

Work Life Balance Of Women Employees: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract: *Work-life balance is a serious issue for working professionals struggling to juggle their lives and career. In today's world, where every individual has to balance conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life balance has emerged as a predominant issue in the workplace. But increasing work pressure, globalization, and technological advancement have made it an issue with both the genders, all professionals working across all levels and all industries throughout the world. Work life balance plays a major role in all the life of human being who is working. Especially it's a greater hurdle for the married women to balance both the home and work. Sometimes due to this imbalance of work they face a lot of problems in their families, even in their career growth. Harvard Business Review survey pointed out that the experts agree the compounding stress from the never-ending workday is damaging. It can hurt relationships, health and overall happiness. Technology is one the reason make worker accessible around the clock.*

Keywords: *work life balance, life satisfaction, imbalances, marital status.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Work is part of life and today's work is characterized by uncertainty and long working hours. There is scarcity of time for people to take care of their personal issues. Hence, having balanced life has become an important phenomenon for organizations and employees. It is said that a perfect balance between profession and personal life never exists. A perfect balance is always depending upon the understanding of an individual on his/her perception of work and life. In the process of work/life balance, employees need to do a mind scanning of the daily activities and pay a little more attention to the areas that are dragging them down. Then, based on the result of one's mind scanning and analysis of the situation, experiments can be made to bring a balance between professional and personal life. Work/life balance is having a sense of achieving the professional goals and enjoying life outside work. Climbing the professional ladder and reaching the highest peak and enjoying every bit of life, these two are paramount features of work/life balance.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of Work-life Balance i.e. WLB, backs the efforts of the employees to divide their time and energy between work, family and the other aspects of their lives. In recent years, WLB has occupied a significant role in the higher education sector – research and academia, enabling employees or faculties to pay attention towards personal, societal and professional aspects of their lives as well. Organisations in general have realised that there is a need to plan and promote work life balance policies for increasing both qualitative and quantitative productivity. The steps taken by organisations to do so include – job sharing,

flexible working hours, family events at work etc. This has been done so, to bridge the gaps between professional, personal and social lives of the faculties with an aim to improve organizational work culture and effectiveness. Coser (1974) had said that, “Work–life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work–family conflict.” Japan, is considered as one of the most hard-working country and the culture of the country is work oriented. But this has led serious issue for the majority of the citizens, as their lives are revolving only around their professional life. Japan as on date has the highest working hours amounting to 80 hours overtime in a month which goes unpaid to the employees. Issues persistent in the country are – low birth rate, lonely lifestyle of the citizens, overburdened with work and sleeplessness epidemic. Hence, the country is trying its best to adopt work-life balance policies in order to improve the situation of its citizens (The Guardian – 2019).

Work-life balance is not mere related to work and life; it is the positive state of mind. Work-life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or ‘fit’ between the multiple roles in a person’s life (Hudson, 2005). Work-life balance is about the interaction between paid work and other activities, including unpaid work in families and community, leisure and personal development. Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) defined work-family balance as “the extent to which an individual is equally–self engaged and equally satisfied with –his or her work role and family role”. Work-life balance does not mean an equal balance in units of time between work and life. It is not a tight rope walk between two poles acting as an organizational commitments and home demands at the same time, but it is about proper understanding of the priorities of the professional and personal level.

In general, if we analyse the concept of work/life balance, we can identify certain important components such as:

- **Health** of a person is an important component of work/life balance. The absence of healthy mind and body does not allow a person to realize his/her strengths and abilities fully. This poses a serious hindrance while practicing work/life balance.
- **Conducive and supportive environment** at home and at workplace, is another hallmark of a good work/life balance practice. In case of crisis such as ill-health of spouse/parents/children, misunderstanding between husband and wife, unsupportive colleagues, dominating supervisor, an individual may not be able to achieve his/her professional goals and also cannot enjoy life outside office.
- **Love and faith** are two major components of life. Without these two, an individual cannot focus on professional and personal roles and responsibilities. A healthier relationship with friends and peer groups is also an important component of work/life balance.

2.2 Factors Determining Individual’s Work Life Balance:

Emotional attachment to the organization is an important factor because it binds an individual to an organization (Meyer, Becker & Vandenberg he, 2004). Mathew & Panchantham (2011) revealed that role overload, dependent care issues, quality of health, problems in time management and lack of proper support are the major factors influencing the work-life balance of women entrepreneur in India. According to Frone (2003), the measurable four components of work-life balance are work-to-family/non-work conflict, family/non-work-to-work conflict, work-to-family/ non-work enhancement, and family/non-work-to-work enhancement. Trust has also been identified as a distinguishing characteristic of managers in

“successfully flexible organisations” (Quijada, 2005). Many individuals found that they were increasingly isolated from family and leisure activities in an ever-increasing climate of long work hours and intensity (Haworth & Lewis, 2005). Spill over between activities can create real time allocation challenges for dual career households. It increases stress, especially where difficulties are faced in combining work, unpaid housework, and work-related travel (MacDonald et al., 2005). Low and Schulenburg (2006) recommended a supportive work environment and management, flexible work arrangements as work life conflict moderator. Family responsibilities such as household time demands, family responsibility level, household income, spousal support and life course stage have been found to be sources of work-life stress (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Nathani and Jha (2009) has grouped factors influencing work and family life spheres into three namely, family and personal life related factors, work related factors and others. Working hours has major influence over managing both the work and life dimensions. In a study of Macky and Boxall (2008) reported that employees working longer hours are slightly more likely to report a greater imbalance in the work life relationship. The study of Steiber (2009) found that time-based work demands were strongly associated with the experience of work-family conflict among women and men. Long working hours, or at weekends and having to work overtime at short notice showed an aggravating effect on conflict them to strain based conflict. Deery and Jago (2009) in their study asserted that greater use of flexible work practices such as flexible scheduling, working from home and having access to both paid and unpaid leave and job sharing are some of the strategies that can positive effect on Work Life Balance. Ghalawat& Dahiya (2010) concluded that the most critical factors related to work life balance are multi roles, long work hours, peers pressure, headcount reduction measures etc. The basic conditions influencing the balance between work and family life are shown in figure .1

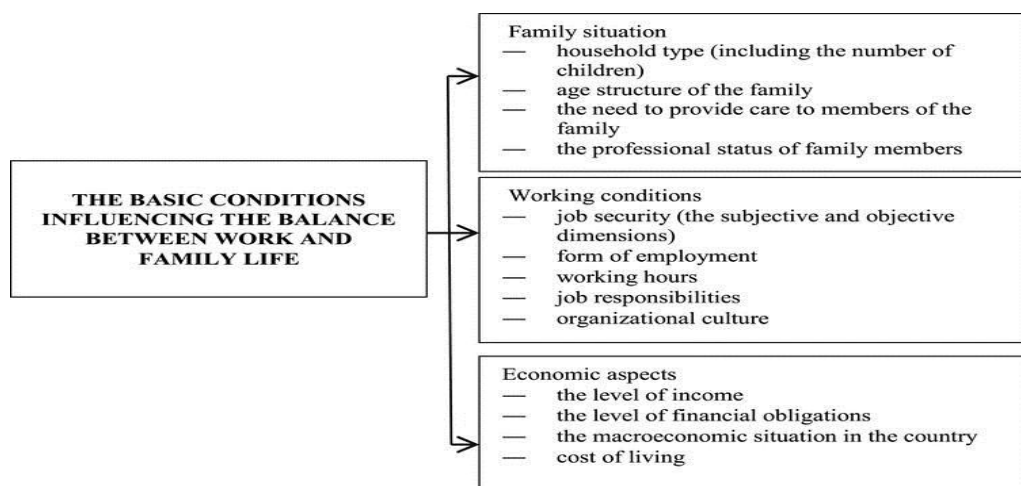


Fig.1

2.3 Work family conflict

Another line of research has examined job involvement as an antecedent of work-family conflict. There is a recognition that individuals may be actively participating in one role while simultaneously feeling distracted by thoughts, emotions, or demands that are tied to another role (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000).

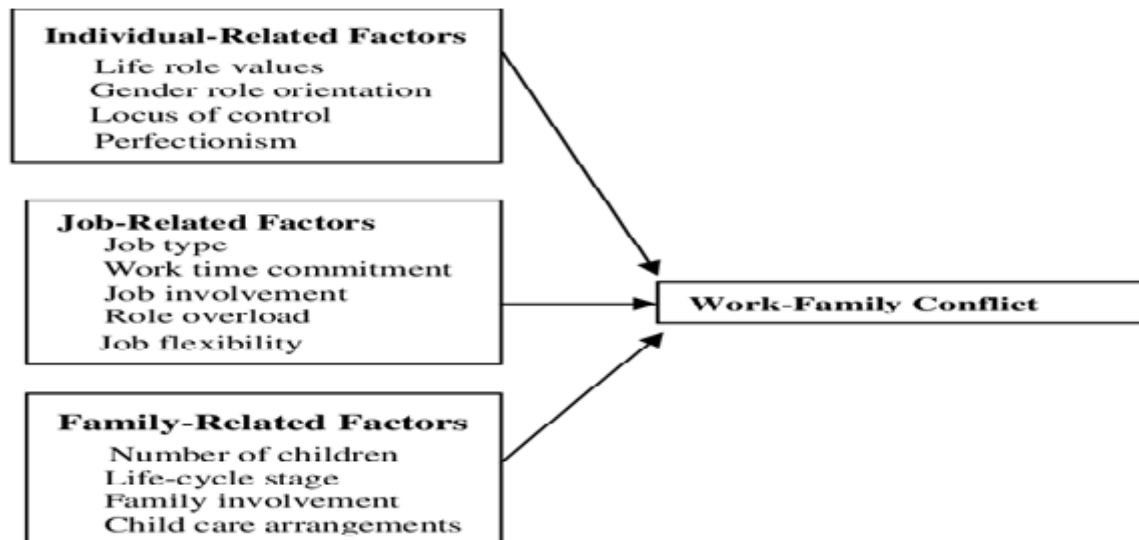


Fig.2

Job related factors According to the spillover theory, moods, stress, and thoughts generated in one role domain often influence or spill over into other domains (William & Alliger, 1994). Moorehead (2001) argued that this overlap is a relatively positive one and refers to this as “synchronizing work and family.” In contrast, one might argue that these overlapping thoughts are distractions, which are the product of poor role quality, and may thus result in negative outcomes. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between job involvement and work-family conflict (Hammer et al., 1997; Darry & McCarthy, 2007). This implies that individuals with high levels of psychological involvement in their work role may be more preoccupied with their work and, hence, may devote an excessive amount of energy to their role at the expense of their family role, resulting in work-family conflict. When the total demand on time and energy are too great for an individual to perform the roles adequately or comfortably, role overload occurs (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Individuals who occupy work roles and perceive that their workload is more than they can handle, would experience negative emotions, fatigue and tension. These feelings would then have positive effects on work-family conflict.

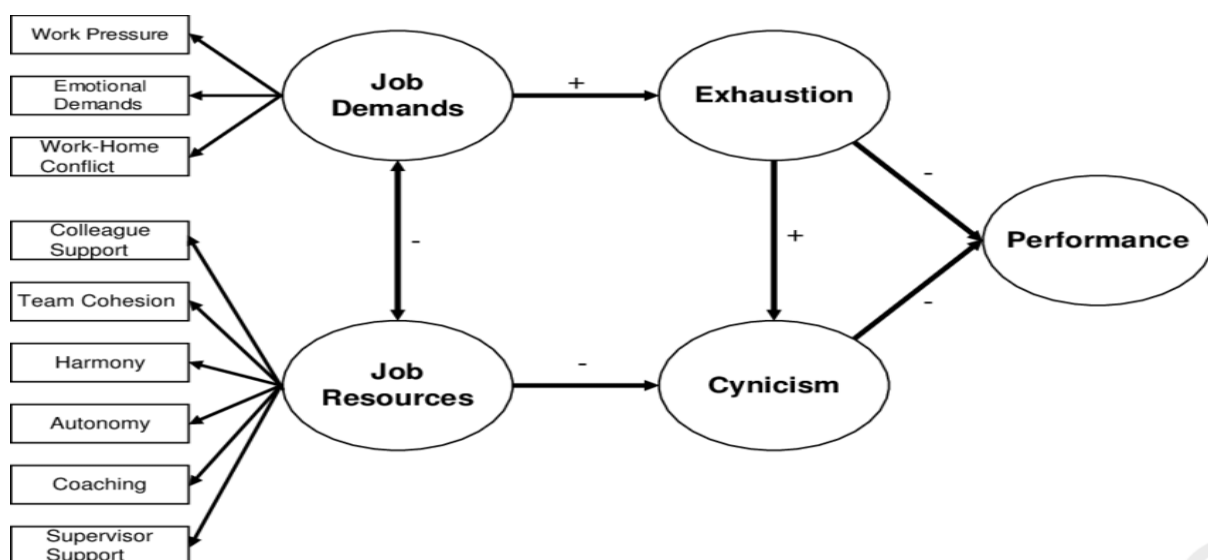
Family-Related Factors Several aspects of family structure are associated with work-family conflict including dependent care responsibilities, especially care for the elderly and disabled children or adults and life cycle stage. Duxbury and Higgins (2003) found that both male and female Canadian employees with dependent care responsibilities report higher levels of work-to-family conflict. Intuitively, these results make sense as employees with children and/or elderly dependents are more likely to have inflexible commitments at home that will conflict with expectations or demands at work. This study also found that employees with dependent care responsibilities were at higher risk of caregiver strain. The presence of children in the household has also been positively related to work-family conflict (Carnicer et al., 2004).

Individual-Related Factors Besides job- and family-related factors, a number of individual-related factors could contribute to the experience of work-family conflict. The incorporation of individual values into the work-family conflict research is important because life role

values are central to organizing meaning and action for working people (Carlson, & Kacmar, 2000). In incorporating values into work-family conflict research, Carlson & Kacmar (2000) has used three multiple perspectives, namely centrality, priority and importance. Centrality refers to the value expression of individuals with regard to how central work or family is in their lives when compared to other life roles. Thus, the different centrality placed on the role of work or family may be helpful in explaining differences in the experience of work-family conflict. Priorities refer to the value expression of individuals with regard to how individuals prioritize their life roles. Variation in values as expressed by prioritization of life roles should lead to differing experiences of work-family conflict. Life roles can also be examined from the perspective of importance which refers to the value expression manifested in the importance an individual place on a given role. The researchers found that individuals who valued work over family experienced greater family-to-work conflict. In addition, the sources, levels, and outcomes of work-family conflict were found to differ depending on the life role values held by the individuals when expressed in terms of work centrality and importance. However, differences in the work-family conflict process were not found for individuals whose values were expressed in terms of priority or family centrality.

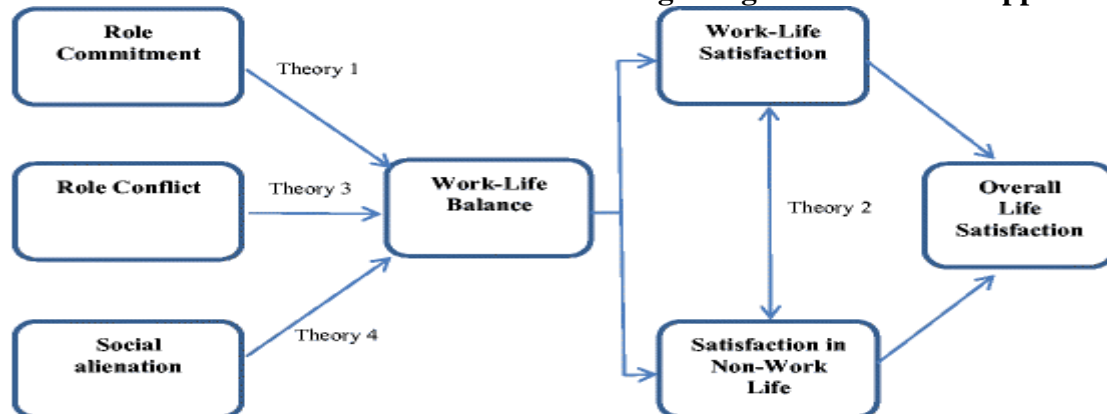
JOB DEMAND-RESOURCES MODEL

The model is used to determine employee burnout and employee engagement as it describes the assumptions of every occupation in regard with employee well-being. The model classifies the work environment into two categories – Job Demand and Job Resources. Job Demand affect the employee’s mental and physical health which take place due to the struggling effort to meet job demands and skills towards achieving organisational goals. Job Resources, on the other hand relates to individual motivation clubbed with functional management through social support and performance feedback. Job resources are also related to aspects like job security, role clarity, working environment and combating negative effects of job demands. With higher job demand and lower job resources, it is bound to result in job strain, demotivated employees, burnout and other negative aspects affecting the employees mentally, physically and spiritually.



Imbalance in job demand and job resource will significantly affect the work engagement of an employee which will further result in burnout, whereas high job demands and high job resources shall have lesser consequences in terms of burnout stages as well as create positive work outcomes. Even with jobs high in demand and low in necessary job resources, shall result in burnout. Hence, it is vital for a balance to be maintained between job demand and job resource (Yanchus, 2013).

The life satisfaction model of work-life balance: integrating four theoretical approaches



Theory 1: Role commitment Theory → enhance role commitment
 Theory 2: Positive spillover Theory → enhance positive affect transfer
 Theory 3: Role conflict theory → reduce conflict between work and non-work roles
 Theory 4: Social alienation theory → reduce role disengagement

ACHIEVING WORK LIFE BALANCE

Time management skills are the key to managing and achieving a balance among all spheres as every individual has 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, which needs to be allocated profusely for all the activities – basic need to exercise, sleep, social events, work demands, family demands and personal pursuits. Hence effective time management can help reduce stress and bring balance to life in and out of the office. Organizations can help employees by providing training modules for time management, delegation and help them prioritise their needs, wants and commitments accordingly.

FACTORS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE OF FEMALES

- Demographic profile and biographic profile
- Perception towards hours of work, work logistics and lifestyle choices
- Professional satisfaction and willingness to continue in the present assignment
- Organizational support
- Chance for correction of errors while performing of tasks
- Expectation of facilities at work place and enhancement of skills
- Superior interaction at work
- Facing biological hazards while performing tasks
- Impact of stress on self
- Understanding emotions, role of empathy while performing tasks
- Perception towards different components for WLB policies

CONSEQUENCES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Considering that work life balance holds a pivotal role in any individual as well as organisation's periphery, it does possess certain consequences if not managed well. Poor work life balance is often demonstrated within a range of physical and psychological strains i.e. depression, anxiety, low self-confidence, insomnia, mental imbalance, burnout, low productivity, low morale, fatigue, hypertension, high-blood pressure and even increase relationship fall-out. Another consequence of poor work life balance is that work-family conflict increases emotional exhaustion and lowers satisfaction levels at job front (Karatepe and Tekinkus, 2006)

2. CONCLUSION

Work Life Balance (WLB) is concerned as a vital issue nowadays for individual and also for organizations. Work Life Balance has been defined and elaborated by various prominent scholars relating this issue in different ways. A number of factors are involved in determining the Work Life Balance and Imbalance of any individual which plays a critical role in his/her personal and professional life. It is clear from above literature survey that a plenty of antecedents of Work Life Balance are found in many studies carried out in this area. It has been also explained that a better Work Life Balance creates a number of positive consequences whereas imbalance between work and family of an individual holds a negative effect which is responsible for some serious issue for individual as well as for the organizations.

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