

A Study About the Work - Life Balance of Women Employees

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Abstract: *In the recent times, the issue of work - life balance has gained more attention due to the reason that an individual's work life and personal life may present conflicting demands on one another while the demands from both the spheres are equally important. Work - life balance refers to maintaining the balance between performing roles and responsibilities at work and at home. This problem is more for women employees because of the type of roles they play at home and the spill over of personal life over work life and vice - versa. In India, entrepreneurship has traditionally been considered a male prerogative. However, in tandem with a changing socio - cultural environment and an increase in educational opportunities, women have started recognising their inherent talents and business skills. Therefore, the major objective of the present study was to develop and validate an appropriate tool to illustrate the work - life balance (WLB) issues faced by women employees. We also sought to understand the important factors influencing the WLB of these women Employees. This study revealed that role overload, dependent care issues, quality of health, problems in time management and lack of proper social support are the major factors influencing the WLB of women employees in India. Furthermore, even though most of the entrepreneurs examined in this study suffers from WLB issues, there are significant differences in the level of WLB issues faced by the various categories of women employees.*

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Women Employees, Social Support, Family, Career

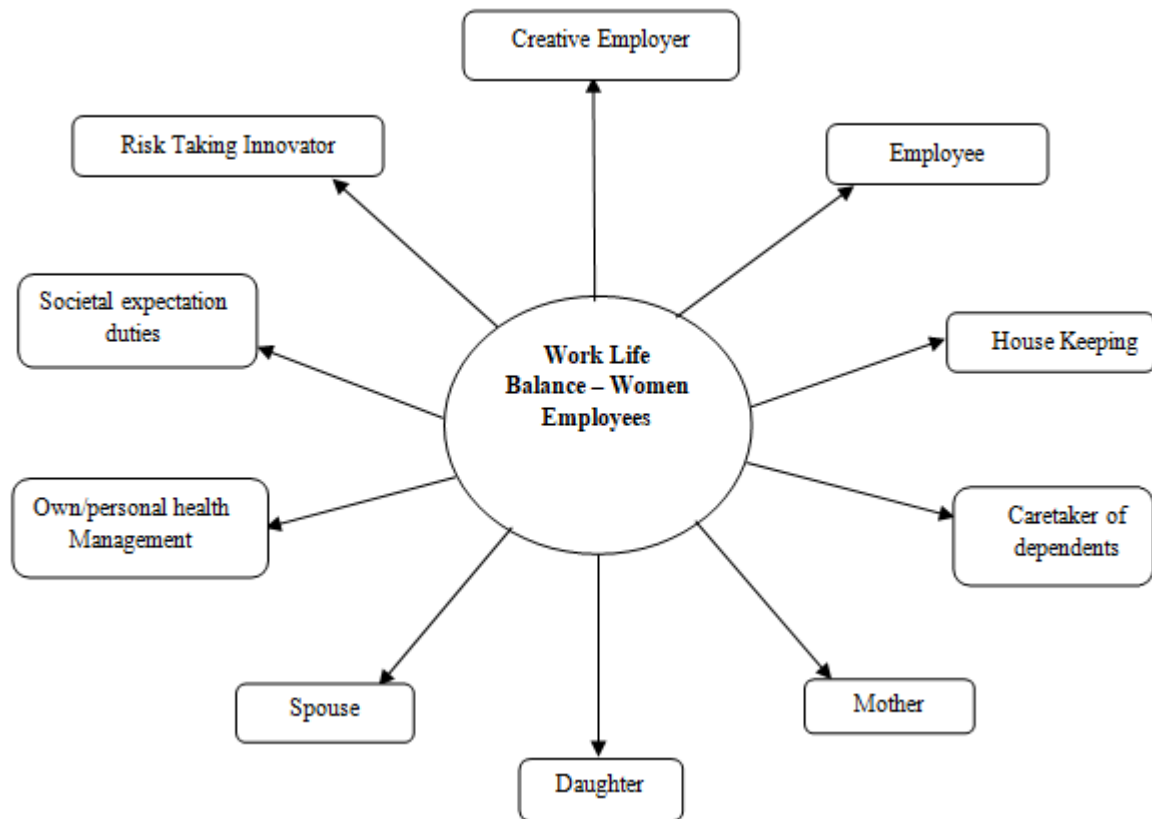
1. Introduction

The term work - life balance (Work - Life Balance) was coined in 1986 in response to the growing concerns by individuals and organisations alike that work can impinge upon the quality of family life and vice - versa, thus giving rise to the concepts of “family - work conflict” (FWC) and “work - family conflict” (WFC). More recently the term has drawn on some confusion; this is in part due to recent technological changes and advances that have made work and work objectives possible to be completed on a 24 - hour cycle. Apart from home maker role, they also have a significant role to engage even outside the home. With the increase in cost of living on one hand and the improved education and employment opportunities on the other hand, both husband and wife started working and many families became dual earners. Over a period, women accomplished remarkable progress in every walk of life and made a noteworthy mark in the respective fields. A good work - life balance, on the other hand, is profitable for both employees and employers. Where employees are unable to suitably balance work and family life, they tend to find it difficult to manage tasks at the workplace and this subsequently shrinks productivity. Lack of work flexibility, elevated work pressures and long working hours; a situation that decreases their job performance and productivity. When either side becomes unbalanced for extended periods of time, the effect is likely to be visible in unhealthy symptoms (fatigue, stress, depression, etc.). A lack of synchronization between

domestic life and work life causes great personal and financial hardship, both to the individual and the company. In the competitive era, organizations are under competitive pressure to achieve high productivity and require employees with healthy work - life balance as an employee with good work - life balance will be in a position to contribute more towards the organizational growth and success (Naithani, 9 2010). Therefore, it is a high time for employers to draw out strategies and help the women employees to enjoy their work and live life to the fullest.

2. Issues of Work Life Balance

After overcoming many inherent disadvantages related to the deeply embedded traditional mindset and stringent etiquette, today we find Indian women engaged in different types of traditional (e. g., garment - making, beauty care, fashion design) as well as non - traditional (e. g., founding financial institutions, educational institutions, entertainment companies) entrepreneurial activities. In addition to their challenging entrepreneurial work, many of these women must also perform several roles in their families. These roles include being a spouse, caretaker and parent; managing daily household chores; and providing services to the community and society. Women also must take care of their own health and other personal activities, which are often neglected because of role overload as well as time limitations. All these situations lead to the absence of WLB and manifestation of many WLB issues.



In contrast, a study by CIBC (2004) revealed that women Employee in such developed countries as Canada can better balance their family life with work than those employed by someone else. The demands originating from the work and personal life of women are quite often mutually exclusive, rendering it very difficult to strike a balance between the role demands. Presently, even though the topic of WLB issues among female employee commands urgent attention, studies pertaining to the WLB of entrepreneurial women in India are extremely scarce (Mathew & Panchanatham, 2009a). In this context, the current work is a step towards analysing the WLB issues confronted by the women employees.

Work - Family Conflict

Work - life conflict occurs when the demands of work and non - work life are incompatible in some respect so that participation in either role is made more difficult by participation in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). It can emanate from two aspects of the work life interface: factors associated with the time required to perform work and nonwork roles, and the psychological spill over of gratification (or distress) from one role domain to the other (Voydanoff, 1988). Since most often work and family duties are performed in separate locations, individuals are generally physically unavailable to perform both sets of duties simultaneously' (Ibid.). The "spill over" effect means that individuals may also encounter psychological unavailability if the energy required for the performance of one role depletes the energy required to perform the other role (Ibid.). In this sense, then, work - life conflict can be seen to have two major components: the practical aspects associated with time crunches and scheduling conflicts, and the perceptual aspect of feeling overwhelmed or overloaded by the pressures of multiple roles. Although it is difficult to

determine which of these mechanisms is most responsible for women's differential response to stress, there is little doubt that women are exposed to different, if not more, stressors at both work and at home (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). This literature provides rather strong evidence, therefore, that women are at particularly high risk for work - family conflict and stress - related disorders. In the modern era, women are shouldering the responsibilities with their male counterparts in all walks of life. Whether it is private sector or public sector, one can find mushrooming of female employees in all segments. It's not only at the middle or the lower levels but also at the top level of management, females are making their presence felt. In this context, the increasing number of women in organizations indicates that women must be recognized as active participants in the nation's developmental process. There is a growing recognition that larger social, cultural and political contexts may affect individual's perceptions and experiences within work family domain. Organizations all over the world are being forced to deal with the effects of family issues spilling into work. The traditional division of labour in families is under great pressure with the expansion of the roles of women. Women are increasingly being forced to deal with the job - related demands that limit time spent on family roles or its quality.

The Suggestions of Maintaining Work Life Balance

- Women Employees should manage their work and lifestyle by proper time management.
- Women employees delegate their responsibilities among their co - worker, Team Members.
- Encouraging and supporting members through effective communication and development programs would help them to maintain a healthy work environment and their personal life.

- Women employees should enhance their technical competence of team members to facilitate pace of work.
- They should not bring back office work to home or vice versa,
- They should spend their vacation time with family members to prevent stress.
- Women Employee should encourage involvement of family members in their work
- Women should hold work and family responsibilities on proper time schedule to avoid procrastination, and
- They should improve their personal (self - confidence, self - control, personal goals, stress management, and listening skills), social (communication, effective relations, change management, responsibility, flexibility, and development skills), and professional (planning, problem solving, information gathering, analytical thinking, creativeness, and time management) competencies through various development programs to accomplish their work.

3. Conclusion

Work life balance can be defined as the perception of an employee to maintain and integrate multiple domains of personal, time, family care and work with minimum role conflict. Work life balance can be different to different people depending upon the different stages of life. It basically includes the problems of exhaustion and lack of time. Research shows that failure to achieve a satisfactory balance of effort is directly connected to lack of energy to fulfil personal commitments and lack of control over the workload. The imbalance here leads to consequences such as fatigue, poor quality of life and most importantly poor performance. Work life balance is the relationship between personal commitments and work and its impact on one another. In order to attain in - depth understanding of one's work and family life, researchers who study work-family roles should include multiple perspectives such as job stress, quality of life, mental health, and work demands. In addition, it is necessary to explore multiple waves of data collection over a longer period to better understand the changing nature of work family roles over time. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted to examine how the stages of life (e. g., marriage, childbirth, and child rearing) affect work and family concerns. It is clear from the current study that married women employees indeed experience WFC while attempting to balance their work and family lives. Thus, organizations need to formulate guidelines for the management of WFCs since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees.

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