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**WORK LIFE BALANCE FOR HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES - A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF TWO
FIVE STAR HOTELS IN KOLKATA**

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ABSTRACT

People around the world go to hotels to spend holidays and to revive and refresh themselves. This implies that staff working in hotels is busiest during holidays and festivals which affect the work life balance of these employees adversely. Their families are also stressed by the certain absence of such members during festivals and functions. On the other side when hotel employees are off duty the rest of the family members are busy with daily affairs.

Hotel industry has a huge variety of jobs and runs 24/7. In today's competitive labor market it is very difficult to find good people for their team. Employees are not only looking for incentives and financial rewards but many lay emphasis on good treatment and ways to keep their work and life balanced. There are many theories which reports on work life balance. The goal of the current work is to illuminate and to compare the work life balance of hospitality employees working in two five star hotels of Kolkata. The study clearly shows the challenges faced by the employees of this sector and how they cope with the same. The comparative analysis also highlights how few Human resource policies can contribute towards minimizing the gaps in work life balance and go a long way in making employees comfortable which could lead to better retention and more efficient performance.

Key Words: Hospitality, Hotel Employees, Five Star Hotels, HRM, Work-Life Balance

1.0 Introduction

Work-life balance is a concept that has been conceived in numerous ways. However, the main concept comes from two areas-

achievement and enjoyment both of which seem to be very simple. (Bird, 2006). Going by the above one can define work-life balance as person's control over the

condition in their work place or work life balance is a phenomenon when satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum of role conflict. (Clark, 2000)

One of the major challenges of working in the hospitality industry is coping with work timings and shifts. This is particularly highlighted as the core business is more during holidays and festivals when most people venture out to enjoy. For hospitality service professionals these times are the busiest and it becomes impossible for them to avail any leave or offs during this period. This naturally creates a work life imbalance and family conflict as expectations on the home front are ignored. Hotel industry faced an issue that led to it being characterized as an industry with a “turnover culture”.(Wasmuth & Davis, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c) This happened primarily due to decline in hotel and travel business in the early 21st century due to high competition and economic condition. (Deery & Shaw, 1997, p. 377). The hotel industry faced an acute crisis due to a diminishing number of skilled labors and this became more crucial as it was coupled with high rates of turnover that directly affected the bottom line of the industry. (Pitt-Catsouphe & Smyer, 2005).

In the latter half of the twentieth century work life imbalance was considered to be an issue for working mothers only. However towards the end of the twentieth century the application of work - life balance as a concept gained prominence and many employers started planning for the same. Various models were put forth by researchers that include segmentation model, spill over model, compensation model, instrumental model and conflict model. (Das & Chatterjee, 2013)

This paper is focused on comparing the quality of work-life balance for employees of two five star hotels in Kolkata by using their feedback on human resource practices, work conditions, work life balance and job satisfaction by means of a questionnaire.

2.0 Review of literature

Work-family conflict and stress issues have received ample attention in other literatures that have considered long hours, non standard times on call hours, geographic mobility as a prerequisite for career advancement. These work characteristics have been proved to be potential work stressors that are associated with attrition and also are antecedents to work family conflict.

It is also been identified that there is a paucity of research in many characteristics of jobs in the hospitality industry. (Hom, 2002).

Many researchers have included factors like conflict between work and family as possible reasons that influence the decision of an employee to remain or leave an organization. (T.W. Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The above two factors namely job stress and family conflict have not been accorded due merit in hospitality and tourism journals. (Mulvaney, O'Neill, Cleveland, & Crouter, 2006). It was estimated that an increase in employee turnover by 1 % resulted in a decrease of nearly \$7,550 of lost profits at the unit level for a hotel group. (Simons and Hinkin, 2006) The intention of an employee to leave or stick to an organization is largely dependent on work stress and home conflict. This also has an implication on the health care cost. (J. C. Thomas and Herson, 2002)

2.1 Work Characteristics, Work Stress, and Work–Family Conflict

In a study on organizational stress literature five major sources of stress were identified which was job related stress, role based, with inter personal relationships, career growth

related and work family conflict (J. C. Thomas & Herson, 2002).

It has been identified that work during non standard hours and the number of hours has a significant effect on physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of employees. Shift work is a common issue for employees that create stress in marital life as well as child related problems (Presser, 2004). Job schedules that involve working on weekends and holidays which is common in hotel life creates complications for employees trying to negotiate the work family interface. (Almeida, 2004) Performance at work as well as balancing the home front is both dependent on the number of working hours as has been identified by (Staines & Pleck, 1983).

It has also been proved that reduced work load has resulted in enhanced well being, reduced health problems and diminished perception of stress. In addition it was seen that the family life bonding had improved with increased involvement and stronger relationship. (M. D. Lee, MacDermid, and Buck, 2002). The changing context of work and responsibilities that include telecommuting, multi tasking and working from home has increased the intensity of

work in the life of employees (Hochschild, 1997). This intensity is characterized by the continuous disruptions that describe a number of jobs and work places in the present day, typically hotel environments. (Perlow, 1997)

2.2 Work-Related and Non-work Support as Buffers to Stress

The work family culture of an organization is an important factor in an employee's perception of conflict and balance. The negative effects can be minimized by positive elements in the work environment, support of supervisors and colleagues, a manager who encourages flexible schedules and innovative solutions to problems. (Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neil, & Payne, 1989)

Work family culture has been defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives (Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999). In hotels the perceptions of general managers

are considered important variables in shaping manager's work family conflict. Hence, a positive organizational culture and support for reconciliation for work and family has a significant influence on the employees perception of family support. (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Starrels, 1992; Thompson et al., 1999; Thompson, Thomas, & Maier, 1992).

2.3 Multiple perspectives in perceptions of work stressors and work-family issues

The major issues in work life balance is due to poor planning in areas of dealing with work and non work roles as also college seniors having little idea regarding future issues like children and career marriage conflict. The importance of the realistic expectations regarding work is ideally the focal point to research on employee turnover. (Peake and Harris, 2002) (Barnett, Gareis, James, & Steele, 2003). The above is more prominent in the hotel industry.

Table 1: Antecedents, consequences and sources of work – life balance

Antecedents	Source
Long working hours; long working hours culture	Guest (2002) ; MacInnes (2006) ; De Cieri et al (2005) ; White et al (2003) ; Lewis (2003) ; Roberts (2007) ; Cullen and McLaughlin (2006) ; Deery (2008)
Time pressures	Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) ; Lewis (2003)
Lack of flexibility	White et al (2003) ; Lewis (2003)
Financial pressure	White et al (2003) ; Warren (2004)
Employer practices	White et al (2003) ; De Cieri et al (2005)
• Supervisor practices Lack of communication with staff	De Cieri et al (2005)
Demographic details	White et al (2003) ; Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) ; Lyness and Kropf (2005) ;
• Gender	Roberts (2007) ; Smith and Gardner (2007) ; Ponzellini (2006) ; Tomlinson (2006) ; Doherty (2004) ; Guest (2002)
• Education	
• Marital status	
• Children	
• Socioeconomic status	
• Job tenure	
• Work status	
Increased work demands	MacInnes (2006) ; De Cieri et al (2005) ; Roberts (2007) ; Guest (2002)
Stressful work; job stressors such as	Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) ; MacInnes (2006) ; Roberts (2007)
• job insecurity	
• role clarity	
• job autonomy	

• time pressures	
• leadership relations	
Exhausted from work and too tired to enjoy homelife; marital satisfaction via job exhaustion	MacInnes (2006) ; Mauno and Kinnunen (1999)
Psychographics, especially personality	Lewis (2003) ; Guest (2002)
New technology	Roberts (2007)
Negative consequences	
Marital and work stress	Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) ; MacInnes (2006) ; Roberts (2007)
Psychosomatic symptoms	Burchell et al (1999) ; Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) ; Lewis (2003)
Absenteeism, turnover	Deery, 2002, 2008, , Wang and Walumbwa (2007)
Organizational difficulties in recruiting staff	Doherty (2004)

3.0 Research Methodology

This work is aimed to compare the work life balance of employees from two five star hotels of Kolkata. For the same secondary data is reviewed from available literature and published works on the subject. Further feedback is obtained from employees of both the hotels as well as the human resource practices of the hotels are examined. An analysis and comparison was done between two five star hotels of Kolkata to know the

satisfaction level of employees on work-life balance and their feedback was recorded on a questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to gauge their organizations efforts in providing them with a work environment that was conducive to achieve work life balance.

Feedback was obtained from five percent of the employees of both the hotels and the same were stratified according to type of employment to get a clearer picture of the

work life balance. A questionnaire was administered to the employees on various factors of employment as well as their work life balance and job satisfaction. The data so obtained was scanned and analyzed using MS Excel and SPSS.

4.0 Data Analysis and Inferences

Data was collected from 5% of the employees of both the chosen hotels. A total of twenty five questions were put and respondents were asked to fill in the same. Further their scores on work life balance, job satisfaction and reason for attrition in their organization was noted. On work life balance not even one employee mentioned a positive mark. Hence the responses on the rest of the questions were used to ascertain the satisfaction of employees that is checked with their response on job satisfaction. The following charts and tables give a clear picture of the analysis.

Organization	Job satisfaction	Average (F)
Hotel A	4	1.81
Hotel B	14	1.56

Out of total possible score of 50 Hotel A scores 4 on job satisfaction. i.e. 8%

Out of total possible score of 42 Hotel B scores 14 on job satisfaction. i.e. 33%

The difference is 25% between Hotel A and B.

On a scale rating of 1 and 2, where 1 is positive and 2 is negative Hotel A scores 1.81 and Hotel B scores 1.56 which shows that Hotel B is closer to the positive end. $1.81 - 1.56 = 0.25$ i.e. 25% which is exactly the figure marking the difference in job satisfaction. This also validates the direct score on job satisfaction. Further, as all employees of both hotels have marked the same response on work life balance, the above scores are crucial in ascertaining the better of the two hotels. Other analysis by SPSS is shown below.

Reliability

Table 2 indicates that the reliability of the instrument which is used for employees is 0.846. This is considerably high with regard to social research. The instrument was designed considering the basic questions and all items included in the questionnaires which are directly derived from it and consistent with the objective of the study.

Table 2 - Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.846	36

Org * JS Cross tabulation

Count

		JS			Total
		neutral	satisfied	very satisfied	
Org	Hotel A	23	0	2	25
	Hotel B	9	10	2	21
Total		32	10	4	46

Chart 1- Job Satisfaction and Hotel

It can be seen that the satisfaction level of Hotel B is higher than Hotel A. For Hotel A the satisfaction is almost nil, while most of them are neutral for job satisfaction.

Chart 2- Qualification and Type of Organization Cross Tab

The above chart represents the qualification of employees in the hotels. It is evident that Hotel B has more employees possessing professional qualification in Hotel management.

Chart 3- Work Life Balance

It is clear that Hotel A employees have a poor work-life balance, while both Hotel A and Hotel B say that their pay package is quite poor.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Org	45	1	2	1.47	.505
F1	46	1	2	1.70	.465
F2	46	1	1	1.00	.000
F3	46	1	2	1.37	.488
F4	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F5	46	1	2	1.85	.363
F6	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F7	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F8	46	1	2	1.91	.285
F9	46	1	2	1.91	.285
F10	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F11	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F12	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F13	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F14	46	1	2	1.76	.431
F15	46	2	2	2.00	.000
F16	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F17	46	1	2	1.70	.465
F18	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F19	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F20	46	2	2	2.00	.000

F21	46	1	2	1.70	.465
F22	46	1	2	1.63	.488
F23	46	1	2	1.78	.417
F24	46	1	2	1.91	.285
F25	46	1	2	1.91	.285
F26	46	1	2	1.70	.465
Valid (listwise)	N 45				

Inferences

- No work life balance in both hotels.
- No difference across age, gender or employee category in the above factor.
- Job satisfaction is 25% higher in Hotel B as compared to Hotel A.
- On the average of all the factors there also was a 25% difference.
- Satisfaction of employees was generally very low for both the hotels.
- Hotel B has more professionally qualified employees as well as a better ratio of female employees as compared to Hotel A.

5.0 Conclusion

It is a very sad picture that the results show. On the whole there is a complete absence of work life balance in both the hotels that were considered for this study. It is an accepted fact that hospitality work is categorized as low skill and poor wage provider. This study reiterates an accepted fact and highlights the issue that has been stated in a number of earlier works from various parts of the world. That there is a lack of committed research in the study location and not much value is accorded to such work is also a fact that stands out. This study shows the obvious trend in the hospitality industry in the study location. The results coming from two of the best rated hotels of the city clearly indicates the trend that can be gathered from other hotels of similar standard and lower category

hotels. Also what is notable is the fact that results are similar across all categories of employees. It can also be noted that employee satisfaction on wages and other benefits do contribute in improved work life balance. Hotel B which has more professional employees as well as female employees shows a slightly better picture with job satisfaction. It is arguable whether improved benefits and wages can counter the lack of work life balance; however it can certainly increase employee satisfaction and minimize grievance. The results of this work are clearly an alarm signal for the hospitality industry to address with immediate effect or else in near future they may be burdened with demotivated employees as well as no interested fresher's who are ready to join.

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