘anytime, anywhere’ functionality of the devices providing enormous convenience for users, it is also thought to be a reason for enhancing their work productivity, which again facilitates the work-life balance of users.

ICT devices are expected to provide the users a higher level of satisfaction by retaining a perpetual link with the members in their family and friends while they are at work which in yet another way enhances their work-life balance.

The above arguments ultimately lead to an inference that those ICT devices termed as work extending technologies make the workers who use the devices get a better balance between their work life and personal life. This is mentioned by Schlosser (2002) in his article “An interactive study of Wireless Technology Use” that “mobile work extending technologies help workers to achieve greater balance between work and non-work environments.

3.9 ICT AND WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION – THE DOWNSIDE

Information and communication technology said to provide connectivity and enhance flexibility however could lead to higher expectations in availability and responsiveness. It could also allow employers to create a new work culture that would use communication devices to make their employees do more work and for longer hours. And it is widely believed that ICT devices like mobile phones and other devices with internet facility are making the boundaries between personal life and workplace
indistinct. The above developments can potentially be a down side for many individuals when their boundary between work and personal life begins to diminish, potentially leading to poorer levels in work-life balance.

**Increased workloads:** Information and communication technology in the workplace has created a lot of extra work that was not there before. Primarily Information technology and computers have led to information overload which takes the form of emails and other data - both voice and text. Moreover advancement in information technology brings about with it higher expectations on the work done by an individual and in addition there is general frustration that this extra work is not recognized, either by money or in other ways.

**Increased expectations of availability:** Flexibility due to ICT devices leads to increased expectations in availability and responsiveness. When a worker is making use of mobile communication devices as a work extender, superiors and colleagues tend to expect that member to be ‘always on’ and almost always available to do work. Since ICT devices allow people to send requests quickly, at any time, they can have high expectations in regards to the speed with which people could respond to their request. There is a feeling of being on call all the time makes the evenings, weekends and holidays less relaxing.

**Giving up control over work-life boundaries:** However, being constantly connected with a smartphone also means being more connected to work; it has become easier to work longer hours, have work leak into personal time, and slowly but ultimately lose control over the boundaries between work and non-work domains. Ironically, individuals who are always on in order to gain more control over their time may actually end up giving up more control than they gain.

**Bring work to non-work environment:** ICT devices not only initiate a physical or rather a visible manifestation of work into the home and other non-work environments, it can also psychologically remove users from the non-work environment and return
them to a work mindset. Although physically present in the non-work domain whenever users engage with their communication devices they are removing themselves from their present environment and focusing their attention elsewhere described by Fortunati (2002) as ‘present absence’

By materializing work, ICT devices like laptops, Blackberries and others can become the centre of attention when used outside the office, and provide a focal point for discontent and resentment among friends and family members.

**Bring home to work:** Extending technologies can be used to bring work home, but can also be used to bring home to work, phenomena identified as spillover by Chesley (2005). When information and communication technology allows workers to stay connected to their family without disrupting their work it is a matter of positive spillover but it often leads to interruption in work such as putting off a high priority work leading to negative spillover. Spillover happens as communication devices make the boundaries between work and home more permeable causing both kind of activities to overlap in space, time, and across psychological borders.

**Making work-life boundary indistinct:** While information technology devices provide flexibility some types of people may not be able to make use of the flexibility as others do. People who are ‘always on ‘and do not know when to ‘switch off’ spend more of their family and personal time in ICT devices supported work from home, while on vacation, on weekends and weeknights. The fact that these devices make it easier for work to impinge on family time make indistinct the boundary between work and home.

However the negative impacts cited above presents an exceptional challenge for mobile device users. The question as to whether the workers would be able to take advantage of the perceived benefit of flexibility and ultimately improve their work-life balance or would it be harder for them to manage the thinning boundary between personal and work time inflicted by being ‘always connected’ remains.
3.10 CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE CONFLICT

Work-personal life conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible. Obligation of one can force an individual to neglect the other. Constant struggle and effort to maintain a balance between the work and personal life can have serious implications not only on the life of the individual worker but will also generate an adverse impact on their family and the organization to which they belong.

3.10.1 Impact on the Individual

By spending more time at work than at home, the employee may miss out on a rewarding personal life. Moreover, when they face challenges in their personal life, such as caring for an aging parent or a disabled child, concentrating on the job can be difficult. The negative effects of work-life conflict and long work hours not only hamper employees’ ability to harmonize work and family life but also are associated with symptoms of stress. According to studies, it has been found that such situation can take a toll on the person's health both physically and psychologically. The physiological symptoms, disclosed by the specialist in the health and medical sciences on the basis of research, are changes in metabolism, increased heart and breathing rates; increased blood pressure, head ache and cardiovascular problems. Anxiety, depression and job dissatisfaction are the obvious psychological symptom of stress (Robbins and Judge, 2007).

The inverse is true of individuals and employers who are able to achieve balance. Positive work experiences allow employees to reach their full potential, be fully engaged, and be able to meet their personal and professional goals and objectives (Spinks, 2004). Employees with comparatively lower levels of work-life conflict also report higher job satisfaction (Boles, Howard & Donofrio, 2001).
3.10.2 How the Family life Suffers

Work-life conflict has negative implications on family life. Various studies show that employees have reported that their work responsibilities interfere with their ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home in different instances. A conflict between work and personal life of an individual may lead to a situation such as missing out some of the important events in the life of the near and dear ones. Missing out on such important events or milestones and less time spent with children, relatives, friends, etc. may harm their relationships with loved ones.

Whether the problem is too much focus on work or too little, when the work life and the personal life are out of balance, stress along with its harmful effects is the end result. Behavioral symptoms of stress include productivity decline, changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, and fidgeting and sleep disorders. Such behavioral symptoms will surely take a toll on the family.

3.10.3 How the Organization is Affected

The intensification of conflict between work life and personal life is a major problem for individuals and organizations alike, as high levels of such conflict are associated with negative effects. For employers the costs to their business on failing to improve work-life balance include poor performance, absenteeism and sick leave; and higher staff turnover, recruitment and training costs (Department of Trade and Industry, 2001).

The pressures of the work on personal life can lead to stress (Judge & Colquitt, 2004). Employees who experience increased stress due to work-life conflict and decreased perceptions of control over their work and non-work demands are less productive, less committed to, and satisfied with, their organization and more likely to be absent or leave the organization. (Boles, Howard & Donofrio, 2001). The consequent cost of employee turnover and accompanying loss of valuable company knowledge can be significant to the organization.
Even otherwise, behavioral symptoms of employees due to stress including mood disorder such as depression, anxiety disorder and a substance-dependence disorder such as alcohol addiction along with health disorders will surely have a cascading effect on the organization.

3.11 CONCLUSION

In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life integration has become a predominant issue in the workplace. Good work-life integration leads to healthy activities that in turn lead to a satisfied employee and a good contributor to the progress of the overall economy in general and the organization in particular. Organizations have recognized the need and value of work-life benefits. Forward-thinking human resource professionals seeking innovative ways to enhance their organization’s competitive advantage find that work-life integration offers a win-win solution both for the employee and their organization. Work-life integration is here to stay and organizations that do not recognize its importance and change with the times are at an apparent disadvantage.