

A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN WORKING FEMALE EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The role of working female employees has modified throughout the world because of financial conditions and social requirements. This has resulted in a very state of affairs during which working ladies have tremendous pressure to develop a career as sturdy as their male counterparts whereas sustaining active engagement in personal life. The ever-increasing work pressure is taking a toll on these women; they have less time for themselves. The increasing responsibilities on the private front with the technological blessings like advanced mobile phones, notepads, etc. that keeps work life integrated with personal life additionally creates stress on personal and work fronts during this information age. This affects an individual's physical, psychological and societal well-being. Thus, achieving work life balance may be a necessity for working women to own an honest quality of life. This paper is a shot to explore the robust challenges faced by married ladies in maintaining a balance between their personal and professional life. The various factors touching the work-life balance of married female employees have been examined in this study.

Keywords: *Work-Life Balance, Quality of Life, Female Employees, Personal Life, Professional Life.*

Introduction

Women of the earlier times were mostly restricted to their kitchenette and few of them worked in factories, farms or shops. Hardly any women had the access to higher learning and they were strained to be at the mercy of their fathers' or husbands' outlooks towards women and work. The rapidly increasing information based economy has accommodated more women to be liberal by higher education. Education has not only given them strength but also has given them promising careers. With intellect being the mandatory skill in this information age, rather than patience or physical strength, the women workers seem to pour into every business at same level with men. But this has indeed become a tough test for ladies as they have to perform household chores and office work as well. The responsibilities are doubled when they get married and even more when they start a family, they have to take care of the children and extended family and are thus, under stress to carry on a career path. In present times, working ladies perform everyday jobs at home and also try to contribute at the utmost level in their careers managing the taxing demands of their numerous roles. The working mothers have a prime task of taking care of children and elderly members of the family which lays a heavy strain on them when combined with their professional responsibility. They try to incorporate, sort out various problems and activities in their diverse roles at the same time puts them under tremendous pressure. Health issues lead to lower efficiency and efficacy of workers. This paper focuses on the harsh life of female employees of Uttar Pradesh pushing their limits to create a balance between work and family life.

Literature Review

Work-life balance is defined as a worker's perception that numerous domains of personal time, family care, and work are maintained and incorporated with a least amount of role conflict (Clark, 2000; Unger son & Yeandle, 2005). Work-family balance echoes an individual's orientation across different life roles, an inter-role occurrence (Marks and Mac Dermid, 1995). Work-life balance is a critical factor in all types of service as dual-occupation families have become common and elevated work demands with

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extended working hours have become the standard. The significance of helping employees achieve a balance between the demands of their work and their home lives has been emphasized. Socio-demographic changes as seen in the rising number of female workers in the place of work and double career families have generated a progressively more dissimilar workforce and a greater requirement of employees to balance their work and personal lives (Bharat, 2003; Kumar Raju, 1996; Rajadhyaksha & Bhatnagar). This has led to an increase in the number of female employees and, hence, working mothers (Grossman, 1980). The advantage of this information era for ladies is work-related opportunity and mobility. But this has become a great challenge for the working women of today as they are not only work under the same professional environment as men but they even face the strain created by the manifold role demands and contradictory expectations. By meeting their financial needs, workplaces have without any doubt made ladies independent with a particular social status but it has also compelled them to manage two main domains of office and family. They have stepped into work place but at the home front, responsibilities of ladies still remain the same, (Sunita Malhotra & Swapna Sachdeva, 2005). The study by Francene Susner Rodgers (1994) with the sample consisting of employees of twenty Fortune five hundred companies; thirty percent of the men and fifty four percent of the ladies reported that work-family strain affected their skill to focus on work hence showing that more than half the female employees and almost one third of the men reported that work/family pressure affected their ability to focus on the job. Pleck's (1976) study indicates that family-to-work spread out is stronger for female workers and the work-to-family pour out are stronger for men. Data suggests that female employees in all parts of the world are stressed most of the time, they hardly get any time to lighten up and feel strained and exhausted most of the time, but women in developing nations feel the pressure even more as compared to female workers in advanced countries. Women in India (nearly eighty five percent) are most strained for time (Nielsen Survey, June 2011). ASSOCHAM's study based on the survey of nearly hundred corporate female workers from seventy two different companies across ten large sectors of the economy concentrated on the issues of corporate female employees. One of their major finding is that high psychological occupational demands like extended working hours, strain to meet deadlines, without clear direction leads seventy five percent of the working females suffer hopelessness or general anxiety disorder than those working women with lowest level of psychological job demands (Nusrat Ahmad, March 2009).

Maintaining a perfect balance between personal life and professional life is becoming a mission impossible. Work-life balance issues can be really severe and needs to be resolved in due time.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To study the occurrence of work-life balance problem among the female employees from Academic and Healthcare sectors
- To study the degree to which various aspects like working hours, work involvement and family duties, affect married working female's work-life balance.
- To analyze the work-life balance crisis of married working women across their demographic distinctiveness such as age group, number of kids and spouse's occupation.
- To analyze the outcome of work-life balance on the quality of life of working women.

Research Methodology

Details of Sample

The study was carried out among the married working women of Uttar Pradesh. A sample of 120 married female employees was selected using Convenient Sampling. They were from Academic and Healthcare sectors. Sixty women from each area were chosen for the study.

Details of the Tool Applied

The study is based on questionnaire having twenty items. The key tool was the checklist (Daniels and Mc Carraher, 2000) in the manual on work-life balance of The Industrial Society (now the Work Foundation) comprising 10 statements about work-life balance. The choice for answers were either 'agree', 'sometimes' or 'disagree'. Few statements were added to get a better transparency in the analysis on work life balance in the married working females of Uttar Pradesh such as Age group of the respondents, Number of Children, occupation of Spouse and Industry in which the respondent is working, additional caring responsibilities; normal working hours; occupation; and any administrative or decision-making responsibilities

Checklist Manual on Work-Life Balance: The checklist manual developed by Daniels and Mc Carraher for the Industrial Society (2000) and the guidelines to check oneself with the manual on the balance between work and family are as follows:

Work through this checklist and assess whether your own life is balanced		A	B	C
		Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
		1	2	3
Q1	At the moment, because the job demands it, I usually work long hours			
Q2	There isn't much time to socialize/relax with my partner/see family in the week			
Q3	I have to take work home most evenings			
Q4	I often work late or at weekends to deal with paperwork without interruptions			
Q5	Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do			
Q6	I worry about the effect of work stress on my health			
Q7	My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure or long hours of my work			
Q8	My family are missing out on my input, either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired			
Q9	Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult			
Q10	I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation			

Guidelines for interpreting the responses to the Checklist	
If you ticked all or mostly A's you may already be under considerable stress from your lack of work-life balance	
Over time, your productivity could suffer along with relationships, your health and long-term employability	
As an individual, start to address your own needs so that you become more effective.	
At work, try to promote better work life balance to the advantage of the whole workplace.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you ticked all or mostly B's you are not entirely happy with your work-life balance, but in a good position not to let the situation get out of control. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By encouraging your organization to adopt a work-life strategy, you can help to create an enhanced working environment that will benefit you, the organization and colleagues at all levels. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you ticked all or mostly C's you have set your own priorities in work-life balance, making them work for you. As well as the benefits to you and your family, is your organization getting more from you? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show leadership by encouraging a culture that respects work-life balance for all and takes into account the fact that individuals have differing demands at various stages of the lifecycle. When people have a sense of control over their work-life balance, they can be more productive and committed to their work and better prepared to manage the demands of today's rapidly changing workplace 	

Source: Daniels and Mc Carraher Industrial Society (2000)

• **Data Collection**

The questionnaire was distributed to the married working females of the various sectors. A total of 120 check list instruments were distributed and 110 completely filled questionnaires were collected giving an overall response rate of 91 per cent.

• **Scope**

The scope of the study was limited to the married working women of Uttar Pradesh from the academic and health sectors regarding the challenges that they face in balancing professional life and personal life.

Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected was subjected to statistical testing; it was coded and analyzed using SPSS software (originally Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The data was studied in tabular form with frequency tables and percentages using MS-Excel.

Results and Discussions

• Reliability Analysis

The data were subjected to Alpha tests of reliability and they had acceptable (0.721) Cronbach's Alpha value which indicates a decent level of internal uniformity for the scale with the specific sample used for analysis.

• Profile of the Respondents

Among the 120 married working women, maximum number of respondents belonged to the age group of 30-40 (37.5%). Many respondents (39.2%) had two children. In terms of Spouse's Profession, 20% were engaged in business, 21% in the Academic sector and so on respectively.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents		Frequency	Percentage
Age Group of Respondents:	Under 30 years	34	28.3
	30 to 40 years	45	37.5
	Over 40 years	41	34.2
Total		120	100
Spouse's Profession:	Business Others	24	20
	IT Industry	21	17.5
	Construction	16	13.3
	Academic	18	15
	Marketing	17	14.1
	Insurance	16	13.3
	Others	8	6.6
		120	100
No. of Children:	None	17	14.2
	One	24	20
	Two	47	39.2
	Three	21	17.5
	or more	11	9.1
	120	100	

Table 2

	Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	At the moment, because the job demands it, I usually work long hours	120	2.58	0.747
Q2	There isn't much time to socialize/relax with my partner/see family in the week	120	2.53	0.78
Q3	I have to take work home most evenings	120	2.03	0.765
Q4	I often work late or at weekends to deal with paperwork without interruptions	120	2.14	0.898
Q5	Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do	120	2.21	0.837
Q6	I worry about the effect of work stress on my health	120	2.57	0.702
Q7	My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure or long hours of my work	120	2.39	0.808
Q8	My family are missing out on my input, either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired	120	2.65	0.744
Q9	Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult	120	2.76	0.657
Q10	I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation	120	2.63	0.732

Among all the statements in Table 2, the statement 9 " Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult "was graded maximum,

with a mean score of 2.76, which indicates that married female employees experience 'time constraint' and hence find it really very tough to have time for themselves by means of hobbies/leisure activities or maintain friendships and extended family bonding. The statement 8 "My family are missing out on my input either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired" and statement 10 "I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation" had nearer mean scores of 2.65 and 2.63 respectively which suggests that married female employees find it difficult to give the preferred input to their family because of their rigid schedules or exhaustion and they feel helpless as they feel they do not have any control over their working hours and stress levels. The next mean scores of 2.58 and 2.57 were for the statement 1 "At the moment because the job demands it, I usually work long hours" and "I worry about the effect of work stress on my health" correspondingly, which suggests that married female employees work for lengthy hours and they also feel anxious about the result of work stress on their health. The next statement is 2 "There isn't much time to socialize or relax with my partner/see family in the week" and statement 7 "My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure or long hours of my work" with the mean scores of 2.53 and 2.39 respectively. Statement 5 "Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do" and statement 4 "I often work late or at weekends to deal with paperwork without interruptions" have the mean scores of 2.21 and 2.14 respectively. On the other hand, statement 3 "I have to take work home" got the lowest mean score, 2.03, which indicates that the most of respondents didn't take work home in the evenings.

- **Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis**

- The reply of the respondents to the statement "I am able to balance my personal and professional life well" with the alternative Yes and No, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 3

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	32	26.7
No	88	73.3

- The reply of the respondents to the statement "As a working woman, my biggest challenge is work-life balance." with the alternative Yes and No, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 4

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	85	70.8
No	35	29.2

From the above table, we come across the fact that out of the total 120 married female employees respondents of Kanpur District, 85 (70.8%) of them felt that work-life balance was the main challenge that they faced while 35 (29.2%) of them felt that work-life balance was not their major challenge.

- The reply of the respondents to the statement "There is a strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life" with the alternative Yes and No was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 5

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	74	61.6
No	46	38.3

From the above table, we come to know total 120 married female employees of Kanpur District, 74 (61.6%) of them felt that there is a strong association between work-life balance and quality of life while 46 (38.3%) of them felt that there is no strong association between work-life balance and quality of life.

- The reply of the respondents to the statement "I feel that better work-life balance in my life can guarantee me a better quality of life." with the alternative Yes and No, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 6

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	68	56.7
No	52	43.3

From the above table, we find that out of the total 120 married female employees of Kanpur District, 68 (56.7%) of them felt that better work-life balance in their life can assure them a better quality of life while 52 (43.3%) of them felt that better work-life balance cannot assure them a better quality of life.

Findings

This study was able to gauge the work-life balance of working females finding that married working ladies find it very tough to balance their professional and personal life irrespective of the area they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's occupation. The Health sector working professionals were found to have more difficulties in balancing work and family followed by academic sector working women. The married working women of all the sectors mainly find it very hard to squeeze time for their own hobbies or leisure activities and maintain friendships or extended relationships. The married working women in the age group of less than 30 years were found to have more work-life inequity problems than those in the age group of 30 to 40 years while married working women over 40 years were found to be balancing work-life somewhat better than the above mentioned age groups. Our findings exposed the significance of work-life balance and the need to have work-life balance to have happiness and life satisfaction.

Conclusion

With double career couples extensively prevalent in this modern era, there is a requirement for methodical research into the nature of work life conflict and additional insight is required into ways by which the work-home boundary can be more efficiently managed. Noticeably more research is needed to gain additional insight into the significance and consequences of work-family balance. This study was able to compute employees' work-life balance and found weekly hours of work and the strain associated with work were very important determinants of employees' work-life balance, alongside their occupations, age and caring responsibilities. There is an extensive demand from employees for the right to balance work and home life in today's busy world where finding time for oneself seems impossible. Health and wellness programs can, for sure help working ladies in balancing their personal and professional life. But they alone cannot be the answer to resolve the problems of imbalance. The problems of women are multi-dimensional as obvious from the literature reviewed; therefore, they need further prying to help working women in balancing their work and family life.

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