CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background
The Service Sector contributes a lot to the Indian Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It has a big share in the country’s GDP. Also, it has been indicated through numerous studies that the work-life balance problems are comparatively more prevalent in the sectors namely Call centre employees, Information Technology (IT) professionals, Bank employees, University academic staff (including Admin staff), Labor Market/Trade Union members/Credit Union executives, Doctors, Retail shop supervisors, Healthcare employees and Nursing employees. Hence, the present study has taken service sector for conducting the research. It was decided to choose these sectors from the above mentioned sectors because the employees have indicated more Work-Life Balance (WLB) issues as compared to the other ones and these firms are major contributors to the service sector. Thus, it was found that Call centre employees have comparatively more WLB issues because of their night shifts, flexible working schedules, lesser salaries and more labour-work. Similarly, IT sector employees have another set of WLB problems like extended working hours, job insecurity, insufficient leave arrangements, job stress, etc. The problems are different with banking employees which include role description issues, huge targets, lack of family friendly policies, type of job (autonomous or supportive), impact of new technologies/banking software, new working conditions, etc. Thus, priority wise, the above mentioned three sectors have been chosen as they cover wide variety of WLB issues by avoiding getting repetitive and providing a huge scope for a detailed analysis. The issues mentioned above are more relevant to the urban environment. Although rural sector has its own share of WLB problems but the WLB issues of urban sector are relatively more troublesome to the employees. The studies found in Indian context are comparatively less in number. Thus, it will be necessary and interesting to study the concept of Work-Life balance of the employees working in India. The present study may add value to the existing WLB literature by exploring new facts. The IT sector and BPO are private ownership dominated industries. Thus, private banks have been chosen over public sector banks to maintain uniformity with the other two chosen
sectors. Also, the private banks have variety of issues like more targets, extended banking hours, job insecurity, etc as compared to public sector banks.

The present study is more issue specific. Gurgaon has been selected on the basis of varied reasons. BPO industry has its offices mostly in Gurgaon. IT companies and private bank branches also have their wider presence in Gurgaon. The lifestyle of Gurgaon is comparatively lavish and costly. Also, there is a lot of scope for the existence of WLB issues in a city like this.

1.2 Call Centers: A call centre is a centralised office used for the purpose of receiving or transmitting a large volume of requests by telephone. Call centers, or their contemporary successors contact centers, are the preferred and prevalent way for many companies to communicate with their customers. The call center industry is thus vast and rapidly expanding in terms of both workforce and economic scope.

A call center constitutes a set of resources (typically personnel, computers and telecommunication equipment), and enables the delivery of services via the telephone. The working environment of a large call center could be envisioned as an endless room with numerous open-space cubicles, in which people with earphones sit in front of computer terminals, providing tele-services to unseen customers. Most call centers also support Interactive Voice Response (IVR) units, also called Voice Response Units (VRUs), which are the industrial versions of answering machines, including the possibilities of interactions. But more generally, a current trend is the extension of the call center into a contact center. The latter is a call center in which the traditional telephone service is enhanced by some additional multi-media customer-contact channels, commonly VRU, e-mail, fax, internet or chat. Call centers can be categorized along many dimensions: functionality (help desk, emergency, tele-marketing, information providers, etc), size (from a few to several thousands of agent seats), geography (single- vs- multi-location) and agents’ charateristics (low-skilled vs highly-trained and single- vs- multiskilled).

1.3 IT Companies: The Information Technology industry has brought a kind of revolution in the field of business and contributing to the economy of the country. Its the most lucrative sector as far as employment is concerned. The IT companies are majorly found in cities like Delhi (NCR), Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and
Hyderabad. Some examples of "Indian IT Services Providers" are Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Cognizant, Wipro and HCL Technologies.

The IT companies are expected to provide an enjoyable work-life environment. Though these companies are experimenting with five day work format but the real test for their commitment will manifest in a down turn economy. The signs of work burn-outs are evident in the large number of young IT professionals who are bitter that the personal leisure is snatched away due to work pressures. Some companies are investing in recreational and sports facilities on worksites where people prefer to stay for longer hours owing to the ambience of work environment which cannot be a substitute to the home and family. IT companies support and strengthen work-life balance vision by providing principles, policies and programs to support its employees. It offers flexible leave options and flexible work arrangements that are subject to management approval and business needs. There is an option of study leave, sick leave, maternity leave, compassionate leave, marriage leave, etc in many IT companies. There is also provision for flexible work arrangements like part-time work, flexible work week and flexible tele-commuting. Employment opportunities have become massive because of existence of IT sector companies. It has a great contribution in the global outsourcing sector as well.

1.4 Private Sector Banks: Banks are one of the important components of financial system and basic instruments of circulating money. Banking plays an indispensable role in modern economy. Banking has changed dramatically over the past few years. Banks offer a wide range of products and services than ever before and deliver them faster and more efficiently. However, the central function of banking remains the same—mobilizing the savings (deposits and investments) of the economy towards investment. A bank is a financial institution which primarily deals with accepting money and lending the same to the needy. Its primary activity is to act as a payment agent and borrow and lend money. It is also referred to as banking company. It consists of the activities undertaken by a bank to carry on its operations including receiving, keeping and lending money to the outsiders.

Private sector banks with their focussed business and service portfolio have a reputation of being niche players in the industry. The strategies of these banks have allowed most of them to deliver superlative levels of personalized services. With RBI
allowing these banks to operate their businesses in urban areas, this statutory requirement has translated into lower deposit mobilization costs and higher margins relative to public sector banks.

The banking scene is in for a change. The role of a banker is also changing. Banking has made a shift from being traditional to going online. It is now marked by intense competition, narrowing margins, growing customer and regulatory pressure and rapid technological departments which have pressurized the employees to work even harder.

The newly developed facilities provided by banks to the customer are automated teller machine services, plastic money in the form of credit cards and debit cards, telebanking, anywhere banking, internet banking, mobile banking, relationship banking, life and general insurance, mutual funds, demat accounts, etc.

1.5 Work-Life Balance: Importance of Work-Life balance (WLB) in Human Resource Management is well established. The antecedents and consequences of WLB are the driving forces behind the success or failure to maintain work-life balance. Though this perspective is widely acclaimed and utilized to explain the importance of WLB, it is sparsely incorporated in Human Resource Management. Academic literature on WLB provides information on the individual effects of various WLB policies on the employees of diverse organizations. However, it does not provide the combined effect of these policies on the mental and physical balance and economic well being of the employees. Work–life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). There can be two ways through which the organizations can provide the facility of work-life balance options. They can be offered either individually or in a group. A lot of employees working in the organization wish that individual working arrangement should be made available to them. For accommodating such expectations, the organizations need to have appropriate culture. There is a perception among the organizations that presence of more work-life balance arrangements could have the risk of damaging the career of the employees. Thus, it is very essential for management to understand the importance of WLB and consider the views of employees in this respect. Most employees feel that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. When there are high-
stress jobs, the employees might suffer from stress-related medical conditions and are likely to quit.

Work-life balance policies can help to deal with many problems of employees like low morale, high level of stress, reduced absenteeism and employee tiredness. This study aims to explore the WLB in the context of individual, family and organization (as perceived by the employees). Towards achieving this end, existing literature on work-family conflict, quality of work-life and work-leisure conflict is critically reviewed. Gaps in the existing literature have been identified and their applicability is proposed and analyzed. Consequently, a discussion is offered as to how this perspective can be utilized by managers in effectively managing their work and family life.

1.6 Constructs and Variables: The study deals with the following constructs which are discussed further in Literature review:

1.6.1 Work-Family Conflict (WFC): When expectations and demands from work and family are incompatible, they result in a form of inter-domain conflict called as work-family conflict (WFC). It includes transfer of stress at work to one’s personal life, inability to spend quality time with family/friends and giving up attending functions when they are in conflict with important job related functions. The proposed sub-variables in this category that may probably create this conflict are multiple commitments of employees like commitment to friends, partner and children to devote quality time and provide happiness to them, emphasis of an organization on maintaining good relationships among employees, the extent of perceived schedule flexibility in the number of working hours, mental and physical health, support from the supervisor, mentoring relationships, self presentation, creating opportunities, marital status, work-status of spouse, presence of children and dependents, employee welfare services like referral services, health program, exercise facilities and equal access to promotion.

1.6.2 Work-Leisure Conflict (WLC): When inequality arises between the work and period of time free from paid work or other obligatory activities, it is referred to as Work-Leisure Conflict. The result of this conflict could be difficulty to enjoy free time outside work, interference of the amount of time
spent with free time available, restriction to the enjoyment outside of work by job-related worries and inability to meet friends frequently. The proposed sub-variables in this category that may probably create a conflict are role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

1.6.3 Quality of Work-Life (QWL): Quality of work-life is the environment at the work-place provided to the people on the job. The sub-variables in this category are impact of new technology, flexible working arrangements like flexi-time, telecommuting, part-time work, new working conditions like professional autonomy, creativity and learning techniques, challenging assignments, project teams and strict deadlines, family friendly policies like medical care arrangements, counseling services, referral services, health programs, exercise facilities and equal access to promotion and development, leave arrangements, type of job and basic responsibilities.