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**WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG WOMEN PROFESSIONALS - A STUDY OF TELANGANA STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present enquiry has as its theme, the understanding of the predictors of Work-Life Balance among women professionals in Telangana State along with assessing their work-family conflicts and identifying their coping strategies that enable the achievement of equilibrium between work and family. The study also devotes to examine the presence and pervasiveness of 'Glass-ceiling', as affecting the career prospects of women professionals in Telangana State. The theories of Symbolic Interaction and Gender Inequality have been adopted as conceptual frame for analysis. The results reveal that though different strategies are resorted to meet the demands of career on family, the pattern of coping strategies are similar among all professional groups. Though conflict is pervasive in both the domains, the work domain is seen as a slightly greater source of conflict than the family domain. The prevalence of 'glass-ceiling' is confirmed and it is found that it denies due appreciation and ruin the career prospects of women professionals.

**KEYWORDS**

Women Professionals, Work- life Balance, Role conflict, Work-family conflict, Gender Discrimination, Glass – Ceiling.

**INTRODUCTION**

The fact that employees in huge buildings of prospering Indian firms take home huge pay every month, can paint a rosy picture of their lives in anyone's mind. However, when we take a closer look, we see another reality that is not so bright. In reality, the lives of these individuals are marked by pressures, hectic schedules, and extremely long hours at work which takes a toll on their health, and also relationships at home and social engagements.

It is true that there is no substitute for hard work, especially for the Indian professionals who are beginning to make a mark in the global business world. But, striking a balance between work and personal life is equally imperative. After all, one cannot be expected to make a living at the expense the quality of life that all humans deserve.

According to psychotherapists and trainer-consultants in personal growth, human beings do not have just one drive, but many drives and needs. In order for them to have a sense of wellbeing, these needs are to be met adequately. Work is important and it gives a lot of meaning in life, but one must always remember that life is bigger than work. When our lives are only about work, other needs will not be met and which results in frustration.

When work-life balance is not maintained, a person begins to experience sense of emptiness and hollowness which is difficult to deal with. In addition, relationships take a beating and the person begins to experience loneliness, depression, despair and cynicism.

A result of work-life imbalance can be seen in a survey on career couples by Team Lease in February 2008. It showed that 54 percent of the respondents felt they were merely “weekend parents. In addition, 34 percent of the working couples surveyed felt that since there were two careers the chances of a divorce were high. Moreover, most participants agreed that working in odd shift hours had a bearing on their marital relationships.

The psychotherapists believe that mid-career professionals are most prone to having work-life imbalance. Since they believe that they need very little time to reach the position of desire. This crisis often leads to a tendency to overwork to achieve things faster, and the work-life balance gets disturbed. One must not act while she or he is facing this anxiety. Being led by the feelings can be disastrous. One must take time to understand the feelings and realize that it is natural to have those feelings. The work-life balance is also essential for the professional growth of a person. Research has found that a healthy balance increases the individual’s professional productivity due to a sense of greater self-confidence, it helps in the ability to communicate effectively, and it boosts morale – which ultimately helps the organization as well.

#### **Case for Balance in India**

The industry in the U.K., and elsewhere in the West, is far ahead in this area than its counterparts in developing economies like India’s. Even government legislations in many Western countries make it mandatory for business establishments to provide work-life balance to their employees. Yet, there exist groups such as the Employers for Work-Life Balance in the U.K. and the Centre for Work-Life Policy in the U.S. Having said this, how much more India Inc. needs to do in this area is not difficult to imagine. India makes a stronger case for work-life balance given that the boom in her economy is a more recent phenomenon which puts the workforce in greater stress than in developed nations.

What’s more, India is a service destination for numerous global business firms due to the availability of cheaper workers, many of who are required to work in night shifts. Most Indian professionals find it difficult to cope with the stress levels. Increasing work pressures and the rising need to travel for work are potential contributors to a new, mounting stress placed on corporate executives like me. Gone are the days when executives were concerned only about the bottom line and market share.

#### **Women Bear the Brunt**

The entry of a large percentage of women into the workforce is adding to the complexity, in a largely male-dominated society like India’s, women are made to shoulder all the major responsibilities of the household, be it buying groceries or raising kids. This is generally true even when the woman of the house has a career. Not that this attitude is not changing, but its pace is far slower than needed given that the number of women choosing to have a career is growing by the day. For instance, about 20 percent of the employees in Motorola India are women. For women, the problems are a lot more serious and so they opt out. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 demands that all women workers be given a three-month paid maternity leave. Unfortunately, almost all pregnant working women choose to work till very close to the delivery date so that they can utilize the leave

to look after their babies. But is it easy for nursing mothers to leave the baby home after three months? And it is not easy even to go back to work with a feeling of guilt for leaving their babies with maids or old grand parents. Besides, there is no legal provision for paternity leave, and therefore husbands can be of little help. Here is where it is in the interest of organizations to do something to 'tap into this talent pool' that will otherwise go unutilized.

### **Industry's Response**

Are Indian firms helping their employees balance work and life? Independent HR (human resource) experts think otherwise. Indian organizations are not really doing much and are not likely to. This is not a priority at all. You can see that many IT (information technology) companies are looking at a six-day week to bill additional revenue.

### **Review of Literature:**

This section documents the studies on women in the traditionally male dominated world of professions. It is presumed that although the past few decades have witnessed a striking increase in the number of women joining the professions, their position remains marginal in all the professions. Hence it will be interesting to probe into the studies on them with a view to gain information on the 'why' of the situation.

Brockman (2001) argued that although the legal barriers that historically prevented women from entering the legal profession have been removed, the informal and structural barriers that impeded their full participation in the profession still existed. According to her, gender bias and discrimination in the legal profession restricted women's career advancement. The study revealed how sexual harassment and discrimination were used as a form of social control to exclude the full participation of women lawyers.

Loy (2005) examined the career paths of women financial executives who had tried various approaches to balancing career and family. The professional level these women had attained requires a huge commitment of time, energy, and emotion that looked natural to employers and clients, who assume that a career deserves single-minded allegiance. Meanwhile, these women must confront the cultural model of family that defined marriage and motherhood as a woman's primary vocation. The above study focused on the social and cultural forces that created women's identities and shaped their understanding of what made life, worth living.

Findings of the studies on the challenges of female medical practitioners in Australia, London, and Denmark revealed that the key issues that affected the professional and personal lives of women included job satisfaction, balancing work and personal life, autonomy, availability of flexible work hours, fair remuneration, and having a voice in decision making. Key personal issues included self-care, time for relationships with a partner, children, family and friends, and time management to allow pursuit of non-medical interests. These conflicting demands made on female professionals diminished their job satisfaction and led to stress and imbalance in their lives. A supportive family, an understanding work environment, and changes in culturally based self-expectations of female professionals could lead to more fulfilling and well-balanced professional and family lives for women. (Kilmartin 2002).

Another study (Rout 1995) identified specific pressures at work and at home experienced by general practitioners and their spouses and concluded that a female physician's workload and decreased interest in her family were important stressors that affected her entire family unit. Other stressors included time pressure, hours on call, lack of support, and amount of paper work. Many women brought

work home, and spend time away from home at meetings, and family life was constantly role conflict as a major stressor for female general practitioners interrupted by telephone calls. This study also identified.

Women worldwide faced barriers in reaching top, executive posts," Although women in the United States hold only a small percentage of executive management positions, they have made more progress than women in other countries, according to the International Labor Organization's report, of the year 2001, titled, 'Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management.' The report examined the changing role of women in business and government in more than 70 countries, obstacles to their career development, and steps to improve opportunities for women and promote gender equality. According to the report, women in these countries were experiencing not just a 'glass ceiling,' but 'glass walls,' where women were not being trained for and offered mid-level positions that prepared them for the top positions.

"Another factor that prevented women from rising to the top in corporations is the predominance of 'male values' and 'gender roles,'" according to the above ILO report. In a 1995 survey of 355 personnel managers and female bank managers in the European Union, published in 1999, respondents ranked the dominance of male values as the biggest obstacle to recruiting and promoting women to management positions (68.8 percent) and family obligations as the second biggest (45.8 percent).

#### **Need and Significance of the Study.**

As regards finding the time for family and social life, depends on how each individual manages her or his time. If one finishes the work within the office hours, there will always be time for other engagements. The employees need to realize that they need to balance work and life for both success at the workplace and a fulfilled life. Organizations can only facilitate, but the initiative should be taken by the employee. Attaining a better work-life balance by utilizing mobility and technology in daily work schedules is the need of the hour.

Technology like Blackberry increases professional agility by allowing the freedom to work anytime and from anywhere. Many organizations today have implemented intranets, virtual private networks and other knowledge management systems, these technologies must be used by employees to stay in touch even if it means they have to work from home for non-work related purposes such as tending to a sick child or parents.

#### **Aims and Objectives:**

- 1) To study the status of Women's Division of labour from part times.
- 2) To examine the change in women with education.
- 3) To express the occupational aspirations of the women workers and the Hindrances in achieving them.
- 4) To study the constraints at home and work place and balancing in between two.
- 5) To elicit the differences between elite and lower class working women in balancing the work life.
- 6) To provide steps to empower the women to improve the quality of life.

Identifying the key need or reason for introducing work-life balance policies, building the commitment to it into the organization's vision statement, setting up a special task force, examining current practices, holding joint discussions with employees to evolve policies while also

identifying possible barriers, communicating policies through handbooks, newsletters, intranet and so on, holding workshops to help managers implement and manage policies, monitoring implementation and putting feedback systems into place. The government could play a critical role in being a catalyst of change. An advantage that Indian industry will however have is learning from the experiences of other countries in what has worked and what has not. But, there's no 'one size that fits all' and Indian companies will have to adapt policies to fit in with not just the nature of industry, profile of workforce and other such factors but also with the local culture and environment.

### **Conclusion**

The present study incorporates the results of an empirical analysis of the WLB issues faced by the women entrepreneurs of South India. Because of the paucity of specific studies in the area, a psychometric tool was developed, based on preliminary qualitative research and a literature survey, to measure the WLB issues of these entrepreneurs. Using 39 items, five factors, and a five-point scale, an explorative area (cluster-random) sampling survey of the WLB issues of women entrepreneurs in South India was conducted. Standard statistical processing of the generated data revealed a number of issues related to WLB, including the fact that women entrepreneurs struggle to juggle highly demanding familial, entrepreneurial, personal and societal duties and needs. The prominent WLB issues that they face are role overload, health maintenance problems, poor time management, dependent care issues and lack of sufficient support networks. The complexity of these issues poses very specific demands on the individual's role system. Although support network, quality of health and time management are positive predictors of WLB, dependent care issues and role overload are negative predictors. Even though the vast majority of respondents struggle with WLB issues, there exist significant variations in the perception of WLB among the various categories of women entrepreneurs, depending on age group, education level, income and marital status. As the work roles of women entrepreneurs and their personal and familial roles quite often contradict each other, these women struggle to strike a balance between work and personal life. As a result, work-life imbalances and conflict have become a common feature of the lives of many aspiring Indian women entrepreneurs.

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