

Impact of Demographic Variables on the Work Life Balance of Married Working Women Employed in Professional and Non-Professional Jobs in Bangalore

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Abstract: Women constitute 20% of the Indian work force [1]. Even though women are actively and increasingly participating in the workforce today and contributing significantly to the income of the household and the economy, their role as the center and primary care given of the family remains intact. They are expected to meticulously execute their traditional household care-giving responsibilities. This mostly leaves no space or scope for personal time or growth leading to many imbalances and dissatisfactions. The most majorly impacted aspect being their Work Life Balance. There have been studies done on work-life balance amongst IT professionals but there has been little effort made to understand the nature of challenges faced by other professional and nonprofessional working women. This study was undertaken to investigate the so far unexplored problems faced by married working women employed in professional and non – professional sectors in Bangalore in maintaining their Work Life Balance. This study considers variables like the size of the family, the age of children, work hours and the level of social support. The study specifically aims at exploring the role of technology and access to help as an enabler to improving and maintaining Work Life Balance. Do these variables help the working women in Bangalore employed in the professional and non-professional sectors to balance their personal and professional lives? The study found that variables like size of the family, the age of children, the work hours and the level of social support, do impact the stress level faced by working women.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Quality of Life, Working Women, Role Conflict, Work-Life conflict.

1. Introduction

“Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world” Tan Wei CCCTV. The changing social demands and economic environment has transformed the composition of labor force all over the world. The fast-developing knowledge economy has given more girls the opportunity to be educated thereby, empowering them to seek employment and have a robust career. Many women today have successful professional and non-professional careers [2]. With brainpower being the requisite skill during this knowledge era, instead of endurance

or physical strength, women have ventured into every industry. Women are now employed in what was previously considered to be male-dominated fields such as engineering law, sports, military, law enforcement, firefighting, and top-level positions in companies and the government [3]. The typical Indian family today is the dual-income family. Currently, in many families women are not only wage earners, but also the primary breadwinner. Women are not just spending money; they are earning it too [4]. All this progress made by women however has not translated into a change in the basic social or family structure. Woman is the mistress of the house, the primary care giver, the center and the foundation of the family. In India it is still taken for granted that economic activities are the prerogative of the males where as domestic work, childbearing, and child-rearing are solely the responsibility of females [5]. As working women marry, they take on additional responsibilities. Once they become mothers, they need to manage the care of children first, then the in-laws, relatives and the house hold also. This puts them under tremendous pressure, and continuing on a career path become difficult if not impossible [7]. Today’s Working mothers fulfill family responsibilities and attempt to remain fully involved in their careers as-well, coping with the competing demands of their multiple roles. The caring responsibilities that working mothers have lays more stress on them. This has become a troublesome challenge for working married women as they are expected to perform tons of duties with the same integrity at home and office. Thus the concept of Work-life balance has become increasingly relevant and has gained much prominence in the world of research [8].

1) Work Life Balance Definition

The English Dictionary [9] explains Work Life Balance, “the amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy. It can be difficult to get the right work-life balance.” “Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance. The core of an effective work-life balance definition is two key everyday concepts that are relevant to each of us. They are daily

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Achievement and Enjoyment, Meaningful daily achievements and Enjoyment in each of my four life quadrants: Work, Family, Friends and Self. Trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities is usually unrewarding and unrealistic “[25]. Based on the above definition the evaluation was based on the participant’s self-assessment as to how happy they are with the time they are able to dedicate to each of these four quadrants. Various research studies have held these four quadrants as being vital pillars for the emotional and psychological wellbeing of and individual [21].

2) *Significance of the Study*

Numerous studies have focused on the challenges faced by working women when it comes to the balance between paid work and family responsibilities. Many studies have studied the associations between formal or informal policies and work-life balance and employee well-being [19]. The previous research conducted were mostly concentrated on WLB between married and unmarried women or WLB challenges faced by women in organized and unorganized sector, or the WLB challenges faced by women with kids and without kids, or the studies were gender, sector location specific [20]. Many studies have also concentrated on demographic variables like age, experience, income levels, nature of family size of family, work load and even spousal stress. There was little evidence for research conducted on married working women professionally employed in Bangalore city and the WLB challenges faced by them. In this background, it's proposed to undertake this study to understand the work-life balance challenges faced by married working professional and non-professional women working in.

2. Objectives

This study is aimed at understanding the WLB amongst the professional and non-professional married working women, and investigates the impact of demographic variables on maintaining WLB.

1. To study the challenges faced by professional and non-professional married working women to maintain WLB.
2. Identify if there is any significant difference in the WLB challenges among the two groups.
3. To study the challenges faced by married working women in maintain WLB across their demographic variables such as age group, number of children and spouse’s profession. Apply intervention and study the effect of the intervention on the WLB.

3. Research Design and Methodology

A quantitative tool was used to collect data. Survey method was used to collect the data from married women both professionally and non-professionally employees and working on full-time or part-time in around eight different companies in Bangalore City.

1) *The Research Question*

“Is there a significant relationship between work life balance

experienced by married working women having professional and non-professional careers in Bangalore City and the demographic variables under study”?

2) *Operational Definition of terms*

1. *Work*: To perform work or fulfill duties regularly for wages or salary. [21]
2. *Qualified*: An ability, quality, attribute, or accomplishment, especially one that matches or someone suitable for a specific job or activity: a condition or standard that has got to be complied with (as for the attainment of a privilege). [21]
3. *Professional*: A person follows a profession, especially a profession. a talented practitioner; an expert, participating for gain or livelihood during an activity or field of endeavor often engaged in a specified activity as one's main paid occupation instead of as a pastime. [22]
4. *Non-professional*: Relating to or engaged during a paid occupation that doesn't require advanced education or training: [22]
5. *Technically Qualified*: Is "a person or persons who, due to education, training, or experience, or a mixture of those factors, is capable of understanding and performing a specific task which needs application of a specific training or skill set. [22]
6. *Difference between technical and non-technical*: Technical and non-technical don't say computer software and non-computer or automation. Technical does mean something which needs technics to be implemented within the process. Non-technical does affect things doesn't actually talk concepts or technics. Something likes physical work. Or add a non-structured environment and not necessarily pertains to their respective educational qualification, this being the main difference [23].

3) *Research Type: Exploratory and Descriptive Research*

B. *Research Design: Mixed Approach.*

Based on the nature of the study, survey questionnaire seemed to be the ideal choice. A qualitative approach was also considered at the beginning of this study as in depth interviews were a possible method of data collection. Subsequently quantitative tools were applied to process and interpret the data.

C. *The Research Instrument*

This research was based around the checklist in the manual on work-life balance of The Industrial Society (now the Work Foundation (Daniels and Mc Carraher, 2000) [24]. This is a self-assessment tool. It consists of thirty statements about work-life balance where the options for answers were either ‘agree’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘disagree’. Due to time and resource constraints, and to make the data more relevant to working women of Bangalore the number of questions were limited to 20. The researcher has changed the wording of some of the questions within the survey to help participants understand better. Extra demographic questions were added into the survey to try and gain further information into the topic. The aim was to get a

better understanding of the main challenges women working in the corporate sector face in relation to their WLB, and also if it is related to their family life. An information sheet and consent form was also included in the questionnaire.

1) *Data Collection Method: Data is collected through primary as well as secondary sources.*

1. *Primary source:* The data is collected through interviews, focus group discussions and filling of questionnaire from the qualified married women working in Bangalore City.
2. *Secondary sources:* Consist of books, journals, periodicals, newspapers and online resources. In this study all of the participants were introduced to the survey by an information sheet explaining the objective of the study. The sheet handed out explained the topic in detail and it was made clear that their participation in the survey /study was a voluntary. A secure box was placed in each company into which the participants could drop their survey when completed. The dates on which their responses would be collected for informed to them in advance.

2) *Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling*

- *Sample Size:* 80 Female employees from 4 Segments of Service Sector viz. IT & ITES , Hospitals , Education and Others were selected.40 qualified responses each form the professional and non-professional married working women respectively were taken.
- *Data collection:* One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to four different types of organizations falling under service sector which are Hospitals, IT & ITES and Education and other. After eliminating the invalid questionnaires we had one hundred and twenty valid questionnaires, Out of the one hundred and twenty surveys collected only eighty were selected for the study. Care was taken to ensure that equal representation was given to professional and non-professional working women. Hence the sample size was pegged at forty professional and forty non-professional married working women.
- *Ethical Considerations:* All participants were advised that their participation is completely voluntary. Participants were also informed that their identity along with their company's identity would remain confidential. It was explained to participants that the survey had no bearing what so ever on their professional standing, the personal information was being collected solely for academic purpose and it will not be shared with the company or anybody else nor will it be individually revealed in this study. Participants were told that they could retain a copy of their responses and a copy of the study would also be made available to them on demand subsequently.

3) *Limitations of the Study.*

1. The study will be made in the Indian context, where the work –culture and the life style is very different from the other western countries .Not much of generalization can be made due to this limitation.
2. As the survey will be in English, The study is focused only to literate (English speaking) married working women in Bangalore city. This may have its own

limitations and bias on the findings of the study.

3. This is a Short term project. Due to the limited time and resources the sample size may not be sufficient to make a generalization for a huge population.
4. Due to time limitation, not many variables would be changed for intervention .This could be made as a scope for future experimental studies.

4. Results and Discussion

1. The results confirmed negative effects of WLB such as high levels of stress due to high workload, mental health issues and work family conflict caused by long working hours.
2. While none of the respondents said that they have ideal WLB it is interesting to note that a majority i.e. 62% of the respondents who said they lack WLB are below the age of 35 and only 38% are above the age of 35.
3. The most interesting find of the study is that a majority i.e. 78% of the respondents said that it is not the lack of family support but unsatisfactory working conditions and unrealistic demands and expectations from the employers that is putting the maximum strain on their WLB.18% of the respondents said that they feel pressurized due to family responsibility and lack of family support.
4. More number or women i.e. 57% of respondents who have professional career said that they lack WLB against only 43 % of respondents who had nonprofessional careers. There were cases were women gave up high profile and demanding jobs and have settled for less paying and personally taxing career to have some sort of work life balance.
5. Only 8 out of the 80 respondents did not have children. Out of the women who had kids 52 % are below the age of 35 and only 45% were above the age of 35. In this too women with younger kids found it more difficult to manage their WLB, Women with older kids were relatively better off in terms of their WLB.
6. This implies three things; (a) Women find it difficult to sustain their careers in the long run. (b) With age and increased experience older women learn to manage their work and family affairs in a better way. (c) Women with older children find is comparatively easier to manage WLB and/or women choose to come back to their career once their children have attained some degree of independence.
7. It should be noted that most of the respondents who had technical professional careers had higher educational qualifications. Higher than Masters. Many respondents said that they have to constantly undertake upgrading courses and training to sustain and grow in their careers, and that they find it difficult due to family commitments hence, they forgo promotions and salary hikes .
8. While majority of the women i.e. 78% of the respondents said that they have no time to indulge in personal care, recreation or growth related activities only 37% said that they are unhappy about this fact. They feel that sacrificing personal time is the cost they are paying for maintaining

some sort of work life balance.

9. Although all the respondents agreed that ‘me time’, time spent with friends or any other mode of recreation acts as major de-stressor which is very important to maintain their mental health and over all, but these activities are the last in their priority list. It is something that is resorted to under extreme firefighting situation rather than being employed as a day to day sustenance and maintenance option.
10. Technology does play a vital role in maintains work life balance. While professional women use technology extensively to manage their work a family responsibility by doing some work at home or ordering in food and groceries from office . Women with non-professional careers use technology mostly for recreational and distressing activities
11. More number of women with professional careers i.e. 72% of the respondents had hired some form of assistance to make their life easier. For example hiring the services of day care center, elder care centers, alternative transportation modes, domestic help, tuition classes etc. Women with non-professional career relied more on family support.

A majority of the respondents said that the study made them to re-examine their WLB situation. They felt that they could significantly improve their work life balance if they let go of some of the expectations and use the resources at hand more effectively. They realized that a fair work life balance is attainable if they sought interventions and help with regards to certain aspects of their life from the appropriate sources.

5. Recommendations

Although none of the respondents said that they have a satisfactory WLB many of them admitted that there were times when they felt that their lives were not that bad, and that though they feel stretched they had earned to get some rhythm into their juggling act. While they would not score their overall performance as satisfactory, they have recognized that a fair WLB can be achieved if they brought about some changes in their day to day activities and life .Some of the recommendations given to and by the respondents are

1. Learn to compartmentalize the work and family units.
2. Learn to differentiate between expectations and actual requirement.
3. Set SMART goals for personal life too.
4. Learn time management, people management, priority management skills.
5. Learn better communication skills and how to be assertive without being aggressive.
6. Learn “self-love “.make time for exercise, recreation, learning and hobbies.
7. Delegate work in personal life too.
8. Seek help where ever required, especially in the area of mental health and over all wellbeing. During the study it was also seen that many women carried unresolved emotional baggage’s which was effecting their mental health and over all wellbeing .Almost none of them had considered approaching a counselor

to seek help .It was consider as a ordinary and normal problem what did not require professional help . More than the taboo attached it was the lack of time and the expense and effort involved that prevented women to seek professional help in dealing with their emotional issues .

6. Scope for Future Research

There is a good scope of a longitudinal intervention based study. There is scope of suitable interventions in terms of training such as time management, priority management, communication, emotional intelligence training etc. Such interventions would help women structure their daily life activities and long term personal goals in a better way. This would in turn increase the enjoyment and accomplishment quotient of their lives, their by improving not only their WLB but their overall wellbeing happiness and quality of life. Suitable policy change recommendations can be also given to the companied to make the working conditions more favorable for the women especially those with young dependent children. It would be interesting to see if personal interventions in the form of counseling, trainings and positive life style changes would impact on the work life balance of married working women in Bangalore .Given the unique environment work and social culture and structure, the role of technology as an enabler or a deterrent to attaining perfect Work Life Balance can should be further probed.

7. Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of Impact of Demographic Variables on the Work Life Balance of Married Working Women Employed in Professional and Non-Professional Jobs in Bangalore.

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