

A Study on Challenges faced by Working Women in maintaining Work –Life Balance at Personal, Family and Organisational level

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Abstract

In the past years the labour market has seen drastic changes. The ratio of female workers has increased manifold. The stereotypical roles that of males being the “bread winner” and females looking after household chores and children has changed. Women are no more constrained to kitchen. Due to social and economic pressures they were forced to move out of their households and earn a living. With more and more women getting educated, it did not remain a mere pressure to earn a living, it also gave them an opportunity to prove their mettle and work towards building their long lost self-esteem. Though women changed, our society remained where it was, In order to prove themselves, they had to take up additional pressure and manage their time meticulously to balance both their work as well as their personal lives. This ever increasing pressure is taking a toll on the working women and has left them in doldrums, leaving no choice but to be burned out. This burnout is affecting their physical, emotional and social wellbeing, therefore it becomes indispensable for them to maintain the right work life balance. Through this paper we have tried to explore the major challenges faced by working women in maintaining an effective work life balance and suggest strategies to achieve the same.

Keywords:

Work-Life Balance, Women Employees, Challenges

Introduction

As an old axiom says “Empty mind is a devil's workshop”. Our mind needs to be engaged in some positive tasks to stay fruitful. Work is an essential and inevitable part of our lives, it ensures continuity of livelihood along with making sure we are productive and use our knowledge and skills in the right direction. In our Indian society men have always been considered as the bread winner and females are the ones that will take up the responsibility of domestic chores, children and dependent family members. The pressure to do well at professional and personal front has given rise to major challenge that all working women are facing at the global level and that is of maintaining the work life balance.

Work-life balance refers to maintaining the balance between your personal and professional roles. This problem is more for women employees because of the multiple roles and multitasking they are involved into. One role has a rippling effect on the other role being played by the female employees.

The origin of the idea of “Work life balance”

The idea that rest is as important as work goes back to ages

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”

Genesis 2:2, King James Bible

In the 1800s, after the industrial revolution, capitalists and unions mutually agreed that staff had to be given a day off. Later in the western countries the weekend became a two day off. But this was generally for the labourers, in today's knowledge driven era, there is no stopping of work. In today's volatile and dynamic times, work life balance has just become a myth. The use of technology has made this all the more difficult to achieve, as we are constantly being pinged on our smart phones, laptops and other remote working technologies. We are expected to be on call 24 x 7 to show that we are productive enough.

The Industrial Revolution transformed the work scenario for both males and females. Industrialization changed the locus of work from home to factory. Earlier women performed all the work which was related to managing the smooth functioning of the household. And males were considered solely responsible for earning the bread and butter, getting money for the livelihood. The role of women in the family did not change overnight, many families

worked together in the factories. Though the traditional role of females remained intact till 19th and early 20th century.

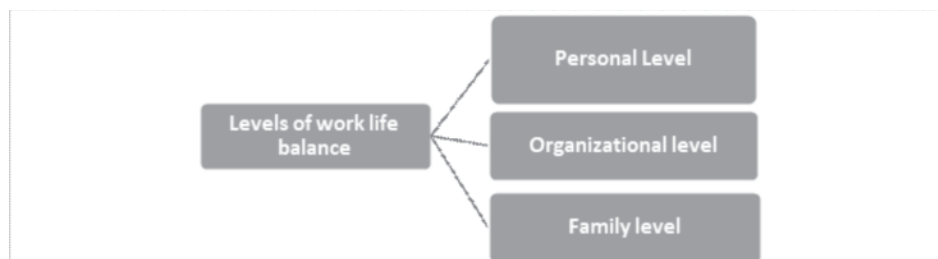
Growth of education leading to higher literacy amongst females, awareness of their rights and duties brought about a paradigm shift in the roles played by men and women at home as well as outside. Around 1970's more and more married women started working in offices and this brought about a revolution and also gave rise to the Latchkey kids generation, though these roles were restricted to some specific areas of job like teaching and nursing.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2015), data released in 2013 and 2014 states that 57 percent of women participated in the labour force. Of those 57 percent of women, 69.9 percent were also mothers. Since 1975, the rate of working mothers has risen from 47.4 percent to 70.3 percent, which implies that women continue to need employment just as much as their occupation needs them.

But irony is that women often feel they must choose family and motherhood over their professional goals and desires along with social conditioning reassuring them to put home before career. Women are subjected to multiple demands that can be conflicting and can tear them apart with the stress and anxiety caused due to the constant juggle between them. These conflicts can provoke women to sacrifice their career aspirations and devote more time to their families.

Our study revolves around three domains/levels of work life balance. Through this study we would try to find out various challenges faced by working women in the below mentioned domains.

Fig 1: Levels of work life balance



The Classification of determinants at the three levels are given below

Table 1 : Classification of determinants of work life balance

S.No	Organizational level	Family Level	Personal level
1	Income of employees	Support from family members	Time management
2	Nature of Job	Distribution of household tasks among family members	Intrinsic motivation of an individual
3	Support from employer and management	Family expectations	Self-expectation
4	Support from colleagues	Number of kids	Focus on personal goals
5	Policies of organization	Kind of family setting	Attitudes and values of an employee
6	Opportunities for growth and training		Mental and physical health
7	Working Hours		
8	Flexibility provided		

There are various determinants that affect the work life balance of an individuals. When an individual fights to maintain a judicious balance between work and personal life, a disproportion or imbalance may occur .The basic determinants can be categorized into three i.e. organizational level, family level and personal level. These three categories and the factors related to them can make or break the work life balance .Therefore an awareness of different factors at all three levels becomes essential.

Impact of work life balance

With the growing cut throat competition, it is indeed very difficult to strike a balance between work and personal life, however inability in doing so can have many repercussions,

Some of the positive effects of a good work life balance for an organization are given below

1. High morale
 2. Increased productivity
 3. Better team work and communication
 4. Reduction in organizational stress
 5. Low absenteeism
 6. Low employee turnover
 7. More committed and positive employees
 8. High job satisfaction
 9. Increased organizational citizenship behavior
- A good work life balance can enable the individuals become
1. More motivated
 2. Enhanced productivity
 3. Less cases of sickness and burn out
 4. Better relationships at personal and professional level
 5. Ability to achieve personal goals
 6. More satisfaction and value in life
 7. More committed & engaged employees
 8. High employee loyalty
 9. More chances of growth in career ladder of the organization
 10. Happier and stress free personal and professional life
- Therefore, it becomes imperative for an individual to

balance their work and personal life.

Literature review

A number of studies and researchers have delved into this issue from different perspectives. Some of them have been discussed below.

Dr. R.Rangarajan (2018) has uncovered that women felt pressurised and stressed when they worked more than 12 hours. Through his study it was also evident that working women had worries about their job and also getting tired due to work. They also suffered from a guilt of not being able to spend quality time with their families.

Shraavana and Dharani (2014) observed work life balance in employees working at schools. Female employees were found to experience better work life balance in comparison to their male peers. Female school teachers satisfied the expectation of their superiors, worked for longer hours, took work home, had more social support for their job and had better coping abilities than the male school teachers. On the other hand male teachers enjoyed the type of work and met deadlines and schedules much better in comparison to female counterparts. Therefore we can see that both the male and the female school teachers differ with respect to the factors that influence work life balance.

Lakshmi and Gopinath (2013) stated that there was a significant relationship between marital status of women workers and overtime work. Married women workers with children and dependents primarily work for financial reasons and accept overtime work which severely damages their work – life balance. The degree of work – life balance experienced by married women workers is associated with the number of dependents and small children at home.

Niharika and Supriya (2010) have considered the work based variables and family related aspects that are considered to add to work life equalization. Work related variables are flexitime, flexibility to work from home and the family related aspects are taking care of office responsibilities along with dealing problems at home.

Need for the study

In the present scenario, where everything has come to a standstill and we all are in lockdown with our families, something which has not changed are the personal as well as professional responsibilities of women. This is a major problem with the working females, who are trying to juggle successfully between cooking, mopping, taking care of the elders at home, online classes of their kids, laundry along with meeting their office deadlines. It is all the more a bigger challenge for working women in the Indian scenario, as in India due to some societal norms or

pressures, the duty of household chores and house management is generally vested with the females, whether working or not. Whereas men are still considered to be the primary bread earners of the family and their job or careers are generally looked upon with more seriousness and priority. Therefore to maintain the right balance between work and life becomes a staggering task. Through this paper we would like to find out what are the major challenges being faced by the working females and what strategies are they using to overcome these challenges. Therefore it becomes essential for us to study the various aspects related to work life balance of working women.

Scope of the study

The present study is done in various cities like Aligarh, Bareilly, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Mumbai, Mohali etc. The questionnaire was floated as a google form due to lockdown in the month of May 2020. The sample was chosen randomly and as per convenience. Women employees working in different occupation in different sectors like Education, Banking, Health and IT were considered for this study.

Research Methodology

Research Design

An empirical study was conducted to achieve the objectives. The study was conducted by collecting data from working women across different sectors in various cities namely Aligarh, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Delhi & NCR. Etc. The respondents were selected randomly from working women. The survey questionnaire in the form of google forms was sent to almost 150 such women (due to the COVID Lockdown) and in order to maintain the authenticity of the data telephonic follow ups and simultaneous questionnaire filling was done. Qualitative data was sourced from journals, relevant literature and also through telephonic discussions, open ended questions and observations. Quantitative data was collected by administering a structured questionnaire sent as a google form which included sections on challenges affecting work-life balance and the challenges faced by them. Personal data of respondents was also collected. A five point Likert scale was used to find out the degree of agreement for each item on the questionnaire.

Objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- To study various challenges faced by women in maintaining work-life balance in various sectors.
- To study the extent to which various factors like hours worked, work involvement and family responsibilities,

affect working women's work-life balance.

- To study the effect of work-life balance on the quality of life of married working women.

Hypothesis Testing:

H1₀: There is no significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' personal (individual) life.

H1_a: There is significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' personal (individual) life.

H2₀: There is no significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' work life.

H2_a: There is significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' work life.

H3₀: There is no significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' family life.

H3_a: There is significant impact of work life balance on working female employees' family life.

Description of Sample

The study was conducted among the married working invarious cities across different sectors. A sample of 150 working women was selected using Convenient Sampling. We received 100 responses, 30 respondents did not fill the survey, whereas 20 responses were incomplete, therefore

100 valid responses were considered for the analysis.

Description of the research tool:

The research design is descriptive and causal in nature. As the objective is to study and describe the challenges faced by working female employees in managing work life balance on personal and professional life we applied parametric statistics i.e. correlation and regression.

The questionnaire had 28 questions .The questionnaire was sent as google form due to COVID lockdown .These 28 questions were assessed through a five point Likert scale options for answers as “Never” (1) and “Always” (5). The questions were divided in three sections i.e. of Challenges faced at Family, Organizational and Personal level.

Reliability & Validity

To check the reliability of the scale Cronbach's alpha (coefficient of reliability or consistency) was calculated. Cronbach alpha value for all the challenges faced by female employees come out to be 0. 828. This value lies between 0.8-0.9, which depicts that, the scale is reliable (refer Table2) .In this study, content of research was validated by analysing the literature, considering the opinions of experts. With the help of Expert's views and review of literature, each and every statement of questionnaire was thoroughly examined. It was found that content of each item were related with the objectives of the study.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics through Cronbach Alpha

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.821	.828	100

The information of all the questionnaires was coded and entered in the computer by using MS Excel and SPSS Software. Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20.0 Version was used to do the required statistical analysis. Descriptive Analysis, Correlation and Regression techniques was used to analyse data in the study.

Data Analysis & Discussion

The overall work life balance of female employees was analysed using Descriptive statistics. The Mean values and standard deviation was analysed. The following were the range in discussion.

4-5: High level of Work Life Balance

2-4: Medium level of Work Life Balance

0-2: Low level of Work Life Balance

Survey Results

On calculating the mean score for work life balance on working women .The following results were obtained

Table 3: Mean Scores

Challenges faced at Family Level	3.49
Challenges faced at Work level	2.85
Challenges faced at Personal level	3.38

Therefore we can say that the challenges faced at all the Levels show “Medium level of Work Life Balance”, and Descriptive Hypothesis tells us that Challenges faced at

Family Level, affect work life balance more in comparison to Challenges faced at Work and Personal Level.

Correlation between Work Life Balance and Challenges faced by Female Employees’ at Family Level

Table 4: Correlation Analysis between work life balance and challenges faced at family level.

CORRELATION			Challenges faced at family level	Work-Life Balance
SPEARMAN'S RHO	Challenges faced at family level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.678*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.011
		N	100	100
	Work-Life Balance	Correlation Coefficient	-.428	-.681**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.144	.007
		N	100	100

As is evident in table4, Correlation analysis was carried out to study the relationship between work life balance and personal life of working female employees. The above SPSS –Spearman's correlation shows the correlation between difficulty in maintaining work life balance and factors affecting at “Family Level”. Significance level comes out to be 0.11 which less than 0.05, thus it means that there is high correlation between Work Life Balance and

challenges faced by Female Employees at Family Level. Average Correlation Coefficient comes out to be positive which means that as the challenges at “Family Level” increase, difficulty in maintaining a positive work life balance also increases. Therefore the more issues a working women has at family level, the more difficult it would be for her to maintain an effective work life balance .

Table 5: Correlation analysis between work life balance and challenges faced by women employees at work level

CORRELATION			Challenges faced at Organisational level	Work-Life Balance
SPEARMAN'S RHO	Challenges faced at Organisational level	Correlation Coefficient	.942**	.644*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.013
		N	100	100
	Work-Life Balance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.624*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.023
		N	100	100

Table 5 through SPSS –Spearman's correlation shows the Correlation between Difficulty in maintaining Work Life Balance and challenges faced at “Work Level”. Significance level comes out to be less than 0.013, thus it means there is high Correlation between Work Life

Balance and Challenges faced by Female Employees' at work Level. Average Correlation Coefficient comes out to be positive which means as the challenges at “Work Level” increase, difficulty in maintaining an effective work life balance also increases.

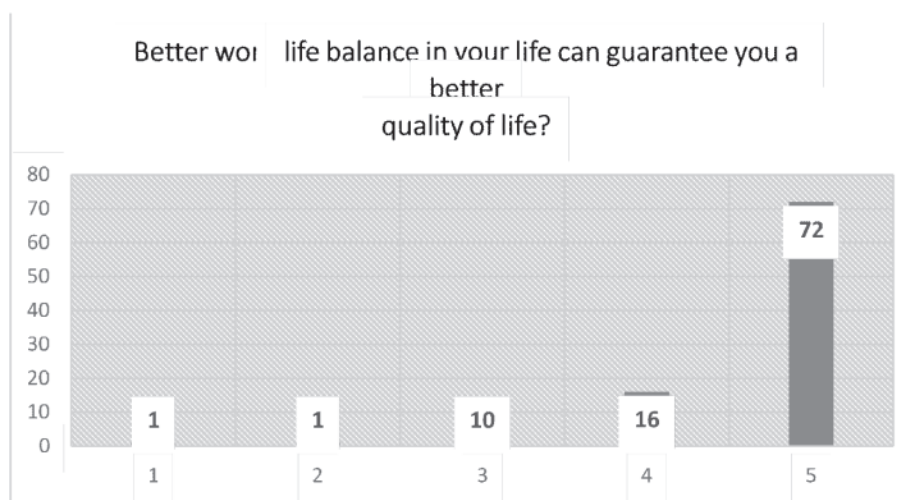
Table 6: Correlation analysis between Work Life Balance and Challenges faced by Female Employees' at Personal Level

CORRELATION			Challenges faced at Personal level	Work-Life Balance
SPEARMAN'S RHO	Challenges faced at Personal level	Correlation Coefficient	-.038	.060
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.902	.028
		N	100	100
	Work-Life Balance	Correlation Coefficient	-.140	.824**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.648	.001
		N	100	100

Table 6 shows SPSS –Spearman's correlation between difficulty in maintaining Work Life Balance and challenges faced at “Personal Level”. Significance level comes out to less than 0.028, thus it means that there is high Correlation between Work Life Balance and Challenges faced by

Female Employees' at Family Level. Average Correlation Coefficient comes out to be positive which means as the challenges at “Personal Level” increases, difficulty in maintaining Work Life Balance also increases.

Fig 2: Does better Work-Life Balance guarantee better quality of life?



1- Never , 5 –Always

As per Figure 2: Out of 100 responses obtained, 72 women endorsed that a better work life balance would guarantee them a better quality of life . Therefore we can conclude that if women employees get a better work life balance , it will surely have a positive impact on the quality of life they have at both personal and professional fronts.

Findings of the study:

- Based on mean scores calculated, we can say that the challenges faced at Family Level, affect work life balance more in comparison to challenges faced at Work and Personal Level.
- On the basis of the correlation analysis it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between the challenges faced at Family, work and personal level on the work life of Working women
- Lastly as per the responses received in relation to the question posed in fig 1, we can say that maximum working women feel that a better work life balance in the life would help them have a better quality of life in all three levels of study.

Suggestions:

On the basis of our study and experience, we can suggest the following

Suggestions to maintain an effective work life balance from a personal and family perspective

- Working women should try to manage time well.
- Take small breaks to re-energize and then get back to work.
- Say “NO” to things that act as inhibitors.
- Don't carry work to home.
- Don't overlook your physical and mental health.
- Seek help if necessary.
- Increase support system.
- Discuss work and personal priorities with your family members.
- Set manageable expectations at home and office.
- Don't over think and hurt yourself.
- Use technology to speed up work.
- Don't be shy to ask the work life balance facilities

available at office.

13. Family should respect and value personal and professional goals of the female.
14. Share household chores.
15. Give some “me” time for relaxation and unwinding.

Suggestions for organizations to help women employees maintain an effective work life balance

1. Have a work life balance policy in place.
2. Implement the policy without any bias.
3. Communicate about the policy among employees.
4. Promote awareness for Work life Balance among Employees.
5. Offer flexi time , work-from home options
6. Try to create women friendly policies.
7. Offer parental leaves.
8. Offer child care leaves and child care programs, crèches etc.
9. Avoid long working hours for female employees.
10. Provide options to merge personal and professional lives, like kids day at office etc.

Limitations:

1. The sample size could have been increased, but due to COVID 19 lockdown we could not reach many people. The primary data was collected through google form, therefore the reach was limited due to social distancing and inability to meet people in person
2. The definition of family was restricted, we could have included separated and single working women.
3. The survey excludes the unemployed and the self-employed, so the level of imbalance in the population as a whole may vary.
4. Future research must focus on a wider sample in order to get more generalized results. Moreover, it must be directed at understanding individual differences so that employee specific initiatives to improve work life balance could be initiated by organizations.

Conclusion:

In today's business world, women are breaking many glass ceilings, all top notch positions in various sectors and companies are being held by women. The ratio of women workers in most of the organizations has increased in past few years, therefore their contribution must be valued and organizations should make it a point to provide women friendly work environment. It also becomes imperative for the families to encourage and support the working women in achieving their personal and professional goals, this would help them feel motivated and encouraged to perform better in both the facets of their lives.

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