International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research

IJETMR

A Knowledge Repository

WORK-LIFE BALANCE STUDY FOCUSED ON WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract:
The role of working women has changed throughout the world due to economic conditions and social demands. 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 ring on the working women leaving them with less time for themselves. The increasing responsibilities on the personal front with the technological blessings like advanced mobile phones, notepads, etc. that keeps work life integrated with personal life also creates stress on personal and professional fronts in this knowledge age. 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. The tool used for the study is the manual on work–life balance of The Industrial Society. Data were subjected to descriptive statistics and it was found that the problems faced by the working women of Pune Maharashtra state in terms of work-life balance are quite high. The results also indicate that the work-life balance of individuals affect their quality of life.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Quality of Life; Working Women; Personal Life; Professional Life.

1. Introduction

Women of the early centuries were mostly restricted to their kitchens and those who were employed worked in factories, farms or shop works. Very few women had the access to higher education and they were forced to be at the compassion of their fathers' or husbands' attitudes towards women and work. The fast developing knowledge economy has given place for more number of women to be enlightened by higher education. Education has not only empowered them but also has given them robust careers. With brain power being the requisite skill in this knowledge era, rather than endurance or physical strength, the women workers seem to flood into every industry on par with men. But this has indeed become a tough challenge for women as they have to perform a lot of duties in home and office as well. As working women get married, they have additional responsibilities and when they become mothers, they have to manage the primary care of children and extended family and are thus, under greater pressure to continue on a career path.

Working mothers of today fulfill family responsibilities and also try to remain fully involved in their careers coping up with the competing demands of their multiple roles. The caring responsibilities that working mothers have lays a heavy stress on them when it is combined with their professional duties. The attempt of working women to integrate, organize and balance the various problems and activities in their different roles simultaneously puts them under tremendous pressure. As a result, the family becomes an organizational stakeholder and this powerful social trend marked the beginning of the work/life balance paradigm shift. (Denise Horner Mitnick, 2007). Richard Welford (2008) in his survey results on work life balance in Hong Kong quotes that there is an alarmingly high percentage of respondents who feel that work is the cause of health problems, specifically stress and lack of exercise. Health problems are likely lead to lower productivity and effectiveness of workers. This paper focuses on the tough life of married working women of Pune Maharashtra in their battle to strike a balance between work and family life.

2. Literature Review

Work–life balance is defined as an employee's perception that multiple domains of personal time, family care, and work are maintained and integrated with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000; Ungerson & Yeandle, 2005). Work–family balance reflects an individual's orientation across different life roles, an inter-role phenomenon (Marks and MacDermid, 1996). Work-life balance is a key issue in all types of employment as dual-career families have become common and high work demands with long working hours have become the norm. The importance of helping employees achieve a balance between the demands of their work and their home lives has been emphasized. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives (Bharat, 2003; Komarraju, 1997; Rajadhyaksha & Bhatnagar, 2000; Ramu, 1989; Sekharan, 1992). The knowledge economy has created greater access for women coupled with factors such as changes in marital patterns and smaller families. This has led to an increase in the number of working women and, hence, working mothers (Grossman, 1981). The gift of this knowledge era for women is occupational opportunity and mobility. But this gift has become a great challenge for the working women of today as they are not only exposed to the same working environment as men but in turn are also exposed to the pressures created by the multiple role demands and conflicting expectations. "By fulfilling their economic needs, employment has no doubt made women independent with an identifiable social status but it has also made them to juggle into two main domains of life- work and family. They have stepped into work place but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same, i.e., women may be a top executive, still the "nurturing" or "care giving" roles are considered much a part of feminine roles." (Sunita Malhotra & Sapna Sachdeva, 2005). Many women today are wearing multiple hats in their attempts to balance both career and home/family responsibilities. Concern about family can interfere with work to a great extent and worries about work issues can also be exhibited in the family front. The study by Francene Sussner Rodgers (1992) with the sample consisting of employees of 20 Fortune 500 companies;28 percent of the men and 53 percent of the women reported that work-family stress affected their ability to concentrate at work hence revealing that more than half the women and almost a third of the men reported that work/family stress affected their ability to concentrate on the job. Life at work seems so difficult for working women. Pleck's (1977) research suggests that family-to-work spill-over is stronger for women and the work-to-family spill-over is stronger for men. Research suggests that female respondents in all

parts of the world are pressured for time, rarely have time to relax and feel stressed and overworked most of the time, but women in emerging countries feel the strain even more so than women in developed countries. Women in India (87%) are most stressed/pressured for time (Nielsen Survey, June 2011). Several studies have explained the effect of work-life conflict on the health of working women. ASSOCHAM's study based on the survey of 103 corporate female employees from 72 various companies/organizations across 11 broad sectors of the economy focused on the issues of corporate female employees. One of their significant finding is that high psychological job demands like long working hours, working under deadlines, without clear direction leads 75 percent of the working females suffer depression or general anxiety disorder than those women with lowest level of psychological job demands (Nusrat Ahmad, March 2009).

Striking a perfect balance between personal life and professional life is becoming near to impossible. There is real balance only when the individual feels that she has done justice to all her roles and is satisfied about it. Work-life balance problems can be really serious and needs to be addressed in due time. In the renowned book, 'Work and Family: Allies or Enemies', Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) argue that conflict between work and family has real consequences. It significantly affects the quality of family life and career attainment of both men and women. The consequences for women may include serious constraints on career choices, limited opportunity for career advancement and success in their work-role, and the need to choose between two apparent opposites—an active and satisfying career, or marriage, children, and a happy family life. Work and family balance, in a way, deals with the role balance of an individual both at home and work. Work-Life Balance Programs (WLBPs) developed by employee friendly organizations can be a good solution to solve the problems of work-life balance. WLBPs have been found to increase employee control over time and place of work (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and reduced work-family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) and stress (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). Kirchmeyer (2000) views living a balanced life as ''achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains''. The purpose of striving very hard both at home and work at the cost of her individual health and well-being for every married working woman is to have a good quality of life. But this quality of life that she craves for is often influenced by work- life balance. Any imbalance in the work and family of an individual can hamper the quality of life thoroughly for the individual. Kofodimos (1993) suggests that imbalance—in particular work imbalance—arouses high levels of stress, detracts from quality of life, and ultimately reduces individuals' effectiveness at work. Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, Karen M. Collins & Jason D. Shaw (2003) suggested that an equally high investment of time and involvement in work and family would reduce work–family conflict and stress thereby enhancing an individual's quality of life. And so it goes without saying that married working women of this era can have a healthy quality of life only when work-life balance is maintained making the topic of work life balance for working women, the need of the hour.

3. Rationale of the Study

This study is basically for assessing the prevalence of work life among married working women. The purpose is also to present and discuss specifically the problems married women face in the process of balancing their work and family life. Previously, the female workforce in India was mainly employed in non-managerial, subordinate or low-profile positions. Now, they occupy

almost all categories of positions in the workplace. These changes in work culture have added to women's duties and responsibilities to their family as well as to society (Mathew & Panchanatham 2009a; 2009b). The conflicts between competing work demands and personal and family needs seem to be the most probable reason for this scenario of work-life conflicts. Research conducted by Rout, Lewis and Kagan (1999) finds that women in India experience considerable pressure, in the morning before going out to work and after work, to do all that is necessary for the family. 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 WLB, along with its implications, is a core issue that must be investigated as the number of working women is on the rise and the problems they face because of it is without doubt quite serious. This study is proposed to examine the effect of long working hours, caring responsibilities or other potential workplace or family determinants on the work life balance of married working women in Pondicherry. The purpose is also to present and discuss specifically the fact that that work–life is out of balance and in need of attention for most working *Checklist Manual on Work-Life Balance:* The checklist manual developed by Daniels and McCarraher for the Industrial Society (2000) and the guidelines to check oneself with the manual on the balance between work and family are as follows women irrespective of the sector they are into be it academic, healthcare or IT. This study has been essential for assessing the growing need for work life balance policies/programs for the working women of India.

4. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:
1) To study the prevalence of work-life balance problem among the married working women.
2) To study the extent to which various factors like hours worked, work involvement and family responsibilities, affect married working women's work-life balance.
3) To study how various factors affecting work-life balance influences the married working women from Academic, IT and Healthcare sectors?
4) To study the work-life balance problems of married working women across their demographic characteristics such as age group, number of children and spouse's profession.
5) To study the effect of work-life balance on the quality of life of married working women.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Description of Sample

The study was conducted among the married working women of Pune city. A sample of 180 married working women was selected using Convenient Sampling. They were from Academic, IT and Healthcare sectors. 60 women from each sector were chosen for the study. Since the study focused only on married working women, all the 180 respondents were married.

Work through this checklist and assess whether your own life is balanced	A Agree (3)	B Sometimes (2)	C Disagree (1)
Q1 At the moment, because the job demandsit, 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 paper work 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, vacation 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			

5.2. Description of the Tool Used

The questionnaire had 20 items. The major tool was the checklist (Daniels and McCarraher, 2000) in the manual on work–life balance of The Industrial Society (now the Work Foundation). It consists of ten statements about work–life balance where the options for answers were either 'agree', 'Sometimes' or 'disagree'. The details of few added statements to get a better clarity in the study on work life balance in the married working women of Pune are as follows:
 Four statements on the demographic details of the respondents namely
1) Age group,
2) Number of Children,
3) Profession of Spouse and
4) Industry/Sector the respondent is working in.

Five general statements with the options 'yes' and 'no' to answer:-
1) I am able to balance my personal and professional life well.
2) As a working woman, my biggest challenge is work-life balance.
3) There is a strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life.
4) I feel that better work-life balance in my life can guarantee me a better quality of life.
5) In general, my level of satisfaction towards my Quality of life is good.

Guide Lines for Interpreting the Responses to the Checklist
If you ticked all or mostly A's you may already y be under considerable tress from your lack of work–life balance. Overtime, your productivity could suffer along with relationships, your health and long-term employability. As an individual, start to address your own needs. At work, try to promote better work life balance to the advantage of the whole workplace.
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. 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.
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? 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 work place.

Source: Daniels and Mc Carraher Industrial Society (2000)

5.3. Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to the married working women of the various sectors in person. A total of 200 check list instruments were distributed and 180 completely filled questionnaires were collected giving an overall response rate of
90 per cent.

5.4. Scope

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

6. Analysis and Interpretation

In order to subject the data to statistical testing, the collected data were coded The data were also tabulated with frequency tables and percentages using MS-Excel.
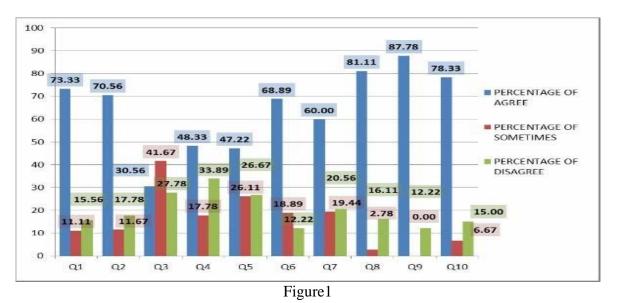
7. Results and Discussions

1) *Reliability Analysis:* The data were subjected to Alpha tests of reliability and they had acceptable (0.731) Cronbach's Alpha value which indicates a good level of internal consistency for the scale with the specific sample used for the study.
2) *Profile of the Respondents:* Among the 180 married working women, maximum number of respondents belonged to the age group of 30-40 (38.9%). Many respondents (65.0%)

had two children. In terms of Spouse's Profession, 18.9% were engaged in business, 17.2% in the Academic sector and so on respectively.

Table 1:

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Age group of respondents :		
Under 30 years	50	27.2
30 to 40 years	67	38.9
Above 40 years	63	33.9
TOTAL	**180**	**100**
Spouses Profession:		
Business	34	18.9
IT industry	30	16.7
Healthcare	25	13.9
Academic	31	17.2
Insurance	18	10.0
Marketing	23	12.8
Others	19	10.6
TOTAL	**180**	**100**
No. of Children:		
None	25	13.9
One	27	15.0
Two	117	65.0
Three or More	11	6.1
TOTAL	**180**	**100**

3) Percentage Analysis: Percentage analysis was done to check the response of the respondents to the checklist instrument. Figure 1 represents the percentage of 'A's(Agrees), 'B's(Sometimes) and 'C's(Disagrees) selected by the 180 respondents in the checklist instrument.

Figure1

It is found that there is a strong predominance of 'A' which signifies that work-life balance is out of control and is in need of attention. The strong predominance of 'A' for all the work- life balance related statements except taking work home in most evenings suggest that working women face the problems of work-life balance almost in every way in their daily life. Work-life balance problem is widely prevalent among the working women of Pondicherry.

4) *Mean and Standard Deviation:* The mean and standard deviation of responses (based on agreement of respondents) for each statement in the checklist are tabulated as below:

Table 2:

Sr No.	Statements	N	Mean	S.D.
Q.1	At the moment because of job demands it, I usually works long hours.	180	2.58	.747
Q.2	There isn't much time to socialize or relax with my partner / see family in the week.	180	2.53	.780
Q.3	I have to take work most evenings	180	2.03	.765
Q.4	I often work late or at weekends to deal with paperwork without interruptions.	180	2.14	.898
Q.5	Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do.	180	2.21	.837
Q.6	I worry about the effect of work stress on my health	180	2.57	.702
Q.7	My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure or long hours of my work.	180	2.39	.808
Q.8	My family are missing out on my input either because I don't see enough of them / am too tired.	180	2.65	.744
Q.9	Finding time for hobbies, vacation activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult.	180	2.76	.657
Q.10	I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation.	180	2.63	.732

Among all of the statements presented in Table 2, the statement " Finding time for hobbies, vacation activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult "was rated highest, with a mean score of 2.76, which implies that married working women experience 'time- squeeze' and hence find it really very hard to have time for themselves by means of hobbies/leisure activities or maintain friendships and extended family relationships. The statements "My family are missing out on my input either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired" and "I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation" had closer mean scores of 2.65 and 2.63 respectively which implies that married working women find it hard to give the desired input to their families because of their tight schedules or fatigue 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 statements "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" respectively, which implies that married working women work for long hours and they also feel worried about the effect of work stress on their health. The next statements to follow are "There isn't much time to socialize or relax with my partner/see family in the week" and "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. "Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do" and "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, "I have to take work home" scored the lowest mean score, 2.03, which implies that the majority of respondents didn't take work home in the evenings.

5) Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

a) The response of the respondents to the statement "I am able to balance my personal and professional life well" with the options yes and no, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 3:

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
YES	32	17.8
NO	148	82.2

From the above table, we find that out of the total 180 married working women respondents of Pune, 148(82.2%) of them felt that they were not able to balance their work-life while 32(17.8%) of them felt that they were able to do so.

b) The response of the respondents to the statement "As a working woman, my biggest challenge is work-life balance." with the options yes and no, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 4:

Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
YES	127	70.56
NO	53	29.44

From the above table, we find that out of the total 180 married working women respondents of Pune, 127 (70.56%) of them felt that work-life balance was the biggest challenge that they faced while 53 (29.44%) of them felt that work-life balance was not their biggest challenge.

c) The response of the respondents to the statement "There is a strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life" with the options yes and no, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 5:

Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
YES	111	61.67
NO	69	38.33

From the above table, we find that out of the total 180 married working women respondents of Pune, 111 (61.67%) of them felt that there is a strong relationship between work-life balance and

quality of life while 69 (38.33%) of them felt that there is no strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life.

d) The response 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 options yes and no, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 6:

Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
YES	103	57.22
NO	77	42.78

From the above table, we find that out of the total 180 married working women respondents of Pune, 103 (57.22%) of them felt that better work-life balance in their life can guarantee them a better quality of life while 77 (42.78%) of them felt that better work-life balance cannot guarantee them a better quality of life.

e) The response of the respondents to the statement "In general, my level of satisfaction towards my Quality of life is good." with the options yes and no, was tabulated and the frequency distribution and percentage analysis was found.

Table 7:

Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
YES	44	24.44
NO	136	75.56

From the above table, we find that out of the total 180 married working women respondents of Pune, 136 (75.56%) of them felt that their level of satisfaction towards their Quality of life is good while 44 (24.44%) of them felt that their level of satisfaction towards their Quality of life is not good.

It is found through the tabulated results that majority of the respondents are not successful in striking a balance between their personal and professional life. This shows the severity of the problems of work-life balance among the married working women. A large number of respondents are found to have the feeling that the biggest challenge of being a working woman is work-life balance. This implies that working women are really facing a tough time in their attempts to balance personal and professional life. Many respondents have agreed that there is a strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life and many of them feel that a good work-life balance can guarantee them a better quality of life. Majority of the respondents are dissatisfied with their quality of life which shows that married working women are not pleased with the way their life is going.

8. Summary of Findings

This study was able to measure the work–life balance of working women finding that married working women find it very hard to balance their work and personal life irrespective of the sector

they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's profession. The IT sector working professionals were found to have more difficulties in balancing work and family followed by academic sector working women and then health sector working women. Working hours related WLB problems were more for the IT sector professionals while time to socialize or being relaxed is tough for working women of health sector. The married working women of all the sectors predominantly find it very hard to steal out time for their own hobbies or leisure activities and maintain friendships or extended relationships. The married working women in the age group of under 30 years were found to have more work life balance 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 slightly better than the above mentioned age groups. The respondents with spouse's profession as business were found to be the ones suffering the most with work life balance closely followed by the spouse's profession marketing. Out findings revealed the importance of work life balance to have happiness and life satisfaction.

9. Conclusion

With dual career couples widely prevalent in this modern era, there is a need for systematic research into the nature of work-life conflict and further insight is required into ways from study, we find that out of the total 60respondents of Academic sector, 48 (80%) of them feel that they are not able to balance their work and family life while only 12 (20%) of them feel that they are able to do. We find that out of the total 60 respondents of Healthcare sector, 46 (76.7%) of them feel that they are not able to balance their work and family life while only 14 (23.3%) of them feel that they are able to. We find that out of the total 60 respondents of IT sector, 54 (90%) of them feel that they are not able to balance their work and family life while only 6 (10%) of them which the work-home interface can be more effectively managed. Considerably more research is needed to gain additional insight into the meaning and consequences of work–family balance. This study was able to measure employees' work–life balance and found weekly hours of work and the stress associated with work were very important determinants of employees' work–life balance, alongside their occupations, age and caring responsibilities. Conflicts in work-life balance of working women affects their health who report more stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gain and depress than their male counterparts. Manipulating between the obligations towards the families and expectations of the organization and constant struggle to maintain a balance between work and family can have serious implications on the life of an individual by affecting their well-being and overall quality of life. There is a widespread 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 women in balancing their personal and professional life. But they alone cannot be the answer to addressing the problems of imbalance. The problems and difficulties of women are multi-dimensional as evident from the literature reviewed; therefore, they require further probing to help working women in balancing their work and family life.

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