

A study on Work-Life Balance in Working Women

Ms. Shital H. Rathod, Mrs.Sunayana Shivthare

Abstract—The concept of work life balance has gained considerable importance due to demographic & sociological trend. The role of working women has been changed throughout the world. This has resulted in a scenario in which working women have tremendous pressure to develop a career as robust as their male counterparts while sustaining active engagement in personal life. The ever-increasing work pressure is taking a toll on the working women. It enables them to reconcile the competing claim of work & home by meeting their own need as well as those of their employer. This affects the person's physical, emotional and social well-being. Thus, achieving work life balance is a necessity for working women to have a good quality of life. This paper is an attempt to explore the tough challenges faced by working women in maintaining a balance between their personal and professional life. The various factors affecting the work-life balance of married working women have been examined in this study.

Keywords: Working life balance, Working women, Role model.

I. Introduction

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.

II. Work-life balance and working women

Traditionally, women have been looked upon as nurturers and care givers and assigned all roles related to maintaining and managing a family.. In urban India, the percentage of dual-earner couples is gradually increasing and for most women and men today, their work environment and the family have become the two important institutions in life. Women often find it more difficult to maintain balance on account of the competing pressures of work and demands at home. Working women have to carefully handle their personal balance and skilfully blend their roles, so as to optimise their potential in all quadrants of life.

III. Factors affecting work life balance

Burden of excessive work: Most of the respondents agree that they suffer from the burden of excessive work. Working women are often confronted with tasks involving children, home, in-laws, parents and their social circle. To add to this they must also take up multiple roles in their personal lives. With the increasing demands on the job, working women have to spend long hours of work and sometimes even carry their work home. Therefore majority of them are burdened with excessive work in both their personal and work spaces. This is a contributing factor to work life imbalance and may lead to conflict.

Interference of work with family life: Majority of the respondents agreed that work interfered with family life. This may be attributed to the fact that mostly work hours are not limited to 7 or 8 hours a day and the private sector employees spend 12-16 hours at work. This leaves them

with very little time for family. As more than one half of the respondents are employed in the private sector, there may be interference of work with family life due to long hours spent in completing official work.

Fulfil others' expectations: A large majority of the respondents agree that they are under pressure to fulfil other's expectations. As working women are constantly juggling between two full time jobs, taking multiple roles in both domains, there is a lot of work pressure resulting in work life conflict. While, there is a lot of expectation from family to fulfil social roles, the organisation also expects them to perform effectively. Both domains expect the working women to do full justice to all their roles thereby exerting tremendous stress and strain. The above analysis suggests that in trying to fulfil others' expectations, working women are often left with very little space for themselves to pursue their personal interests.

Longer work hours: Working women have to put in longer hours of work as they need to compete with their male counterparts in their work domain so as to remain in the race for advancement and promotions. In the Indian context, women remain the sole caretakers of children and older dependents which will entail longer hours of work at home thus jeopardizing their work life balance. It is observed that working women are left with hardly any time to pursue personal interests.

No time for oneself: Majority of the respondents agreed that they had no time for themselves. Though a large majority of the respondents did not have to travel frequently at work and over half of them also had family support, they had to commute long distances everyday to work. This robbed them of precious time that could be constructively spent for their personal growth or spiritual pursuits.

Further, the analysis of responses on factors affecting work life balance has indicated that working women selected for the purpose of this study are not necessarily stressed due to financial pressures. The respondents also disagree that they do not find time to meet social obligations. Working women

in India are not exempt from fulfilling their social obligations. As women are aware that certain social obligations must be met whether they are working or not, they may be consciously setting aside the time to fulfill such obligations. Discussions with respondents revealed that though the younger generation Indian men today are more tolerant of non-traditional lifestyles of the working women in their homes, they are still fairly conservative and expect women to manage household work and childrearing tasks. Often, working women are expected to make career sacrifice by restricting themselves to limited work at the workplace. This may cause anger and frustration which has the potential to spill over to the various roles women play in their work and family lives.

IV. Three factor model

This model advocates that the key to healthy work life balance lies in maintaining a dynamic equilibrium of three factors i.e. knowledge, behaviour and skill in both family as well as work life. The three factor model is depicted in table 1 as follows:

Three factor model		
Factors	Family	Work
Knowledge	Self	Organisation
	Other	Environment
	Tasks	Functions
Skills	Peace Keeping	Decision Making
	Sharing Feeling	Communication
	Networking	Technical
Behaviour	Relationship	Role
	Social	Profession
	Informal	Formal

Knowledge of the self, others and tasks in family life enables the working woman to engage effectively in her multiple roles as mother, spouse, sister, daughter and so on. It also enables her to develop meaningful relationships with others and provides clarity of the tasks involved in managing the various roles. In having complete knowledge of her organisation, the external environment with which she must interface and the functions that her work roles involve, the working woman can establish the right balance for achievement and enjoyment in both spheres.

In family life, the working woman's behaviour being relationship based, she must accord due importance to all her personal relationships and engage in the social environment through informal interaction. Her behaviour in

the work place should be role based and therefore, professional and formal. The working woman also has to develop relevant skills to deal with both, the family and work spheres. In the family space, she should be adept in peace keeping skills by sharing feelings and encouraging others to do the same. Moreover to build her support system, she must network effectively. In the work space, she must focus upon decision making and technical skills and ensure that she builds effective communication with her team. A judicious blend of the three factors – knowledge, behaviour and skill will enable the working woman to strike a healthy work life balance.

V. Conclusion:

- In the Indian culture, women remain primarily responsible for their family and career is rarely given top priority.
- This study has revealed that burden of excessive work, the need to fulfil others' expectations and not having time for they are the prime factors affecting work life balance of working women. As a consequence women suffer from job burn-out, experience high levels of stress and anxiety, are unable to realize their full potential and also do not enjoy harmonious family life.
- Informal discussions with working women revealed that those who had family support and flexible work schedule enjoyed better work life balance.
- The above findings have implications for working women with regard to gaining a deeper understanding of factors affecting work life balance. It also provides insights into finding solutions to maintain healthy work life balance.
- The role analysis model and the three factor model of work life balance clearly elucidate the fact that working women must take responsibility to achieve a harmonious balance in both spheres of their lives.

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