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Work Life Balance During Work From Home For Indian Working Women During Covid -19

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Abstract

Work from Home (WFH) has become the order of the day for people world-wide during the pandemic of covid 19. The facility to access work away from the physical office environment was a common practice for many IT, IT enabled and banking services. However, this practice is continued during the Covid-19 pandemic for relatively a longer period. There are many factors which challenge the working women. Among them the “Location – Home” is a major influencing factor, putting some challenges on women in balancing their work and life. This affects their work performance negatively and creates an imbalance in their work and life. Traditionally the role of Indian Woman was restricted to cater to the needs of the family at home. Now women play a vital role in every sector and they are equally competent to perform in the work place too. In this context, the study conducted on Indian working women during pandemic. The factors namely, role conflict, role ambiguity, the presence of elderly parents, infant children were found as the major causes for their work life imbalance. Judgmental sampling method was chosen to collect the data from the population of working women in India. And it was found that there exists some challenge for women who work from home in balancing their work and life which are mainly depended on the demographic variables. It was found that, the presence of infant kids/elderly people at home; family members who do not involve in work from home, and children who do not have online classes were the major influencing factors. Coping strategies were suggested on the basis of subsequent interview and discussions from selected working women among the respondents.

Key words:- Work from home, work-life balance, role conflict, role ambiguity, time management, coping strategies.

1. Introduction

Work From Home (WFH) is a common practice in Information Technology (IT), IT enabled services and banking services. However it will be for a short period when an employee chose to work from home for a day or two based on his or her requirement. It is only for those particular employees who opt for work from home within the company's provisions/norms. The Corona virus outbreak lead to a world-wide lock down and people are forced to opt work from home irrespective of the sector/industry/geographical location etc. This situation differs from the normal work from home practice.

Traditionally the role of Indian woman was restricted to cater to the needs of the family at home. But now women play a vital role in every sector and they are equally competent to perform in work place. In this context, the study conducted on Indian working women to identify the challenges faced by them in their work life balance, while working from home, during the Corona Outbreak. The major factors which influence the work life balance of an individual and the specific demographic variables which were relevant in the said context were considered in this study. It is necessary to view the expectation of an Indian family on the women who are available at home for their services. The role conflict, the size and composition of the family play a vital role in determining the family expectations and the women's work at home.

2. Literature Review

(Crosbie, Tracey & Moore, Jeanne, 2004) Pointed out in that, professional women suffer the most personal conflict between their roles as homemakers and workers, as they tended to see these roles as equal.

(Mani, 2013) Revealed the factors namely, role conflict, lack of recognition, organizational politics, gender discrimination, elderly and children care issues, quality of health, problems in time management and lack of proper social support influence the work-life balance of women employees in the Indian context.

(Allen, 2013) Proved the factors (a) the focal employee's experience of work-to-family conflict and enrichment and (b) the attitudes of the employee's spouse/partner have its impact on employee work-life balance.

(Rangarajan and Balaji, 2014) They defined work-life balance as, maintenance of balance between responsibilities at work and at home. They also pointed out that work and family has become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of time and energy demanded from working women creates conflict. These conflicts are also lubricated by the cultural contradictions of motherhood and their self-fulfillment in demanding careers. They face difficulties in finding adequate time to children and elderly people at home.

(Brough P., Timms C., Chan x.W., Hawkes A., Rasmussel L, 2020) The authors discussed some of the antecedents and consequences of work-life balance with reference to the family demands and resources, personality antecedents, work demands and resources. They showed few future directions for research on

work-life balance in the context of technological advancements and individual levels of mindfulness and resilience.

(Katz, 1978), Katz and Khan stated that when people play multiple roles at the same time shall lead to a greater role conflict. Married women invest considerable time in performing multiple roles at family and work place, as stated by time utilization studies by Hing 1984; Airmy et al. 1991 (Hing & al., 1984)

Role ambiguity discussed in this study is focusing on the confusing situation of women that emerges due to the work related to family and work related to office performed by them during work from home.

3. Objectives

- To identify the factors influencing the work-life balance of Indian working women while working from home during this pandemic period
- To find out the significant difference in the work life imbalance of Indian working women based on the demographic variables.
- To explore the strategies and coping mechanism used by Indian women to reduce these challenges.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

Descriptive research design was adopted for this study by identifying the literature background for factors influencing the work- life balance and assumptions drawn to identify its applicability in the said context.

4.2 Population

Indian working women adopted work from home during this pandemic period

4.3 Sample size

150 responses received from working women during the pandemic out of which 143 sample responses were analyzed after the cleaning and verifying of the data eliminating missing values.

4.4 Sampling Technique

Judgmental sampling method was used to select the respondents based on the researcher's knowledge on the suitability of the sample unit to incorporate the working women various sectors

4.5 Pilot study

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed and data collected from 25 working women using convenience sampling method as part of pilot study to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The cronbach alpha was measured using SPSS software and the alpha score was 0.948 which states that the instrument has 94% reliability.

4.6 Research instrument and data collection method

The semi-structured questionnaire containing 17 scale variables to measure work life imbalance and 5 demographic variables were incorporated to measure its impact on work life imbalance. The responses were collected from the target audience through Google forms.

4.7 Data analysis

SPSS was used as a software package to do the analysis. The statistical tools used to find out the results were, Percentage analysis, and ANOVA

5. Data Analysis and Interpretations

Percentage Analysis was used to demonstrate the demographic features of the respondents. One way ANOVA was performed to identify the significant difference in the work like imbalance on the basis of the demographic variables and work life balance of women based on the number of dependent elderly parents and children not attending online classes.

5.1 The demographic features of the data

Table 5.1.1 Age of the respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 28	13	9.1
29 to 33	9	6.3
34 to 38	30	21.0
39 to 43	43	30.1
44 and above	48	33.6
Total	143	100

Source:- Primary Data

5.2 Data Analysis

The data to be viewed when the value of mean is more there is more work life imbalance as the scales were used to measure work life imbalance.

Table 5.2.1 (A) ANOVA for work life balance based on Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4254.889	4	1063.722	4.358	.002
Within Groups	33686.104	138	244.102		
Total	37940.993	142			

Table 5.2. 1 (B) Mean value for work life imbalance

Age_grouped	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Less than 28	36.6923	13	14.85140
29 to 33	49.7778	9	13.20774
34 to 38	41.2333	30	13.81824
39 to 43	53.1395	43	15.16823
44 and above	44.3750	48	17.53007
Total	45.9930	143	16.34595

Inference:- It is interpreted from the Table 5.2.1 (A) that there is a significant difference in the work life balance of women as the $F= 4.358$ is significant at 95% confidence level as the p value is < 0.05 . Further the Mean values shows that women at the age group of 39 to 43 faces high work life imbalance compared to the other age group and it is to be noted that the young women less than the age of 28 are have less work life imbalance.

Table 5.2.2 (A) ANOVA of work life imbalance based on the number of people at home excluding the respondent

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6780.484	7	968.641	4.197	.000
Within Groups	31160.509	135	230.819		
Total	37940.993	142			

Source : Primary Data

Table 5.2.2 (B) Mean value of work life imbalance

Total Number members in family	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1.00	58.1111	9	15.28434
2.00	47.4054	37	17.30520
3.00	51.8696	23	16.40483
4.00	38.2000	40	13.75463
5.00	42.0769	13	20.83451
6.00	56.3077	13	.48038
7.00	37.0000	4	.00000
8.00	38.0000	4	.00000
Total	45.9930	143	16.34595

Inference:- It is evident from the above table 5.1.2 A that, there is a significant difference in the work life balance of women based on the number of members in their family. The value $F= 4.197$ is significant at 99% confidence level, as the p value is less than 0.01. It is further found that the work life imbalance is high for women who have 1 to 3 additional members in their family. However there is no specific pattern of increase in the imbalance which can be predicted based on the number of members in their family.

Table 5.2.3 ANOVA for work life balance based on the type of occupation of women

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1459.358	3	486.453	1.853	.140
Within Groups	36481.635	139	262.458		
Total	37940.993	142			

Source:- Primary data

Inference:- As the p value for the $F=1.853$ is greater than 0.05, it is interpreted that there is no significant difference found in this data set for the work life balance of women based on their nature of occupation.

Table 5.2.4(A) ANOVA for work life balance based on the number of non-working members at home

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4336.581	6	722.763	2.925	.010
Within Groups	33604.412	136	247.091		
Total	37940.993	142			

Source:- Primary data

Table 5.2.4(B) Mean value for the work life imbalance based on number of non -working members

Total Number of members not working	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0.00	46.7826	23	18.93039
1.00	57.7500	20	14.24180
2.00	43.3774	53	16.27791
3.00	43.3704	27	16.09383
4.00	44.0000	8	13.89758
5.00	56.0000	4	.00000
7.00	37.5000	8	.53452
Total	45.9930	143	16.34595

Inference:- It can be interpreted from the table 5.2.4 (A), that, there is a significant difference in the work life balance of women based on the number of non-working members at home. The $F=2.925$ is significant as the p value is < 0.05 . This also can be viewed that the non-working spouse, elderly parents and non-school going children are the dependents for the women at home and this create an atmosphere for them at home to serve them on their requirements. On the other hand the working spouse of school going children will be engaged in their work create a space for the women to work from home without such challenges. The mean table 5.2.4 (B) shows women having one dependent member, are facing more work life imbalance compared to others.

6. Results and Discussions

It is found that the Role conflict, role ambiguity, elderly and children care issues, time schedules allocation and lack of social support are the major factors which influences the work-life balance of women working from home during this lock down period. The work place “home – As the location”, also influences degree of imbalance in work-life on contrary to many research comments of work from home as an option to reduce work-life imbalance. However in this study the context of work from home is totally different compared to the normal one.

The working women found it difficult to convince the elderly parents and their children on their unavailability for serving them when working from home. The elderly parents/ children feel the physical presence of their daughter/mother at home and are unavailable for their service due to office

work. This problem can be rectified with the solution discussed by Dr. Marisa D'Mello, in the Deccan Chronicle, narrated that, balancing work and life is a myth because the passionate workers need not attempt to balance the two instead work-life integration is to be practiced. Few Passionate professionals disagreed to the work-life imbalance is because of this passionate approach.

It is found that the degree of work life balance of women employees significantly differ based on the demographic features. The Mean values (Table 5.2.1 (B) shows that women at the age group of 39 to 43 faces high work life imbalance compared to the other age group and it is to be noted that the young women less than the age of 28 are have less work life imbalance. This is due to the change in the family atmosphere for the young generation and the type of responsibility they have at that age. The elderly women having more responsibility towards to elderly parents and the tradition mind set of the old generation Indian families.

The number of dependent family members present at home, the understanding of spouse, and industry/sector in which the employee works. There is a significant difference in the work life imbalance of women based on the presence of non-working members in their family. This is viewed from the angle that the working spouse and school going children who attend classes online are engaged in their work. This will give the working women a space for focusing on their work. The work life balance has not shown any significant different based on the nature of occupation. This only can be viewed as a coincidence of the data composition.

6.1 Coping strategies

The work life imbalance of Indian working women can be resolved based on the change in the mind set of Indian families. Women who are working professionals suggested that the nature of imbalance is temporary only for some initial months of working from. As the family members understand that the work from home is equally important as the women work from office and they are not available for the services of the family members during the working hours. However it is to be noted that the working time also got extended when people work from home. It is not like working for a specific time period as in the case of normal working at office. Above all the best way to balance the work life is, work life integration. Women need to educate the elderly parent and children that they are at their office work. Women can fix a specific room for them to work at home which will create them an atmosphere free from distractions. Proper planning of their work schedules at home will help them for better work life balance.

6.2 Conclusion

It is concluded with evidence that there are factors significantly influence the work-life balance of Indian women namely, role conflict, role ambiguity, dependent elderly parents and children. The location-Home plays a vital important factor which is a challenge for the women employees to attend office work and homely responsibilities at the same time. This study can be further extended focusing on work-life integration.

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