

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND IMBALANCE: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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Abstract

Work life balance has become a vital issue for employees working in all sectors, especially for women employee because of dual responsibility of their work and home, it is very difficult to maintain a proper balance between work and life and consequently they face work-life conflict. This paper focuses on various variables related to work-life conflict. A conceptual model has been drawn on the basis of extensive literature identifying the work demand and family demand and also enlighten the various problem arises as a result of work life imbalances. The paper has been concluded with remarkable inference drawn from conceptual model and vast review of literature. It has been found that work demand is related to work-family conflict(WFC) and family demand is related to family-work conflict(FWC) , all these conflicts eventually lead to work life imbalance and have a negative impact on the performance of women employee at organization and at home.

Key words : *Work-life balance, Conflict, Women employee, Performance, Work demand, Family demand.*

Introduction

The term work-life balance was first used in United State in the late 1970 and it was coined in 1986. It experiences when demands from the domain of (paid) work are compatible with demands of another domain e.g. family or leisure time (Pichler, 2008). Building work-life balance is emerging as a new challenge for human resource development. The new paradigm shift of management from a small regional centric organization to global diversified competitive business organization has mounted large work pressure and enhanced responsibility on the employees to enhance production and productivity, such huge work pressure laid on employees created work life conflict. As women had stayed at home for cooking, cleaning, washing and caring of their children & dependents and men was expected to earn for their family as breadwinner, but today women have also entered in all fields like sports, politics, business (Ghosh, 2010) hence, they have to perform numbers of role at work and home which give

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rise many challenges in their life. The proper balance between work life and personal life of a person is a state of equilibrium between work demand and family demand and understood as a concept that supports employees to split their time and energy between work and family roles. It can be achieved by better time management through task prioritization that helps women employee to reduce their stress, conflict, absenteeism and turnover rate and increase their performance at home as well as at work.

The employers need to devise good work life balance policies for their employees because now it has been realized that people are the most important resource of production which direct and control all other resources, therefore, the employers are required to assist employees particularly women employees for maintaining their work life balance by providing family friendly policies and programmes like providing child and elder care support, maternity leave and benefits along with flexible schedule, transfer, promotion, reducing working hours, shifting work etc. Due to increased demand of work, women are finding more difficulties to achieve appropriate balance between work and family which hampers their proficiency to carry out their responsibility of work and home in the effective way. Lowe (2007) pointed out that work life imbalance is not a new problem, it has received more attention in this decade than ever before. The problem is posed not only for employee but also it has created a lot of trouble for organization also, therefore, both have needed to concentrate on this problem. Employees are facing problems like low level of job satisfaction, monotony, stress, absenteeism, turnover due to work life imbalance at work as well as cases of divorce, high stress level, and poor family relation problem at home. This study focus on women employee and its purpose is to develop basic outlook of their problem and to draw a conceptual model based on various thoughts from research studies and diverse literature review. This model speaks that work and family demand creates work-life conflict and this is in turn adversely affecting the performance of women employee at organization and at home.

Literature review

The balance between work and personal life have a positive impact on employees as it linked with increased productivity, better job performance and life satisfaction. A study identified the impact of work life balance practices, it has been suggested that flexible work arrangement would be able to relax the mind of the women employee to work freely and help them to maintain a balance (Mohan & Prabha, 2010). These practices were found positively related to turnover, absenteeism, and satisfaction level in a thesis (Morgan,2009; Thriveni,2012) but some variables such as marital status, age, working hours, and overtime has been identified in teaching field which had negative impact on work –life balance among women employee (Lakshmi & Gopinath, 2010) .

Work domain and family domain were major stressor in the life of employees, as result employee found themselves juggling with competing demands of work and family (Byron, 2005), therefore, they had to face a conflict between these both lives. Research studies on women

employee in banking sector reported that married women employee faced work-family conflict because they had to perform multiple roles in addition to their career. Hence, this study was aimed to identify those factors which gave rise to obstacles in managing both lives. It has been found that work characteristics like number of hours worked, inflexible work schedule and work stressor and family characteristics like number of children and their age had greater impact on work-family conflict (Victor, Thavakumar;2011).

Levy (2012) conducted a study on work life balance which explored the ways in which full time and part time work affect women and their perceived work-life balance and also examined the influence of child care support, educational attainment, age of youngest child, number of hours worked, and high workload on their perceived work life balance of working women. Work domain variables affect the perceived work life balance of working mothers. It was found in this study that full time employed working women with younger child had a significant negative impact on the success in balancing work-life.

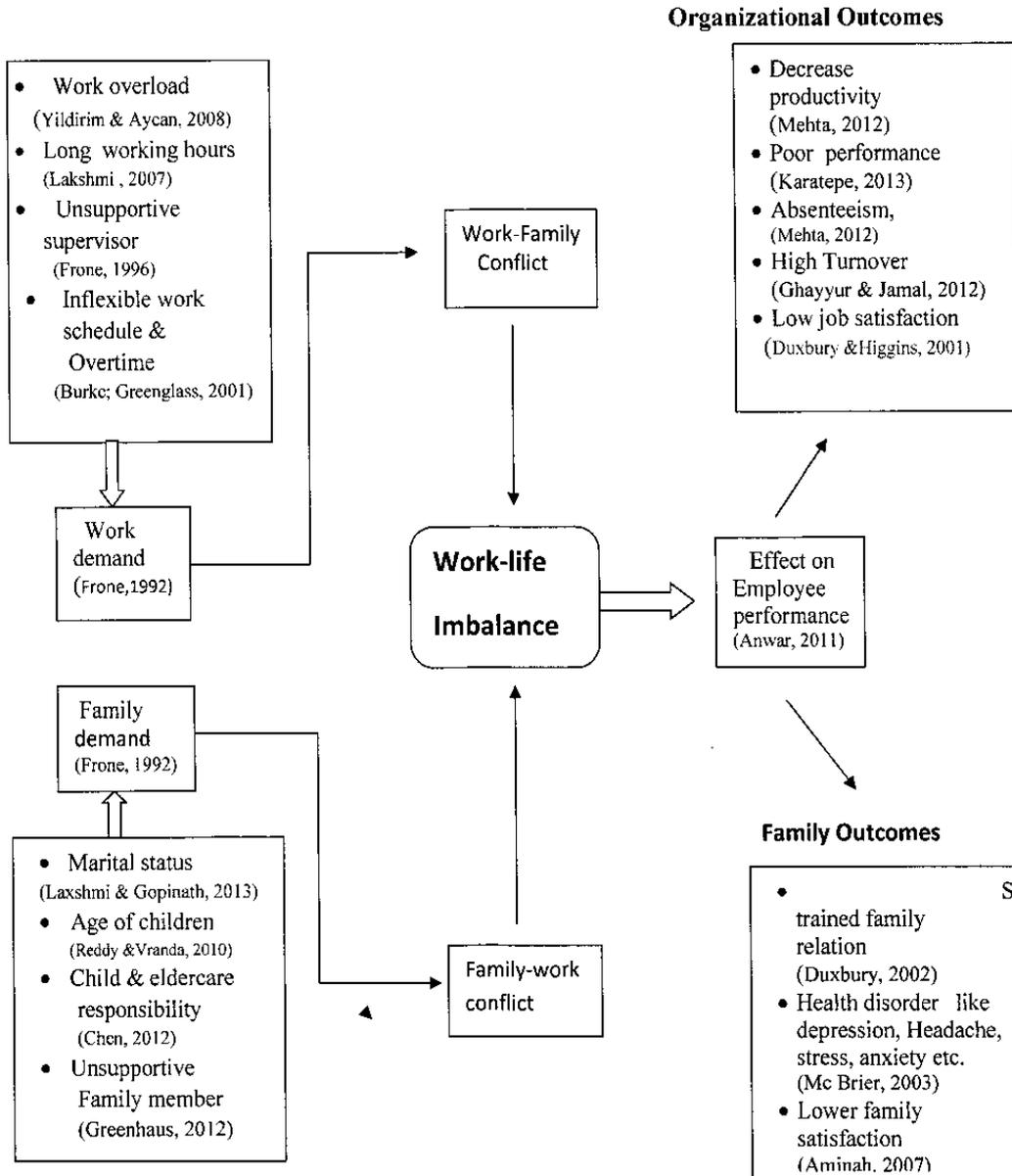
Guttek et al (1991) also conducted a study in which they explored work-family conflict (work interference with family) and family-work conflict (family interference with work). Both were clearly different and relatively independent with each other. Yildirim and Aycan(2008) examined in a study of Randomly drawn sample of 143 employed women (106 Academic nurses and 137 clinical nurses) the extent to which work demand (work overload, irregular work schedule, long working hours and overtime work) was related to work-family conflict as well as the life and job satisfaction of nurses in turkey. Result was found that nurses with heavy work demands experienced less work to family conflict, it has been suggested that they are more satisfied with their jobs and personal life when they receive social support from their supervisors. Another work demand such as irregular work schedules and work overload had the strongest relationship with nurses' work-family conflict (Yildirium and Ayan, 2008; Burke and Greenglass, 2001; Simon et al, 2004).Campbell and Kennard (1994) have studied the effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of women employee. Past research studies have shown work-life conflict is widespread and it has negative effect on well being.

A conceptual model for antecedents and outcomes of work-life imbalance

The model has been designed on the basis of various studies and thought drawn from diverse review of literature related to work-life conflict. Various variables have been recognized which are responsible for conflicts in work and personal life. Model also depicts outcomes of conflicts in organizational and family perspective. Every task needs time, energy and skill for its effective execution. As women employees have to perform multiple roles as compared to men, work demands and family demands both mount a pressure on women employees to spend more time and energy to carry out both roles. Hence, it becomes difficult for women employees to cope up with these competing demands. The gap in work demands and family demands give

rise to conflict. The conflict can be divided into two forms namely- Work-family conflict (WFC) and Family-work conflict (FWC). Frone et al (1992) has found that work demand is the most powerful causes of work-family conflict (WFC) and family demand is strongly related to family-work conflict (FWC).

Figure 1: Antecedents and Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance



Source : Self-developed Model

Work demand

When work demand such as long working hours, irregular work schedule, overtime, work overload or unsupportive supervisor, etc. interfere women employee to fulfill their family responsibilities, work-family conflict crop up. It has been examined in earlier researches that work overload and irregular work schedule had a positive relationship with work-family conflict, work pressure faced by nursing women have interfered their family life (Burke and Greenglaus,2001; Simon et al, 2004). Long working hours and overtime have also identified as work demand in addition to work overload, irregular work schedule, which also was positively related to work-family conflict (Yildirim and Aycan, 2008). Additional working hours at work refuses married women employee to attend the children and other dependent and to take care of their need which distort their work life balance (Lakshmi & Gopinath, 2011). As a result, 24% of men and 48% of women quitted their job because of long or inflexible working hours (Malhotra, 2013). Another study also indicates that unsupportive supervisor or employer can also interfere with their family life and work-family conflict can arise between both roles. It can only happen when employee don't found supporting employer towards them, to take care of their need. (Frone et al, 1996). It seems that all variables are the indicators of work demand, which become antecedents of work-family conflict.

Family demand

As women are playing dual responsibility of home and work, both are interrelated and interdependent on each other. There are numbers of variables which is the indicators of family demands on the part of women employee, such as child care, elder care, unsupportive family members, age of children, etc. When family demands dominate over work demands, then family-work conflict (FWC) arises which result in diminished work quality (Greenhauss, 2012). Previous research has shown that married women employee face higher family-work conflict (FWC) than single counterparts and parents experience higher family-work conflict (FWC) than non-parents (Herman & Gyllstrom, 1997). Furthermore, as women's participation increasing in the employment, the problem related to child and elder care takes place (Hindu Business Line, 19 June 2006). Several variables such as size of family, age of children have been found which affect work life balance of women employee and also influence the level of family-work conflict (FWC). Children are the most important family factor which affects the work-life balance. It has been studied that with younger children, women face more family-work conflict than those grown up child as child grow up they more involve in their job rather than home (Narayana,2013 ; Beutall & Greenhaus, 1980) but another study have indicated that women having an eldest child between 6 and 10 years, family-work conflict was found more. Therefore, the age of children was found positively related with family-work conflict among married working women (Reddy; Vrandra; Ahmed; Nirmala; Siddaramu, 2010). Marital status is demographic factor which affects work life balance. Women employees who are married, find interference in their work and face more conflict as compared to unmarried

women, as such, who are single and young are likely to tend have less family-work conflict as compared with those who have childcare and Eldercare responsibilities (Chen, 2006).

Work-family conflict (WFC) & Family-work conflict (FWC)

Work and family are two central domains in the lives of employees. Work life balance has been identified as a major issue for academic staff, especially for women academic staff (Sorcinelli, 2007). It was studied from various literatures that family demand on employed women like child care, elder care, house work is higher than the employed men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Therefore, work-life conflict has been considered as primarily a women's issue. The employee tend to share their time and energy between demand of work and family and try to make a proper balance and better synchronization between them, but excessive demand of one domain over another give rise to work-life conflict. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-life conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect i.e. participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role". Gutek et al (1991) conducted a study which has decided two dimensions of work-life conflict that is work-family conflict and family-work conflict, both are clearly different and relatively independent with each other.

Work-family conflict can be understood as work interference over the family life, for example the work demand like long working hours may restrain women employee to attend the family responsibility while Family-Work Conflict means interference of family over the work-life. For example, sometime family demand like child care, elderly care may become a reason of absenteeism for women employee and they leave their work at pending because of responsibility of their home (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994; Gutek et al, 1994). Demand for aligning motherhood and marriage with career has become a major challenge, therefore women are likely to face work-family conflict as compared to men colleagues (Williams and Alliger, 1994). Women have to carry out home responsibility along with their work, women give more priority to their home responsibility due to inherent affection for child care and home as such work-family conflict is more common than family-work conflict (Frone, 1992; Gutek, 1991). In another case if there is a single parent in a family, then work and family both responsibilities become imperative for him/her and face both types of conflict.

In today's competitive and global environment, both men and women are required to earn for their family. Women are expected to share the responsibility of their home with their husband, if she does 'not like so, the work-family conflict and family-work conflict can arise which leads to work life imbalance. It is the inability of employee to satisfy and meet the demands of their work and home, which adversely affects their performance at work and at home.

Effect of work-life imbalance on employee performance

Married women, who are the member of dual career families, feel larger role pressure from the work domain and family domain as compared to men. The work-life conflict has detrimental outcomes that have been well established in the research literature. A study has been done in Pakistan, which investigated the impact of work-life conflict on performance of employee, it was found that conflict between work and family roles negatively affect the employee performance (Anwar & Shahjad, 2011). Work life imbalance results in negative consequences which have been described below :

Organizational outcomes

Incompatibility or imbalance of work and life activities is also called as work-life conflict which effect the performance of employee at work (Kinnunen, Feldt, & Pulkkinen, 2006; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006). Work life imbalance results in less productivity at workplace , absenteeism , high attrition , low morale, more stress on the women employees working in service sector (Mehta, 2012). Asfaq, Mahmood & Ahmad (2013) studied the impact of work-life conflict and work overload on employee performance through collecting data from 300 employees working in banking sector of Pakistan. It was found that performance of employee was affected by work-life conflict and workload. There was prolonged working hours in banking sector as compared to other sector, it became difficult for women employee to manage their work and family life and it was negatively associated with employee performance. Karatepe (2013) has also suggested, employees who had work-family conflict, and Family-work conflict with work overload, they were not able to establish a balance between work and family roles, they were emotionally exhausted and less embedded in their job and placed poor performance at organization. Poor work-life balance led to many devastating things like tardy, bad performance, lack of motivation, more errors, and absence from work and so on and also it reduces quality of work and productivity without any doubt. Netemeyer et al. (1996) found intention to leave an organization to be correlated with both work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC). In some studies, both interference were also found positively related to employee turnover in both banking and pharmaceutical organizations (Ghayyur, Jamal; 2012, Anwar; Hammed, 2013).

Organization success depends on people, if employee do not find proper balance between work and life, their physical and mental health will retard which in turn affect the organizational productivity and profitability (Anderson at al 2004). A National study in the year 1977 on the changing workforce reported that 29% of employed women had problems with babysitters, daycare facilities which caused absenteeism and reduced concentration due to imbalance. In the study of Duxbury and Higgins (2001), role overload leads to work-life conflict that affects the performance of employee. Work life conflict have a direct relationship with job satisfaction, excessive work demand interfere in family life of women employee which negatively influence

their job attitude, as a result employee doesn't get satisfaction from their job (Rathi & Barath, 2012) and their performance level got reduced.

Family outcomes

Work-life conflict put adverse effect on well being, health, marital and family life. Employees face problems in their personal relationship due to work life imbalance. A study indicates that employees are more likely to experience negative relationship with their children and their spouse or other family member due to work life imbalance (Duxbury et al. 2002), Work life conflict can result in family quarrel and divorce with spouse. According to a study in year 2003 by the women's executive network, women are twice as likely as men to report work life imbalance with a reason that despite the massive influx into the workforce, women retain the greater share of responsibility of child care, eldercare, and other home work like cooking, washing, cleaning etc (Work-Life Balance Compendium, 2001), therefore, they face high level of work-life conflict than men (Lilly, Duffy and Virick, 2006) and have negative consequence on their health like increased anxiety and depression (Mc Brier et al, 2003), three times more likely to suffer from heart problem, infections, injuries, mental, health problem, back pain etc and five time more likely to cancer (Social development Canada, 2004). In a study, Mental Foundation Survey found various outcome of work-life imbalance or conflict. The study made comparison between men and women employee and found that due to long working hours more than Quarter (27%) of employee felt depressed, 1/3 felt anxious, more than half (58%) felt irritable. 42% of women reported Unhappiness then 29% of men and 2/3 of employee have negative effect on their personal life, lack of personal development, physical and mental health problems, and family relationship and poor home life. According to Aminah (1997), married working women in Malaysia, did experience work-family conflict more than family-work conflict, which led to dissatisfaction in their family life.

Conclusion

Work life conflict has been emerged as an issue for today's organization. The women employees face more work life conflict as compared to men employee. Work life conflict is bidirectional as various factors of work such as long working hours, work overload, unsupportive supervisor, inflexible work schedule and overtime interfere with the family life, on the other hand marital status, age of children, child and eldercare responsibilities, unsupportive family member are identified as family demand interfere with work life. If work life balance is not maintained, it can affect employee performance at organizational level which can also affect family. This study has identified various negative aspects of work-life imbalance at work and family for instance poor performance, increased absenteeism and turnover rate, low level of job satisfaction and low productivity at organization level and poor family relation with spouse and other family member, anxiety, depression, and dissatisfaction from family, poor mental and physical health at family and personal level.

Limitation of the study

An attempt has been made to highlight antecedents and consequences of work life imbalance in this study. The limitation of this research work is that no empirical study has been done to validate findings of the study, moreover the secondary data used in this study is also limited.

Future implications

The present study provides a broad outlook of work-life balance. The study will help to know the demand of both work and family lives and to understand their negative impact on performance of the employee so that organization can take corrective action in implementing the policies and practices to deal with these issues. The conceptual model on work life imbalance depicts complete know how of process, factors and outcomes involve in work life balance. This paper has implications for employee, organizations, and policy maker, government and researchers.

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