

A STUDY ON WORK FAMILY CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

We all talk of gender equality, woman empowerment and female education; but how far it has achieved in reality? Coming this far, evolving, civilizing, modernizing; the lot of women is very less changed in reality. Though well educated, employed and marching ahead; like all other women, working women too faces a lot of challenges and problems. A woman plays so many roles (of daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, mother...) and for ages has been a multi-tasker; one who cook food, does the domestic works, raises kids, and cares for everyone. She works 24X7, never complains and asks no remuneration. Her tasks and challenges have increased and hardened multifold now when she is super multi-tasking; juggling between career, travelling, kitchen, kids, husband, house, society, personal health, passion and desires. Balancing between so many duties and obligations, a woman faces numerous challenges and problems every day, every time, and may be every second minute or second. Here a simplistic summary of what all a working woman has to face in her daily life, the challenges and the problems.

KEY WORDS: Work and Family. Career Decisions, Flexible Work-hours, Family Commitments, Role Overload

INTRODUCTION

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Even though most women work outside the home, they are still the primary caregivers for their young children as well as elderly or infirm relatives. Consequently, many women can only pursue their careers on a part-time basis, resulting in fewer promotion opportunities. Unlike their male colleagues, women consider the ages of their children and the amount of time they have available before they decide to pursue a career path. . A woman's work is not merely confined to paid employment. She has to almost always shoulder the burden of household chores as well. Women have to face many more problems in their daily life and struggle a lot to establish their career. Men just took care of few chores that are to be dealt outside the house. So the major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all the chores as long as they were homemakers. Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the more harder. They have to take up a 9 to 5 job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker. Men's role has not changed much.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

In today's world, where every individual has to balance conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life Balance has emerged as a predominant issue in the workplace. Meeting competing demands of work and family is not only tiring but can be stressful and can lead to sickness and absenteeism. It inevitably affects productivity. Employees work better when they find adequate time out of their work schedule, for family and personal interests. This paper discusses the issues and challenges of women employees and to highlight the present situation of continual barriers which cause resistance to women's career growth.

Objective of the study

The primary objective of this study is to understand the impact of family responsibilities on the career decisions of women professionals and also to find out the type of work-life support they would require from their employers as well as their family to balance their work and life in a better manner.

Review of Literature

Sophia J. Ali (2011) “investigated the challenges facing women in career development. She found that most of the women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmers and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities.

Skinner and Pocock (2008) investigated the relationship between work overload, work schedule control, work hours and their fit with preferences and work-life conflict among full-time employees. It was found that the “strongest association with work-life conflict was demonstrated by work overload, followed by work schedule control, work hours and work hours fit. Ming (2007) “examined the relationship of self-efficacy, work family conflict, social support, gender role attitude, role model and career aspiration to top management among women in middle management at the manufacturing line. This study intended to determine the contribution of each factor to career aspiration. Though multiple roles in work and family can be the source of multiple satisfactions for employed women (Crosby 1987), a combination of career and family roles is often associated with conflict, overload, and stress (Frone, Russel and Cooper, 1991; 1992; Lewis and Cooper, 1987; 1988).

Women in management :career and family challenges

Men and women experience executive leadership differently such that men's careers tend to be linear while women's are characterized by interruptions and exits. The roles one married woman needs to perform every day are more as compared to an unmarried woman and their male counterparts. We can also say that the role expectations of women have increased. Hence despite the fact that woman are equally educated as their male partners, sharing same intellectual level, still when it comes to family priority and career advancement mostly family priorities win over career decisions; like a shift from full time job to part time jobs, Home based jobs. Part-time. Family responsibilities have a strong influence on career decisions of Female Professionals. Women professionals agree that children's responsibility, lack of spousal support and structure of family hinders their ability to advance. Hence comparatively more Women prioritize family over work. Woman has come to workforce and proved to be equally efficient as their male counterpart now men also need to prove their household skills. They have accepted this changed gender role and trying to make balance between both responsibilities. But problem arise where men seem to be uncooperative with their changed gender role. In all societies women

are the prime carers of children, the elderly and the ill, and do most of the domestic tasks.⁹ Women's lives are greatly affected by reproduction, which has an incisive and direct impact on their health and on their educational, employment and earning opportunities. In societies where women marry very young and much earlier than men, wives defer more to husbands, and this has a substantial bearing on women's chances of finding paid work and receiving an education

FACTORS PREVENTING WOMEN EMPLOYEES FROM ASPIRING FOR HIGHER LEVEL POSTS

The major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all the chores as long as they were homemakers. Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the more harder. They have to take up a 9 to 5 job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker. Men's role has not changed much. Women have started sleeping lesser than before because only when they wake up early they can cook for the family, get themselves ready for the job, get their children ready for the schools, so on an average, women lost 2 hours of sleep per day and up to 14 hours sleep per week. If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. This leads to relationship problems. They have to handle harassment's at their work place, sometimes just overlook things to ensure that their job is not jeopardized in anyway. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband.

The women executives unlike their male counterparts find difficult to take up leadership roles in their path. Though they are on par with the male counterparts in term of age, education, talent, skill, competence, knowledge, the conventional duties cast on women on domestic front, the natural love and affection towards the family members, inability to bear separation from the family thanks to promotion on transfer, physical debility in undertaking tours etc., militate against their desire to climb up the career ladder. The factors such as taking care of the family

combining domestic work and office work leaves no time for making fit for higher posts physical strain necessitating longer hours of stay in the office difficulty of better judgment and quick decision making required in higher posts strain of frequent tours and/ field visits and fear of transfer which disturbs family life and domestic peace are taken into consideration to find out the major factors curbing the desire to aspire for higher end positions.

How a women can achieve perfect life balance

Work on your time management skills – being clever about how and when you work can allow you to get more done in a shorter space of time. Learn when and how to delegate and organise your workload more constructively. Read a good book on time management or ask your manager if there are any courses they could send you on.

Have a word with your manager – if you're struggling to achieve a healthy work-life balance, speak to your manager and ask if they have any suggestions that may help. It's in their interest to help as if you continue to struggle you'll be less productive and may get to the point where you consider leaving.

Don't worry about being perfect – being really great at everything you do may have helped you get to where you are in your career, but there are times when pursuing the tiniest details of perfection may just push you over the edge as a working mum juggling her career and children. We're not saying that you should start being careless or lowering your standards, ut to recognize when you've done a good job and can move onto the next task. One solution is to give yourself a certain amount of time for a task, or a target to reach, and stop when you've achieved it.

Prioritize and pass on tasks – if you're struggling under a seemingly unachievable workload, ask your manager which tasks are the most important or urgent and prioritize them. Also ask them if they'd like you to tackle the rest of your jobs when you have time, or pass onto a colleague or team member.

Ask your family for support – if you're working on a particularly important or big project at work that needs more of your time and energies right now, explain that to your partner and children. Let them know that you may need to focus more on work than usual right now, but that you'll make it up to them when it's over. If you have the support and understanding of your family, it makes it much easier to focus on your work when you need to, so you can do a better job.

Leave on time – decide what time you want or need to leave work and stick to it. Structure your workload so you can work towards this deadline, and let your manager and colleagues know you will be leaving then, so they don't schedule meetings or catch ups just before you need to leave.

Leave work at work – be firm with yourself and leave your work behind when you go home. Make a list of anything you need to do or remember the next day before you leave work, and forget it. If any thoughts pop into your head when you're at home or with your family, write them down and then put them aside.

Find a way to relax and wind down from work and do it – some working mums run off their stress by jogging or going to the gym, other paint or read, and some meditate or practise yoga. It doesn't matter what you do, the important thing is to find something that works and enjoy it.

Make the most of your family time

To make your work-life balance work it's important to make the most of your time you're your family. Enjoy each other's company and do things together that you all enjoy. To help give you some ideas of how to, we've made a quick list:

- **Make a list of all the things you can enjoy together as a family** – get everyone's input and plan outings such as going to the zoo or cinema, and activities such as walks along the beach or playing board games. Then do them!
- **Invest time in your relationship** – it's easy to get caught up in your roles as working professionals and co-parents, but remember you're also a couple with a relationship separate to all that. Book regular 'date nights' and arrange for someone to babysit while

you go out. Put them in your calendar ahead of time and be firm with yourselves about sticking to them.

- **Start a project together** – it could be something small or silly like collecting interesting shells and pebbles from your local beach, growing vegetables or herbs, doing a physical activity together, or all starting a new hobby. The point is to work collectively to the same goal, to share a sense of achievement and have fun together.
- **Do nothing together** – your family life doesn't have to be planned to the last minute. We often are so used to micro-planning our work-life that find ourselves doing the same with family life. But some of the best times we have are spontaneous and simple. Squashing onto a sofa together to watch a movie on a wet Sunday afternoon or wandering aimlessly around the local woods with no real plan can be some of the most enjoyable times when you look back on them.
- **Resist the temptation to check your work phone or email during family time** – keep work for work and give your entire concentration and energies to enjoying your family.