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WORK- LIFE BALANCE AND WORK- LIFE CONFLICT ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN PROFESSIONALS IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR, BENGALURU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of socio-economic, personal and career advancement aspects were analysed from 75 information and communication technology (ICT) women professionals, from 7 various ICT organisations from Bengaluru, India. ICT industry continues to be the largest private sector employer in India for women in that 800,000 women currently working in this sector account for over 30 per cent of the existing hires and this figure is all set to rise in the future. The characteristics of the ICT industry in India and the nature of the work pose some unique challenges for women professionals in the industry. This study focuses on how does work and family related factors influence the work life balance and work conflict of women professionals. It is very evident that career oriented women has to manage / balance work & life due to stereotypic roles played. ICT women professionals have agreed that their career advancement is influenced by work or personal life enhancement. ICT Women Professionals have said that they have been affected by gender through various reasons on work interferences with personal life & career advancement. It is evident that there is a concern among women professionals working in shifts and it does bring in work on family conflict & family on work conflict. There is a very high significant relationship between Work Life Balance (WLB) and Work Life Conflict (WLC). Even when there is a support from the family, the individual undergoes conflict on not managing both sides effectively. WLB & WLC is a significant factor leading to overall performance of the ICT Women Professionals. They should possess strong work role salience since work helps define the career-cantered professional's self- concept, which should further intensify the potential incompatibility between the work and life domains.

Keywords:
Work- Life Balance, Work- Life Conflict, Women Professionals, Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

1. INTRODUCTION

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry continues to be the largest private sector employer in India. Also, India is the fourth largest start-up hub in the world with over 3,100 technology start-ups in 2014-15. India is the fastest growing service sector in the world with annual growth rate of above 9% since 2001, which contributed to 57% of GDP in 2012-13. India has become a major exporter of IT (Information technology) services, BPO services and ICT services with $167.0 billion worth of service exports in 2013-14. It is also the fastest-growing part of the economy. The 2013 Global Information Technology Report cited 1,117,753 jobs created in South Asia by digitization with India responsible for the larger portion of that.

The characteristics of the ICT industry in India and the nature of the work pose some unique challenges for ICT Women Professionals in the industry. The challenges are intensified in the case of Women Professionals. The ICT industry in India is characterized by a project-oriented organisation and as the industry has matured, more complex and strategic projects have been outsourced to India. [1](Ethiraj et al, 2005) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

The phenomenon of Indian ICT Women Professionals' is the term used to describe the enormous rise of women in the ICT/BPO industry (The Indian programmer, 2000). Off the total, India-based workforce in the IT industry in 2007 had 26.4% of women, up from 24% in 2005 and women comprise 25% of the employee strength of the major Indian IT companies (Ali, 2006). Women's participation in the IT workforce is seen as a critical enabling factor for the continued growth of the industry (The Economic Times, 2009; Valka and Srinivasan, 2011) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).The ICT industry, a knowledge-intensive sector and equal opportunity employer has been actively hiring women in its workforce over the past decade. The 800,000 women currently working in the sector account for over 30 per cent of the existing hires and this figure is all set to rise in the future.

Long working hours for women provides a pressure due to uncertainty and instability in the ICT field. This can be due to the time differences with the western countries since there is a necessity to work at odd hours (shift hours) including night hours and project based unpredictable workloads and project delivery with extensive travelling. There is a necessity for the ICT Women Professionals to adapt themselves with the rapid technology by re-skilling and training. Consequently, ICT Women Professionals need to put in extra training and educational hours to keep up with these changes. (Armstrong et al, 2007) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011)

It should be recognised that in Indian society, woman's role is redefined and she had to take up the above challenges and there is a clear need for her to expand her role in order to have a very strong career identity. The pressure of work load, odd hours, travel and trainingdemands lot of

time and energy. Work Life Balance and Work Life Conflict is a cited challenge of the women ICT Women Professionalswith the changing of Indian women's role and responsibilities.This paper focuseson the work life balance and work conflict of women in ICT sector and the objective of this paper is to analyse the factors related to work life balance and work conflict of working ICT Women Professionals.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

How does work and family related factors influence the work life balance and work conflict of ICT Women Professionals?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1.WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

Work-life balance has been defined as an individual's orientation across different life roles, an inter role phenomenon (Marks &MacDermid, 1996) (Jeffery, Karen, & Jason, 2003), 'With minimum role conflict at work and home satisfied with effective functioning' (Campbell-Clark, 2000), and 'a satisfying, healthy and productive life that includes work, play and love that integrates a range of life activities with attention to self, personal and spiritual development and that expresses a person's unique wishes, interests, and values (Kofodimos, 1984, Shaffer, Francesco, Joplin & Lau, 2003). Traditionally, research on the work family interface has been dominated by a conflict perspective focusing on negative effects such as stress (Greenhouse and Parasuraman, 1999; Haas, 1999).

Work-life balance fits in the framework of the support provided by the organisation to the employee and how employee relates to the self. Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com, shares that "Work-life balance is a meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life". There are other 3 quadrants of Life (e.g. family, friends and self) apart from the fourth which focuses achievement and enjoyment at work which is a critical part of anyone's work-life balance.

[2] Hyman and Summers (2004) (Shukla & Bagali, 2016)classified seven major problems which are associated with the current practices over work-life balance. These are 1) inequality of adoption across different sectors and organizations, 2) lack of formalization of policies at organizational level, 3) restricted employee voice over the introduction and implementation of policies,4) policies are primarily to meet business needs rather than those of employees, 5) there is no evidence of reduction in working hours,6) tangible and intangible work intrusions into domestic life and 7) responsibilities are still conducted primarily by women irrespective of their employment status. While much of the literature review presented above could be gender neutral, literature recognizes that all of the above mentioned variables have a greater impact on women at work.

Women continue to be the primary provider for domestic and childcare responsibilities though the family structures and female roles vary across countries (Webster 2002). (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011) There is an increasing attention to the Work –Life Balance issues with the increasing number of women in the workforce and their thirst towards development and careers. Murphy

and Doherty (2011) revealed that it is difficult to measure work-life balance in an absolute way as there are personal circumstances which influences the perception establishing a harmony that reflects an individual's priorities. The employees must draw a firm line between their home and work lives and is confident that the line is in the right place.

ICT Women Professionals are known to curb their identity from their work (Deetz, 1995) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Many women value their careers and their development as central concepts of their Career identity (King, 1997; Shaffer, Francesco, Joplin, & Lau, 2003) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Research on the work family balance in women in other sectors has recognised that in comparison to occupation roles, the salience of women's commitment to family roles often emphasised in Indian culture as being central to their very being remains undiminished (Bhatnagar &Rajadhyaksha, 2001) (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Additionally, the authors share that many Indian women, especially those in traditional joint and extended families, are obligated to care for elderly, in contrast to women in Western societies.

Simultaneously, family life is also becoming more complex. The extended family, even in India, is slowly disappearing (Patel 2005). (Doble & Supriya) Small nuclear families have come to stay, where both the spouses go to work. In addition, there are an increasing number of single parent households due to increase in divorces (Amato et al. 2003). Although this problem is not so serious in India as in the West, yet, it is slowly becoming more important issue. Participation by women in employment continues to grow since the past decade. In spite of more women going out to work, there has been little change in patterns of household responsibilities (Singh 2004) (Doble & Supriya).

Indian Women continue to hold the accountability of domestic chores, child rearing and managing family, in spite of their positon in the organisation. These changes at family and work forces ICT Women Professionals endeavouring a balancing act. Very often the work encroaches on the family and social life, while at other times family pressures affect the work performance (Fu and Shaffer 2001). (Doble & Supriya) Hyman et al (2003) (Doble & Supriya) observed that organizational pressures, combined with lack of work centrality, result in work intruding into non-work areas of employees' lives. Such interferences often manifest themselves differently depending on the type of work, extent of autonomy and organizational backing (Hyman et al. 2003; Atkinson and Meager 1986). (Doble & Supriya)

Both women and men prefer working in organisations that support work-life balance. Men appeared to benefit more than women (Burke, 2002). (Burke) Men feel more satisfied when they achieve more on the job even at the cost of ignoring the family. On the other hand, Women stress that work and family are both equally important and both are the sources of their satisfaction. When work does not permit women to take care of their family, they feel unhappy, disappointed and frustrated and they undergo conflict. They draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the other (Burke, 2002). (Burke)

3.2.WORK LIFE CONFLICT (WLC)

Theoretically, conflict between work and family has two directions. Research Scholars appreciate the distinction between work–to-family conflict and family–to-work conflict. Work-

to-family conflict occurs when experiences at work interfere with family life, like prolonging abnormal, or fixed work hours, work overload and other forms of job stress, interpersonal conflict at work, extensive travel, career transitions, unsupportive supervisor or organization. Family-to-work conflict occurs when experiences in the family interfere with work life like presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elders' care responsibilities, interpersonal conflict within the family unit, unsupportive family members.

Work-family conflict (WFC) has been a topic of great importance to researchers, practitioners and society. Consequently the research exploring the relationship of WFC has increased over the last few decades (Eby et al., 2005) (Bakar & Salleh, No.2 2015). Work-family conflict refers to employee's experience that his or her work pressures or efforts to optimize job requirements interfere with the ability to meet family demands (Frone et al., 1997; Frone, 2000; Judge et al., 2006), also addressed as work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) (Amstad et al., 2011).

Work-family conflict always leads to certain personal and social factors such as work diversity, independence, policies, differences, conflict, role uncertainty, organisational support, family support, managers' support, job demands, involvement, shift work, insecurity, climate, physical demands, overtime work, commuting time to work and dependent children were the main WFC engendering factors(Michel et al, 2011; Jansen, et al, 2003).

According to Greenhouse and Beutell (1985) Work- Life does create intensified role pressures when the roles are salient to one's self- concept. It was evident in a study that the traditional role identity increased conflict with psychological pressures (Carlson and Perrewé, 1999; Michel et al., 2010).On the other hand, when WFC is reduced, employees reveal greater job fulfilment, organizational commitment, high retention (Butts, Caspar, & Yang, 2013), and report greater family and life happiness.(Lapierre et al., 2008).

It is important for us to manage and balance the expectations of family and work which does affect individuals. At time it can affect oneself in balancing the role expectations of work and home and the conflicts surrounding both. Work-life conflict can have unfavourable results on families and workplaces causing anxiety and depression (McBrier et al. 2003), poor job performance and absenteeism (Anderson et al. 2002; Frone 2003). (Schmidt, 2011)

4. METHODS

This study consists of data from 75 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Women Professionals surveyed from 7 various ICT organisations from Bengaluru, India. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data on issues related to their personal, family, career, work-life balance, &work-life conflict. The cross sectional equal representation based on the work levels of the ICT Women Professionals were selected; 25 ICT Women Professionals were from Executive to Senior Executive (band 1), 25 Assistant Manager to Manager level (band 2) and 25 senior manager & above(band 3). The investigator adapted Hayman (2005) work life balance scale. The questionnaire was distributed at work places and the responses of employees were collected.

5. FINDINGS

5.1.DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Demographic variables such as age, income, experience, marital status influence the women employees in their work life balance. Various studies were conducted in this direction to determine the impact of demographic variables on work-life balance of women employees. Changes in the workplace and Employee demographics in the past few decades have led to an increased concern for understanding the boundary and the interaction between employee work and non-work. (Kumari & Deva)

This study revealed that76% of the ICT Women Professionals was below the age group of 35 years and 54.7 % of ICT Women Professionals were living single and 45.3% were married. 37.3% of the ICT Women Professionals' spouses were deployed in various fields while 8% were deployed in the same field. The changing view of marriage and living together also affects work-life balance as many women are no longer expecting lifelong partners, and consequently they stress the importance of acquiring skills and qualifications as stated by researcher Lewis et al. (1999), whereas in contradiction to the above Milkie and Peltola (1999) stressed that happier marriages are related to a greater sense of success in balancing work and family.

When we analysed the qualification Variables it was evident that the ICT Women Professionals are highly qualified, among them 40% of them were Graduates while 36%of them were Post Graduates. The Women ICT Professionals were earning below INR 25,000 per month, 34.7% within the range of INR 25,000 to INR 50,000 per month while 21.3% within the range of INR 50,000 to INR 75,000. The Women ICT Professionals had a varied specialisation in their colleges 22.7% were from Engineering while 12 % were from HR and finance and Public Relations,5.3% were from Operations,4 % were from Accounts, Administration and Marketing each, others (13%) with the unique combinations which are not in line with their work and only 2.7% have an R& D specialisation.90.7% of them were living in a nuclear family and 9.3%were living in the Joint family.30.7% had 4 to 5 members living with them while 28% had 2 to 3 members while 26.7 % had below 2 members in the family and 14.7 % had above 5 members.

5.2.PROFESSIONAL STATUS

96% of the ICT Women Professionals were full time working in the corporate sector, 2.7% were working as a part-timers and 1.3% were working as consultants. 28% were deployed in IT & Operations, 16% in engineering & R&D sectors, 21.3% in accounts & Finance analysis department, 9.4% are others such as Sales, PR, & Marketing Professionals in IT, 25.3% are deployed in Admin & HR.58.7% have total work experience of below 5 years, and 2.6% of above 20 years of experience.

When we explored on the relevant experience the ICT Women Professionals were 65.3% below 5 years and 1.3% between 20 – 25 years and 48% of the ICT Women Professionals spend 8 to 10 hours at work, 33.3% spend time from 7 to 8 hours, a day at work. 78.7% of the women had not availed career break while 4% taken a break due to Marriage, 12 % due to Childbirth and 5.3% for further studies.

ICT Women Professionals think very strongly (40%) that their relationship to career is equal to home. They identify themselves to home career. 30.7 % identify career oriented and think career as a primary means while 29.3% identify that their focus is primarily home and 77.3 % of ICT Women Professionals agree that their career is influenced by their role model(s) and they share that the following are the role models for their success. Father (41.3%), Mother (24%), Celebrities (20%), Manager (5.3%), Siblings (4%), Friends (2%), Spouse (2%). Half of the ICT Women Professionals share that their career driver is to meet the financial goal, 25.3% to utilise their knowledge & skills, 10.7% were the Breadwinners of the family.

The ICT Women Professionals felt that they have gender bias in their career growth and they have been affected in promotions, wages and even in personal life however 25.3% of ICT Women Professionals shared that they have not bothered and not allowed for the gender bias to affect them. The seven out of ten women ICT Women Professionals were pleased with career advancement opportunities given to them while 18.7% of ICT Women Professionals were neutral and 10.6% of ICT women ICT Women Professionals disagreed on the career advancement provided to them.

5.3. WORK LIFE BALANCE & CAREER ADVANCEMENT

When we analysed all the components of Work-Life Balance such as Work Interference with personal life, Personal life interferences with work, Work / Personal life enhancement, and Career Advancement, there seems to be significance on the work / personal life enhancement which reinforces our findings. The statistical result indicates that there is no significant relationship between WLB components and Career advancement of ICT Women Professionals. But the majority of ICT Women Professionals have agreed that their career advancement is influenced by work or Personal life enhancement. ($0.642 < 0.05$, p value <0.05).It is very interesting to see how the women manage their career growth and family with the compromises for the personal self.

Statistically it is very evident that career oriented women has to manage and balance work & life due to stereotypic roles played. There is a very highly significant relationship between WLB and WLC. Even when there is a support from the family; the individual undergoes conflict on not managing both sides effectively ($0.000 < 0.05$, p value <0.05) Study has shown that the majority of women are working 40-45 hrs/week out of which almost 53% of them struggle to achieve work-life-balance. The reason behind this struggle is that they are being challenged by the demands of their organization versus the commitments of their home. They need to manage the daily requirements of their family as one side and the multiple schedules, meetings, business requirements and other routine responsibilities at work. Women at work need to be taken care of by their employers and to work out schemes that would not only attract and retain the employees for a longer period but also make them highly productive, schemes viz. transport, canteen, day care centers, postal/saving schemes, Flexi-working hours, part-time working, provide the information about work-life balance policies and special leave arrangement such as Annual leave & public holiday leave, Career Break leave. These schemes help the women employees to work peacefully without any stress about family and children so that they are able to give their best at work. Moreover, organizations have women empowerment schemes like forums, committees,

grievance redresses system, suggestion schemes where a woman is empowered to share her views, complaints and suggestions with the top management and derive solutions for the same.

5.4. WORK LIFE BALANCE& WORK LIFE CONFLICT WITH CLARITY ON CAREER GOALS AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

In our findings it is evident that clarity of the individuals on the goal is an influencing factor. It is evident statistically that strong personal characteristics reflect a very high clarity on their Goals (0.026 < 0.05, p value <0.05).Education provides a platform to anybody who are hungry in their own career. It is evident statistically that this also influences the personal characteristics which in turn influences the self-esteem of the ICT Women Professionals to be successful (0.035 < 0.05, p value <0.05).Personal Characteristics seems to be influencing the Work Life enhancement and there is significance in the statistical results. The ICT Women Professionals strongly exhibit that Personal Life gives them the energy for the job which in turn influences the energy in job with better mood in personal life and the job. (0.045 < 0.05, p value <0.05). Personal Characteristics has a greater influence in terms of Personal Life interfering with work. Statistical results highlight that Personal Life drains their energy, being tired do not make them effective and agree that work suffers because of personal life and the personal matters prevents them from hard work. (0.059 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

The statistical result indicates that there is a very significant relationship between WLB components and clarity on career goal of ICT Women Professionals. But the majority of ICT Women Professionals have agreed that they do have clarity on their career goal. (0.037 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

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The component wise analysis of Work Life Balance such as Work Interference with personal life, Personal life interferences with work, Work / Personal life enhancement, and Career Advancement life, there seems to be a significance on the work / personal life enhancement which reinforces our findings. (0.039 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

5.5. WORK LIFE BALANCE & WORK LIFE CONFLICT AND SOCIAL FACTORS OF ICT WOMEN PROFESSIONALS

Education provides a platform to anybody who is hungry in their own career. It is evident statistically that this also influences the personal characteristics which in turn influences the self-esteem of the ICT Women Professionals to be successful (0.035 < 0.05, p value <0.05). The statistical result indicates that there is a very significant relationship between WLB components

and Education of ICT Women Professionals. But it is very evident that majority of them poses a Graduation or a Post-Graduation (0.093 < 0.05, p value <0.05).The statistical result indicates that there is a very significant relationship between WLC components and the College location of ICT women professionals. The values affirm that there are more number of ICT Women Professionals educated from city colleges (0.099 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

Working environment is one of the factors which affect the work-life balance of a person. The statistical result indicates that there is a very less significant relationship between WLC components and work level of ICT Women Professionals. Both factors i.e. Work on family conflict & Family on work conflict seems to be influencing the work level (0.067 < 0.05, p value <0.05).Workload is one of the main factor in unbalancing work and life. More workload in the job affects the employee's personal life completely. Spending more time in office, interacting with clients, meetings, pressure of job will affect the personal life.

Working hours also affect the work-life balance of an employee. Long working hours means spending more time in the office and more workload which affects the personal life of the employee. Because of long working hours an employee will not be able to spend more time with family or friends. This results in less time for family and friends. So long working hours affects the personal life in many ways. This also affects the employee health which results in many disorders in future. Sometime long working hours become the reason of job dissatisfaction leading to leaving the job (0.034 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

Women, especially Indian women, pay more attention to the family than their career. The need to take care of the children while away from home is a vital factor which disturbs their mind and diverts their attention from their office work. The result indicates that there is a significant relationship between WLB components and spouse's income of the ICT Women Professionals. It is very evident that there is link between the income and the work life balance (0.038 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

The result indicates that there is a very significant relationship between WLB components and working women in shifts of ICT Women Professionals. Though the finding say 83% is not working on shifts, it is a major conflicting area for a mother to leave the child in a crèche (0.016 < 0.05, p value <0.05). The results further indicate that there is a very significant relationship between of WLC components and working in shifts has significance of ICT Women Professionals. It is evident that there is a concern among women ICT Women Professionals working in shifts and it does bring in work on family conflict & family on work conflict (0.002 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

It is very evident that career oriented women has to manage /balance work & life due to stereotypic roles played. There is a very high significant relationship between WLB and WLC. Even when there is a support from the family, the individual undergoes conflict on not managing both sides effectively (0.000 < 0.05, p value <0.05). The WLB components are having significant impact on role model of women ICT Women Professionals. Since majority of women ICT Women Professionals agree there is an influence on the components of WLB and it is also reflected the result in terms of who is their role model. Majority of ICT Women Professionals claim father as their role model, if they do agree and share their strong influence on work life

balance (0.054 < 0.05, p value <0.05).The WLB components and clarity on career goal of ICT Women Professionals are strongly influence each other. But the majority of ICT Women Professionals have agreed that they do have clarity on their career goal(0.037 < 0.05, p value <0.05).The statistical result indicates that there is no significant relationship between WLB components and gender effect of software women ICT Women Professionals. But the majority of women professionals said that they have been affected by gender through various reasons on work interferences with personal life & career advancement (0.569 < 0.05, p value <0.05).

6. CONCLUSION

WLB & WLC have been a concern and real issue among the ICT Women professional respondents. The importance of WLB & WLC is dual in nature and it does provide disturbance in motivation, job satisfaction, self-confidence, career growth, balancing life & career and encouragement. It was also revealed that less support from family & colleagues, unequal treatment, education, stressful nature of job, frequent health problems, travelling constraints, job switching talent pool creates an imbalance and conflict in work and life.

 If women have both physical and emotional signs of unhealthy work life balance & work life conflict, they cannot easily recognize the reason for that, but it is important to know what they are and what they can do? What are the solutions for these problems? Work life balance & Work life conflict is a component between work and personal lives. It implements that the individuals have to make efforts to maintain a healthy balance between work and their personal life. They have to be in control of their own behavior and expectations regarding work life balance &work family conflict.

The study shows that if the organization or work place provides or enables better work life balance, the individuals will be happy and achieve their aims and can be successful in their career & life. ICT organizations should have the ability to look after women employees and measure what their requirements and work on it. Organizations should help or provide facilities required and include or practice in the work life balance & work life conflict policies like flexible working time arrangements, care of children and family members, paid leave, insurance schemes, crèche facilities, and maternity leaves more than six months, salary progressions based on their performance, day shifts, orientation programs, training facilities etc.

All ICT organizations should provide various stress free working hours or refreshment activities like meditation techniques, yoga, extracurricular events, proper self-appraisal of jobs, Flexible working hours, cab facilities, strong security in case required, adequate training for improvement etc. They should focus on developing, formulating, implementing and reviewing better WLB & WLC. Thus a better work –place as well as a secured and happy family life is possible. WLB & WLC is a significant factor leading to overall performance of the ICT Women Professionals. The ICT Women Professionals should possess strong work role salience since work helps define the career-centered professional's self- concept, which should further intensify the potential incompatibility between the work and life domains.

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