

WORK-LIFE BALANCE – AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ABOUT WOMEN EMPLOYEES**Orusa Yaseen Bisati*****ABSTRACT**

The paper analyzes the work-life balance issues faced by women workers. The study aimed at contributing towards filling a gap in the work-life balance literature and attempts to explore the work-life balance challenges faced by women workers and also studies how successful women are in balancing their work and personal life. The sample of 50 women employees from different sectors were chosen for the purpose of the research. The simple random sampling technique was used and women from each sector, i.e., industrial sector, education sector, banking sector and hospital sector were chosen. The sample constituted both married and unmarried women in order to make the sample healthy and to avoid similar kind of responses. The working women between age group 23-53 were chosen. The present study being exploratory in nature was mainly based on interviews and open ended questions; however, in order to make the study more objective close ended questions were also used. The obtained data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Carl Pearson's Correlation was used to find the relationship between the different variables through SPSS 18 and MS Excel 2007. The work-life balance challenges and issues faced by women employees as reflected by the study include; role overload, role conflict, social support issues, organizational culture, workplace stress, required motherly duties, lack of achievement motivation, and the poor time management skills.

Key Words: Work-Life Balance, Stress, Role Conflict, Social Support.

Introduction

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). There is no one accepted definition of what constitutes a work-life balance practice, the term usually refers to one of the following: organizational support for dependent care, flexible work options, and family or personal leave (Estes & Michael, 2005). Hence, these practices include flexible work hours (e.g., flextime, which permits workers to vary their start and finish times provided a certain number of hours is worked; compressed work week, in which employees work a full week's worth of hours in four days and take the fifth off), working from home (telework), sharing a full-time job between two employees (job sharing), family leave programs (e.g., parental leave, adoption leave, compassionate leave), onsite childcare, and financial and/or informational assistance with childcare and eldercare service. Work-life balance policies can assist employees achieving a balance between their work and personal commitments that is right for them. The policies need to be supported by the workplace culture, which reflects the beliefs, values and norms of the whole of the organisation from the CEO to staff members. Other important factors in the success of balance policies include proper communication of commitment to the policies to existing and future employees, raising awareness of the policies, education of managers about the importance of policies, and training of managers on 'how to' implement these policies. Today there are many young women who do not want to just stay at home and do house work, Today's women are mostly into full time services and are working 8 hours per day and 5 days in a week minimum and are confronted by increasing workload everyday. So, most of them carry work and responsibilities to home but balancing but want to have careers. About 64% of mothers whose youngest child was under age six, and 77% of mothers with a youngest child age 6-17 were employed in 2010, indicating that the majority of women with dependent care responsibilities cannot or do

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not wish to give up careers. While women are increasingly represented in the work force, they still face challenges balancing work and home life. Both domestic and market labor compete for time and energy. "For women, the results show that that only time spent in female housework chores has a significant negative effect on wages" Women have to cope up with high work targets, office commitments, tight meeting schedules and the duties and the responsibilities of life and home which results in role conflict. Role conflict is a type of social conflict caused from an individual being forced to take on separate and incompatible roles. Role conflicts can occur individually, as in the case of one person being torn between separate roles for different organizations or groups, or within an organization, when an individual is asked to perform multiple roles in the same group. Employers should concentrate on framing various policies and schemes to facilitate work life balance to encourage and attract women employees. Women should be provided social support. This helps her to balance work and personal life. Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional (e.g., nurturance), tangible (e.g., financial assistance), informational (e.g., advice), or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging) and intangible (e.g. personal advice). Social support can be measured as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated in a social network.

Review of Literature

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). There is no one accepted definition of what constitutes a work-life balance practice, the term usually refers to one of the following: organizational support for dependent care, flexible work options, and family or personal leave (Estes & Michael, 2005). Work-life balance has emerged as a major theme during the last two decades, which witnessed a substantial intensification of work caused by economic uncertainty, organisational restructuring, and increase in business competition (Green, 2001; Millward et al., 2000) Work-life balance has been rather narrowly conceived and considered; as it has been predominantly viewed to pertain to individuals, especially women, who are in corporate employment and have family obligations (e.g. Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Hardy and Adnett, 2002; Felstead et al., 2002, p. 57). Because of this narrowness in the consideration of work-life balance, pertinent organizational actions are mostly oriented towards the implementation of "family-friendly" policies (Felstead et al., 2002; Wise and Bond, 2003).

A comprehensive survey of the literature shows that specific studies pertaining to the work-life balance issues of women are very few. The only available reports on the issue, which are mainly from developed nations, indicate that women entrepreneurs/workers of these nations enjoy a comparatively good WLB (Key et al., 2003; CIBC, 2004; Carter & Eleanor, 2006; Godwyn, 2009). On the other hand, no serious efforts have been made to analyze the work-life balance issues faced by women entrepreneurs/workers of developing and underdeveloped countries where societal etiquette, male dominance and deep-rooted discriminatory socio-cultural values and traditions (UNIDO, 2001) persist. The limited studies available from India on women workers (Khanka, 2010; Mann & Phukan, 2010; Anitha & Lakxmisha, 1999) either concentrate on the reasons for female emancipation or highlight the contributions of the few successful women entrepreneurs/workers. According to Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker and Schaufeli (2005), pressures from the job and family domains are often incompatible, giving rise to imbalance. Therefore, the concept of work-life balance, along with its implications, is a core issue that must be investigated as more women become working in Indian society. Baruch GK, Barnett RC. Role quality,

multiple role involvement, and psychological well-being in midlife women. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1987;51:578–85. found that women who had multiple life roles (e.g., mother, wife, employee) were less depressed and had higher self-esteem than women who were more satisfied in their marriages and jobs compared to women and men who were not married, unemployed, or childless. However, authors argued quality of role rather than the quantity of roles that matters. That is, there is a positive association between multiple roles and good mental health when a woman likes her job and likes her home life.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the work-life balance challenges and issues faced by women workers.
- To study how successful women are in balancing their work and personal life.

Research Design and Instrumentation

Sample

A sample of 50 women employees from different sectors were chosen for the purpose of the research. The simple random sampling technique was used and women from each sector, i.e., industrial sector, education sector, banking sector and hospital sector were chosen. The sample constituted both married and unmarried women in order to make the sample healthy and to avoid similar kind of responses. The working women between age group 23-53 were chosen.

Research Instruments

Two Research Instruments were used viz semi structured interviews and questionnaires with both close-ended and open-ended questions.

Reliability

The coefficient alpha of the scale ranged from 0.82 to 0.90. The scale was found to have good content, construct and predictive validity

Statistical Measures

The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Carl Pearson's Correlation was used to find the relationship between the different variables through SPSS 18 and MS Excel 2007.

Findings

The study aimed at contributing towards filling a gap in the work-life balance literature and exploring the challenges and issues pertaining to work-life balance of female employees. The findings show that work-life balance challenges and issues faced by women employees are:

- The different roles performed by women ultimately lead to role overload.
- Ambiguity in the roles leads to role conflict.
- The social support is of great importance to combat issues of work-life balance.
- Organizational culture plays an important role in maintaining work-life balance.
- Workplace stress leads to family conflicts.
- Required motherly duties and a lack of achievement motivation leads to poor attitude towards work.
- Poor time management skills which results in imbalance between work and personal life.
- Most of the women employees find it difficult to balance work and personal life.
- Most of the women employees suffer from stress.

Suggestions***Suggestions at Organizational Level:***

- Flexible timings.
- Facilities for child care.
- Leave plans - both paid and unpaid - to suit employee's needs etc.
- Examine employee workload concerns.
- Developing and maintaining a culture that enables and supports the opportunity to have a desired work life balance.
- Extending social support to women employees.
- Introduction of supportive work-life initiatives by the organization.

Suggestions at Individual Level

- Self-Management.
- Time Management.
- Stress Management.
- Leisure Management.
- Adoption to change.

Conclusion

The remarkable rise in the population of working women has led to the increase in the issues related to working women. Work –life balance is the most important of such issues. Although, it affects the life of male workers as well but women are the worst hit folk. The women are overloaded with the roles (both at home and office) which create role conflict and in turn women face a situation called STRESS. From the above research it can be concluded that the organizations should address the Work-Life Balance related issues pertaining to women and take a holistic approach to design and implement policies to support the women employees to manage their work- life balance which would add to their performance.

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