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Work Life Balance of Women Employees During Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: Work life balance is a concerning situation in the modern and challenging work era which has progressed over time. With changing education and employment opportunities for both man and women, almost families are having working women to maintain the standard of living and secure future, but due to globalization many employees are working under different shifts and time sensitive environment which is resulting in getting very less time to spend with families and friends. The organisation must acknowledge the significance of work life balance as it directly improves the productivity and quality of the output. Since past few decades the work life balance issue has given a lot of focus by the researchers. Specially women employees are encountering more challenges in balancing their family life and work responsibilities. Covid-19 pandemic situation has completely changed the working conditions and forced employees to work from home. During the lockdown phase all family members were at home, children had online educations resulting additional stress to women to manage their roles and responsibilities. This research is mainly to figure out the challenges of imbalance and future aspects of revolutionary work from home condition. Overall married women employees are unsatisfied with work from home as it increased additional responsibilities towards children. On the contrary single women are quite happy as they get enough time on travel and leisure. Therefore, researcher suggests the way of balancing work and personal life while recommend to organizations to come up with strategies to implement flexibility in working hours with special reference to women employees.

KEYWORDS: Work life balance, Covid-19, pandemic, lockdown.

I. INTRODUCTION

Work life balance is broadly conceptualised as prioritizing between work space and private life. To maintain the balance between job, meetings, conferences and personal responsibilities like looking after family members, keeping in touch with friends and close ones and spending leisure time for one self, is one of the most difficult tasks in today's technologically advanced world. The work life balance is also defined as juggling of five aspects of one's life at one point in time, specifically, friends, family, health, work and self (Hill, 2005). While we break the concept in three parts, Work - Life - Balance, Work is involvement of physical and mental strength and efforts to accomplish goals set to attain for the best results. We work harder so that we can peacefully put food on our table and roofs over our head. While life is a beautiful journey, where we enjoy the ride with happiness, celebrations, prosperity and overcome our awful phase courageously. As rightly quoted by Abraham Lincoln "and in the end it's not the years in your life that counts, it's the life in your years". While the term balance is an even distribution to keep the work efforts upright and the journey of life steady. Work life balance is an utmost integral part for every individual, more specifically to women.

As we go back in time, women were restricted to various rights, one being education. The male dominance was at its peak in various sectors whereas women were forced to spend their lively hood as home makers. But as the time is changing there has been an evolution in women, raising their voices, remarking themselves globally which eventually led to higher women empowerment. Despite of being globally recognised and highly successful many women are still attached to the duties of home maker. Women not only have the burden of competing at workplace but are always concerned with weight of home responsibilities. Despite of a chaotic life, in the year 2020, there was a terrible breakdown in the economy across the globe due to Covid-19 pandemic. Coronavirus had a severe impact in all the countries, because of which not only the economy but the stability and the growth in the development of infrastructure, the health of the people of the country and the educational system had all been on virtue of destruction. But the immediate action of lockdown had resulted in the revolution of working culture. It gave rise to work from home concept. Prior, work from home was only confined to people at specific level in the organisation as to maintain the secrecy and integrity, but now it has gained worldwide acceptance from lower to higher designation and in almost all sectors of the economy that is from the multinational companies to the local ones. Many women working in the small-medium enterprises had to leave their jobs because it had been drastically affected or shut down due to the impact of covid-19 pandemic on the

organisation. Not only local organisations but many national and international companies gave either voluntary pink slip or decreased the pay scale percentage of the working women which had indirectly affected their living.

Family and the work life balance of an individual are important; maintaining both of them in the modern world where women perform the role of provider as well as home maker turns to be a very difficult task. Especially for working women, this is an ongoing challenge. There have been many studies conducted on the work life balance of the women employees but since pandemic is a rare situation that arises once in a century and limited studies found when economy struggling under hard locked down due to economy turmoil. Hence, the present study addresses the need to study working women and challenges faced in this perspective with work from home situation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work life balance is a wider concept and it has gained a lot of focus of professionals, governments and researchers in the recent times, as the global economy moving towards safe, healthy and pleased lifestyle after covid-19 worldwide breakdown. The vocal point of the literature review is to summarise the concept of balance between work and life and constraints to do so.

Researchers have addressed work life balance as a conflict between family responsibilities and work commitment (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Rebecca Bundhun (2009) studied women and men usually have a diverse discernment of what the “life” part of the balance involves. For men it is spending more time chasing personal interests, while for women it tends to be giving more time to family. However, Katty Marmenout (2013) explained work life balance is not simply about equally isolating the time spent on one’s work and personal life, but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual’s priorities. So, this allows for acceptance of the happy workaholic and it is equally important for a man and a woman to split their time on the basis of priorities and maintain a balance (Yukta Kotwal, 2019).

Evidently a married working women have more responsibilities of home as compared to man as they have to take care of households, baby and job commitment and, women struggle to managing these responsibilities irrespective of industry they belong (G. Delina and R. P. Raya, 2013). Because they don’t get sufficient quality time to devote with their family and friends (R. Rangarajan, 2018; Bhumika, 2020).

There are a lot of discussion among researchers that how can we measure or evaluate work life balance, well the indicator would be that it should feel right (Rebecca Bundhun, 2009). However, Murphy and Doherty (2011) discovered that it is unlikely to measure work-life balance in an absolute way as there are personal situations which influence the way that is perceived but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual’s priorities while individual must draw a strong line between their home and work lives and be assured that the line is in the right place (Harvard Business Review, page184).

In research of Hyman and Summers (2004) elaborated the major seven difficulties which are connected to present practices over work life balance these are roughness of acceptance across different industries and companies, limited organisational policies, restricted employee voice over the introductions and implementation of policies, policies are focused on business need rather than those of employees, no sign of reduction in working hours, tangible and intangible work interruption into domestic life, domestic responsibilities are still led primarily by women irrespective of their employment status.

Further there are evidence of health issues, tiredness and decreasing performance across all ages of working women as they are loaded with office duties and stress related activities (R. Rangarajan, 2018). However, it has been improved in covid-19 phase as employees started working from home and they are satisfied with the revolutionary working conditions (Manjushri Janardan Yadav1, Sadhana Jadhav –Tilekar2, 2021)

Objectives

- 1) To examine in brief challenges faced by working women during pandemic.
- 2) To suggest improvisation on how to avoid the imbalance in personal and professional life.
- 3) To summon up on how working women managed their work-life balance in work from home situation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on descriptive method. It focuses on how working women from various cities across world manages their work space and home responsibilities. It also set opinions on what organisations must strive to do to help women overcome the imbalance between their personal and professional life.

Data collection

Primary data: Questionnaire, personal interviews and observations

Secondary data: Articles and research papers.

Sample design

The size of the sample taken into consideration for research purpose is of 100 working women on random basis across major cities. These women are from various sectors of the economy like education, finance, banking, government, medical, services and private sectors. Few of them are from non-profit organisations while a handful of them are entrepreneurs. These 100 working women were selected on basis of simple random sampling method.

Findings

- 1) On an average 72% of women work for at least 10 hours a day while 28% work for more than 10 hours in a day.
- 2) Out of these, there are 52% of working women who are dissatisfied with their current work hours while 48% of them are satisfied with the working hours.
- 3) 84% of working women work overtime and on the other hand there are 16% who has never worked overtime for their organisation.
- 4) Women also work on weekends, which make it more difficult for them to manage between work and home responsibilities. There are 61% of women who work on weekends while the rest have time to spend with their family, friends, or oneself.
- 5) Only 39% of women are satisfied with their current work-life balance. On the contrary, there are 61% of women who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance.
- 6) Covid-19, however, has shown a positive impact on the working women, in a handful way of living. 45% of working women could save on their travel and other expenses and 32% could strike right balance between their personal and professional life. But there were 37% of women whose work schedule was all messed up due to the chaos of the covid-19 situation.
- 7) Besides career duties, 98% of women have household duties, childcare and elder care duties while only 2% of women were free to focus only on their career.
- 8) For 94% of women, their work schedule makes it difficult for them to fulfil their home and family responsibilities. And 6% of working women could tackle their work well with the family.
- 9) 42% working women finds their family or partner unsatisfied with their current job arrangements while 58% find them supportive.
- 10) 69% of working women have a healthy work and life balance when working from home while 31% are struggling with work from home job.
- 11) 67% of women agree that tension at home related to job affects negatively on their performances or relationships with the colleagues at work.
- 12) There are 50% of women who think of quitting their job because of the imbalance in their professional life and home responsibilities.
- 13) Work from home has been a boon to many working women. 61% of women are equally as productive or/and have been more productive for the organisation. Yet 39% of working women have given lesser contribution than to what they could provide if it was not work from home situation.

Recommendations

By witnessing these findings, researcher mentioned some recommendations for working women, government and organisations which need to implement.

- 1) Employees should set the goal and excel in both career and family.
- 2) Employer needs to assured that employees are taking frequent breaks throughout the day
- 3) Employees should schedule the day before it starts. Priorities of work and schedule time including household work and unforeseen work calls, conferences and meetings.
- 4) Employer should treat each employee as an individual with different life priorities and a different perspective on what constitutes a good work life balance.
- 5) There should be a separate provision of flexibility working options

- 6) Employer should maintain a transparent communication with employees of the services and options available that could help them to achieve better work life balance.
- 7) There should be frequent monitoring of workplace policies, such as parental leaves, maternity leaves and childcare benefits.
- 8) Employer should arrange online session for physical and mental health therapy like meditation, Yoga, Zumba.
- 9) Employer should often conduct a training and development program which usually help to identify internal job movement and a fresh opportunity to job travel and project migrations.
- 10) Employees should learn to say no, don't feel pressured on every new request from colleague or manager. Saying "yes" to everything is a sure-fire way to hamper work life balance.
- 11) Employees should not suffer in silence or allow pressures at work to escalate to unmanageable levels. Colleagues, managers, friends, and family are there to help and share the load when things get too much. But they can't help if they aren't aware of what's going on.
- 12) Employer needs to make sure that employees are getting enough leaves to enjoy holidays with family and friends. Opting not to take break means missing out on physical and psychological health benefits, including lowered stress levels, higher motivation upon returning to work, and decreased burnout. However, options are limited during the covid-19 pandemic, but just because you cannot leave home does not mean you shouldn't take a vacation. Even a "staycation" provides a valuable chance to unwind and recharge, switch off from work and reconnect with family
- 13) Governments to take initiatives and encourage companies and institutions to provide better working conditions and compressed working week. From Japan, New Zealand, Germany to Spain, several countries tried to experiment with four-day workweek to improve work life balance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Careful planning, personal efforts and supportive culture can make an individual life balanced. Despite of multiple collective measures taken by the government, management and society as whole, women is still striving hard to balance between professional and personal lives and they tend to spend more hours on work and less on family/ leisure. Consequently, there is a further scope to study women work life balance in extended situation where women life changes in rural and urban areas, distinct between countries or organisations while physical and psychological behavioural play a vital role in analysing effective work-life balance culture.

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