

# A Study of Work-Life Balance in Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department (HPPWD), Shimla

**Ravi Kaundal**

(Research Scholar, H.P. University Business School, Summer Hill, Shimla)

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## Abstract

*The present study is an attempt to understand the work life balance, causes of work life imbalance, measures, and suggestions etc of the employees of HPPWD. The various aspects of the work life balance, its effects on employees and various other reasons of stress/tension related to work life balance has been attempted to find out some solution. Efforts have also been made to find out the personal habits and relationship of the employees and how these are related to the work life balance. Work-life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home and it very useful & important to know as imbalance in work life not only affect the efficiency and performance of employees at work but it can disturb the relations of employees at home and with friends. Work-life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. Work-life balance is a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace.*

Key Words: Work life Balance, stress, employees, performance.

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## Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a state in Northern India. It is spread over 21,495 sqm (55,670 km<sup>2</sup>) and is bordered by the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir on the north, Punjab on the west and south-west, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on the south, Utara khand on the south-east and by the Tibet Autonomous Region on the east. In 1950 Himachal was declared as a union territory but after the State of Himachal Pradesh Act 1971, Himachal emerged as the 18th state of the Republic of India. The Economy of the Himachal Pradesh is currently the third fastest growing economy in India. Himachal Pradesh has been ranked fourth in the list of the highest per capita incomes of Indian states. Due to the abundance of perennial rivers, Himachal also sells hydro electricity to other states such as Delhi, Punjab and Rajasthan. The economy of the state is highly dependent on three sources: hydroelectric power, tourism and agriculture.

Himachal has area of 55,673 sq.m with total population of 68,56,509. The total number of males and females are 34,73,892 & 33,82,617 respectively. The sex ratio of Himachal Pradesh is 974, whereas rural population is 61,67,805 and urban population is 6,88,704. The total literacy rate is 83.78%, wherein male literacy rate is 90.83% and female literacy rate is 76.60%. The state has 12 districts.

### **Himachal Public Works Department (HPPWD)**

There are about 50 government department, 23 corporations, one dozen Boards and about one dozen other bodies functioning in the state. The public works department after education department is the biggest state department in the state which is directly working for people and is linked with the people. This is the only department in which most of the Engineers are working along with the other non technical personnel. The department has more than 40 thousand manpower among which about 32 thousand are the technical personnel. The Department is one of the most important department in the state, responsible for developmental works like Building, road infrastructure and building works of various Govt. departments. The department also executes engineering work as deposit works on behalf of Local Bodies, Boards and other Institution under Himachal Pradesh Govt.

The primary task of the department is to provide efficient road infrastructure. The department has a vital role to play in the economic growth of the state as economy of Agriculture, Horticulture, Industry, Mining depends upon efficient road network. Social activities such as education, health, tourism also depend on road infrastructure. The department is headed by Engineer-in-Chief with four zones in the state. Each zone is headed by the Chief Engineer. The department has a separate wing for highways namely National Highway wing, headed by Chief Engineer. The department also has separate quality control wing headed by the Chief Engineer, quality control. In spite of above there are various projects like NABARD, World Bank, PMGSY, which are being executed by the department.

### **Work Life Balance**

Work-life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Work-life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. Work-life balance is a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation,

spirituality, personal growth, self care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace. Work-life balance is assisted by employers who institute policies, procedures, actions, and expectations that enable employees to easily pursue more balanced lives. Because many employees experience a personal, professional, and monetary need to achieve, work-life balance is challenging. Employers can assist employees to experience work-life balance by offering such opportunities as flexible work schedules, paid time off (PTO) policies, responsible time and communication expectations, and company-sponsored family events and activities.

Work-life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life (Hudson, 2005). People's perception of work-life balance is very subjective, as reflected by various descriptions of work-life balance by employees.

Work-life balance for any one person is having the 'right' combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions) and other aspects of their lives. This combination will change as people move through life and have changing responsibilities and commitments in their work and personal lives. The demand for work-life-balance solutions by employees and managers is expanding at an unprecedented rate. As a result, work-life balance is an increasingly hot topic in boardrooms and government halls today. Over the coming decade it will be one of the most important issues that executives and human resource professionals will be expected to manage.

### **Reviews**

According to a recent study conducted by National Life Insurance Company for the Center for Work-Life Policy, 1.7 million people consider their jobs and their work hours excessive because of globalization. The study shows that seventy percent of US respondents and eighty-one percent of global respondents say their jobs are affecting their health. Between forty-six and fifty-nine percent of workers feel that stress is affecting their interpersonal and sexual relationships. Additionally, men feel that there is a certain stigma associated with saying "I can't do this". According to a survey conducted by the National Life Insurance Company, four out of ten employees state that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. Those in high-stress jobs are three times more likely than others to suffer from stress-related medical conditions and are twice as likely to quit. The study states

that women, in particular, report stress related to the conflict between work and family.

The number of stress-related disability claims by American employees has doubled according to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association in Arlington, Virginia. Seventy-five to ninety percent of physician visits are related to stress and, according to the American Institute of Stress, the cost to industry has been estimated at \$200 billion-\$300 billion a year. Steven L. Sauter, chief of the Applied Psychology and Ergonomics Branch of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, states that recent studies show that "the workplace has become the single greatest source of stress". Michael Feuerstein, professor of clinical psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences at Bethesda Naval Hospital states, "We're seeing a greater increase in work-related neuro skeletal disorders from a combination of stress and ergonomic stressors".

Research conducted by the Kenexa Research Institute (KRI), a division of Kenexa, evaluated how male and female workers perceive work-life balance and found that women are more positive than men in how they perceive their company's efforts to help them balance work and life responsibilities. The report is based on the analysis of data drawn from a representative sample of 10,000 U.S. workers who were surveyed through Work Trends, KRI's annual survey of worker opinions. The results indicated a shift in women's perceptions about work-life balance. In the past, women often found it more difficult to maintain balance due to the competing pressures at work and demands at home.

According to a new study by Harvard and McGill University researchers, the United States lags far behind nearly all wealthy countries when it comes to family-oriented workplace policies such as maternity leave, paid sick days and support for breast feeding. Jody Heyman, founder of the Harvard-based Project on Global Working Families and director of McGill's Institute for Health and Social Policy, states that, "More countries are providing the workplace protections that millions of Americans can only dream of. The U.S. has been a proud leader in adopting laws that provide for equal opportunity in the workplace, but our work/family protections are among the worst. At least 107 countries protect working women's right to breast-feed and, in at least seventy-three of them, women are paid. The U.S. does not have any federal legislation guaranteeing mothers the right to

breast-feed their infants at work, but 24 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have laws related to breastfeeding in the workplace.

At least 134 countries have laws setting the maximum length of the work week; the U.S. does not have a maximum work week length and does not place any limits on the amount of overtime that an employee is required to work each week. (survey) Sweden, Denmark and Norway have the highest level of maternity benefits—Sweden provides 68 weeks paid maternity leave, Norway provides 56 weeks paid maternity leave and Denmark provides 52. A 2003 survey by Management Recruiter International stated that fifty percent of executives surveyed didn't have plans to take a vacation. They decided to stay at work and use their vacation time to get caught up on their increased workloads.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Based on the review of literature and need of the study, the following objectives of the study are designed:

1. To study the behavior of the employees at work and at life i.e. work life balance of HPPWD employees.
2. To study the effects of introduction of Bio-metric Attendance system on employees.

### **Data Collection**

For the collection of data through questionnaire, Shimla Zone of PWD has been considered. The employees of head office of PWD i.e. employees of Engineer-in-Chief at Nirman Bhawan, employees of Architect wing, employees of Chief Engineer (PMGSY), employees of Chief Engineer (HPRIDC) are considered for the study. There are about 600 employees of these wings at Shimla, who are considered for the survey. In the study only Class-I, Class-II and Class-III employees are considered, in which Engineers, Architect, Superintendents, Senior Assistant, Draftsman are taken for the study. Among these category of total number of employees, 90 employees are considered at random for the survey. The criteria used for selection of employees from Class-I, Class-II and Class-III is percentage basis. Out of 600 employees 15% i.e. 90 employees are selected at random for the survey, among which questionnaire is being circulated to gather the information.

## Findings

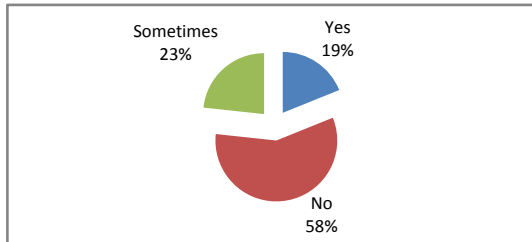


Figure 1 : (Showing statistics of employees for periodical medical examination)

As shown in the figure, 58% employees do not go for regular medical checkup. Only 19% employees go for periodical medical examination and 23% employees prefer their medical examination sometimes.

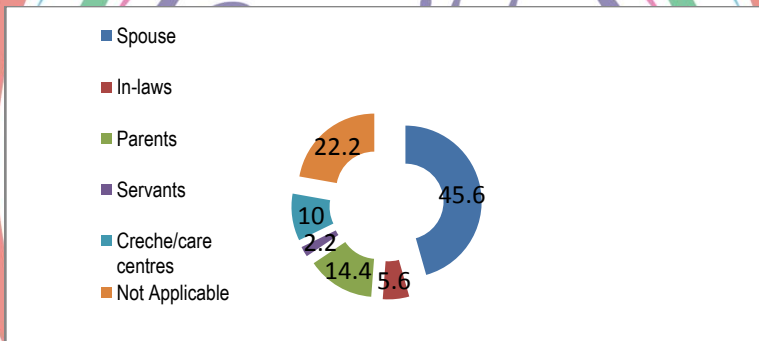


Figure.2 : (Showing who is helping to take care of employees children)

As usual, it is the responsibility of either of the partner to take care of their children, when someone is in job. Here 45.6% spouse look after their children at home. It may be due to nuclear family system or otherwise, while 14.4% employees said that their parents look after their children. This is the case, when both are in job. 22.2% means that their children are not dependent on them for care.

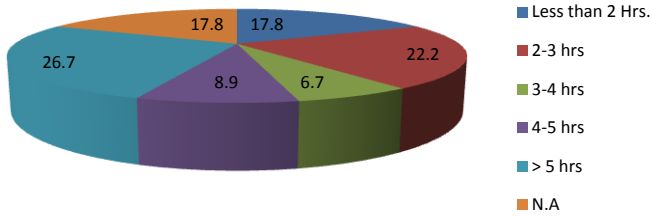


Figure.3 : (Showing the time employees spend with their children)

It is the good news for the children, who need quality time from their parents. Employees of HPPWD (26.7%) spend more than 5 hours with their children. While 22.2% employees spend only 2-3 hours with them. It is a matter of concern for those children whose parents spend less than 2 hours with them. It is all due to work and life imbalance.

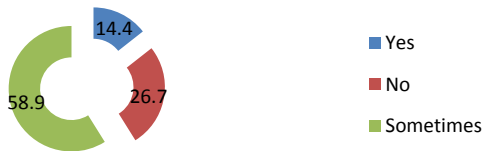


Figure.4(Showing the time employees spend for themselves)

Due to work load, weather conditions and binding of biometric attendance system, most of the employees don't have time for themselves. Only 14.4% employees have time for their hobbies and personal interest, while 58.9% employees spare some time for themselves occasionally. 26.7% employees are unable to spare time for themselves.

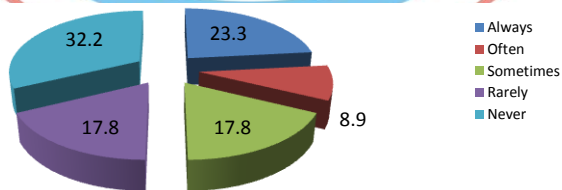


Figure.5 (Whether employees are being awarded & recognized for Commitment, leadership skills initiatives & for Performance ):

It is a matter of great concern that in spite of work pressure and commitment to work only 23.3% employees are being recognized & awarded for their better performance & commitment. While 32.2% employees feel demoralized & never being recognized. Even the other figure is not in employees favor. 8.9%, 17.8% & 17.8% are stat of employees who are being awarded & recognized oftenly, sometimes or rarely.

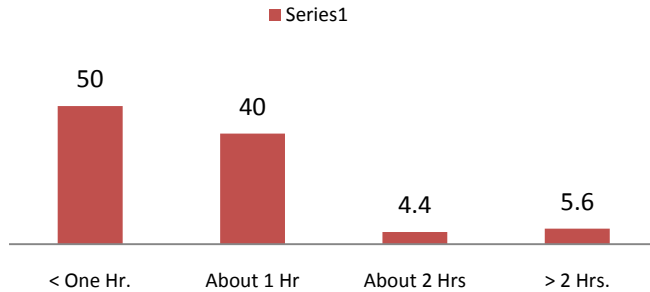


Figure.6 (Showing the time employees spent in travelling for job)

As shown below 50% employees take less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour to reach to the office. But 40% employees spend nearly 1 hour in traveling , there are very few employees who waste 2 or more than 2 hours in traveling.

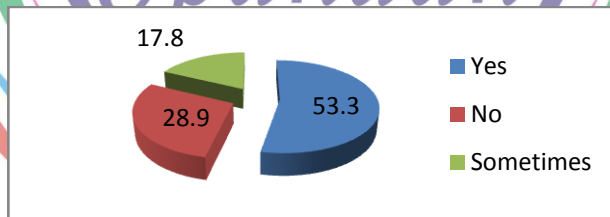


Figure.7 (Showing weather employees feel stressed with Biometric attendance system)

The much controversial attendance system in the department , Biometric attendance system has become the main cause of stress for the employees instead of work and other factors. Only 28.9% employees don't feel stress with this system, otherwise 53.3% employees feel stressed with



this system & 17.8% employees also feel stressed sometimes due to this system.

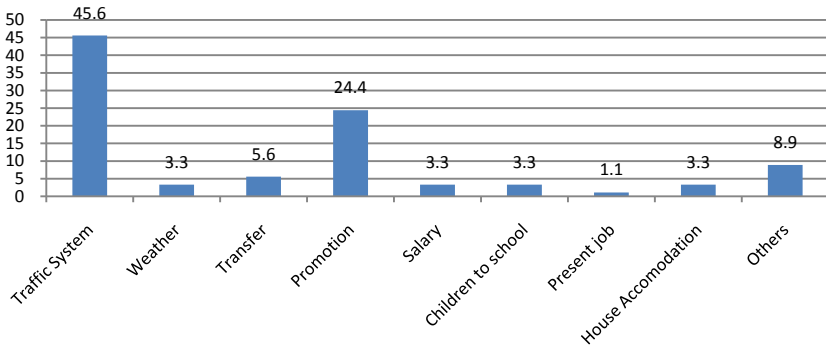


Figure.8 (Other Causes of stress/Tension)

The most challenging system for the Shimla administration is also the worry for employees. As shown below 45.6% employees got stressed/tensioned due to Shimla’s traffic system. While promotion is the second reason of tension. Present job for 4.4% employees is also the reason of stress for employees.

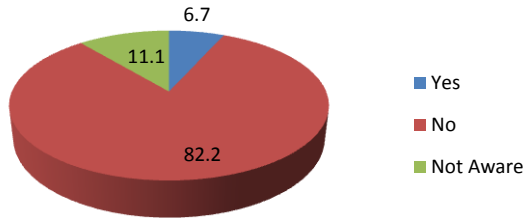


Figure.9 (Showing the existence of departmental work-life balance policy)

For the main & biggest department of the state, there is not any policy for maintaining work life balance of employees & this is the main concern for the employees. Although 6.7% employees feel that there is a system in the department to maintain better balance. But 82.2% employees accepts that there is no such policy and 11.1% employees are not aware of existence of such policy.

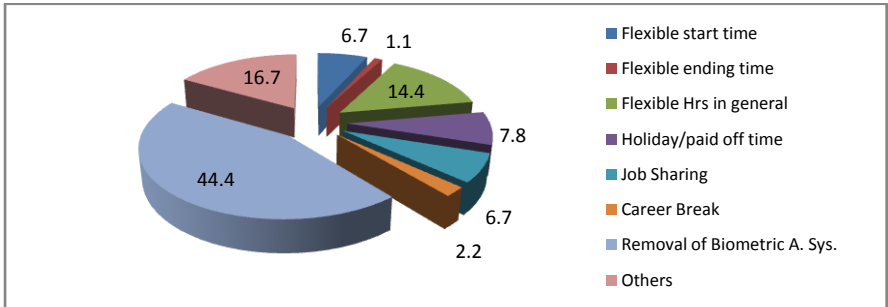


Figure.10 (What type of policy employees want to maintain work life balance)

Due to non existence of policy to maintain work life balance, employees want to have different provisions under the policy. 44.4% Employees want the removal of Biometric attendance system from the department, the main cause of stress to the employees. 14.4% employees want to have flexible hours of working in general to maintain work life balance. Due to bad traffic system, 6.7% employees want flexible start time and 6.7% employees also want to have a job sharing system in the department. Due to busy schedule and other constraints, 7.8% employees want holidays/paid off time to have a better balance.

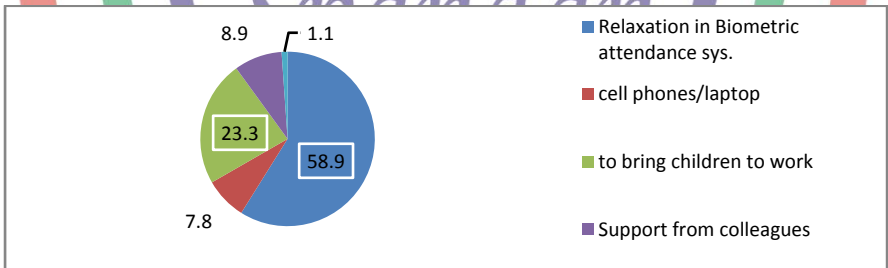


Figure.11 (How balance between work and family can be maintained )

The employees of PWD feel that removal/relaxation in biometric attendance system can help in balancing their work & family life. 58.9% employees have such a views. 23.3% employees feel that if they are being allowed to bring their children to work on occasion, then this can help in maintaining the work life balance. 8.9% employees want support from their colleagues.

## Conclusions

The various conclusions can be drawn as follows:

In spite of stress & tension 58% employees do not go for regular medical checkup, Only 19% employees go for periodical medical examination and 23% employees prefer their medical examination sometimes. As usual, it is the responsibility of either of the partner to take care of their children, when someone is in job. Here 45.6% spouse look after their children at home. It may be due to nuclear family system or otherwise, while 14.4% employees said that their parents look after their children. This is the case, when both are in job. 22.2% means that their children are not dependent on them for care.

It is the good news for the children, who need quality time from their parents. Employees of HPPWD (26.7%) spend more than 5 hours with their children. While 22.2% employees spend only 2-3 hours with them. It is a matter of concern for those children whose parents spend less than 2 hours with them. It is all due to work and life imbalance. The study shows that only 37.8% employees have sufficient time for their family. 33.3% employees find difficult to spare time for their family. While 2.2% employees are those who are unable to give time to their families due to job.

Due to work load, weather conditions and binding of biometric attendance system, most of the employees don't have time for themselves. Only 14.4% employees have time for their hobbies and personal interest, while 58.9% employees spare some time for themselves occasionally. 26.7% employees are unable to spare time for themselves. It is a matter of great concern that in spite of work pressure and commitment to work only 23.3% employees are being recognized & awarded for their better performance & commitment. While 32.2% employees feel demoralized & never being recognized. Even the other figure is not in employees favor. 8.9%, 17.8% & 17.8% are stat of employees who are being awarded & recognized oftenly, sometimes or rarely.

The much controversial attendance system in the department , Biometric attendance system has become the main cause of stress for the employees instead of work and other factors. Only 28.9% employees don't feel stressed with this system, otherwise 53.3% employees feel stressed with this system & 17.8% employees also feel stressed sometimes due to this system. The most challenging system for the Shimla administration is also the worry for employees. 45.6% employees got stressed/tensioned due to

Shimla's traffic system. While promotion is the second reason of tension. Present job for 4.4% employees is also the reason of stress for employees.

For the main & biggest department of the state, there is not any policy for maintaining work life balance of employees & this is the main concern for the employees. Although 6.7% employees feel that there is a system in the department to maintain better balance. But 82.2% employees accepts that there is no such policy and 11.1% employees are not aware of existence of such policy. Due to non existence of policy to maintain work life balance, employees want to have different provisions under the policy. 44.4% Employees want the removal of Biometric attendance system from the department, the main cause of stress to the employees. 14.4% employees want to have flexible hours of working in general to maintain work life balance. Due to bad traffic system, 6.7% employees want flexible start time and 6.7% employees also want to have a job sharing system in the department. Due to busy schedule and other constraints, 7.8% employees want holidays/paid off time to have a better balance.

Again 53.8% employees feel that removal/relaxation in the Biometric attendance system can help them to maintain their work life balance. 15.6% employees feel that flexible hours in general can also help them to maintain better work life balance. Due to bad traffic system, 5.6% employees want flexible start time and 6.7% employees also want to have a job sharing system in the department.

Biometric attendance system has become the major cause of stress for employees. 55.6% employees feel that this system has become the main hindrance in maintaining the work life balance. 17.8% employees feel that traffic problem is also the main reason for the imbalance in work life. 7.8% employees feel that negative attitude of family members also causing hindrance to maintain work life balance. The employees of PWD feel that removal/relaxation in biometric attendance system can help in balancing their work & family life. 23.3% employees feel that if they are being allowed to bring their children to work on occasion, then this can help in maintaining the work life balance. 91.1% employees prefer to take food from home instead of taking from outside/canteen. Only 1.1% employees uses departmental canteen for lunch and any other purpose. That means that there is not good facilities in the departmental canteen for the employees.

## Suggestions

On the basis of the results of the study the following suggestions may improve the efficiency of employees of HPPWD at work place, behavior at home and can maintain a good work life balance.

The department (Government) should think seriously for the removal/relaxation in the new Biometric attendance system in the department as the study reveals that it is the major cause of stress/tension for the employees. This system also affecting the performance/efficiency of employees at work and at home. The other major cause of imbalance in work life of employees is the traffic system of the Shimla city, due to which they find it very hard to reach the office. The department should provide transport facility to its employees, so that they would reach office in time without the tension/stress of biometric machines.

Promotion is also the other main cause of stress/tension causing imbalance in work life of employees. The government should expedite the process of promotions for the various categories of the staff. The government should also consider the alternatives measures in case of delay in promotion. As per the study, there is no policy for maintaining the work life balance of employees in the department. They should provide the policy to employees such as flexible start time, flexible end time, flexible in general, removal of biometric attendance system, support from supervisors, etc so that they can maintain better balance in work & life.

Along with the separate work life policy, employees also want additional work provisions to relax & to avoid stress at work place. Such as social functions for family, better transportation facility & counseling services for them etc. The department should also improve the existing grievance handling system so that they feel free from tension & stress and can maintain better work life balance.

As most of the employees are married and having children. To send them to school at Shimla is very hard job for the employees in general & for those employees in particular where both are in job. So the department should allow employees sometimes to accommodate children in the office, for which crèche or other similar type of facilities may be provided. If the above stated suggestions are being followed seriously, then it will help the employees of the PWD to maintain balance in their work and family life in a better way. It will also help to reduce the stress/tension to a greater extent.

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