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Understanding and Managing Life at Work for Women: A Study based on Working Women from Some Parts of Gurgaon, Haryana, India

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Abstract:

Work – life balance is an important concept for organization as well as for employees. The desire to live a good life is encouraging people to work hard and put more hours of work at their work place. In this situation the employees often get stuck in their office. This creates stress in their lives leading to various problems which is not good for the employee, employer, family and its surroundings. To avoid these problems, the employers are looking for the solutions to deal with this problem. They are providing options like flexi- timings, work from home options and part –time options. For female employees they are providing multiple facilities for their children like onsite daycare, crèche etc. and also they provide flexible working hours pattern for them. This article will focus on the problems of today's employee with a special focus on problems faced by women employees and what the organization and employee is doing to avoid these problems. During this study the finding indicates that the women are facing problems related to work-life balance. They enjoy working however they need a helping hand for other household works. Employers and the spouse are contributing to balance work-life.

Keywords: *Work – life balance, stress management, competition, recreational activities, employment, family etc.*

1. Introduction

Changing work environment and changing lifestyle is the need of time. Over a period of time we have observed a change in work environment and the lifestyle of people. People involved in this are trying to create a balance between the two. Working of both the parents is needed as the cost of living is increasing and the expenses are high. This study will be based on understanding and managing life at work place so that the life at home is also managed. This is to lessen the burden on the employees by doing some joint effort from both sides i.e. the employee as well as employer side. Life at work is about the life of the employee at the work place. This is related to work- life balance which means creating equilibrium in personal life and professional life. This is very difficult these days as the job requires a lot of hard work and also the responsibility and demand at home is also increased. This later on affects the individual, family, employer and community. The longer working hours has been determined as the most important factor which adds to work family conflict. There are other reasons as well like the job insecurity, work demands or overloads, job dissatisfaction, support from supervisor or co-workers and the more use of technology also affects the work – life balance.

2. History

The term work-life balance was first coined in 1986 because many of the Americans were choosing work and neglecting their family, friends and all leisure so as to reach their career goals. The balance of emotional, intellectual, spiritual, imaginative and physical is what is needed in work – life balance. Sometimes the employees are required to be present at both the places at one time and then in this situation any which ways they have to neglect one or has to think of some substitute. The corporate are also concerned for this and they are appointing consultants for bringing out the solutions or to create a stress free environment for their employees. There is a change in working time also which has introduced recently. The example of this is the employees can opt for day shift or night shift, part time job, Flexi time, Work from home etc. The employees can opt for any of this as per their comfort. Also the corporate is designing different programmes which focus on stress relieving and providing counseling services to their employees whenever they require. The organizations want that their employee should work free mind so that they concentrate more on their work instead of concentrating on their problems. The problem of work – life balance is increasing over time as the female workforce is more now, also the increase in number of nuclear families and the increase in number of single parent. The problem of maintaining life both at work and at home is becoming challenging and it requires urgent attention. For a stable life of employees there should be some solutions provided by organizations.

The many problems that arise because of work conflict have health implications as well. The highly challenging jobs are not limited till maintaining balance but are related with many health risks. For coping with stress the employees start consuming alcohol and starts smoking. They gain weight and gets into depression. Work – life conflict has negative implications on family life. Time is a constraint for every employee. The employee who is able to balance time is the one who is happy these days. If the division of time is properly done, then the family people and the people at work place all will be happy. Also the person will get time for some social activity and can do some recreational activities for mind relaxing.

3. Concept

In the topic there are two concepts one is the understanding and other is managing. Both are different but equally important. Understanding means to deeply understand something. To have no doubts and everything or concept should be crystal clear. This is the first step in the whole process of understanding and managing work life. To climb the ladder of success in any organization the employee is required to devote more hours into work and to face difficult and complex issues. Sometimes the days are good, fun filled and sometimes the days are bad and full of tension and stress. A most common dilemma for many employees is that how they manage all of the competing demands in work and life and avoid letting any negative effects of work to rule in their personal life. The effects of work into an employee's personal life can result in job exhaustion, soured relations with family and friends, loss of enjoyment, increase in stress level and this all took a toll on employee physical and mental health. There are some ways by which the employees can manage their career success: -

3.1. Strive for Work-Life Effectiveness- Not Balance

A research firm named Catalyst that focus on women in business suggests that the person should look for a situation where work fits with other aspects of your life. Jeffrey Greenhaus and Gary Powell explained this concept further and advise that work and personal life should be associates. The participation in different roles such as parent, partner, friend, employee, can actually enhance physical and psychological well- being. In an example of Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahooshe managed her work and personal life properly. She returned to work after the birth of her son. She was fulfilling her duty of being a mother and also her duty of being a CEO. Like Mayer, one should opt for a holistic perspective which states that one should consider career as avital part of life and not an obligation.

3.2. Define Success in All Categories of Your Life

The definition of success is different for different person. Ryan Smith, co-founder of Qualtrics, manages his success. He evaluates himself in each role as a father, husband, CEO, self and identify the actions that help him feel successful. This kind of evaluation helps him realize that he is doing everything for him as well as for those who are around him.

4. Background Review

Many of the research shows that the employees of today are feeling more stressed due to the increased work load and to get acknowledged they compromise with their health and working hours. The employees are devoting more hours of work at their work place which distracts them from their family life and thus make them irritated and depressed. They do not have time for themselves for family and for other social activities. Work-life balance is a concept that deals with maintaining a balance between the occupation and household. Many researchers, scholars, academicians are working on this field. A report on the Lowe (2005) in his study states that out of 4 employees 1 employee experience high level of conflict between work and family. Today the employees have multiple responsibilities like work, children, housework, spouse and elder parent care. This affects the employees and they get stressed. As per the study of Duxbury and Higgins, 1 in 4 Canadians complains that their job responsibilities interfere with their home responsibilities. As per the study of Duxbury and Higgins (2007) women hare facing more workloads then men. The reason behind this is that women devote more time to household activities like childcare, elder care, cooking and other domestic work. Many studies showed that women get less support for their careers from their spouse while men get more support from their spouse. It's not only the employee who is affecting also the family and his social life also gets affected. This is due to the less available time for family and for social activities. As per a study by Messmer in (2006), flexible work timing is most appreciated option. However, if flexibility is given without conditions can hamper the business instead of enhancing work life balance.

5. Recent Surveys

According to a survey conducted by National Life Insurance Company 4 out of 10 U.S. employees found their jobs extremely stressful. In a study conducted by Work – Family Spillover and Daily Reports of Work and Family Stress in the Adult Labor Force, Researchers found that because of the increase in amount of negative spillover from work to family, the reporting of stress within the family increased by 74% and with the increase in amount of negative spillover from family to work the reporting of stress felt at work increased by 47%. As per the National Health Interview Survey Occupational Health Supplement data, the percentage of U.S. workers who are reporting difficulty in balancing their work and family life is 16%. In the age of 30-44 the imbalance is more.

6. Current Practices in Work – Life Balance

Employers are getting aware of the cost implications with the over- worked employees such as the operating and productivity costs, absenteeism, punctuality, commitment and performance. There are several reasons why companies participate in work life balance programs The high return on investment, recruitment and retention of employees, costs and union regulations are some of the reasons. There are variety of techniques that employer practice for helping the employees to achieve work-life balance. It is important to note

that different work – life balance programs help employees handle stress, cope more effectively and reduce the stress level by rebalancing work life. The number of employers are growing who has implemented wellness programs or pay for their employee's gym membership as part of a benefits package. Some companies invite fitness trainers or yoga instructors into the office to hold lunchtime sessions. Some companies are taking initiatives to improve employees healthy eating habits. Others offer stress management programs which include stretching, yoga, counseling. Many employers offer long vacation times. Additionally, some companies offer flex days. Human resource policies that can be used to increase work-life balance include implementing time off in lieu of overtime pay arrangements, providing a limited number of days of paid leave per year for child care, elder care or personal problems, or having policies around weekend. There are some uncommon issues that arise when employees have flexible work hours such as lack of face- time with other staff and not being available to clients; these issues can be solved by ensuring employees discuss schedule with supervisor and let clients and other employees know their hours of availability. The companies may need to reduce the amount of work given to each employee sometimes when they have to accommodate workers need for work life balance. To fulfill this purpose, the employers can go for hiring new people, can reduce time spent in job – related travel, can allow for job sharing, or can do the reevaluation of work itself and how it is structured and organized with work process improvements.

7. Research Methodology

7.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify the problems faced by both working parents and to suggest the possible solutions to overcome the problem.

7.2. Objective

To study the problems faced by working mothers and working women

7.3. Hypothesis

There is strong relation between the working mother and the type of family they are living in. Working mothers are more stressed as compared to working fathers.

7.4. Research Design

The research will follow descriptive design for this study.

7.5. Sampling

A data was collected from 50 respondents which include 25 working women and 25 working fathers from some parts of Gurgaon district. The age group selected is 25 years to 40 years. And the educated working men and women were interviewed and given questionnaires.

7.6. Tools for Data Collection

A self-prepared questionnaire was distributed. Those who had less time were interviewed.

8. Research Findings

8.1. The findings from the above study showed that among 25 working women 18 accepted that they feel disturbed between the household responsibilities and the demand at workplace. The desire of being independent, rising expenses and to maintain the standard of living is the need of time. The rest 7 agreed that they enjoy their work and they have domestic helpers to manage their household work. (Fig.1)

8.2. The observation is that among 18 working stressed women around 15 comes from joint families and have family pressure whereas the rest 3 comes from nuclear families. (Fig.2)

8.3. On a whole the 15 working women comes from joint families while the other 10 working women comes from nuclear families (Fig.3). Working women also felt that sometimes they are supposed to work late hours which is not accepted in the prevailing atmosphere where the women security is very less.

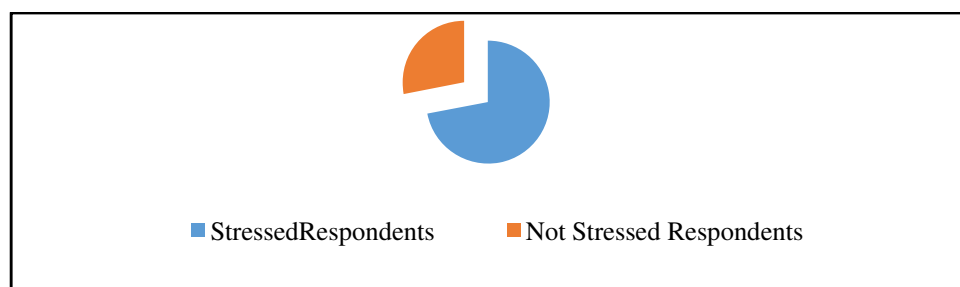


Figure 1: Percentage Explanation of Fig.1 Out of 100 % of working women population 72% of working women population is stressed out

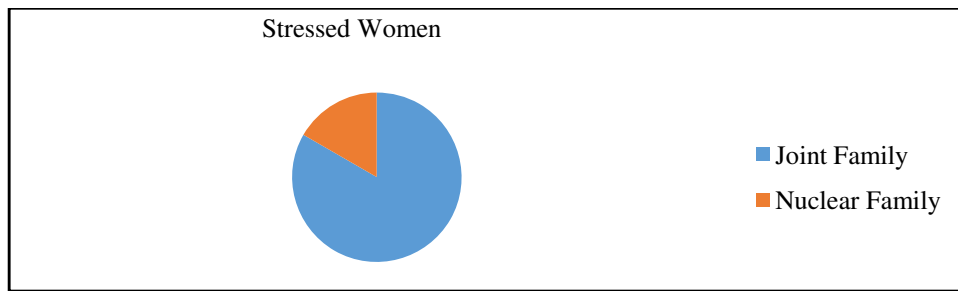


Figure 2: Percentage Explanation of Fig.2 Out of 100 % of Stressed women 83.33% of working women comes from joint family

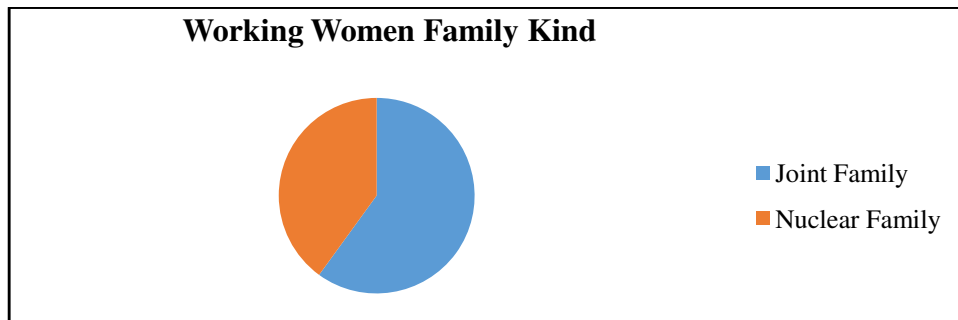


Figure 3: Percentage Explanation of Fig.3 Out of 100% of working women population 60% comes from joint families

8.4. For their kids they avail the facility of daycare provided at their workplace or outside their workplace. They admitted that the option of daycare at workplace is quite satisfactory as this ensure safety and security of their children. They can come anytime to see their children.

8.5. Men felt that the job these days has become more challenging and demanding. To meet these demands, they have to work for long hours because of which they give less time to their kids and their families. Also the increased involvement in social media is occupying them. Those working during night shifts accepted that to keep them awake they drink coffee, smoke cigarettes which are harmful for health. Among 25 working men 22 accepted that the job has become very competitive and to compete with the others they are doing all efforts. (Fig.4).

8.6. Also 21 men accepted that their wives are more work laden then them and stressed because they are doing multiple roles. (Fig.5).

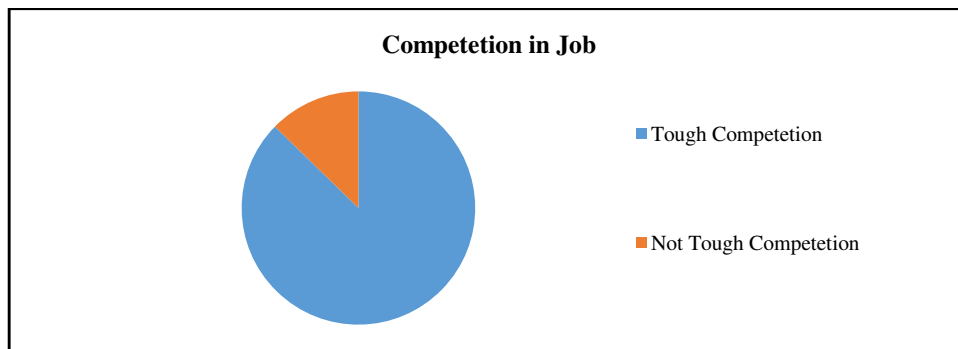


Figure 4: Percentage Explanation of Fig.4 Out of 100% population of working men 88% faces tough competition

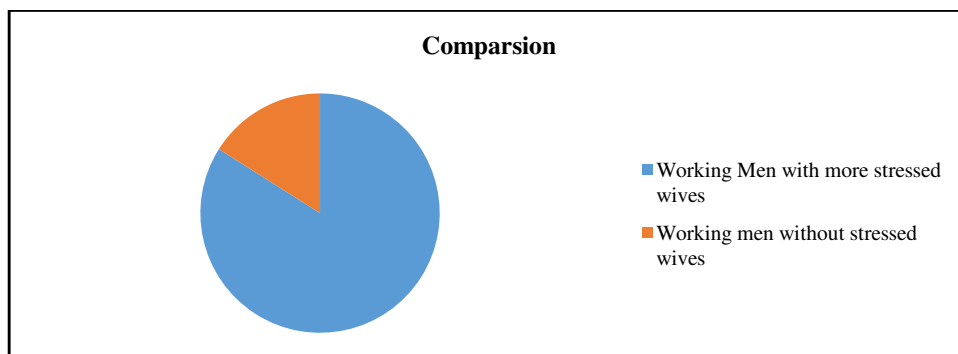


Figure 5: Percentage Explanation of Fig.5 Out of 100% of working men population with working wives 84% felt their wives as stressed out

10. Conclusion

In the light of my study I found that the women who comes from joint families and has kids are more stressed and work laden as compare to the women who comes from nuclear families and has no kids. Also their spouse accepted that their wives are more stressed and bounded by work as compared to them. The target population accepted that the environment is not safe for the women to work in late hours or night shift even if the company is providing pick and drop facility. They also accepted that employers are doing efforts to create work-life balance. They have designed different activities for the stress free environment. Wives accepted that their spouse have become more responsible and contribute in the household work. The good thing in that was found in this study is that wife and husband started sharing equal responsibilities in terms of household work. This is an encouragement for the working women. Further recommendation for doing this study is to find out the measures that everyone can take for creating the balance in work-life. Also the government perspective on this should be studied and how much our government is taking initiative for the work-life balance and the environment prevailing in this society.

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