

Correlates of Work-Life Balance and Family Influence on Career Life Stages of Female Employees: Evidence from Literatures

¹Rishish Mishra, ²Dr. Mohit Kumar, ³Abhishek Mishra
Research Scholar, Associate Professor, Research Scholar
School of Management Studies
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, INDIA.

Abstract: The historical literature has revealed that women have been a subject of oppression and domination by Indian patriarchal society along with the challenges that have always been there for them. In this connection, the present paper is spiritualized by the concept of work-life balance and influences that have been on working women and female employees. The study mainly focuses on the basic notions of work-life balance and its meaning in the Indian context. Further, the paper discusses the role of the family in influencing the work-life of female employees, specially engaged in service sectors. Also to understand what methods and strategies can opt to maintain and practice for a balanced life. The primary objective of this paper is to understand the phenomena of work-life balance and correlation with career life stages of female employees in the service sector. The research is descriptive in nature and based on data collected using secondary sources. The study is limited to selected service sectors such as education, banking, and HR organizations and detailed findings have been discussed in the paper. The study further can be continued for covering the different sectors of working which are considered hard for female employees.

Keywords: Work-life Balance, Family Influence, Career Life Stages, Female Employees.

I. INTRODUCTION

Working to make ends meet has always been the prerequisite for survival. Traditionally, men were always considered breadwinners and their wives stayed at home as caretakers of the children and maintained the home. With the emergence of civilization, people began to obtain a formal education and diversified their career path, whereas women still worked as a homemaker and her progression in life was linear and predictable. One of the most significant changes in the labour market over the previous two decades has been the dramatic increase in the participation of women in the labour force. Today, women are increasingly becoming educated much ahead of their male counterparts and securing good jobs and sometimes they tend to earn more money than men. The changing workforce demographics have made it difficult for many individuals to balance the conflicting demands of work and family life. These difficulties have forced a re-examination of the old models of coordinating work and family life (Lee & Kanungo, 1984). Men and women, irrespective of their caste, religion, gender and upbringing, come together to work in tandem and achieve something which is bigger than their individual name and fame. A gendered division of labour, with the wife caring for the family and the husband, assuming the breadwinner role, is no longer a viable option for couples today. But this change has not come overnight.

Historically women have suffered coercion and domination by the patriarchal society in India and have faced many problems and challenges. However, this has continued to be the case, despite the fact that the present society pitches the impression that people are liberal-minded about the issues relating to gender equality. The idea of discrimination further holds good when we see studies conducted by Clutterbuck & Devine in the year of 1987 which takes the view that men should go out to work while women stay at home. This hackneyed mindset has raised barriers against which women are continuously tested in pursuit of their careers.

Today, as married women commonly pursue their careers outside the home, alarms as to their ability to achieve equal footing with their male counterparts without losing their family need trouble both policymakers as well as economists (Blau, 2000). Globalization led industrialization has made available to societies in cheaper and more efficient ways of working. The increased feminization of the labour force is also experienced within the context of India. According to the Ministry of Labour, Government of India (2015), during the period between 1995 and 2005, 58 per cent of females contributed to the growth in the labour force as compared to only 42.3 per cent of males. This places greater pressure on women to try and juggle their work and domestic responsibilities. Despite the decades of modernization efforts since its independence in 1947, the participation of women in organizations has remained low. However, in recent years, with the increased pace of urbanization and modernization, coupled with other factors like demographic and social changes, increased female literacy rate, focus on female higher education, exposure through media and increasing work opportunities and the widespread acceptance of women working outside the home have also resulted in women taking up employment. Indian women, irrespective of their social caste and economic classes, are entering leading to a rapid change in the society in general and organization in particular into paying occupations. This massive participation of females in the organization can be attributed to the increasing opportunities for women in India (Moorhead et al.

1997). This implies a host of new challenges for today's workers as they struggle to cope up with the often competing pressures of work demands and personal responsibilities with an increased concern for the boundary between the employee's work life and personal work life (Hochschild, 1997). Until recently, legal and cultural practices, coupled with the aberration of restricted women's entry and participation in the workforce. Consequent to the poor socio-economic status of women and their economic dependency on men, this new change not only needs attention but also structured probing to understand the issue in totality.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 2.1 To understand the phenomenon of work-life balance for female employees.
- 2.2 To identify the career interruptions on female employees due to family influence.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research is qualitative which uses a descriptive approach. The conceptual research method has also been adopted to get detailed literature and a deeper understanding of the subject. The foundation of theories and concepts of work-life balance and career life progression has been reviewed from secondary data which have been sourced from different kinds of literature such as economists, various national and global agencies, journals, articles, books, websites, e-books, organizational reports and other reports. Further, we have gone through different research websites to understand the concept and past efforts that have been done in the concerned field and also to assess the various theories, philosophies and principles available to the related subject and literature made available by past researchers.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Professor Michelle Ryan from the University of Exeter in her TEDx Talk entitled 'Work-life Balance: Balancing Time or Balancing Identity?' in 2015 explored that, Women have taken unbelievable steps when it comes to workplace equality. Women are acquiring a higher qualification from the university at a better rate as compared to men and they are seeing success in various professions and sectors such as education, medicals, bankings, retail and service industries. But, women are still underrepresented in several occupations including politics, top management positions, the police force and armed forces as well and they continue to be underrepresented in the roles of a senior and executive management. Some researchers and authors make the argument that the underrepresentation of women is a choice that females make themselves and they choose not to go into the above-said roles or into particular sectors. The argument further goes that women have a greater need for work-life balance as compared to men and they are not prepared to be motivated or make the required sacrifices. These kinds of argument are reflected in women as well.

4.1 Career

A career is a sequential arrangement of jobs undertaken in the entire life. Career includes diverse roles including activities related to both jobs and work. Traditionally, career was an indication of paid employment commonly known as occupation. However, in today's phraseology, career is an ongoing process of learning that leads to the development with the inclusion of work experience, public involvement, various employment life roles, organizational activities, training and development, interests and volunteer work.

4.2 Work-Life Balance

Let us take an example of a sports car which is highly efficient and convincing and its engine produces an amazing 199 kW at 6500 RPM and a torque of 330 NM at 4000 RPM. Now the reason that the car is so efficient and what makes the human being comparatively inefficient is that the sports car has only one goal and that goal is exceptionally clear that it has to go very fast down tarmac roads. As a general principle, no machine can be optimally efficient at more than one thing. For example, a robot that has to both climb stairs and make coffee will be far less efficient than two distinct machines, each of which can focus exclusively on a single work. The more limited goals will be, the higher would be the chances of efficiency. Unlike sports cars, our brain is not designed or evolved to be maximally efficient at any one thing. This amazing cognitive and emotional machine is a profound generalist and it comes abstemiously well equipped for a huge range of promising activities such as to write a novel, bring up a child, drive very fast, writing office reports, go into politics or expand a small business into the Indian market. Now the price that we pay for being a generalist is that we all be less good at any one of the many activities we perform than someone who did only one thing their whole life long.

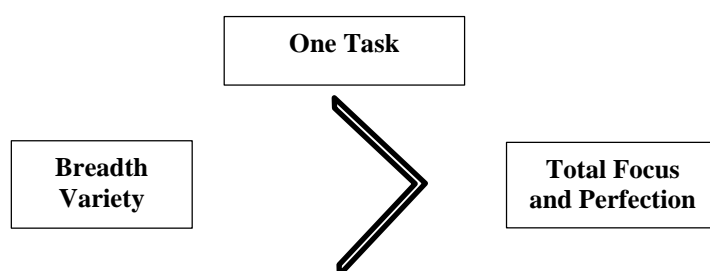


Figure 4.1: Constraints on Career Development in Women

The above figure is an example of understanding the concept of focus. Focusing on one thing to the exclusion of all others has its cost. There is a cost to being a human equivalent to a sports car. Unfortunately, our society has set up an absurd idea that it will be possible to do many things and do them all completely well. That is why we hear so much talk about the concept of “Work-Life Balance” which means perfectly optimal career and perfect optimal home life. However, some researchers do not agree with these phenomena and believe that work-life balance is impossible because everything worth fighting for unbalances our life. And if we are strung out across multiple roles in life, then all our aspects will suffer.

4.3 Definition Clarity of Work-Life Balance

The term ‘work-life balance’ emerged as a term to explain the balance between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside paid work. Having a work-life balance means that the equilibrium is in the right position for the individual concerned. There is no one-size-fits-all definition of work-life balance. For some people, it means spending more time on paid work and less time at home, while for others it means ensuring that work in running the business does not encroach on the time needed for personal responsibilities.

In the words of Hudson (2005), Work-life balance can be defined as a balance between the multiple roles that an individual play in his life. The balance of work and life is a continuous struggle that both males and females face. However, females owing to their family obligations are more likely to face a conflict between work and family. Whereas, Dundas (2008) argue that work-life balance is about managing the work and all family, including community activities, volunteer work, personal development, leisure, and recreation seamlessly. On the other hand, Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) define work-life balance as the maximization of work and family role judiciously.

This brings us to a thought that work-life balance is a situation in which the demands of an individual’s job and personal life are equal.

Table 4.1: Different Factors Impacting Work-Life Balance of Female Employees

Demographic profile and biographic profile	Work-Life Balance of Female Employees
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 tasks	
The expectation of facilities at the workplace and enhancement of skills	
Superior interaction at work	
Facing biological hazards while performing tasks	
Impact of stress on self	
Understanding emotions, the role of empathy while performing tasks	
Perception towards different components of WLB policies	

4.4 Theoretical Underpinnings of Work-Life Balance

Thomas Reuters Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation explored that work-life balance was considered a top issue for the Asian countries. Societies are expecting mothers to coach their children through a highly competitive school system. As women are on their independence and work outside the home, they began to realize that it is very different from what a man experiences. Men are traditionally the breadwinners, they work and then come home to relax whereas a woman's work, then comes home to continue her work in the house. Exhausted, she begins to wonder if she can handle both. Being a working mother is not an easy road. According to the International Labour Office, at the global level, women in the workforce have decreased from 52 per cent to 49 per cent since 1995. The alarming trend does not bode well for the future of women in the workplace.

A report, prepared by the Statistics Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs in the year 2015, presents the latest analysis on the status of women around the world. The report states that, as a group, women work equivalent to men. When both paid and unpaid work such as household chores and caring for children are taken into account, women work longer hours. Women have intelligence and skills and are able to handle the same job as men do. They are now found in every job in the market and if women are single and have no obligations outside of the workforce, balancing home and work is not really an issue.

According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, 69.9 per cent of women either working or looking for work had children under the age of 18 and found themselves in a stressful situation. How do they balance work and family? Most women feel that they are

being overwhelmed with carriers and family care and they believe that there are just not enough hours in a day to get everything done. Eventually, their bodies begin to shut down, illness sets in and they get sick or stressed becomes too great and they collapse mentally.

4.5 Career Progression amongst Women

Progression of women's career has many barriers which may include organizational culture and family issues. The organizational and managerial values in these organizations tend to be characterized by stereotypical views of women's roles, attributes, preferences, and commitments. These in turn influence decisions about who is suitable for particularly a position, which is seen to have potential and so forth. Inhospitable organization's culture is one of the most significant barriers to the career advancement of women and a major factor in diminishing their satisfaction with work in large organizations (Phillips and Goodine, 1997, p.571).

The New York Times magazine in recent years published an article titled "The Opt-Out Revolution" which explored that many women who are resigning or quitting high powered positions and successful positions in an earlier time before they reach the glass ceiling because they wanted to spend more time at home with their families. One of the female participants interviewed for the article said that conquering the world is not their aim, and they don't want to live like a queen.

It is also important to have a look at the choices that women make and the concerns that they have but if they take such decisions purely at face value, what they might end up ignoring is the continuing existence of societal barriers such as the glass ceiling. There may be some more complex things going on and they need to look at the circumstances and context under which they make these decisions.

Owing to this inhospitable culture several women choose not to apply for more senior positions because they believe that the balance between work and life that they have managed to achieve in their current position cannot be maintained at a higher level one due to increase in job satisfaction (Hyman et al. 1996). To counter this, many women leave organizations and start their own entrepreneurial venture, thereby ensuring feasible timings for operations. Businesses headed by women are one of the fastest growing groups. This was further strengthened with the opinion of the women interviewed by McKenna (1997) who opined that by running their own organizations, they could focus more on the quality of what they did over how it was done, and provide the means for their staff and themselves thereby attaining a balance between work and life.

4.6 Developing Career

Developing a career is a process of schematizing life, learning, and work. The career development process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the kind of people they become, the sense of purpose they have, the income at their disposal (Bowlbey, 2002) further, career development also determines the social-economic contribution they make to their communities and societies. Career development is frequently affected by family as well as work commitments and responsibilities, unlike those of men. Several studies conducted on women empowerment and work-life balance suggested that at the beginning of the career or at the beginning of the training, men and women have absolutely the same level of ambition but that for women the ambition erodes over time. This erosion by the third year of their undergraduate degree, women are less likely to say that they want to be a scientist or a politician or CEO. Larwood and Gutek (1987) concluded that any theory of women's career development must take account of five factors: Career preparation, or how women are brought up to view the idea of a career and whether they believe they will have one or not, the availability of opportunities should be taken into consideration, and whether they are limited to women, compared to men, marriage, viewed as neutral for men but harmful to the career of women. Similarly, pregnancy and having children inevitably cause women to take some kind of career break and timing and age, as career breaks and family relocations often mean that women's careers do not follow the same chronological patterns as those of men.

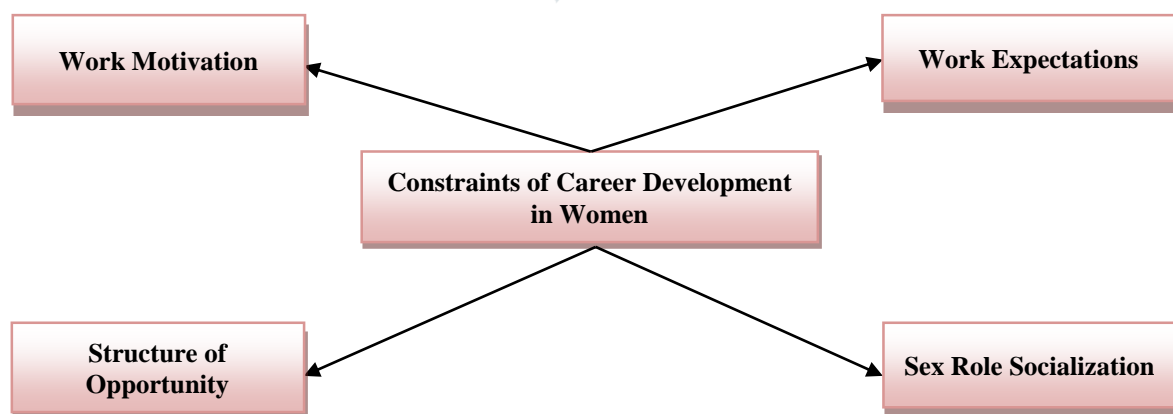


Figure 4.2: Constraints on Career Development in Women

The process of career development starts with the individual getting to know them and then synchronizing their interests, aspirations, and skills with options for study and work. Basically, developing a career is more than just a job, it is all about setting the life present & future that one aspires to get. Developing a career must be pursued as an organized approach to match employee goals with the business needs of the organization in support of workforce development initiatives. In this process, the purpose of career development must be kept job performance, enable individuals to take advantage of future job opportunities and fulfil agencies' goals for a dynamic and effective workforce (Jesse Buttrick Davis, 1871-1955).

4.7 Role of Family Influence

Working women need to share their feelings and stress with those that care about them, including their husband, children, and parents. They need to find a time when they can sit down together with the family without any distractions. They need to start the discussions about what is happening in their lives and how it is affecting them in many cases, family members may be unaware of the extent of their stress, but as a family, they need to create a plan to get organized and find the right balance between their profession and their family. Finding a moment for them to take breaks, relax, do something for them, and also needs to eat well and get plenty of the rest.

According to the Pew Research Centre, studies show an unequal division of labour. In most partnerships couple and household with two full time, working parents answered a series of questions about the division of tasks in the house and managing the children. The study reveals that 54 per cent thought that mother did more, 39 per cent said it was shared equally. According to the survey, 47 per cent said that the mother did more when the children are sick and another 47 per cent felt it was shared equally as far as handling household chores and responsibilities. 31 per cent said that women did more and 59 per cent said it was equal when asked about disciplining children and playing or doing activities. 20 to 22 per cent said that mothers did more and 62 per cent said it was shared equally.

In the words of Sumita Parmar (2010), as more women begin to take up jobs outside the home, there is an attitudinal change that is beginning to become noticeable. In the middle classes earlier, women's jobs and incomes were viewed as supplementary to the man's and therefore not given their due importance. In contemporary times women are frequently as professionally qualified as the men and the incomes they earn are equally substantial.

However, Kartikeya Batra (2011) states, Economies across the world is finding it increasingly difficult to ignore women, rather it has become next to imperative to treat them as crucial components of the global system. Despite the increasing workforce participation of women, India remains largely a hierarchical male-dominated society. The cultural traditions and family role structures have not changed significantly and women on average still bear responsibilities for daily household chores, such as cooking, shopping, providing care for children and aged family members (Kalliath et al. 2011).

4.8 Work-Life Balance and Women Employees

Kathleen P., Myra D (2008), The rise of women in the workforce has shown significant improvements for women, families and even poverty levels; and yet, most feel there is still a long way to go. Women all over the globe are dealing with the same balance issues and trying to understand how to "have it all" – both the successful family and home and the successful career.

Kristen (2011), There are several reasons why work-family conflict may have a greater impact on satisfaction outcomes for women. For example, psychological processes may differ by gender, due to the element of choice in the work role for some women, women's tendency to value different aspects of work than men or because the women's inclination to experience more positive emotions from nonwork roles than men translates to greater positive emotions from combining roles. In addition, due to gender role expectations, working women may feel a greater sense of guilt and worry over having multiple life roles than their male counterparts.

Reshmi Majumdar (2011), Women today are glorying in marriage, motherhood, and career, but on their own terms. It's no longer a choice amongst the three. Rather, it is all about fulfilling the needs of diverse demands. A growing number of women are creating a middle ground for themselves by taking a sabbatical and then trying to reboot their careers with a lot of cooperation from the organization. Flexi-Office engagement model provides the woman with a work-life balance, which over a period of time prepares the women to take up higher responsibilities on a full-time basis. Women who are professionals would not be able to succeed without family support. Generating economic value for my country is as important to me as having a happy personal life (Madhuri Dixit, Sulajja Firodia Motwani, 2011).

4.9 The Impact of Work-Life Imbalance

Dr. Meena Bobdey (2010), Having an imbalanced life, strained relationships and passionless life, leads to a reduction of productivity in life, both at work and at home and ill-health. The consequences associated with work to the family conflict have been found to be predominantly negative. With work to family conflict, the employees work interferes with the family and such

interference is associated with the number of negative consequences, including negative association with employees' work attitudes and turnover intentions (Stephen, 2011).

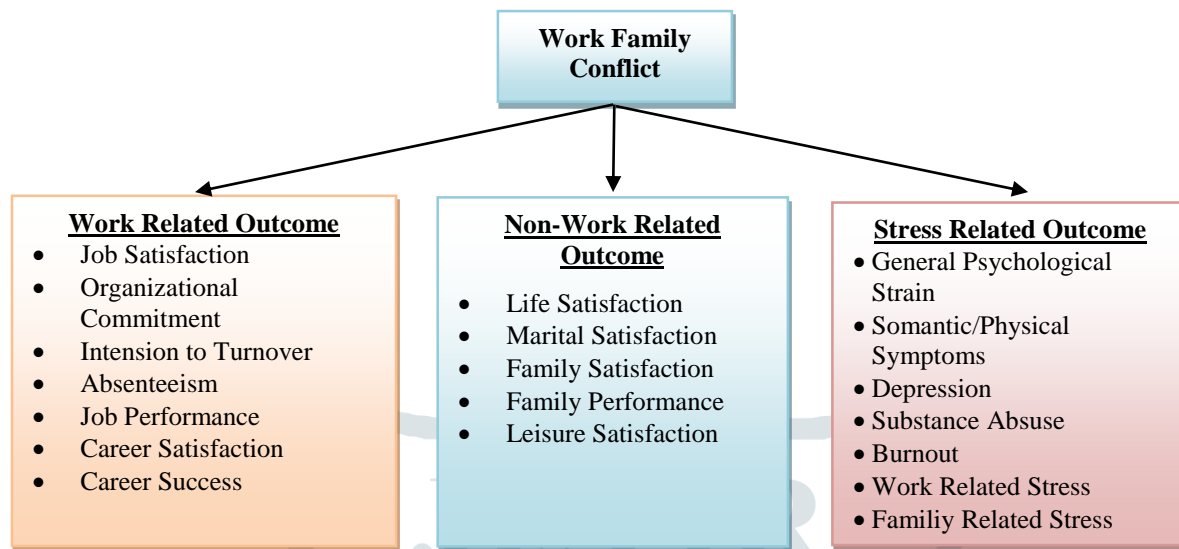


Figure 4.3: Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and its Outcomes (Allen et al., 2000).

V. CONCLUSION

The female ancestors have put the current generation on a very strong platform. During their time, they have fought very pitched battles for issues that we take for granted today. The right to want to study, the right to want to work, the right to want to marry someone of their choice and sometimes even the right to take decisions on behalf of the children whom they have brought into the world. One of the biggest differences between men and women and the middle management level is that women are much less likely to say that they will make sacrifices for their career and it seems that maybe it's just quite simple. The woman just doesn't make these sacrifices, but it has been seen that women say that they are unwilling to make sacrifices early because they believe that their sacrifices won't be rewarded. They are more likely to feel that they have a poor work-life balance and they are less likely to make sacrifices in their careers, but far from being innate, the literature suggests that these decisions and priorities are very much related to workplace experiences.

If we look at the traditional way of work-life balance then we will come to know that it talks about the issues of the time. The time that we spent at work versus the time that we spent at home with friends, with family or engaging in hobbies. Time does play an important role. The initiatives and interventions around work-life balance, we find that most of the women concentrate on time, part-time working, work from home, job share and we believe that all of these initiatives are incredibly important because they give women the opportunity to balance time in their lives. Based on the discussion above we can safely conclude that a well-structured, and facilitated, work-life balance will not only aid in career progression but also in allaying anti-change environment. The other family members can focus on their specific duties and women can balance work and home and enjoy life.

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