

Work life Balance for Woman Employees: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract:

Women in the workforce, today is considered as an integral part of the corporation. Women employees are contributing a major part for the growth of organisation and economy as a whole. India today is witnessing diversification in its workforce. Changing economic scenario has brought several changes in India in all economic, social, technological, cultural and political fronts. Globalization, liberalization and privatization have lead to increase in more employment opportunity for everyone, especially for women employees. Corporate today are hiring more women workforce as they believe that women can do better in all situations even many surveys acknowledges the same. Women in India have come a long way! From just a skilled homemaker women today have acquired skills and capabilities of not just being a homemaker but being at par with their male counterparts. Women today has occupied top positions in Indian inc. Her contribution to the economy and organisation is remarkable. In spite of all these facts society expects her to perform all her roles and manage family effectively as laid down by social and cultural norms. Major road blocks for women who aspire to achieve and succeed in organizations are the presence of social and role of constraints imposed upon them by the society, the family and women themselves. So the importance of attaining work life balance specially for working women is crucial issue. This conceptual article makes an attempt to study about work life balance for women employees and also identifies several ways to attain the work life balance.

Key Words: Changing Social and Cultural Values, Challenges, Synergy, Family Support

Introduction:

Women in India have undergone a dramatic change. Women today are sharing credit with men in the entire field. Since a long time, women have been trying to prove their worth – whether it is in the field of politics, sports, agriculture, aviation, navy, military or even management. Her role has changed from home maker to nation builder. Working women are no longer a rarity and are now accepted as an integral part of the working force. Indian organization has experienced a steady increase in the number of women employees and this pattern is bound to continue in the future as well. Women recently began to join the ranks of managers in large numbers. More women are found in board room today. Although, over the years women in India have struggled to establish an identity & create a mark in the social as well as in the organizational platforms, but with educational institutions training more and more women to enter professional careers, have drastically changed the scenario. 1991 and 2001 female employment in India on the whole, has increased by 3.6% per annum. Many surveys have proved that women can even do better in recession. She is able to manage any situations effectively. The latest trend for India Inc is that it seems to be taking in larger women workforce as they bring their own perspective for things and have emerged as better professionals in any situations. Corporate India today seem to be leaving no stone unturned to lure them and are even offering existing employees an additional bonus as much as 25 per cent for referring a female employee .Companies are Cumming up with certain women-centric incentives in order to attract more females to join the companies and also as a part of their policies.

Times have changed. From the time the husband earned, and the wife stayed at home to the time now when the husband earns and the wife earns too. Working women in India are faced

with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. In India still men do not share on most of the household work, it is women who have to cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, get their children ready for school etc. So the major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all house hold work 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 job plus handle all the household work which they handled as a homemaker. At the same time, corporate world also expects her to give her cent percent to her work also, as she is working in the organisation. How can she balance the role of working women and her family responsibilities? There are several discussions are going on regarding work life balance issue. Whether it is for men employee or women employee, both of them face these problems, but attain work life balance for women employee is more challengeable. However the family is educated or society becomes modern, though certain social and cultural expectations will be always there for women. Therefore for women it is a constant struggle to create the perfect expected image at work and at home.

Need for Study:

In the era of this 21st century changes are taking place rapidly. The life style of many Indian families has changed to the great extent. The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming fiercer by day. The sky rocketing cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up even careers that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts in call centres or BPOs. Today corporate India has recognized her effort and is trying to attract more number of female talents in their office. Though the time has changed, women is contributing towards the development of economy, her talent is appreciated, still she is bound by social, religion and cultural values. Society expects working women to perform all her duties perfectly. Household chores' responsibility is on her shoulders. At the same time her workplace also expects her to contribute sincerely for her work. This makes women to constantly struggle to give her best at both the places. Therefore achieving work-life balance is very difficult for her. Indian women today are struggling a lot to strike balance between family and her work. This made necessary to study about work life balance for working women. . A sincere attempt is made to contribute towards this article.

Objective of Study & Methodology:

This paper is based on the conceptual framework. It is based on the secondary data. The objective of this paper is to study why work life balance is important for working women , challenges faced by her in attain this balance, measures to attain work life balance and support provided by our Indian corporate in striking the work life balance.

What is Work Life Balance?

The expression was first used in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance. Trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities is usually unrewarding and unrealistic. The best individual work-life balance will vary over time. The right balance of a person will vary over a period of time and various stages of personal life. The right balances for you when you are single will be different when you marry, or if you have children; when you start a new career versus when you are nearing retirement. There is no perfect work life balance which fits all. The best work- life balance is different for each of us because we all have different priorities and different lives. However, at the core of an effective work-life balance definition are two key everyday concepts that are relevant to each of us. They are daily Achievement and Enjoyment, ideas almost deceptive in their simplicity.

The change in the pattern of work and the concept of the workplace after the industrial revolution in the second half of the 18th century gave a new dimension to the concept of WLB. As time progressed, nuclear families increased. A later change was the fading away of the "ideal home" in which the earning member's spouse took care of the home. With improved education and employment opportunities today, most homes are ones in which both parents work. The need to create congenial conditions in which employees can balance work with their personal needs and desires became a factor that companies had to take note of both to retain them as well as to improve productivity. It was a compulsion that they couldn't afford to ignore.

Why Work Life Balance is Important to Women?

Today's working women are continually challenged by the demands of full-time work and when the day is done at the office, they carry more of the responsibilities and commitments to home. The majority of women are working 40-45 hours per week and 53% are struggling to achieve work/life balance. Women reported that their lives were a juggling act that included multiple responsibilities at work, heavy meeting schedules, business trips, on top of managing the daily routine responsibilities of life and home. "Successfully achieving work/life balance will ultimately create a more satisfied workforce that contributes to productivity and success in the workplace."

Challenges Faced by Working Women:

To mark her identity, to be independent, to earn a living, to run her family or to support her husband run the family...; there are numerous reasons today women step out of their home, to work and to earn. Breaking off her traditional image of home maker, women today are taking up new roles and challenges of work and career. 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.

- Indian families and society expects women to perform all her duties in spite of working outside the family.
- At work place also she has to perform her work as per the expectation of employer.
- Though we speak about equality of women in society but still women folks suffer from certain limitations. A major problem faced by the working women is sexual harassment at the work place
- Also, Indian women are often deprived of promotions and growth opportunities at work places but this doesn't apply to all working women.
- Working mother faces problem much more than others. She has to manage her kid and its future also.
- Sexual harassment, theft, molestation, eve-teasing, etc. are some of the forms of challenges working women face to their safety, life and dignity.
- A woman going out to work in many societies is seen very lowly and questioned about her character/moral. A working woman who is beautiful or well-maintained or presentable or is friendly with everyone and is progressing in her career instead of being complimented is disrespected and disgusted; is questioned/remarked on her dignity and morals.

- Amid all the dilemma and stretch of balancing the job responsibilities, following her passion, going ahead with her aspirations and looking after her family-kids-husband; a woman handles and balances a big lot of stress, which deprives her of peace, rest, sleep, independent though and luxury to be herself.
- One of the most tough to handle challenges is to manage and cope with the ego of your male counterpart as wife/partner. Males do support women to go out and work, but somewhere they find it hard to accept the progress and achievement of women whether she is his colleague or life partner.
- one of the most unfortunate challenges for women that they are subject to undergo at work despite all their qualifications, skills, talent, hard work and performance; is to be overlooked and low rated in comparison to their male colleagues. This is one reason, why many women have to settle down at less challenging jobs than their capabilities/talent, or get stuck at an irrelevant job/field or get stuck at one point of career with no opportunities for further growth, etc.

Strategies to Strike a Balance

- Budget your time both in and out of the office - Schedule your time efficiently at work. Put yourself on your calendar and take some time for you and your family / friends.
- Control interruptions and distractions - Stay focused while in the office, and budget your time effectively..
- Organization has to provide proper atmosphere for women to work and has to come up with women centric policies.
- Explore the availability of flex-time. Seize the weekend - Plan your time off as you plan your work week.
- Schedule activities with family and friends, a weekend trip, or just something fun. Make your time away from work count!
- Have the right mindset or attitude
- Plan for the important things first. Pay attention towards your family members.
- Be gentle with yourself-put yourself first
- Match your life work balance life-cycle with your business life cycle
- Always keep life work balance in mind-even if it can't happen straight away
- Keep yourself fit and healthy. Concentrate towards stress management.

Role of Indian Corporate:

Even though India Inc. has been encouraging a greater number of women in the workplace, that number is still low. A new study by Grant Thornton, a global accounting and advisory firm, shows that on average, women make up only 15% of the workforce in Indian companies. Globally, this figure stood at 35%. Today, only 1.8% of CEOs in India are women.

Sunita Cherian, vice president of human resources at Wipro, said that her company tries to meet the changing priorities of their women employees depending on their stages of life. For instance, the company is more flexible on working hours for women after they get married, says Ms. Cherian. Wipro Ltd. is also determined to persuade women to stay in their job, even if they may be tempted to quit and rely on their partners' incomes instead.

Srimati Shivashankar, who is in charge of promoting greater gender diversity at HCL Technologies, says she had to work harder than others as she was climbing the corporate

ladder. Cracking stereotypes like “think director, think male” was not easy, says Ms. Shivashankar.

Striking a good work-life balance is much more important for women than for men. A new global research by Accenture, a consulting firm, found that around 70% of female respondents in India said that work-life balance was key to their definition of “success” in their career, while only 40% of men felt that.

The study also found that the difficulty of balancing life and work is a key reason why women in India leave their jobs. While 24% of Indian men surveyed said they quit their jobs because of long or inflexible working hours, for women that figure was 48%.

Conclusion:

For working women, getting caught in the work/life balance will continue to be an ongoing challenge. Careful planning and personal effort is the advice from those who have found balance in both career and home life. As one respondent summarized, "Plan, prioritize and schedule as efficiently as possible... and don't be afraid of hard work!" Work-life balance is a person's control over the conditions in their workplace. It is accomplished when an individual feels dually satisfied about their personal life and their paid occupation. It mutually benefits the individual, business and society when a person's personal life is balanced with his or her own job. The work-life balance strategy offers a variety of means to reduce stress levels and increase job satisfaction in the employee while enhancing business benefits for the employer. In our increasingly hectic world, the work-life strategy seeks to find a balance between work and play. A sentence that brings the idea of work life balance to the point is: "**Work to live. Don't live to work.**"

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