

Work-life Balance of New Age Women Professionals (Evidence from National Capital Region (NCR) of India)

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ABSTRACT :

Women in India are no longer abla i.e. weak and pitiable. They now coming out of four walls have been joining in ever increasing numbers at all positions in almost all professions. However, there has been research evidence to believe that women by nature have been caring for others and hence, have been experiencing the problem of what is termed as work-life balance. It is against this backdrop, the present study makes a modest attempt to investigate into matters relating to work-life balance of new age women employees working in NCR. The study finds that women especially belonging to middle working age have been experiencing more work-life imbalance and suggest measures to be taken to properly balance work and life (home) by both women employees and employers.

Keywords : Work-life Balance, Stress, Absenteeism, Dual Roles, Gender Stereotype, Social Beliefs.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Work-life balance has emerged as an ever research engaging topic in the recent times. The reasons attributed for this include the increasing women literacy, ever increasing integration of women in workplace, ever rising number of working couples, transformation of family structures from joint to nuclear, etc. However, women employees have also been experiencing conflicting roles as employee and home maker (Conlin2000). This, in turn, affects their work life and home life with different manifestations. This has been found harmful for both women employees and employer (Buddhapriya2009: 3-10). Hence, there has been a need for striking a good balance, to the extent possible, between work life and home life of women employees.

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It is against this backdrop, the present study has been conducted to investigate into various aspects relating to work-life balance of women employees in NCR of India.

Objectives of the Study :

The main objectives set for the study are to :

- * Investigate into the factors causing work-life imbalance of women employees across professions.
- * highlight the effect of work-life imbalance of women employees on their work and home lives.
- * suggest measures how to strike a balance between work life and home life of women employees.

Hypotheses :

The study sets the following hypotheses to be tested :

H0 : there is negative relationship between work and home life of women employees.

H1 : work-life balance adversely affects performance of women employees both at work and home.

H2 : married women experience more imbalance in their work-life compared to their unmarried counterparts.

H3 : cooperation from family helps women employees better cope with work-life imbalance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

The universe of the study is National Capital Region (NCR) of India. The size of the sample is 540 working women. Selection of sample is based on random sampling method. The study is based both on secondary and primary data. The secondary data is collected from published sources like research papers, research monographs, individual studies and websites. The primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire personally administered by the researchers. Based on other studies, a total of 10 variables have been included in the questionnaire.

The primary data collected has accordingly been tabulated and analysed by using simple statistical tools like percentage, mean, averages, correlation, and Alpha Test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

Reliability Analysis : The data were subjected to Alpha tests of reliability and they had acceptable (0.778) Cronbach's Alpha value which indicates a good level of internal consistency for the scale with the particular sample used for the study.

The data obtained from the filled in questionnaires was subjected to both reliability and validity tests for all sector employees. The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach alpha and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the factors ranged from 0.656 to 0.897 for Academic employees, from 0.81 to 0.889 for Health care employees and from 0.618 to 0.924 for IT employees. The alpha values for numerous scales are quite high and so might be used for additional analysis. Finally, Cronbach's alpha value for the overall perception scale was 0.897 for Academic, 0.889 for health care and 0.924 for IT samples and indicates its high reliability. Thus, it can be concluded that the designed instrument could be used with confidence to measure the constructs defined.

Profile of the Respondents : Among the 540 married working women, maximum number of respondents belonged to the age group of 30-40 (38.9%). Many respondents (65.0%) had two children. In terms of Spouse's Profession, 18.9% were engaged in business, 17.2% within the educational sector and then on severally.

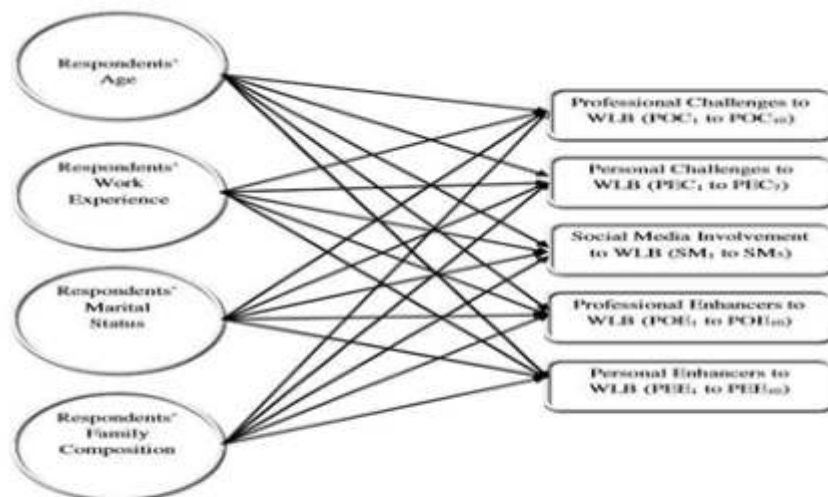


Figure 1: Theoretical model for Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Age group of Respondents:		
Under 30 years	150	27.78

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30 to 40 years	201	37.22
Over 40 years	189	35.00
Total	540	100
Spouses profession		
Business	102	18.89
IT industry	90	16.67
Health care	75	13.89
Academic	93	17.22
Insurance	54	10.00
Marketing	69	12.78
Others	57	10.55
Total	540	100
No. of Children		
None	75	13.89
One	81	15.00
Two	351	65.00
Three or more	33	6.11
Total	540	100

Percentage Analysis : It is found that there's a robust predominance of 'A' that signifies that work-life balance warrants attention. The strong predominance of 'A' for all the work life balance related statements except taking work home in most evenings suggest that working women in NCR face the problems of work-life balance in their livings irrespective of their standards of living.

Mean and Standard Deviation : The mean and standard deviation of respondents' responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses

Sl. No	Statements	N	Mean	S.D
Q1	At the instant, because the job demands it, I usually work long hours	540	2.58	0.747
Q2	There isn't abundant time to socialise/relax with my partner/see family within the week	540	2.53	0.78
Q3	I even have to require work home most evenings	540	2.03	0.765

Q4	I typically work late or at weekends to manage work while not interruptions	540	2.03	0.898
Q5	quiet and forgetting concerning work problems is difficult to try and do	540	2.21	0.837
Q6	I worry concerning the impact of labor stress on my health	540	2.57	0.702
Q7	My relationship with my partner is suffering due to the pressure or long hours of my work	540	2.39	0.808
Q8	My family is missing out on my input, either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired	540	2.65	0.744
Q9	Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult	540	2.76	0.657
Q10	I would prefer to cut back my operating hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation	540	2.63	0.732

As is seen from Table 2, the statement 9 was rated the highest, with a mean score of 2.76, which implies that married working women experience 'time squeeze' and find it hard to have time for themselves. The statements 8 and 10 with mean scores of 2.65 and 2.63 respectively suggest that the married women's difficulty because of non-availability of required time to look after their family chores effectively. The statements 1 and 2 in that order also suggest the non-availability of time to women employees causing stress and, in turn, imbalance in their work life and home life.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS :

(A) The responses of the respondents to the statement "I am able to balance my personal and professional life well" are tabulated in terms of frequency distribution and percentages in Table 2.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Responses

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	96	17.78
No	444	82.22

It is evident from Table 2 that 4 out of 5 women (82.22%) found it difficult to strike a balance between their two roles as work life and home life. This warrants attention for women and employers.

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(b) That married women experience more work-life imbalance then their unmarried counterparts is substantiated as many as 70.56% married women face problem of work-life balance (Khanka 2019: 678-693).

6 out of every 10 women realize that maintaining balance in work life and home life facilitates quality of good life.

On the whole, the data shows that the majority of women employees find it difficult to strike a good balance between their work life and home life. This adversely affects the both fronts of their lives. There is research evidence to believe that imbalance between work life and home life of women employees is disadvantageous both for women employees and their employers as well. Hence, this underlines the need for balance between work life and home life of women employees.

Comparison of Mean Scores : One better indicator giving idea about work-life balance problem might be comparing the mean scores of all variables taken into consideration (see table 3).

Table 8 represents the comparison of means scores of the ten Work-Life Balance related statements from the checklist manual and the industry/sector in which the 540 respondents were employed.

Table 3
Comparison of Mean Scores

Industry/ Sector		Q1 Working Long hours	Q 2 Less time to socialise/ relax	Q3 Taking work home in the evenings	Q4 Working late/ at weekends	Q5 Forgetting about work issues is difficult
Academic	Mean	2.43	2.53	2.15	2.05	2.2
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	0.789	0.769	.685	.91	.84
Healthcare	Mean	2.6	2.5	1.67	2.07	2.22
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	.764	.813	.752	.918	.846

IT	Mean	2.7	2.55	2.27	2.32	2.2
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	0.671	.769	.733	.854	.84
Total	Mean	2.58	2.53	2.03	2.14	2.21
	N	540	540	540	540	540
	S.D	.747	.78	.765	.898	.837
Industry/ Sector		Q6 Worry about the effect of work stress on health	Q7 Relationship with partner suffering	Q 8 Family missing out on input	Q 9 Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities etc. Is difficult	Q 10 Want to reduce work hours but have no control over it
Academic	Mean	2.55	2.37	2.63	2.77	2.58
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	0.723	0.843	0.78	0.647	0.787
Healthcare	Mean	2.53	2.42	2.62	2.73	2.67
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	.724	.809	.783	.686	.705
IT	Mean	2.62	2.4	2.7	2.77	2.65
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	S.D	.666	.785	.671	.647	.709
Total	Mean	2.57	2.39	2.65	2.76	2.63
	N	540	540	540	540	540
	S.D	.702	.808	.744	.657	.732

In conformity with the findings of other studies (Khanka 2016: 3-10 and Malhotra and Sachdeva 2005: 37-42), it is seen from Table 3 that it is the women working in IT sector experience the maximum work-life imbalance (score 2.7). The reason is not difficult to seek. IT professionals are required to work both longer and off-hours like night shifts. Women working pursuing academic profession are found experiencing the lowest level of work-life imbalance for understandable reasons as they enjoy less work hours and days, holidays and vacations, etc.

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Most of women irrespective of their age report difficulty faced in maintaining balance between their two lives at work and home. As regards the profession of spouses, it is found that women with spouses in service profession generally experience less problems of work-life imbalance. On the contrary, those having spouses with business as profession experience relatively more problem of work-life imbalance.

Women having children and relatively small children experience more work life imbalance compared to their counterparts having either no children or having grown up children. This is understandable as small and more children require more time to be given especially by mothers for looking after them.

Table 4 presents data on sector-wise responses from women employees relating to their ability to balance their work life and home life.

Table 4
Sector-wise Ability of Women Employees to Balance Their Work and Home Lives

Sectors		Responses		
		No	Yes	Total
Academic Sector	Number	144	36	180
	% within industry or sector	80%	20%	100%
Healthcare Industry	Number	138	42	180
	% within industry or sector	76.67%	23.33%	100%
IT Sector	Number	162	18	180
	% within industry or sector	90%	10%	100%
Total	Number	444	96	540
	% within age group	82.22%	17.78%	100%

Expectedly, women working in IT sector experience the most difficulty in balancing their work life and home life followed by women working in academic and healthcare sectors in that order.

ACCEPTANCE/REJECTION OF HYPOTHESES :

- H0: there is negative relationship between work and home life of women employees. **Accepted**
- H1: work-life balance adversely affects performance of women employees both at work and home. **Accepted**
- H2: married women experience more imbalance in their work-life compared to their unmarried counterparts. **Accepted**
- H3: cooperation from family hardly helps women employees better cope with work-life imbalance. **Rejected**

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :

Since the scope of the study is limited to NCR and to only three sectors, hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized for all sectors in the entire country.

What Women Professionals Want Employers' Support to Balance Work and Life?

Views from women professionals on what employers should do to help balance work and life are summarized in the following Table 5.

Table 5
Women Professionals' Expectations from Employers

Types of Support	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree to Some Extent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Flexible Working Hours	54	39	16	7	3
Working from Home / Telecommuting	27	31	29	30	2
Childcare Facilities	53	39	18	10	0
Support for Non-work Commitment	21	27	21	0	1
Employee Assistance Programmes	12	36	17	1	1
Wellness and Personal Development Programmes	39	31	7	3	3

It is evident from Table 5 that majority of women professionals expect employers' should come forward to support them to balance their work and life. Nonetheless, the majority of them expect support in terms of flexible working hours(109 / 119), childcare facilities (110 / 120), wellness programmes (77 / 83), and working from home in that order (87 / 119) . The responses are also suggestive of the fact that women professions realize to balance work and life is not only their responsibility but employers also.

CONCLUDING REMARKS :

Employees join work to ultimately live a fulfilled life. Hence, it becomes imperative to balance one's roles so as to perform the roles satisfactorily and effectively. This requires skills to properly prioritize between "work" (career and ambition) and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation) of an individual. Because people have different priorities and different lives, work-life balance is obvious to vary from individual to individual. It is well confirmed that work-life imbalance of employees, in general, and of women professionals, in particular, is harmful for both employees and employers (Sophi 1995: 6-15). Hence, this calls for suitable initiatives and measures to be taken by both employees as well as employers. Sooner and better the both realize it, the better will be work-life balance of women professionals and, in turn, more good for the both: women professionals and employers.

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