CHAPTER-6
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The competitiveness of the Information Technology markets has forced the IT employees to spend more and more time at work. This time spent at work has manifested its consequences on the family and social life of IT professionals. Chennai city being a hub for many of the national and international IT companies resulted in an interest to study the patterns of quality of work life, family life and social life of IT employees in the city of Chennai. Determining these patterns involve an interplay between the personal variables of employees and job satisfaction, likeness towards job, physical health of employees and the overall work life balance. The research objectives established for the study were:

- To examine the patterns of quality of work (professional) life and quality of family/social life as experienced by the employees of IT companies in the city of Chennai, India.
- To gauge any relationship that may exist between respondent based variables and the antecedents of work life balance.
- To identify the factors and dimensions influencing the work life balance of IT professionals.
• To evaluate the perception of IT employees with regard to the prioritization of various work life arrangements as expected from the organizations.

• To suggest strategies and policies that can be adopted at personal, organizational and governmental level to effect an improvement in the work-life balance of IT sector of employees.

• To suggest new vistas of research that can be impacted as a result of this present study.

The study was conducted on a sample of 604 respondents drawn from 45 IT companies in the city of Chennai, India.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics indicate mean scores of all the statements in the questionnaire.

• All the statements in Part II of the questionnaire relate to “You and Your Job”. Statements as “We often end up doing re-work due to client errors”; “I could usually do a better job if given more time”; “We are often based at client's office (India or abroad) for completion of a project”; “I seldom receive adequate acknowledgement or appreciation when my work is really good“show a mean score ranging from 3.2 to 3.9 suggesting that these could be some of the concerns of the employees in
the IT companies of the city. All the other statements show a mean score in the range of 3.1 to as high as 4.3 implying that the organizations do provide a good learning curve and harmonious working conditions.

- All the statements in **Part III of the questionnaire concern “Work Culture of the Organization”**. These statements show a mean score in the range of 3.7 to 4.2 suggesting that somewhere either taking time off or rejecting a promotion for personal reasons is not viewed favorably by the management.

- The mean scores of statements in **Part IV “Your Family and Social Life”** imply that the respondents do not get enough of time to fulfill their personal commitments.

- The mean scores of statements in **Part V “You and Your Feelings”** lie in the range of 3.1 to 3.9 indicating the respondents suffer from quite a few psychological problems which in general are a result of physical and mental exhaustion.

- The mean score for the “All in all I am satisfied with my job” and “I like working here” are 3.89 and 3.74 respectively implicating that the respondents are agreeable to these statements suggesting their satisfaction with their present organization. At the same time the mean score of the statement “I do not like the my job” shows a mean score of 2.2 suggesting that the respondents do not like their jobs which is surprising.
as they seem to be satisfied and like working in their companies but somewhere, are not happy with the pressures of this kind of job.

- The mean score of Physical health rating is 3.49 implying a below average physical health of the respondents.

- The mean score of the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the relationship between my work and personal life” is 2.2 indicating respondent’s discord between his work life and personal life.

6.1.2 ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT BASED PERSONAL VARIABLES VS. JOB SATISFACTION; LIKENESS TOWARDS JOB; PHYSICAL HEALTH RATING AND OVERALL WORK LIFE BALANCE

After the initial descriptive statistics the researcher cross tabulated the chosen respondent based variables as gender, age, marital status, type of family, experience in IT sector, length of association with present organization and spouse-working or non-working with Job Satisfaction, likeness towards job, physical health and overall work life balance.

- **Respondent variable by Gender:** The statistics show that the greater number of males are satisfied with their jobs, have likeness towards their jobs, also report higher work life balance as compared to females but at the same time number of males with below average physical health rating is also greater as compared to females. This is an indication of taxing on part of
males to achieve higher job targets resulting in higher levels of job satisfaction.

- **Respondent variable by Age:** The second respondent variable age shows that the age group of 31-40 years indicate maximum job satisfaction and likeness towards their jobs but in terms of physical health, they are the most affected as have highest numbers in ‘below average’ physical health rating. Also cross tabulation results with work life balance show the numbers of ‘completely does not exist’ to be highest in this same age group of 31-40 years. The inference drawn is that this age group is at its peak with respect to work learning curve and are ready to put in those extra hours to fulfill the work responsibilities, hence they derive the required job satisfaction and likeness towards their jobs. These extra hours devoted at work reflect in terms of poor physical health rating and imbalance in their work and personal life.

- **Respondent variable by Marital Status:** This variable of marital status shows that unmarried individuals are almost double as compared to the married individuals with respect job satisfaction and likeness towards job. At the same time unmarried individuals (121) numbers are comparable to the married individuals (176) with respect to ‘below average’ physical health rating, though their numbers are higher in terms of ‘greater work life balance’ with respect to married individuals. The married individuals have dual roles and responsibilities which tend to create a struggle in their work life and
somewhere negatively impacts their work life balance. The higher numbers in poor physical health ratings in both the categories is suggestive that the nature of the IT sector job itself is very demanding leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

- **Respondent variable by Type of Family:** For this variable ‘type of family’, the statistics data show 408 individuals living in joint families as compared a small number of 196 individuals living in nuclear families. This may be traced back to the cultural norms of the Indian society where family ties are given due importance. Joint families tend to mediate burden of responsibilities and also may come to rescue in times acute work schedules. Hence, greater number of individuals from a joint family indicates job satisfaction, likeness towards the job and greater work life balance as compared to individuals belonging to nuclear families. But with respect to physical health ratings none of the individuals belonging to joint families show good physical ratings. This may be attributed to the extra domestic responsibilities that they may have.

- **Respondent variable by Experience in IT sector:** This variable indicates higher numbers in ‘greater than 5 years of experience’ with respect to job satisfaction and likeness towards job. At the same time the poor physical health ratings are also highest in this category of ‘greater than 5 years of experience’ suggesting greater experience in the same field leads to job satisfaction leading to likeness towards job but in turn affecting physical
well-being of individuals. The work life balance data is confusing as it shows comparable distribution of no work life balance in all the three categories of experience in the IT sector.

- **Respondent variable by Association with Present Organization:** This sixth variable depicts higher numbers for job satisfaction and likeness towards job when the ‘association is less than 3 years’. The poor physical health rating is also highest in this same category but this category shows highest work life balance suggesting when individuals have lesser number of years of association with an organization it does generate interest and likeness towards the job and at the same since the whole environment is new the individuals have a perception of work and personal life balance.

- **Respondent variable by Working or Non-Working Spouse:** The statistics for the seventh and the last variable of working and non-working spouse indicate higher number of individuals with non-working spouse to be job satisfied and having a liking towards their jobs. The numbers with respect to poor physical health are comparatively lower for individuals with non-working spouses, though it is still a substantial number. Also a very high number of the individuals with working spouses seem to have absence of work life balance. The inference drawn is that maybe non-working spouse is able to handle greater domestic responsibilities and hence the individuals are able to achieve a greater balance in their work and personal life.
6.1.3 BIVARIATE TEST- ANOVA: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test whether there is a significant impact of the respondent based variables on the Work Life Balance of IT sector employees. All the F-ratios to be significant at 0.05 level of significance indicating that all the chosen respondent based variables have a significant impact on Work Life Balance of the employees of IT sector. Further, from the mean values it can be predicted that males, individuals in the age group of 41 years and above, unmarried individuals, individuals belonging to joint family, individuals having experience in IT sector for 3-5 years, individuals having association with the present organization for 3-5 years and those with non-working spouses have a greater work life balance.

6.1.4 FACTOR ANALYSIS-TWO STAGE

The first stage factor analysis resulted in extraction of 11 factors and in descending order of their factor loadings are:

Factor 1- Work Load F1
Factor 2- Compliant work Culture-F2
Factor 3- Paucity of Personal time- F3
Factor 4- Negativity Affectivity- F4
Factor 5- Implied Organizational Culture- F5
Factor 6- Sleep Snags- F6
Factor 7- Support from Supervisors-F7
Ecological systems theory states that person, process and context variables influence the experience of life’s roles, and that outcomes can be demonstrated in any life domain. The above factors when segregated under the above three classifications suggest factors F1, F5, F8 & F9 as process variables, factors F3, F4 & F6 as person variables and factors F2, F7, F10 and F11 as context variables. In the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage of factor analysis, the converged factors were named as dimensions. The 3 dimensions that evolved were Professional sphere, Social sphere and Physical Health sphere. Seven factors belonging to process and context variables were loaded in the Professional sphere dimension. Two factors each of person and context variables was loaded in the Social sphere dimension. In the physical health dimension the other two factors belonging to person variables were loaded.

\textbf{6.1.5 MULTIPLE REGRESSION-TWO STAGE}

The factor analysis was followed by a two stage regression analysis where in the first stage factors as independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable overall work life balance. The results depicted factors F7, F8, F9, F10, F11 to have a positive relationship with the overall work life balance of
employees. Interestingly, support from supervisors a context variable was a significant antecedent to the overall work life balance suggesting that in the work environment, support and understanding from the supervisors or senior managers facilitates an employee’s working and one is likely to feel a sense of belonging which contributes to overall balance. Explicit work policies and Progressive work culture both process variables also impact the overall work life balance positively suggesting that organizations in Chennai are fostering a culture that contributes to an individual’s learning curve as well is able to impact the overall balance for an employee. Factors F1, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6 depict a negative relationship with the overall work life balance of IT employees. F2 and F5 suggest that the IT organizations in Chennai seem to have a subservient culture which the employees are forced to follow. As a result these tend to reduce the overall work life balance of the employees. F1 and F3 the two process variables also negatively impact the overall work life balance. F1 implicates high number of man-hours booking by the organizations resulting in F3 where an employee is lacking personal time leading to a reduced work life balance. F4 and F6 factors- the person variables show a negative impact on the overall work life balance of the employees. These both are the symptoms of built-up stress levels in the employees leading to these psychosomatic problems.
The results of the 1st stage regression were formulated as the model depicted in figure 6.1.

**FIGURE: 6.1**

**MODEL DEPICTING 1ST STAGE REGRESSION RESULTS**

The above model depicts that an increase of factors F7, F8, F9, F10 and F11 will increase the work-life balance of the IT employees whereas increase in factors F1, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6 will take the IT employees away from work life balance.

In the 2nd stage the Dimensions as independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable overall work life balance. Since the dimensions were named as per the factors falling in each of them, the results depicted that for the IT
sector of employees of Chennai though the professional sphere dimension was showing a positive relationship with their overall work life balance, the social and physical health spheres had a negative relationship with their overall balance. This is suggestive of the fact that though the organizations are trying to provide a globally competitive nature of work to their employees but at the cost of regularly requiring employees to put their work lives before their personal lives.

6.1.6 RANKING

The researcher also carried out a ranking of the major work life benefit policies as provided by the IT organizations globally to judge the perceptions of the employees with regard to their perception of prioritization of these policies as a contributor to their work life balance. Respondents ranked ‘leaving work place on time every evening’ as rank 1 followed by options of job sharing arrangement, compressed work week, working from home, voluntary shorter working time as some of the other policies that respondents felt will impact positively to their work life balance.
6.2 SUGGESTIONS

Evidence of work life balance tends to be influenced by individual, organizational and governmental perceptions of pressing issues. Work-life balance and conflict issues are inter-related to the integration of the three life spheres of individuals and result in a set of individual, organizational and family outcomes.

6.2.1 SUGGESTIONS TO INDIVIDUALS

Besides the demands of an IT job or the organizational factors, there are certain individual characteristics that result reducing the work life balance. The results of this study echo high job satisfaction and likeness towards the job among all the age groups. This is suggestive of the high involvement. Thus, despite the importance of high job involvement in sustaining job satisfaction and organizational commitment, involvement can have a negative consequence to as depicted in their social and physical health spheres. The researcher would opine to the individual IT professionals that for an integrated personal, professional and physically healthy life, they should try and make use of the concept of integration which suggests that one must operate within a context of making the best of one’s professional life given the social and the cultural context of their work. If one strives to be exemplary in their work, this may pertain to any profession, integration of the physical health and social sphere may not be possible and hence contribute towards reducing the overall work life balance.
Therefore, this research suggests to the IT employees that an integration may best be achieved by understanding the dynamic and synergistic relationship that exists between these three life spheres and make an attempt to integrate these spheres to achieve the overall work life balance.

6.2.2 SUGGESTIONS TO ORGANIZATIONS

IT professionals, as knowledge providers and seekers, often are the vanguard of innovation. Being on the edge of change often demands a high adaptability on the part of IT personnel. IT work, particularly development, is project-centric, where a team member maybe juggling the demands and moving targets for more than one project assignment. In most IT projects the end product is not conceptualized clearly from the start, and instead is a discovery process of ‘learn as you go’. Organizations tend to demand a lot from their technology and by extension, from their technology workers. 24/7 modes of operation expanded by rapid diffusion of e-commerce are common place in most IT organizations. Competitive landscape demands the IT worker to go beyond the need to work extra hours, as technology increases the accessibility and decreases the freedom of individual. Organizations should explore a number of potential avenues to improve the work life balance of their IT employees. Some of the mitigation strategies suggested is:

- Promote Family-Friendly Policies: Organizations across the globe have found one of the potentially most effective ways of dealing with
work life balance is to establish family and life friendly policies. The literature in this area has suggested a number of practices associated with favorable employee perceptions of work life balance. These practices include offering

- Job Sharing arrangement: Organizations can implement job sharing between two employees and with compensation in accordance.

- Working compressed Week: Around the world many MNCs have re-structured their policies to stay connected with their IT personnel. Companies like Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer offer this option of 60% of hour week with the corresponding reduction in pay. At the moment very few Indian companies in Chennai have these options; it is time that more and more of Indian companies should start offering this option and benefit by retaining the talented work force.

- Voluntary shorter working time/Part time Arrangement

- Working from Home

- Dependent Child Care: Providing on-site child care offers great convenience to employees, as they are able to simply bring their young children to work with them and pick them up at the end of the day.
- Remove the stigma associated with Flexi-arrangements: Factors as ‘implied work culture’ or compliant work culture on regression showed a negative relationship to overall work life balance. This finding strongly advocates that the organizations need to foster an environment that is supportive of employees utilizing work-life friendly benefit policies (such as flexi timings, work from home) and that using such policies should not result in negative career consequences. It is important to note that simply providing work life benefits is not enough- there must be a culture which supports the use of the policies; such that employees do not fear negative career consequences (i.e. being passed over a promotion as a result of using the work life benefits policy). The organization culture should not penalize people who take advantage of the few work-life policies that are available. Some women reported the fact that their organization has the unspoken rule that employees availing these policies would not be promoted. In such environment where flexible work arrangements are considered illegitimate, many individuals would rather resign than request for them.

**Socialization Tactics:** Another avenue that organizations may explore is the proper socialization of IT employees. There are global organizations which practice the various investiture socialization tactics. Investiture
tactics are those that tend to build up newcomers and affirm confidence in their own skills and abilities. These investiture tactics help to improve the work life balance in two important ways. By properly introducing individuals to the organization, new members gain a clear sense of the expectations of the firm and particular jobs. Specifically, employees better understand the amount of overtime that is necessary, the way work is structured in the firm, and how the workload relates to their existing experiences. By doing so, firms successfully reduce ambiguity and help employees to have realistic expectations, allowing them to make alternate arrangements in their personal lives during busy work periods or important deadlines of important deliverables.

Second investiture tactics help employees to understand the way their knowledge and skills fit into existing work system, thus clarifying role expectations. Having a clear understanding of one’s role eliminates wasted time and energy spent trying to figure out the tasks that need to be completed and the internal and external customers, with whom the new employee is expected to communicate. By doing so the IT employees feel less role conflict and are more likely to be committed to organization and have higher levels of job satisfaction. One tangible way to implement an investiture based socialization system is to create a mentoring program in which new IT professionals are paired with the old IT professionals of the company. This relatively is a low cost
solution and may be achieved by allowing mentors to give new workers advice about the specific strategies they have used to balance their lives. This may also result in propagating a more open and harmonious culture in the organization.

**Employer’s Commitment to Balance:** Organizational commitment and job identity are important factors in an employee’s success, however these same features often tend to reduce the work life balance of the IT employees. To manage this tension, management themselves should emphasize the importance of work life balance and explicitly state that employees with a good work life balance tend to be better and more effective organizational members. This approach is used by SAS Institute\(^{84}\), a global supplier of statistical software and other business technology solutions. While most HR managers will be unable to make changes to the number of hours that employees work unilaterally, they are in a position to set policies that emphasize work life balance and show the employer’s commitment to balance. Simple things as including employee’s stories of non-work related accomplishments in company newsletter or spotlight e-mails can signal the salience of balance in the eyes of the organization. Celebrating events such as the birth of children, major anniversaries or the accomplishments of life long goals such as

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\(^{84}\text{CEO Jim Goodnight of SAS institute has implemented a 35-hour workweek and works diligently to ensure employees keep to the schedule (O’Reilly & Pfeffer, 2000).} \)
running a marathon or publishing a short story all provide employees with a sense that the organization sincerely cares about work-life balance. Thus, employees high in organizational commitment will recognize the importance of work balance both to them personally and to the organization as a whole, making them more likely to actively balance their own life.

**Merge Family, Leisure and Work Time:** Another policy the organizations can adopt is to refer to supervisors, directors and co-workers using familial language and promoting strong systems of social support. The family atmosphere will facilitate a strong feeling of community in which employees would seek the best for themselves as well as their co-workers and organizations as a whole. One practical way for firms to implement this type of atmosphere is by organizing employees into semis table work-groups where members work together on a variety of projects over a period of time. In doing so, the organization fosters a sense of community among the workgroups and deepens relationships between group members. The strong relationships built in work-groups provide important social and tangible support, such as relieving certain members of tasks when important personal life matters arise. HR managers need to recognize the ambivalence felt by IT professionals struggling to balance their work and
personal lives. By simply doing so the HR managers can reduce anxiety levels and should provide their employees an outlet to discuss these issues. This open dialogue serves as both a means of catharsis for the employee as well as an important information-gathering tool for HR managers, who can use these discussions as opportunities to gather information about current employee.

The second way suggested is for organizations to make an attempt to merge the family and work life by bringing services into the workplace. Organizations may implement these strategies at a cost to employees; yet, by bringing these services to the office, organizations would be able to provide employees with a powerful way to reduce time-based conflict.

**High Involvement Work Practices:** High-involvement work practices (HIWPs) as reward and incentive plans, employment security, sophisticated training plans, information sharing, formal performance appraisals and merit-based promotion may be introduced to emphasize employee commitment. Providing employees with opportunities to participate in decision-making, informal training, pay-for-performance, and promotion opportunities all will result in positively impact on work-life balance. Unlike family-friendly policies, which are aimed directly at increasing work-life balance, these high-involvement work practices affect the relationship between work-life conflict and its deleterious
consequences. These help in establishing a commitment based culture in the organization.

A necessary condition for organizations to reap the benefits of these HIWP is to ensure that the implemented HR practices are internally consistent. Consistency is particularly significant in regard to rewards and incentives in the IT context, where task interdependence across system analysts, developers, testers, and administrators tends to be quite high. This work structure has the potential of placing two high-involvement work practices (teamwork and incentive-based pay) directly at odds with one another unless organizations are careful to recognize the need for both group-level and individual incentives. By rewarding group level performance upon the completion of major projects or milestones along with individual merit-based rewards, organizations can combine teamwork with individual incentives in a complementary fashion.

Organizations in the Chennai city which are able to implement high-involvement work practices may find their employees willing to cope with a degree of work-life balance because the other practices and activities of the firm provide an atmosphere that employees are reluctant to leave (i.e. they help differentiate the firm as an “employer of choice”). These practices affect work-life balance by reducing the probability that time- and strain-based conflict will lead to harmful personal and organizational consequences.
6.2.3 SUGGESTIONS TO GOVERNMENT

There is a need of consistency with respect to labor standards pertaining to work-life balance. Common standards by government would provide a starting point for the organizations in developing work-place policies and practices that address work-life balance issues. The government should help employers recognize the benefits of adopting policies that enable employees to adopt flexible working patterns. They should fund and disseminate research and case studies to key stakeholders that demonstrate the impact and benefits of work-life balance measures to business and individuals.

The Government could evolve partnership with organizations across the country to mainstream work life balance policies. Legislations should be passed to develop national level elder care programs. Tax reductions could also be conceded to enterprises practicing work life policies. IT sector has made India achieve a name and place in the global landscape and it is the duty of the Government to bring out policies that encourage and facilitate the working in this sector.

6.2.4 SUGGESTIONS TO FUTURE RESEARCHERS

- The study has been conducted mainly with respect to the chosen target; other research directions could involve different target groups as employees in general from various industrial sectors.
• The research could be extended to developing further scales to measure quality of work life for the employees of IT sector.

• Lambert et.al (2006) measured four different types of work family interference, including family base conflict, time based conflict, strain based conflict and behavior based conflict. They found that different types of conflict related differently to job outcomes. Future researchers may consider elaborating the existing line of research by investigating how jobs of IT employees are affected by these types of work family interferences.
6.3 CONCLUSION

This research isolates the various factors of professional, social and the physical health life spheres for IT employees. The factors of social and physical health life sphere and some of the factors of professional life sphere indicate a negative relationship to the work life balance of the IT employees reflecting a reduced work-life balance is a real phenomenon and that, if not addressed may have a serious consequence for both individuals and organizations.

The model thus formulated for the present study is depicted as below in the figure: 6.2.
FIGURE: 6.2

MODEL DEPICTING FACTORS OF THE THREE SPHERES OF LIFE CONTRIBUTING TO THE WORK LIFE BALANCE OF IT EMPLOYEES IN CHENNAI

PHYSICAL HEALTH SPHERE

D2

Sleep Snags $d_{11} = 0.6550; \beta = -0.550$

Negativity Affectivity $d_{10} = 0.658; \beta = -0.219$

PROFESSIONAL SPHERE

D1

Progressive Work Culture $d_1 = 0.859; \beta = 0.219$

Explicit Work Policies $d_2 = 0.650; \beta = 0.345$

Support from Supervisors $d_3 = 0.611; \beta = 0.424$

Support from Co-workers $d_4 = 0.601; \beta = 0.193$

SOCIAL SPHERE

D3

Work Overload $d_9 = 0.630; \beta = -0.427$

Paucity of Personal Time $d_8 = 0.825$

Perfect Work Ambience $d_5 = 0.589; \beta = 0.077$

Compliant Work Culture $d_6 = 0.565; \beta = -0.540$

Implied Organizational Culture $d_7 = 0.505; \beta = -0.174$

Work Life Balance

Progressive Work Culture

Explicit Work Policies

Support from Supervisors

Support from Co-workers

Sleep Snags

Negativity Affectivity

Work Overload

Paucity of Personal Time

Perfect Work Ambience

Compliant Work Culture

Implied Organizational Culture
Given the project-based nature of the work, the frequent use of extended schedules, the heavy reliance upon technology and the accelerated timelines of IT implementations, IT workers in particular are subject to both time-based and strain-based conflict. At the same time this is one sector which provides numerous global opportunities to IT professionals and thus the organizations must understand the importance of retaining valuable IT talent. To combat this, organizations must take positive, practical steps to confront the issue of work-life balance. It is important to note, however, that these suggestions may not fit every organization and each HR manager should ensure that the policies suggested mesh with his or her particular setting. Organizations will vary in terms of their available capabilities and resources for implementing these solutions. Finally, given that preferences vary as a function of individual differences, it is important that HR managers consider the characteristics and preferences of their IT personnel when implementing policies and programs aimed at improving the work-life balance.

Organizational responses matter. Work-life balance is an issue that practitioners can help to manage and organizations have a wide variety of options at their disposal to increase the work-life balance of their IT workers. By demonstrating, through both formal and informal policies and practices, organizations can bring about a synchronized integration of the three life spheres of their employees.