



## Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs – A Conceptual Analysis of Work-Life Balance of (Women) Employees

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### ABSTRACT

*Work and family are the two most important domains in a person's life. Though work and family are primarily responsible for the smooth living of any individual it is seen more as a women's issue due to the traditional mindset, where the women are considered primarily responsible for the smooth running of the family irrespective of her job responsibility. In their study on work-family balance Mark & Mac Dermid (1996) conceptualised on individual's orientation across different life roles. Traditionally, research on the work and family has been dominated by conflicts focussing on its negative effects (Haas, 1999). In a study done by Kapoor, Bhardwaj and Pestonjee (1999) women employees face difficulties in maintaining balance between work and family. Another study (Googins and Burden, 1987) shows that women professionals still assume the primary responsibility of home and child-care activities. Instead of concentrating on the negative aspect of these two important domains – work and family, research could focus on how work and family could benefit from each other. Against this backdrop, the study attempts to focus on good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.*

*The paper is structured into three parts: The first part looks at the literature on work family balance. The second part explores the work-family issues and builds a conceptual framework for the study and in the final part, we discuss the work-family balance and draw conclusion on how working (women) employees could manage their work family life by matching individual and organisational needs.*

**KEYWORDS :** Work-life balance, individual needs and organizational needs, life roles, role conflict, child-care activities, by matching individual and organisational needs.

### Introduction:

In every employee's life, the job and family are key stakeholders. If, the balance is not maintained there is conflict. Conflict makes employees increasingly less efficient. Work-life imbalance usually arises out of a lack of adequate time and/or support to manage work commitments as well as personal and family responsibilities. Meeting competing demands of work and family is not only tiring but can be stressful and inevitably affects productivity. Organisations ought to be aware of the positive implications of balanced life. The global trend of increased female labour force participation, coupled with the prevalence of dual-earner families has precipitated considerable research interest in how members of these emergent family forms manage their work and family responsibilities. The study conducted by Gallos (1989) reported that organisations are becoming aware of the positive implication of balanced life, and have begun considering family experiences as part of what workers bring to their workplace to enrich their contributions to work and organisation.

### Review of Literature:

In this section, we review the literature pertaining to the components of work-family balance and expectations of family and organisations.

Herrington (2007) study was an effort to understand the innovative work-life policies and help employees make and negotiate effective career choices. Suman and Dahuja, Promila (2010) examine the most critical factors related to work-life balance and investigate the impact of work life balance on employees' professional and personal life. The research found that most critical factors related to work-life balance are multi-roles, long work hours; peer pressure, work-life balance has good impacts on employee's professional and personal life. In societies where there is low gender egalitarianism such as India, spousal support is extremely important (Rosenbaum and Cohen, 1999). Even though Indian husbands are supportive of their wives participation in workforce, they are yet to assume responsibilities for sharing domestic chores (Ram, 1989). Research conducted by Rout, Lewis and Kagan (1999) find that women in India experience considerable pressure to do all that is necessary for the family. Bharat (2001) adds that inflexible working hours and the absence of childcare facilities constitute impediments for employed mothers. In the study, Frone Russel

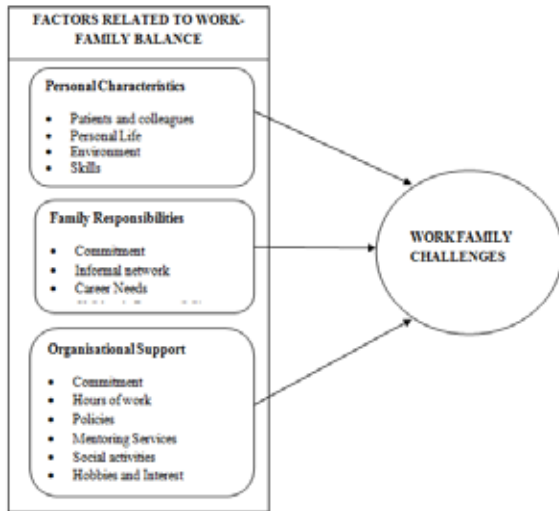
and Cooper (1992) finds that combining career and family roles is often associated with conflicts, over-load and stress. Consequently, researchers have drawn attention to the need to complement the focus on conflict by examining how work and family experiences enrich the lives of individuals through the conceptual lens of work-family balance.

The role of organisational support system is critical in work-family balance. Kapoor, Bhardwaj and Pestonjee (1999) in their study reports that (women) employees face difficulties in maintain a balance between work and family. Their careers suffer because of family responsibilities. In his study, Webster (2000) points out that women continue to be the primary provider for domestic and child care responsibilities. A large number of women taking up a career outside their homes has resulted in increasing attention to work-family balance (Fuller & Narasimhan 2007) clearly demonstrate that women experience a sense of empowerment from their work. In another study Bhatnagar & Rajadhyaksha (2001) emphasise that Indian women are obligated to care for elderly relatives. The sense of empowerment from work coupled with obligation towards their families make women more venerable to be accommodative to their dual roles. This poses unique challenges for professionals particularly women.

The literature review presented above could be gender neutral and it recognises that balancing work and family has a great impact especially on women at work.

### The conceptual Model on work-family balance:

Based on the literature review, the conceptual model on work-family balance is built. The work family balance has been conceptualised as three factors – personal characteristics, family responsibilities and organisational support – related to work-family balance. A satisfying, healthy and productive life includes work and integrates a range of life activities with attention to self and personal development. The model is given below:



**Fig - 1 Conceptual model for the study**

Career and family can either hinder or facilitate each other (Katz and Kahn 1978). The model focuses on how work and family can benefit from each other. The positive effect of each other enhances, enriches and facilitates one another. The positive factor in one domain enhances the function in the other domain.

The personal factors can be emotional and instrumental (Wayne, Rendel & Stevans, 2006). Instrumental support may be attributed to the behaviours of family members aimed at helping in household responsibilities relieving the employee so that he/she can concentrate on the professional requirement. The emotional support is the expression of feelings that enhance the well-being of the employee by contributing to reduction of stress or guilt.

The organisational support system like commitment, hours of work, positive work-family policies, mentoring services etc., is another critical element of work-family balance. Work family friendly policies enable the employee to cope with his or her family commitment. Individuals have adaptive strategies to cope with situations and circumstances which generally effect their lives (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). When family demands are concerned, many employees (especially women) seldom rely on organisational support for fear of being stereotyped (Broadbridge, 2008). Therefore, challenges and opportunities exist within the career and family domains, the challenge is therefore to emphasise on adaptability to challenges facing employees. It is important for organisations to understand how they can increase work family balance (Bakker A.B and Demerouti, E 2007). Organisations, aware of the positive implication of balanced life, have begun considering family experiences as part of what workers bring to their workplace to enrich their contributions to work and organisations (Gallos, 1989).

Managing the work-family responsibilities become more challenging and difficult in traditional family units (Powell and Greenhaus, 2006). The challenges in meeting demands of work and family which is often incompatible becomes a difficult task. In the family domain support comes from various sources such as spouse and other family members (Kim and Ling 2001). Employees also increase their personal domain resources by relying on spousal support (Brett and Stroh, 2003). Zafrah Akbar (2010) in the study *The Balancing Act: Mothers balancing work/study and family life* reported that there is a great need for flexibility in work arrangement, this includes time flexibility so that parents can work hours they want to, secondly the availability of paid leave when family members become sick and someone needs to care for them. Thirdly these flexibilities need to be made available in all jobs, so that socioeconomically disadvantaged families do not suffer.

### Conclusion:

The Authors conclude that workplaces and jobs must be designed to separate work from family demands. For employee effectiveness in carrying out the dual demands of being a worker and being a family member the employing organizations must have appropriate work and family initiatives to help employees prevent negative processes affecting individuals' family life. Women as a growing group in employing organizations are having difficulty juggling employment, and care giving and domestic demands. These same issues are relevant in organisations today. With the growing diversity of family structures represented in the workforce it is important that organizations understand the interface of work and family relationships and the resulting impact in the workplace.

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