A Study on Work Life Balance in Working Women

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ABSTRACT:

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 recognizing their inherent talents and business skills. With the help of various governmental and non-governmental agencies, growing numbers of women are joining the ranks of entrepreneurs. However, in the existing familial and societal setup, entrepreneurial women are overburdened and find it increasingly difficult to balance their work and life roles. 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 entrepreneurs. We also sought to understand the important factors influencing the WLB of these women entrepreneurs. 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 entrepreneurs in India. Furthermore, even though the vast majority of the entrepreneurs examined in this study suffer from WLB issues, there are significant differences in the level of WLB issues faced by the various categories of women entrepreneurs. The present study provides recommendations for human resource professionals, management consultants, academicians and women entrepreneurs themselves to deal with the major WLB issues faced by Indian women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurs, Work-life balance, Role overload, Dependent care, Social support network, WLB.

INTRODUCTION:

Traditionally the role of women used to be of cooking, cleaning, raising children etc. They were looked upon as caregiver or as home keeper and were denied access outside home. Today’s women have made their mark in every field. Be it literature, arts, politics, sports, Corporate or any other sphere women are ready to take up challenges. Time are changing from
traditional where the husband earned, and the wife stayed at home to the modern when the husband earns and the wife earns too. But the wife still cooks, washes and runs the house. Although, women have started spreading her wings in all spheres of life but the traditional concept of the women as the homemaker has not gone away from people’s mind. So, today’s women are striving continuously for “Work Life Balance”

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 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. This affects the person’s physical, emotional and social well-being.

Work Life balance is a phenomenon that occurs to those who are gainfully employed and have to manage their personal life. Work life balance is the daily Achievement and Enjoyment in all spheres of life namely work, family, friends, health and spirit. We are all engaged in a number of roles every day and we hold a number of roles throughout our life. Life conflict occurs when we are unable to give our “many roles” required time and energy as a result of which participation in one role is made increasingly difficult by participation in another. So, there is a need of Work life balance.

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.

**Work life balance Concept:**

Work–life balance is defined as an employee’s perception that multiple phases of personal time, family care, and work are maintained and integrated with a minimum of role conflict. 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. 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.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:**

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.

Friedman and Greenhaus (2000), in his book ‘work and family: Allies or Enemies’ 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.

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.

The limited studies available from India on women entrepreneurship (Khanka, 2010; Mann & Phukan, 2010; Anitha & Lakxmisha, 1999) either concentrate on the reasons for female emancipation or highlight the contributions of the few successful women entrepreneurs.

Dileep Kumar (2006) has elaborated on some of the issues faced by entrepreneurial women, such as a shortage of finances, male dominance, limited mobility, a lack of education, required motherly duties and a lack of achievement motivation.
Rizvi and Gupta (2009), explain that government-sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of women, namely the urban middle class. This may be primarily due to their higher level of education, access to information and family support.

Peters, Montgomery, Bakker and Schaufeli (2005), express the 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 more women become entrepreneurs in Indian society.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the study:-

- The general objective of the present study was to explore the WLB challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.
- The specific aim was to develop and validate an appropriate instrument to evaluate the WLB issues faced by these entrepreneurs.
- To analyze the important factors influencing the WLB of entrepreneurial women.
- Additionally, we explored the potential differences in the WLB of entrepreneurial women with regard to age, marital status, education level and income.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

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. 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. 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 has been essential for assessing the growing need for work life balance.
policies/programs for the working women in India.

LIMITATIONS:

This paper has some limitations which need to be highlighted. First the main area of concentration in this paper was to study the Work Life Balance in working Women and not both men & women. The secondary data collected from different resources was also based upon their findings on the effect of work life balance on women.

INTERPRETATION:

It is found that majority of the working women 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 working women. A large number of women 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 working women 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 working women are dissatisfied with their quality of life which shows that working women are not pleased with the way their life is going. The Knowledge professionals working with IT sector are the ones who find it the most difficult to balance personal and professional life. This might be due to their increased job stress to meet deadlines. The academic sector professionals have lots of preparatory work for classes and paper work in terms of writing notes and doing corrections and hence they find it tough to strike a good work-life balance. The problem of work-life balance is also prevalent among the healthcare sector employees. The healthcare sector professionals probably face the problems of work-life balance due to long hours of working and tiredness after hectic work. 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. Today’s women are mostly into full time services and are working 8 hours per day and 5 days in a week minimum and are confronted by increasing workload every day. So, most of them carry work and responsibilities to home but balancing between these two complex situations in the present day fast
life requires talent, tact, skill and caution. Almost 50-55% of the women are struggling to achieve work life balance. Women have to cope up with high work targets, office commitments, tight meeting schedules and the duties and responsibilities of life and home. Employers should concentrate on framing various policies and schemes to facilitate work life balance to encourage and attract women employees.

Both employer and employee have to play a vital role in the eradication of this problem from our economy.

SUGGESTIONS:

The suggestions for improving the situation of working women are as follows:

To Employers:

- Devote more resources to improving “people management” practices within workplace. Employees who work for a supportive manager – one who is a good communicator, focuses on output as opposed to hours – report a greater ability to balance work and family than those who have a non-supportive manager.
- Flexible timings for women so that they can adjust properly at work as well as personal matters.
- Facilities for child care should also be provided for their children.
- Encouraging employees to use the supports that are readily available and ensure that employees who could make use of such assistance don’t feel that their career prospects would be jeopardized by doing so.
- Leave plans - both paid and unpaid - to suit employee's needs etc.
- Examine employee workload concerns.

To Employees:

- Take full advantage of what support policies exist within your organization.
- The key is not only knowing your priorities, but devoting your full attention to just one priority at a time.
- Split your time and your mind so that you're thinking about work when you're at work and you're paying attention to the baby when you're with him / her.
- Devote at least 30 minutes to yourself in the form of yoga, listening to your favorite music or
in your hobby. This helps to reduce stress.

- Try to leave your workplace on time at least twice a week.
- Schedule sometime with friend and family at least once in a month.

CONCLUSION:

Working women have to handle tactfully her various spheres of life to achieve work life balance. She has to skillfully figure out ways in which she gets mutually benefited in all the quadrants of life. Achievement and enjoyment in all spheres will lead to Work Life Balance 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 by 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.

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. Juggling 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 family and work life.

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