

Software Developer Perspectives on Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore work-life balance (WLB) dimensions that Nepalese software developers prefer. The present study was carried out in ten IT companies situated in Kathmandu Valley. A sample of 50 software developers was chosen to collect data. The convenience sampling method was used. Only primary data were used to reach acceptable results. Such data was acquired using the checklist approach. These developers were given a checklist that included several WLB dimensions. They answered to checklist used for data analysis. Their responses were used for data analysis. WLB is becoming a concern for all employees in today's rapidly changing workplace, particularly in information technology (IT) companies. The results indicate that all of the software developers give first priority to physical and mental health as the key dimensions of WLB. They also prefer parental and family leave, flexible work hours, recognition and reward, team collaboration, reasonable workload, managerial support, and work and family support as important aspects of WLB. They also have given priority to career growth opportunities, boundary management, efficient tools and systems, organizational culture, and remote work options as the important dimensions of WLB. If IT companies can manage these dimensions, software developers can, too.

Keywords: Information technology companies, Perspectives, Software developers, Work-life balance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) practices are purposeful organizational adjustments in programs or organizational culture that aim to eliminate work-life conflict and help workers perform better at work and in other activities. The transition from considering WLB policies primarily as a way of accommodating individual employees with care giving duties to acknowledging their contribution to corporate performance and employee engagement is a significant paradigm shift that is still in the works [1]. [2] report WLB as an individual's attempt to be productive in their personal and professional lives. It entails successfully balancing professional and personal responsibilities. It is wrong for people to devote all of their time to activities such as volunteering, traveling, athletics, personal development, and spending time with their families. This is the basis of WLB [3].

WLB is becoming a concern for all employees in today's rapidly changing workplace, particularly in information technology (IT) companies. It describes the optimal scenario in which an employee may divide his or her time and energy between work and life. Today's business environment is extremely demanding, with high work expectations and rapid technological innovation. Employees are increasingly demanding a work-life balance in order to boost effectiveness. Work and personal life are not mutually exclusive. Maintaining WLB requires balancing job and personal life. Employees are working longer hours due to the current epidemic because they are concerned about job losses and layoffs [4]. Technological developments (such as cell phones, e-mail, and fax) have made it simpler for job demands to interfere with family and personal life. Furthermore, the shift to global competitiveness has raised the need for businesses and individual individuals to be more adaptable and sensitive to change [5]. In such a context, the issue of WLB has become more intense. In fact, this issue came into focus as a result of emerging technology, as companies use email, computers, and cell phones to enable employees to complete office work even outside of the physical boundaries of the office. This affects employees' personal lives because they are busy attending and completing office

assignments even at home, which reduces their focus on family and hampers their personal lives, resulting in work-life conflict. If work-life balance is not maintained properly, it can lead to stress, which has a direct impact on employees' health. If such employees work in a stressful atmosphere, they can burn out [6].

WLB is commonly used to describe flexible work hours, family or personal leave, and organizational childcare support. It is distinguished by little role conflict and happiness, as well as efficient functioning at both works and home. It also refers to the satisfaction that an individual feels from completing their many responsibilities in life. Striking a balance between one's personal and professional lives is necessary to maintain competitiveness and productivity at work while also enjoying a pleasant and healthy social life [7]. Companies lacking work-life balance programs have lower employee engagement, which may diminish their efficacy [8]. Managers who oppose work-life balance efforts reduce productivity in their firms [9]. Employees who do not maintain a healthy work-life balance might have a negative impact on their employers' profitability. Thus, both companies and employees need to focus on enhancing employee WLB so that a positive work environment can be created where they can work happily. In fact, employee performance will improve as they become more aware of work-life balance. Employees are an organization's most valuable asset, hence it is the organization's job to assist them in overcoming the challenges they confront in terms of WLB [10].

Turning to Nepal, the rise of diverse software, apps, and overall digitalization of processes in all types of enterprises has contributed to the nation's IT sector's growth. Aside from domestic enterprises, foreign corporations are aggressively looking for experienced IT experts in Nepal. Nepal's shift to a digital economy over the last decade has resulted in a massive increase in demand for IT expertise across a variety of fields, which is projected to continue in the future years [11]. As a result of this fact, Nepalese IT companies are hiring more software developers. When it comes to balancing work and life, software developers frequently confront several difficulties. As we know software development is a complicated and difficult subject that frequently requires extended working hours. Software developers can find themselves working under strict time constraints and put in additional work to guarantee that the end result performs effectively. This can make it harder for them to maintain their WLB [12]. With these discussions, this study aims to explore WLB dimensions that Nepalese software developers prefer.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

WLB is acknowledged as a significant dimension in attracting, maintaining, and retaining the individuals essential for establishing software companies [13]. It is an important aspect of professional life, particularly for software developers who frequently confront challenging workloads and deadlines. WLB is the perceived and achieved equivalency in the roles of work and family, in such a way that access to one domain enhances the success of another [14] [15]. Literature indicates many dimensions of WLB for professionals.

Work hours and flexibility in terms of flexible work hours [16] [17] and remote work options [18] matter a lot for WLB. It is assumed that flexible working arrangements effectively improve WLB whereas, remote work helps in reducing commuting stress and provides employees more control over their environment. This ultimately improves WLB. [19] reported that a reasonable workload also supports WLB.

A supportive work environment including managerial support and team collaboration also supports WLB. Supportive managers respect boundaries and provide necessary resources [20] that promote WLB. On the other hand, collaboration within teams supports in distributing workload more evenly and reduces individual stress. Such collaboration also enhances WLB [21]. Similarly, health and well-being in terms of enhancing physical health [22] and mental health [23] also support WLB [24]. Career progression including career development and talent management practices also supports WLB [25]. [26] reported that career development and personnel management techniques that have a good impact on WLB, such as high career perspectives, can lead to information technology (IT) professionals prioritizing work over personal life. Such professionals' satisfaction may be increased if they believe they have appropriate domestic and strategic roles. Likewise, [27] reported that teamwork and communication are also essential for WLB. Teamwork often creates a synergy that occurs when professionals exhibit complementary talents, increasing their strengths, potential, and proficiency. Communication across software companies can lead to knowledge exchange and reciprocal and collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, identifying, encouraging, and coordinating work activities increase the level of WLB.

In addition, parental and family leave also support WLB. In fact, comprehensive leave policies for family obligations are critical to promoting WLB [28]. Recognition and reward also promote WLB. [29] agreed that regular recognition improves morale and WLB as it makes employees feel appreciated. Similarly, well-designed reward schemes can encourage employees while improving WLB [30]. Technological supports in terms of efficient tools and systems and boundary management are also helpful for enhancing WLB. [31] observed that efficient tools can improve WLB by reducing job time and providing time for oneself whereas, [32] reported that managing the use of technology to avoid encroachment into personal time is essential to enhancing WLB. Organizational culture in terms of work-life balance advocacy and employee involvement also supports in managing WLB. [33] believe that a work-life balance advocacy culture that emphasizes WLB improves employee happiness and retention. In addition, employee involvement in work policy decisions can help to ensure that policies fulfill their demands and improve WLB [34]. According to [35], companies that value effective organizational culture are more likely to promote a healthy WLB. Finally, family and social support also help in managing WLB. In fact, work and family support are critical for motivating professionals to achieve a work-life balance [36].

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was carried out in IT companies situated in Kathmandu Valley. In the Valley, 229 IT companies offer different IT-related services to different industries [37]. Out of these only 10 companies were selected purposefully (Table 1).

Table 1. IT Companies and Nature and Services Offered

S.N.	IT Companies	Nature and Services Offered
1.	Subisu Cablenet Pvt. Ltd.	Internet, Network and Television Service Provider
2.	Worldlink Communications Pvt. Ltd.	Complete IT service provider providing services such as data connectivity, network integration and consulting, web hosting, hardware sales and maintenance
3.	Vianet Communications Pvt. Ltd.	Provider of high speed Internet connectivity and communications solutions for business and individuals
4.	Cotivity Nepal	Software research and development center
5.	Classic Tech Pvt. Ltd.	Internet Service Provider (ISP) and Network Service Provider (NSP)
6.	BroadLink Network and Communication Pvt. Ltd.	Internet Service Provider
7.	E-Multitech Solution Pvt. Ltd.	Specialising in auction software, web design, web development, mobile apps, e-commerce, and other services
8.	Hamro Patro	One of the first Nepali app to include Nepali Patro
9.	Sunai Technology Pvt. Ltd.	Custom software development outsourcing company for platform-based solutions specialized in cloud/devops, mobile/web app development & product design
10.	Mercantile Communications Pvt. Ltd.	Provides comprehensive range of excellent value added services for Internet, content designing, development and hosting

A sample of 50 software developers (five from each companies) was chosen to collect data (Table 2). To conduct the study more accurately and easily, the convenience sampling method was used. Only primary data were used to reach acceptable results. Such data was acquired using the checklist approach. These developers were given a checklist that included several WLB dimensions. They answered to checklist used for data analysis. Their responses were used for data analysis.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Software Developers

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	34	68
Female	16	32
Marital Status		
Married	29	58
Unmarried	21	42
Age		
21 - 34	43	86
35 - 44	1	2
45 - 54	5	10
55 and above	1	2
Education		
Bachelor	40	80
Masters	10	20

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Facing Difficulty in Managing WLB

Table 3 demonstrates that the majority of software developers (84 percent) find it challenging to balance their personal and professional lives.

Table 3. Software Developer Facing Difficulty in Managing WLB

Response	Frequency	Percent
We are facing difficulty in managing WLB	42	84
We are not facing difficulty in managing WLB	8	16

The results show that they are having problems managing their WLB efficiently. Addressing the core causes and adopting realistic remedies can assist in reducing these kinds of problems.

4.2 WLB dimensions affecting software developers in Nepal

The section presents the key dimensions of WLB that Nepalese software developers prefer (Table 4).

Table 4. Software Developer Preferences to WLB Dimensions

S.N.	WLB Dimensions	Percent	Rank
1.	Flexible work hours	90	4
2.	Remote work options	58	14
3.	Reasonable workload	84	7
4.	Managerial support	82	8
5.	Team collaboration	86	6
6.	Physical health	100	1
7.	Mental health	100	2
8.	Career growth opportunities	80	10
9.	Parental and family leave	92	3
10.	Recognition and reward	88	5
11.	Efficient tools and systems	78	12
12.	Boundary management	80	11
13.	Organizational culture	76	13
14.	Work and family support	82	9

The study focuses on the factors affecting employee WLB that include flexible work hours, remote work options, reasonable workload, managerial support, team collaboration, physical and mental health, career growth opportunities, parental and family leave, recognition and reward, efficient tools, boundary management, organizational culture, and work and family support.

The results indicate that all of the software developers give first priority to physical and mental health as the key dimensions of WLB. They also prefer parental and family leave, flexible work hours, recognition and reward, team collaboration, reasonable workload, managerial support, and work and family support as important aspects of WLB. They also have given priority to career growth opportunities, boundary management, efficient tools and systems, organizational culture, and remote work options as the important dimensions of WLB. Employees give a substantial competitive edge for companies [38] [39] [40] [41] [42] [43]. As a result, companies must focus on the efficient use of human capital and create an environment that motivates employees to become dedicated and committed to the success of the business [44]. They must focus on correctly managing employees' WLB in order for them to be satisfied and perform their organizational duties.

5. CONCLUSION

Software development is a difficult and demanding job, typically requiring lengthy working hours. Developers may have to work under tight deadlines and put in extra time to ensure that the product functions effectively. This can make it challenging for individuals to balance their professional and personal lives. Software development projects frequently have severe deadlines, and developers may feel pressured to fulfill them. This can result in stress and extended work hours, making it difficult for developers to balance both their personal and professional lives. Some software developers may find it challenging to set limits and decline extra duties or overtime. This can give rise to fatigue and disconnect between their personal and professional lives, as they may feel obligated to constantly be accessible on the job. In fact, both physical health and mental health are important for the developers. Workplace health promotion programs can help employees improve their physical health and work-life balance whereas, access to mental health resources and support networks is critical for maintaining mental well-being and WLB. Likewise, employee WLB will be also supported by comprehensive leave policies for family responsibilities. Flexible work hours can help people better manage their personal and professional duties, hence improving WLB.

Employee WLB can be managed through recognition and reward. Regular recognition promotes morale and can improve WLB by making employees feel respected, and well-designed reward systems can encourage and enhance WLB. Team collaboration also matters a lot for WLB. Reasonable workload, managerial support, and work and family support also promote WLB. Creating options for professional development can boost job satisfaction and support WLB. Managing the use of technology to avoid encroachment into personal time is critical for preserving WLB. In the same manner, efficient tools can reduce time spent on tasks and improve WLB by allowing more personal time. An organizational culture that values and supports all employees also helps in WLB. In some cases, remote options also become valuable. Such options reduce commuting stress and give employees more control over their environment, which can improve the WLB of employees. If IT companies can manage these dimensions, software developers can, too.

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