



Balance Between Personal and Professional Life for Working Women: How Difficult It Is?

Pushkar Raj

Student

Kanpur University

ABSTRACT

Work Life balance is a great concern for both employees and employers. Changes in demographics such as the increase in the number of women workforce in a nation like India depict the need to balance work and life for the feminine mass (Bharat 2003). Women workforce plays an important role in changing the social and economic conditions prevailing in a nation which is also the case of any country in the world. However, the responsibilities for women increase when they are engaged in some form of profession; this creates many challenges and difficulties that hurdle their balances at work and personal life. Work-life balance maintenance has become a necessity for working women to enjoy better quality of life. Through this review paper, the researcher examines the different factors influencing work-life balance of women. Furthermore, this paper discusses the challenges faced by working women towards maintaining a balance between their personal and professional life.

Keywords: - Work Life Balance, quality of life, demographic change, Conflict, Work Stress

INTRODUCTION

Work Life Balance can be defined as the ability of an individual to schedule their personal and professional life for a period of time to lead a healthy and peaceful life. Work Life Balance emphasises on the beliefs, attitudes and values of women regarding their work timings in order to balance their work and maintain their family and professional life. The term 'Work Life Balance' was first coined in the United States in the year 1986 with the idea of maintaining and balancing responsibilities associated with 'Work ... Life ... and Family'.

There are three vital concepts associated with the term 'Work Life Balance' as it is framed – Work, Life, and Balance. Work can be defined as the job done to get paid; 'Life' encompasses all the tasks that may or may not be linked with work but are generally associated with the activities that are other than their employment. Skinner and Pocock (2008) definition of Work Life Balance as 'Activities outside Work' reveals the importance of friends, family, and community, which are outside Work and Life domains. Clark (2000, p. 751) definition on 'Balance' as "Satisfaction and Good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict" Both these definitions

can be combined together to arrive at a general definition for our understanding – “*Sufficient time to meet commitments at both Home and Work*”

The Indian family structure is evolving in a rapid pace; this is associated with modernization and urbanization. Changes in the family structure and the need to additional income to support a family necessitate women to go to work. The changes in family structure further create a muddle to the balance of work and life for working women thereby causing stress and confusion. In the early days, Indian women were suffering in the hands of the patriarchal society wherein their work is defined in the kitchen. However, today, women are employed in farms, factories, shops, and multi-national companies. Women nowadays are also accessible to higher education. However, the consent of their husband or their father needs to be acquired before higher education or beginning a professional career. Education is the only means to empower the feminine mass and opens venues for better career in the future.

An analysis of previous extent literature on factors influencing work-life balance of women workforce revealed role conflict, lack of resources, lack of finance, financial dependency, lack of recognition, organizational politics, gender discrimination, children as well as elderly care issues and challenges, imbalance in time management, quality of health and lack of proper familial and social support as factors influencing work-life balance of women workforce.

A study by .K.Santhana Lakshmi et al, March 2013 revealed the importance of Educational Institutions as entities that should address the facts associated with Work Life Balance to their staff, especially female members. A holistic approach was suggested for the design and implementation of policies that support Work Life Balance of teachers. While the policies are general, they are important and impart a good support to women workforce in terms of balancing their work and life-

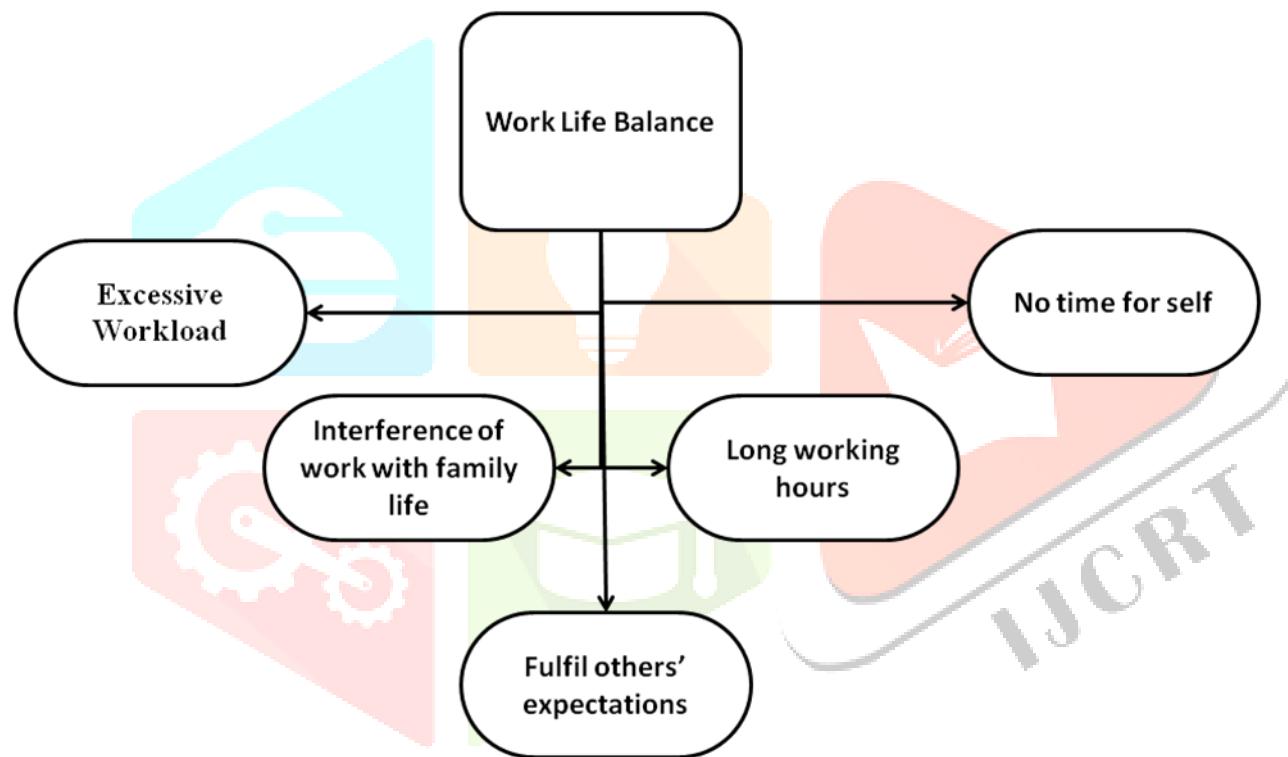
- a. Work Family conflict and Family Work Conflict:** This represents the lack of compatibility between work as a domain and family as a domain. Such conflicts will affect the roles and responsibilities of the workforce related to both work and family domains.
- b. Women in various roles :** Women's service at work and home together makes them work for 8 hours a day, with 5 days paid work, 7 days of unpaid work at home thereby making them 24x7 workers with extensive responsibilities. This makes them more talented, skilful but also to be cautious at work and home. In the present day scenario, women tend to carry their work to home and hence add up more responsibilities at home.
- c. Career Advancement :** Amita Singh, 2010, recommended flexible timings, work from home options, child care facilities, and part time work as some facilities required to build a supportive environment to work in the Indian IT sector.
- d. Work Stress and work life Imbalance:** A study by G.S. Shiva stated that women professionals who are managerial positions in their office need to return from office within a specific time for them to cook, clean and take care of their family. This thereby makes them stressed and creates health problems. Stress is associated with poor performance and reduced productivity.

Furthermore, Shahnaz & Jamie (2008) found that 'Work Life imbalance and Work Stress are correlated with workaholics, regardless of the kind of Gender. Women are deemed to be more career minded, while men nowadays become more family oriented.'

e. **Child Care:** G. Shiva (2013) asserted that working women with children are forced to leave their child in day care or to their maid. This is a stressful condition and makes them less concentrated on their work thereby reducing their capability to give proper care for them and reduced productivity at work.

N. Gayathri & Dr. P. Karthikeyan in August 2013 in their research revealed that Work Life Balance cannot be achieved all of a sudden. Work life balance is an indication of all the efforts that are taken by employer or by women or organizations or by the partners for which the employees work, the family with whom the employee lives and the society where all the processes takes place in which all are embedded. Work Life Balance is also a summation of efforts of all the entities involved in work and home.

Figure 1: Major Factors affecting Work Life Balance



Source: Author (2019)

Figure 1 represents the various factors affecting work life balance. It can be asserted that,

$$\text{WLB} = \text{Healthy Life} + \text{Satisfactory lives both professionally and personally}$$

Lan Day (2006) in his study explained the policies that are centred on extending child care provisions and parental leaves as the best ways to promoting employment flexibility of women workforce.

Daily Schedule of WLB should include:

Work: Be ahead at work; complete tasks within the given timeframe; commute from/to office and home within a scheduled time.

Family: It is important to spend time with family; women should care elders and children by supporting their chores at home.

An analysis of Work-Life Balance reveals the fact that Work-Life Balance is a Pendulum. Similar to a pendulum that moves freely with a weight and maintains an equilibrium at a point of time, there is a need for women employees to satisfy both family and work.

Conclusion

The present paper attempted to understand the factors influencing work-life balance of women in India wherein the challenges and difficulties faced by them are assessed through a review of previous literature. In India, women working in organisations tend to have responsibilities both associated with career and family; family becomes a secondary concern for them. There is a need to fulfil the expectations of both family and profession. Work-Life balance achievement of women should involve identifying the boundaries of personal and professional responsibilities. The consequences of imbalances in personal and professional life of women will be upon affecting the family both physically and financially, less share of feeling, and so on. There is a need for organisations to adopt policies and strategies associated with the management of women human resources to resolve the Work-Life balances of women employees. There is a need for family support for women employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

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