



Work–life balance at JSPL at Raigarh Chhattisgarh: A research study

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Abstract

This study investigates work–life balance (WLB) among a sample of 100 employees at Jindal Steel & Power Ltd (JSPL), Raigarh plant, using structured questionnaires and follow-up interviews supplemented by company reports. Results show that all respondents work six days per week, with the majority (over 90%) logging 7–9 hours each day. Although 86% of employees report that they are able to manage work and life demands, a substantial 70% admit they sometimes or often miss quality family or personal time due to work pressure. Every participant is aware of a formal JSPL WLB policy, but only about 42% cite any form of flexible scheduling (e.g. variable start/end times) as part of it. Instead, a majority (58%) rely primarily on paid leave (holiday or personal leave) to achieve balance. In coping with stress, most employees engage in informal activities (49% listen to music) rather than structured wellness practices (only 7% report doing yoga). These findings suggest that while JSPL provides supportive facilities (such as exercise centers and health camps) that promote employee well-being, gaps remain in how these policies are implemented and tailored to individual needs. The study concludes by recommending expanded flexible work arrangements and enhanced wellness programs to further improve employee balance and productivity, which in turn can help reduce burnout and absenteeism.

Keywords: JSPL (Jindal Steel Plant), WLB (Work Life Balance), policy

Introduction

Work–life balance refers to an individual’s ability to juggle professional responsibilities alongside personal and family commitments. Maintaining this balance is recognized as essential for both employee well-being and organizational performance. Employees who achieve good WLB tend to be more productive, take fewer sick days, and remain with their employer longer, whereas poor balance can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. Indeed, a recent report found that 62% of Indian workers report burnout—far above the global average—often citing work-related stress and poor work–life balance as primary factors.

Heavy manufacturing industries such as steel and power are especially challenging environments for WLB. These sectors typically operate around the clock, requiring long, irregular shifts and strenuous labour. Prior studies of Indian steelworkers have found that these conditions make it difficult for employees to dedicate time to family, adversely affecting health and relationships. Although awareness of WLB issues is growing in the Indian steel sector, actual implementation of supportive measures on the shop floor still lags behind office settings.

JSPL is a major Indian steel and power conglomerate (with about 15,000 employees) whose large integrated plants (e.g. Raigarh, Jharkhand, Odisha) run continuously. This places JSPL in the dual position of needing to maintain high production output while also protecting employee well-being. In line with this, JSPL has introduced several welfare programs—such as flexible working hours for eligible roles, health check-up camps, stress management workshops, and “family day” events—as noted in the company’s sustainability reports. However, external analyses suggest that these benefits are often more accessible to corporate staff than to plant workers. This study therefore explores how JSPL’s operational workforce perceives their work–life balance and uses company-provided WLB initiatives. By analysing survey data alongside organizational documents,

the goal is to assess the current WLB situation at JSPL and identify areas for improvement.

Company Profile: JSPL

Jindal Steel & Power Limited (JSPL) is a major Indian steel producer and power generator, part of the O. P. Jindal Group. It has an annual turnover of about US\$2.9 billion and a globally diversified presence. JSPL operates large integrated steel complexes: for example, a 3 MTPA steel plant in Raigarh (with captive coal and iron-ore mines), steel and wire rod mills in Jharkhand, and new plate mills in Odisha. The company’s 15,000-strong workforce spans engineering, operations, and support roles. JSPL emphasizes efficiency and safety, with policies like Total Productive Maintenance and an Integrated Quality, Safety, Health & Environment framework.

Employee demographics at JSPL skew toward blue-collar, shift-based production roles, particularly at its Raigarh and Angul plants. (Exact demographic data were not provided, but these plants employ many hourly workers and technicians.) The corporate offices in Gurugram and New Delhi support engineering, finance, and management. JSPL’s Human Resources initiatives include periodic health camps and an extensive inhouse hospital. Its official documents (QSHE, CSR reports) highlight investments in employee welfare, including training, safety, and community health. However, JSPL does not prominently publicize a formal “work–life balance” policy, beyond offering general leave and wellness facilities. Our survey data indicate that a separate WLB policy does exist, though its awareness and coverage vary across the organization.

Literature Review

Work–Life Balance Theory: Foundational research defines work–family conflict as the mutually incompatible pressures between professional and personal roles. Later models introduce the idea of boundary management, where

individuals negotiate when and where to perform job tasks, with organizational support (e.g. policies, culture) shaping their success. Empirical studies consistently show that employer-supported measures—such as flexible scheduling and wellness programs—can reduce stress and improve outcomes for workers.

WLB in Heavy Manufacturing: Steel and power sectors pose special WLB challenges. These industries' continuous operations and shift systems often impose high job stress and irregular schedules on employees. For example, Singh and Rani (2018) found that Indian steel workers frequently struggle to find family time, harming their health and relationships. Kumar and Verma (2021) similarly reported that while industry awareness of WLB is improving, actual practice on factory floors is limited, leaving shift workers more dissatisfied than office employees.

Organizational Policies and Outcomes: Previous research highlights that proactive WLB policies—like flex-time, health camps, and family support—can boost employee morale and retention. In JSPL's case, the firm's sustainability report (2023) mentions flexible hours (for eligible staff), health check-ups, stress workshops, and family events. However, these programs may not reach all workers equally: one analysis observed that JSPL's WLB policies are "on paper" but unevenly implemented, with Raigarh and Angul plant employees reporting lower satisfaction than corporate staff. An industry report similarly notes that traditional manufacturing firms in India generally trail service-sector organizations in holistic employee wellness programs. Overall, the literature implies that while JSPL has the building blocks of good WLB support, there is a need for a focused study to evaluate how effectively these measures serve its blue-collar workforce.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design. The universe was defined as employees at JSPL's Raigarh plant, and the sample consisted of 100 individuals (N=100) drawn by random sampling. The sample included workers from various departments (production, maintenance, administration) and both genders. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and supplementary interviews. The questionnaire included items on work schedule, commute, perceptions of work-life balance, stress management, and awareness/use of company WLB provisions. Questions mostly used closed Likert scales or categorical responses (e.g. frequency or yes/no).

Secondary data were gathered from company publications and industry reports. Key sources included JSPL's internal HR survey (2021) and Sustainability Report (2023) which provided context on corporate policies. Data analysis employed basic descriptive statistics (percentages) and the Chi-square test for significance of associations. Results were tabulated and summarized, with critical values compared at the 5% significance level. (For example, a chi-square test on the desire for customized WLB policy yielded $\chi^2=72$, $df=4$, exceeding the critical value 9.488, indicating significance.)

Results

- **Work Schedule:** Every surveyed employee reports a six-day workweek. Daily work hours are predominantly long: 63% of employees work 7–8 hours per day and

28% work 8–9 hours. Regarding commutes, 63% travel about one hour each way, while 37% have shorter commutes (less than one hour). All respondents are shift workers, with 67% on a regular day shift and 33% on rotating or night shifts.

- **Balance Perception:** A large majority (86%) report feeling able to balance work and life demands, leaving 14% who feel they cannot. However, work-related worry often persists after hours: 23% of employees "always" think about work when off duty, 6% do so "often," 39% "sometimes," 17% "nearly always," and only 15% "rarely" carry work thoughts home. Regarding satisfaction with work time, 49% of employees say they are happy or very happy with the time they spend at work (16% very happy, 33% happy), while 37% are neutral and 14% are unhappy or very unhappy.
- **Family/Personal Time:** Work pressure impacts personal life: 53% of employees report that they sometimes miss quality time with family or friends due to work, and 17% say this happens often. Only 30% (13% never, 17% rarely) say they seldom miss family time.
- **Stress Management:** In terms of coping strategies, the most common relief activities are passive: 49% listen to music to de-stress, 16% use other entertainment, 11% meditate, and merely 7% practice yoga.
- **WLB Policy Awareness and Use:** All participants (100%) are aware that JSPL has a formal WLB policy. When asked about specific provisions, 58% of respondents identify paid time off (holidays/leave) as a policy feature, 17% mention flexible start times, 15% flexible end times, and 10% general flexible hours. Among additional benefits, 53% note that the company provides an exercise facility (e.g. gym), 19% mention health programs (wellness camps), 17% note that personal phone use is allowed, and only 5% cite any family support programs. About 73% are aware of JSPL's annual "master health check-up" benefit, while 27% are not aware of it. Finally, 62% of employees agree or strongly agree that WLB policies should be tailored to individual needs, compared to 22% who disagree.

Discussion

The survey results present a generally positive yet mixed picture of work-life balance at JSPL. On the positive side, a clear majority (86%) believe they are able to manage their work and personal lives, suggesting that JSPL's existing policies and workplace culture provide some support. The full awareness (100%) of a formal WLB policy and the availability of amenities like exercise facilities and health check-up programs likely contribute to this perception of support. Notably, approximately half of employee's report being happy with the hours they work, which is encouraging given evidence that contented workers tend to be more productive and less prone to leaving their jobs.

However, several findings point to significant challenges. The uniform six-day workweek and long shifts mirror the industry norm in heavy manufacturing of "long hours and irregular shifts," which are well-known sources of work-life

strain. Correspondingly, 70% of employees sometimes or often miss family or personal time due to work demands. Many workers also carry work-related thoughts into their off-hours (70% “always/often/sometimes” think about work off duty), indicating that job stress spills into home life. The split in satisfaction levels (with over 50% neutral or unhappy) further suggests that a substantial minority of workers feel burdened by their workload. These patterns are consistent with prior studies in the steel industry, which have documented that shift workers often struggle to allocate sufficient time to family and personal pursuits.

In comparison to broader industry practices, JSPL’s initiatives appear somewhat ahead of many peers: the company does offer flex-time options and wellness events in principle. Our data confirm that employees do have access to health check-ups and exercise facilities (with 53% reporting gym access). Yet implementation is uneven. Flexible hour options and family-support programs are recognized by relatively few employees: only about 42% noted any flexible scheduling options, and merely 5% cited family support programs. This limited uptake suggests that many benefits either reach only office staff or are under-communicated among plant workers. The strong majority (62%) favouring individualized WLB policies reflects this gap: employees seem to desire more customization of benefits to their personal circumstances, which echoes observations by Mehra (2022) that plant employees particularly benefit from flexible arrangements. Given India’s high national burnout rates, these findings underscore the urgency of addressing WLB proactively at JSPL. In summary, while JSPL has established foundational WLB policies, our results highlight shortfalls in reach and customization that are common in the industry.

Recommendations

Based on these results, we suggest the following steps for JSPL to strengthen work–life balance:

- **Expand Flexible Scheduling:** Increase options for flexible work hours beyond fixed shifts. Only about 42% of employees identified any flexible scheduling (start/end times) in the current policy, so JSPL should broaden such options. Possible measures include implementing rotating shift patterns, offering compressed workweeks, or allowing occasional work-from-home days for eligible (non-shop-floor) staff. These changes could help employees better manage family and personal commitments amid the demands of plant operations.
- **Enhance Wellness Programs:** Institute more structured stress-reduction initiatives. At present, just 7% of employees practice yoga, suggesting underutilization of active wellness activities. JSPL could schedule regular on-site yoga or meditation sessions, and expand mental health support services (such as counselling or helplines) across all employee groups, not only office personnel. Since nearly half of respondents rely on passive activities like music (49%) for stress relief, providing guided wellness programs could lower chronic stress and absenteeism.
- **Strengthen Family-Support Initiatives:** Develop resources for employees with dependents. Very few workers (only 5%) currently mention any family support program. JSPL could consider onsite childcare

facilities (to accommodate shift schedules), organize family-friendly events at the plant, and enhance parental leave benefits. Tailoring support services to employees’ personal situations – in line with the 62% who favour customized WLB policies – can improve morale and loyalty.

- **Improve Communication and Monitoring:** Ensure all employees are informed about WLB policies and resources. The finding that 27% of workers were unaware of the annual health checkup benefit indicates gaps in communication. Leadership should regularly communicate WLB offerings through multiple channels and solicit employee feedback on their needs. Periodic reviews of WLB policies (possibly benchmarking against industry best practices) can help the company adjust initiatives effectively over time.

Conclusion

The survey suggests that JSPL’s workforce generally perceives a reasonable work–life balance, with most workers satisfied with existing arrangements and aware of supportive policies. Nonetheless, the uniform six-day schedule and long hours remain stressors, as evidenced by the high proportion of employees who report missing family time for work and carrying work concerns into personal life. Compared to wider industry trends— where heavy industries often lag in WLB support— JSPL has made commendable efforts (such as providing exercise facilities and health camps) but should build on these by deepening flexibility and wellness initiatives. In particular, broadening flexible work options and institutionalizing active wellness programs could significantly enhance employee well-being and productivity. Future research could replicate this study at other JSPL sites and evaluate the impact of any new WLB measures over time, helping the company refine its approach to employee balance and organizational performance.

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