



A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN IN DUAL- CAREER FAMILIES IN CHENNAI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute around half of the world's populations. Therefore, they are, regarded as the better half of the society. In traditional societies, they were confined to the four walls of houses performing household activities. In modern societies, they have come out of the four walls to participate in all sorts of activities. Women have been performing exceedingly well in different spheres of activities like academics, politics, business, administration, social work and so on. Men are no longer considered to be the sole economic provider for the family. With the rise in females' education, their psychological need to develop self-identity, materialistic orientation, status consciousness, and the rising cost of living, even married women are entering in to professional careers, and at the same time taking care of the family members.

Today, the dual career life style is progressing tremendously. Contrary to the single-career family where either spouse is engaged in gainful occupation, in the dual career family, both husband and wife pursue an economically gainful career and also maintain a family life together. In dual-career families, both wives and husbands are benefited out of their employment and income. Therefore it is necessary to study the work life balance of working women in dual career families in Chennai.

INTRODUCTION

Work life balance is an important consequence of the professional world for both men and women. However the present study makes an attempt to study the work life balance from the perspective of women professionals of dual career families in Chennai. Chennai being one of the important cities of India in terms of urbanization and services boom has witnessed spectacular

changes in socio-economic status of women employees. The growing living costs, exploding industrial base, traffic congestion, distance of work place from home, competitive work environment, need for social recognition etc have necessitated work life balance. Balance between work and home is a must for harmony and peace in one's life (Sandhya Anvekar 2011)¹.

Hence it is imperative to have better understanding of their work-life balance. Work life balance is an state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal. Clark (2000)² defines work life balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict". The imbalance in the work life of an women attracted a great deal of concern because a large number of problems related to women health, monotony at work place, declining level of productivity and competence at the employee level had started surfacing. Such imbalance has a negative effect on personal life of working women in dual career families which in turn have taken form of social hazards such as increasing number of divorces, infertility due to high stress levels and starting nuclear families etc. The ultimate performance of any organization depends on the performance of its employees, which in turn depends on several factors. These factors can be related to work or can be familial or personal matters. An organization which successfully addresses these issues, leads to a healthy synergy in the working atmosphere of the company and its employee. The major determinants that help the working women of dual career families to balance their work and life are discussed below.

Attitude towards work

It is identified that employees with better attitude towards work were good performers (Rottenberry & Moberg 2007)³. Enhanced performance at work combined with supportive work environment motivates the women employee to be an interesting person at home. Hence positive attitude towards work enables their healthy work life balance.

Work environment

The most significant factor was the motivating work environment which has positive and direct relation with work balance. Fair treatment and performance appreciation at work lend emotional support to women employees. Employees with supportive work environment reported greater job satisfaction, optimistic attitude towards work and organizational commitment.

Support from family members

Apart from the attitude towards work and work environment from the work end, motivation from family members, compatibility and support in tasks were other factors that help balance at home and work for women employees. Emotional security and safety at home was the most significant factor to balance life at home.

Work life conflicts

Conflicts are experienced by working women in situations where they want to be honest to their jobs and to their households and want to dedicate time to both. When conflict between the two domains occurs the consequences are reflected in both organization and domestic life. That work family conflict can encourage employees to consider leaving organizations. This conflict would have a significant bearing on the women employees' work life balance.

Health care and recreation

Both the roles require physical strength and those who perceived their health as poor were the sufferers both physically as well as mentally (Abdul Gani, Roshan Ara, 2010)⁴. Poor health led to poor performance of roles thereby resulting in imbalance. Recreation activities such as listening to music, picnic, watching movies etc refreshes and relxes the mind of an individual.

Level of stress

The sources of stress in the dual career women are classified into internal and external types of stress. The former for example deals with balancing career and family life and finding suitable child care arrangements. Whereas the latter includes the congruity between dual-career life style and traditional norms and the occupational pressures for mobility (Skinner 1980)⁵.

Work life balance initiatives

Both the work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict can be reduced when employee use work life balance initiatives. It results in better work life balance. Further it is identified that managerial support, perceived career damage and organizational time demands predicted the use of work life balance initiatives.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

This study aims to shed limelight on how married working women can manage the ever-increasing demands of work and personal life. It attempts to get insights and understandings of employees' attitude towards work, work environment, family support and the use work life balance initiatives.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the major factors influencing the work life balance of women in dual career families.
2. To examine the relationships among the factors influencing work life balance of women in dual career families.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no influence of work life balance factors on the problems and difficulties faced by the women employees.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present study covers Chennai city only. The study is restricted to the Married women working in educational institutions, banks, government offices, hospitals and professionals in Chennai. It includes the various aspects of work life balance such as attitude towards work, work environment, support from family members, work-life conflicts, health care and recreation, level of stress and work life balance initiatives.

The **Cronbach alpha values for factors is 0.75**. This shows that all the statements in the questionnaire are highly reliable and validated with responses of women employees.

Study Area and sample size

The Survey is conducted among the married working women in dual career families located in Chennai city. Chennai hosts a varied number of business establishments, services industries and government institutions making the study realistic and meaningful. Chennai, being the metropolitan city, truly represents employees belonging to various strata of the society.

The data consisting of 100 respondents were collected through survey method.

- Two-tailed t-tests were used to ascertain the work life conflicts of women employees by comparing its two major determinants impact of home on work and work on home.

Table representing Impact of Work on Home

Statements	t - value	Sig (2 tailed)
Responsibilities at home reduce effort that I can devote to my job	2.102	0.000
Personal or family worries and problems distract me at work place	3.348	0.000
Stress at home makes me irritable at work	2.254	0.010
Because of family commitments I missed better opportunities at work place	1.875	0.602
My job makes me feel too tired to do things at home	11.221	0.000
My job reduces effort that I can give to activities at home	11.4116	0.001
Having a good on the job makes me a better companion at home	30.211	0.000
Work make me more interesting person at home	22.254	0.000

- It is evident that the women employees’ living in joint family complains about the impact of home on work and difficulty in attaining the work-life balance. It is found that women employees with children are optimistic towards job nature and organizational work balance.
- It is noted that women employees in the field of education are comfortable with their conducive environment, physical care, psychological care and rational approach. Women employees in the health industry experiences impact of home on work and also had problems in achieving the desired work life balance.
- Women employees with income around rupees three to five lakhs had stress inception and a sturdy impact of home on work and also had problems both at work and home. It is also found that women employees earning above rupees five lakhs are highly influenced by job nature, psychological care and flexibility.
- Full-time Women employees had stress inception. Women working for five days a week are adapted to the flexibility in their organisation. Women employees working for six days a week are well supported by the family members.

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis is rejected at 5% level and it is inferred that

- There is a significant difference among the factors influencing work-life balance.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

To the organisation

Effective work life programs facilitate a symbiotic relationship between the employee and employer for mutual benefits. Having a job analysis for all the jobs creates transparency between the management and the employee regarding their contribution towards the organisation. Family get together at work place technique can be adopted to acknowledge the role of family in the employees' performance.

CONCLUSION

Work-life balance is an essential ingredient for accomplishment and satisfaction in everyone's life. Successful work-life balance will ultimately contribute to productivity and success for the women in dual-career families at the workplace as well as at home. Women executives have a positive attitude towards work in empowering them by encouraging them through proper recognition and feasible job nature. It is the job nature and job recognition of women employees highly influences factors that determine their work -life balance.

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