

Work-Life Balance and Women Working in Hotel Industry

¹Dr.Sachin S. Vernekar, ²Dorsa Heidari

¹Dean, Faculty of Management Studies, Director, ² Research Scholar

¹ Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship Development (IMED)

¹Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune, India.

Abstract: Work-life-balance has a double-aspect feature which has effect on the productivity of company and at the same time on the quality of employee's life. Due to the service-centric nature of Hotel industry with high and low seasons during a year and its direct impact on the personal life of manpower, hotels may face with the shortage of employees specially women, who nowadays occupied almost 50% of the job vacancies in hotels as managers or/ and employees. Taking long-working-hour or night shifts, workloads and etc. and the related effects of each on the life of employees, turns on the alarm of "Work-Life-Balance" specifically for women manpower whose responsibility is not only limited to their workplace but beyond it. This article is based on secondary data, namely recent articles about work-life-balance in hotel industry and specific role of women in this industry.

Key Words: *Work-life-balance, Hotel Industry, Women in Hotel Industry.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Working in today's competitive market, turned employees to machines who runs against the time for their target achievements. But working like a machine for humans with feelings and limited efficiency does not happen. (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014)¹¹

In the recent years it has become one of the key business issues in all industries. As mental stability of employees can affect their amount of productivity for the organization, thus keeping Work-Life balance is a beneficial subject for both employees and organization at the same time. Therefore, for improvement of that, the organization itself should plan. (Sharma & Shekhawat, 2017)¹⁴ This situation is also available for hotel industry as well, where employees feel stress and challenges in their job and are not able to handle the balance between their work and life which leads to less productivity and weak social and mental health. (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014)¹¹

This is not only for the health of organization, but for employee's self-confidence, problem solving and etc. Because employees spend at least one third of life in their work environment, therefore, balancing between their professional life and personal life plays a key role to maintain them psychologically and socially stable and positive. Meanwhile, hotel employees have various work challenges which can lead to stress and then work and family conflicts (Sharma & Shekhawat, 2017)¹⁴.

Moreover, as one of the fast growing industries due to its service-base nature, with intensive number of labor, it is reported that the average of 55% of the employees are female worldwide. Women work in various departments with different designations which have recently lead to their more contribution in this industry even in leadership and managerial posts (Acharya & Siddiq, 2016)¹. This important factor, has provided them some problems regarding the integration between their professional life and their family life due to long working hours, work load, out of time meetings, fatigue and etc. According to an Australian report published in 2010 (Skinner & Pocock, 2011)¹⁵ 60 percent of women and 50 percent of men, had time pressured in their workplace situation which leads to negative work-life balance that is reported to be seen as the worst interfere in service industries (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸.

II. DEFINITIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As Work-Life balance is a subjective concept, therefore, everyone may have their own definitions. Work-Life Balance may be defined as “personal and professional time and space dedication in the society” (Felstead & Jewson, 2002)⁴.

Another definition of Work-Life Balance is “time for home and work commitments. (Sturges & Guest, 2004)¹⁶.

Somewhere else, (Hudson, 2005)⁶ describes Work-Life Balance as “ when multiple rules are done by a person at a satisfactory level”.

In the concept of “Work-Life Balance”, the balance aspect is referred to an equilibrium between the individual’s personal and professional activities, whereas, this equilibrium can be physiological, psychological and sociological as well. (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸

Along with the concept of work-life balance, there is concept of “work-life conflict”, which guides minds to an imbalance between work and life of individuals. It is defined as “a conflict which happened through work and life pressures, namely family, child care, work overload, ant etc. that seems discordant in various aspects, means doing more than one task simultaneously is difficult” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)⁵ or simply said, fulfillment of one role’s demand prevents that of the other one (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Work-Life Balance” simply means the ratio of the time you spend for your job to the time you spend with your family. It has become to one of the most important challenges in 21st century for the employees, and as it has dual effect on employees and employers, thus according to (Clutterbuck, 2003)³ it can be concerned as a business issue. As sometimes work can affect employee’s life and vice versa, it is a difficult task to give a specific definition to Work-Life Balance, however, the definition given by (Kalliath & Brough, 2008)⁷ is “Work-Life Balance is about adaption of work and non-work activities which helps individuals in building their life preferences.”

In industries such as hotel industry with unusual schedules and working hours, keeping a balance between work and life is difficult, although it helps in productivity, better recruitment and talent acquisition. As the issues related to work-life balance are getting huger day by day, the key people in various industries pay more attention than before to this issue to may find a way (Sharma & Shekhawat, 2017)¹⁴.

As per the studies, women working in hotel industry, have a noticeable percentage of presence (sometime same as men), which means women need to maintain a proper balance between their personal life and their professional life; because against men, today’s women have dual role in life. One role is related to their family, kids, home and etc. and the other role is about their job at hotels as staff, managers, CEO and etc.

Therefore, Work-Life balance is about adjusting work patterns for easily combination of work and personal responsibilities. It is not only about family nor working less, it is all about work smarter and keeping a pace and rhythm to give enough percentage of energy to work and life without any confusion.

This concept covers two aspects:

- Work-base life
- Family-base life

In a work-base life the whole attention is towards work than the family and bringing all the work conflicts a problem to their personal environment. And a family –based behavior is about giving all the priority to the family even the times individual is at work. (Sharma & Shekhawat, 2017)¹⁴

Therefore, as per the article and secondary sources studied by the researcher, the number of articles pointed out to the issues and real need of work-life balance in hotel industry and also importance of keeping balance between work and life among women working in various industries.

From the other hand, most of the influential ways of keeping work-life balance are not applicable for women due to their role and need of their presence at home at specific times of day.

IV. GAPS OF THE STUDY

According to the literature reviewed by the authors, the following gaps have been appeared through the study, which are:

- Lack of proper and specific study about work-life balance among women working in this industry.
- Lack of featured policy (special for women) designed by human resource department to help women in keeping a reasonable balance among their personal and professional life.
- To stop the consequences of imbalance work-life and teaching the ways to eliminate them

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to eliminate the effect of imbalance situation between work and life of employees working in hotel industry, specifically women, this study aims to follow the below objectives, driven out of the gaps in the literature review. The objectives are:

- To study Work-Life Balance situation of employees in the hotel industry (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014)¹¹
- To study the various models of Work-Life Balance
- To explore the specific challenges of women to maintain work-life balance
- To find out the various aspects of work-life balance among women in hotel industry

VI. METHODOLOGY

This article is written with the secondary data extracted from references such as books, journals, articles, websites and etc. therefore, it is the result of a library work. The fact found out through the materials, are completely analyzed and categorized throughout which the researcher came up with the recommendations and conclusions.

VII. WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The nature of works and responsibilities in hospitality industry, may sometimes lead to job dissatisfaction through stress, job insecurity, work load, long working hours and other factors. Therefore, as the result, turnover among employees takes place due to work-life imbalance which is called “Emotional Labor” in service-oriented industries like hospitality industry, because of the face-to-face connection with customers which normally does not happen in factories. So that, due to emotional labor as a stressor in hotels, maintenance of work-life balance is a difficult task in this industry. (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸

This concept was created by Hochschild in 1983 for the first time. It is applicable for service industries such as hospitality industry. This concept aroused through a problem in such industries; that employees are mainly required to manage their emotions to be displayed to customers. As the motto of all service-oriented industries is “The Customer is King”, so the employees have to be happy with a smiling face against all the customer’s complains, even if it is not their fault. (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸

Therefore, for better managing of situation, staff working in frontline and in face-to-face connections with customers should get rotated to achieve their emotional balance, so that, we can reach to this point that selection of staff is a key factor to eliminate the stress resulted from emotional labor. The extrovert, positive and easygoing staffs are better candidates for these designations as they do not require playing the role of a happy and welcoming person! (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸

The other reason for poor work-life balance among hotel employees is 12-14 hours daily during which they have to be on their feet constantly, and this timing sometimes would be more due to seasonal picks and festivals against low cost and when their families are enjoying without them. Therefore, in order to lessen the bitterness of this sweet and entertaining industry, hotel

operators initiated some measures such as adding more leaves or weekly offs, Employees Leisure Clubs to have more fun alongside with their family members and fixed number of working hours daily. (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014)¹¹

VIII. FACTORS AFFECTING POOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG WOMEN IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Growth of women in a society is equal to development of that country. So that, in these societies the organizations with a gender-neutral attitude can run the industry, but from the other hand, this orientation should not be only a slogan for the company; because while writing job descriptions, some positions need long working hours, business meetings, events on meetings and etc. which are in contradiction with women's family responsibilities. As per the equality between men and women in terms of skills, attributes and attitudes for obtaining the leadership positions specifically in hotel industry, narrowing this gap may give women the opportunity of flourishing their potentials. (Lagasi & Buba, 2016)⁹

8.1 Lack of proper Shift-Working guidelines for women:

Shift-works in hotel industry make everything regular and by the book, but even sometimes the irregular shifts cause demotivation among employees, specifically when a fixed-shift employee is on leave, others (usually who works in the previous shift) should make up her absence. This case would sound worst when the person in previous shift is a woman, who has to attend double shifts and sometimes more. Therefore, this issue generally has impact on work-life balance of employees however this employee is a woman with more responsibilities at home as well.

Furthermore, employees should always be ready to work in various shifts, due to lack of ample employees for each department. These changes can be daily, weekly or even in weekend and holidays, which caused the odd hours of returning back home. Therefore, these irregular timings do not let employees plan for their own personal life and disturb the balance between their work and their life.

8.2 Being always fresh:

Due to the service centric nature of hospitality industry and direct contact with guests, employees should always be active, fresh and charming with a pleasing smile on their face. They are not expected to look tired during their shifts. Therefore, when the female employees return home, they cannot spend their time relaxing and sleeping because of their child care, family and home responsibilities, so, managing all these task together for a mother or even the daughter of a family occupied in hotel industry, can be difficult task.

8.3 Scheduling Conflicts:

Scheduling Conflict is the most common conflict usually take place and shatters the balance between work and life of hotel employees. It happens when two events should be done by one employee. Therefore, finding time running two events simultaneously or even one after the other would be tough. In addition, as they have to arrange their changing shifts, they hardly can find any free time as break between two tasks and/or shifts. This case among women employees seems more difficult because mostly women get tired earlier than men specifically in case of physical activities (i.e. housekeeping and etc.). This type of conflicts not only leads to Work-Life balance issue, but sometimes ends to turnout and quitting the job by employees. (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2014)¹¹

IX. MODELS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As per (Zheng, Molineux, Mirshekary, & Scarparo, 2015)¹⁸ there are five models to explain the balance between professional life and personal life of individuals, which are as follow:

- Segmentation Model
- Spillover Model
- Compensation Model

- Instrumental Model
- Conflict Model

9.1 Segment Model

This model suggests “the difference between work and non-work domains of life which are separate and have no effect on each other” (Sturges & Guest, 2004)¹⁶. However, this case is not applicable for service oriented industries such as hospitality industry.

9.2 The Spillover Model

This model is simply about spilling over of professional life into personal life and vice versa. There are two type of spillover, job-to-home and negative spillover (Family/Home-to-work) spillover (Sumer & Knight, 2001)¹⁷. Surprisingly, in double income families rate of these types of spillovers are less than the single income families.

9.3 The compensation Model

According to this model, lacking of one part in someone’s life may be made up in other part. for example, routine and undemanding work may be compensated for by life in the community outside of work (Sturges & Guest, 2004)¹⁶.

9.4 The Instrumental Model

This model recommends a part of activities related to work that leads individuals to better performance outside work or vice versa. Likewise, working many hours to increase the amount of salary for a better life and comfort of the family can be an example of the instrumental model. According to (Rykr, 2009)¹³ being surrounded with various task and responsibilities decreases the level of stress.

9.5 The conflict Model

Workloads and conflicts may occur, but those which are involved in multiple roles have less time to focus on (Rykr, 2009)¹³. (Sturges & Guest, 2004)¹⁶ also mentioned (Clark, 2000)² which postulates that people are ‘daily border-crossers’ who move between work and home and examines the examples of family hotels, farmers and the growing number of people working from home. (Kidd & Eller, 2012)⁸

X. FINDINGS

According to the facts extracted from literature review, these are the findings related to work-life balance situation in hotel industry with a special eye on women working in this industry and their dual role at work and home simultaneously. Findings are as below:

- Human capitals are the most important factor of productivity and cost reduction of the industry.
- High amount of hard work, long working hours and expectations from hotel employees lead to work-life balance issues among them.
- Women, working in hotel industry occupied almost 50% of job vacancies.
- Unprofessional working plans, shift schedules and shift exchanges easily has direct impact on work-life balance when after a long working hours’ women are not capable enough to do home-related works and responsibilities.
- The available models, policies and strategies are unisex (applicable for both, men and women), but with less effect on women.
- Work-Life Balance is not only women’s issue but whoever is surrounding them as well.(ragatz, 2018)¹²
- Being a multifunctional woman (mother, wife, working woman) provides a better prospective and gives more value to individuals. As it is seen women with multitasks to do feel more precious about themselves. (Pappas, 2017)¹⁰
- Women, technically experience more stress at work (Pappas, 2017)¹⁰

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the references and materials studied, there was hardly any article found to emphasize specifically on the dual role of woman in their work environment and personal life. Moreover, surprisingly the studied found with special focus on role of women in hotel industry, but there was no further study related to work-life among women in hotel industry. Therefore, here it is part of recommendations for betterment of this conditions and giving more ideas for future studies:

- To pay more attention to the role Human Resource Department to eliminate the current situation of women in hotels by providing practices and designing strategies.
- To prepare a flexible shift schedule for women in hotel industry.
- To design strategies with the help of which, women can manage their life aspects easier. (should not get mentally affected)
- Career Progression Programs and seminars related to Work-Life Balance should be held for managers of various departments with high number of women in their department and for women employees as well, for better understanding of condition and ways of managing this issue.
- To take the advantages of the feature” Multitask” in company in various strategic ways.

XI. CONCLUSION

Human capitals are the treasury of any organizations, as they are the main cause of productivity, cost reduction and reputation. Moreover, in industries with a direct connection with customers, which are usually comes under the category of service-oriented industries such as hospitality industry; there is a need to fresh human resources with a fresh personality. Although problems in workplace and life are undeniable, but they should be fair and manageable, otherwise, they may cause conflict and confusion and disturbs the Work-Life Balance of employees. It usually happens due to work overload, long working hours, fatigue and even the responsibilities inside individual’s personal life such as family, child care, adult and etc. When individual’s responsibilities of these two separate domains overlap each other, the balance between Work and life gets disturbs and in most cases specially in hotel industry and among women it leads to turn over and as according to reports about 50% of employees in hotel industry are women who has more duties at home in comparison with men. Lack of proper shift guidelines, unreasonable expectations, long working hours and etc. are the factors women in hotel industry suffers from. So that, this study focuses more on the importance of work-life balance among women working in hotel industry.

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