Work-Life Balance and Gender Differences In Middle Level Managers In India

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Abstract
Studies on work-life balance (WLB) in India and South East Asian countries have mostly used western scales for evaluating work/life conflict and work/life balance. This research used an Indian questionnaire to look at WLB and gender differences in Indian perspective. 24 item scale developed by Singh (2014), was used in this study for assessing WLB in middle level managers in India. Findings suggested significant difference between men and women, in work spillover in personal life and personal life spillover in work. Findings suggested women managers experience significantly more work interference in personal life and personal life interference in work, as compared to men

Keywords: Women in management, women in management in India, work-life balance, gender inequality, WLB questionnaire

Context Of Research
This research work focuses on gender differences in the perception of work-life imbalance in the Indian context. Current research work uses an Indian questionnaire to look at WLB and gender differences in Indian perspective. Since this was an exploratory research, using an Indian questionnaire on middle level managers, cultural comparison between questionnaires was out of the scope of current research work.

Introduction
Work life balance (WLB) has gained prominence over past few decades due to perception that excessive demands of work represent an important issue. The issue of work life balance deals with 3 main set of influences - influence of work related developments, life outside work, and individual-related factors. Pressures related with work have increased due to various factors like information load, need for fast response, importance of quality customer service, rapid changes and adjustments required. (Guest, 2002)

For the past few decades, researchers from fields like medicine, psychology, management etc, have focused on employee work-life balance. However, despite a significant research devoted to WLB, there are different definitions accepted in the literature or in practice (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Thus WLB remains a concept defined variably since it is linked to individual perception, and brings into play, a level of subjectivity and perspective. People perceive the ‘balance’ or lack of it differently, and consequently the impact varies significantly. So while some individuals may be comfortable working more hours, and adjusting to the requirements; others may prefer working less hours, devoting more hours to non-work or social life, and be more acclimatized to this type of balance accordingly. (Ironson, 1992).

Even though there is variation in perception of WLB individually, it merits an exploration because of the sheer individual impact of work and life interface being perceived as ‘unbalanced’. Individuals who do not possess a satisfactory level of work-life balance may experience significant sequelae like job burnout and stress. This in turn may impact their personal lives as well as their employers through lower workplace productivity and decreased work satisfaction (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Literature Review
Hill et al., (2001), reported work life balance to be the extent to which a person is able to balance together the temporal, emotional and behavioral demands of both paid work and family.

Veenhoven, (1991) concluded that an effective WLB leads to an individual feeling more happy and more satisfied. Further, this satisfaction makes people maintain the amount of hard work they put in their work fields and remain content. It has also been observed that in one’s aspiration towards high achievement, one may put extreme hard work which may reduce the level of contentment one used to experience earlier, reason being one’s amount of time being put in has increased thereby leading to an unhealthy WLB. Hence, it has been acknowledged that most recent phenomenon is to maintain WLB in all spheres of life (Clark, 2000).

Different researchers have defined the concept of WLB differently, and this concept is being well-researched since the last two decades. (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

WFC in Indian context Sekaran, (1992) reported difference in work and family dilemmas faced by women in India vis-a-vis women in the west. Rajadhakshya and...
Bhatnagar (2000) reported ‘work roles’ are attached with men and ‘family roles’ are attached with women, the reason being gender role expectations and our gendered socialization process. Aryee, Srinivas, and Tan, (2005) observed women managers facing more parental role overload than men because of more societal expectations on women that this gender must give priority to the family over work.

**Studies on Gender**

Many men and women have developed different ways to function around the sphere of work and family. Many researchers have highlighted such arrangements and have reported a gender difference in WLB issues. As Reynolds (2005) suggested “Women prefer to work fewer hours whether their personal or family lives interfere with their paid work or paid work interferes with their personal or family lives. Men in contrast, only want to increase or decrease their work when work interferes with their family lives. These results may help explain why women are more likely than men to actually reduce their work hours to accommodate family responsibilities.”

An extensive research on academia from varying departments of research universities also reported a gender difference in work family balance issues (Colbeck, 2006). Colbeck found that “male participants spent somewhat more time on work and less time on personal activities than the female participants, but for women, work and family roles were not mutually exclusive.” Hence, to enhance WLB, especially for women, companies have started many work-life programs.

Various qualitative researches examining work and family life of corporate workers use an inductive approach in order to comprehend the ways people use to indulge in WLB. On the same lines, Emslie and Hunt (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews, involving both men and women, between the age group 50 to 52 years, and from different occupations like IT, nursing, engineering, and media. They worked on analyzing ways these individuals used to balance their paid work and other personal spheres. This study concluded that even though WLB issues were faced by both men and women, these issues lasted for greater duration in women than in men.

There exists a dilemma in maintaining WLB, that is, in balancing work and family spheres (MacInnes, 2005). Hill (2005) reported the problems faced by mothers as the major observation of most WLB researches.

A gender differential was hypothesized by Pleck (1977) vis-à-vis relative boundary permeability between work and family life. Kapoor, Bhardwaj and Pestonejee, (1999) observed married women encountering WLB issues, and further, noticed lack of husband’s support. Rajadhakshya and Smita (2004) observed that majorly husbands follow a traditional role, only 34% of them were found to extend help to their wives.

More permeability was found by Ahmad (1998) in family boundary than work boundary even though there was no gender difference observed; also these authors proposed to look at different life stages of men and women suggesting that difference may be observed with couples with small children. Wesley and Muthuswamy (2005) reported that work interfering with family was more than family interfering with work; however there was no gender difference.

**Research Methodology**

**Need for Study**

Most of the studies in India and south-east Asian countries (table 1) have evaluated WLB using western scales (Singh, S. 2014). Some researchers like Wesley, J. R. and Muthuswamy, P. R. (2005) have developed a work-family conflict scale with five items each for Work Family Conflict and Family Work Conflict.

The sample population for study was mainly limited to teaching faculty at colleges in Coimbatore. Women in private sector and in managerial roles were not part of the sample. Additionally, questionnaire did not include a behavioral component (Singh, S. 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recent studies in India/ S.E Asia</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajadhyaksha, U. and Velgach, S. (2000): ‘Gender, Gender Role Ideology and Work Family Conflict in India’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmad’s 1998 : Gender Differences in the Boundary Permeability between Work and Family Roles</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Statement of the problem
The current study was undertaken to evaluate “How does Work-Life balance manifest itself among various women managers in India as against men?” Relevance of the current study is to explore the similarity or difference between and women managers, and their male counterparts, in terms of experiencing and being impacted by WLB.

Questionnaire
The questionnaire is a 24 item scale developed by Singh 2014, for Indian population. It has 4 components, tested on 7-point Likert scale, that is work spillover in personal life (13 items), personal life spillover in work (5 items), work life balance enhancers (3 items) and work life balance constrainers (3 items)

Work spillover in personal life
This component is defined as the degree to which work or job affects personal life. It includes 13 items relating to job interference in personal life, neglect of personal life/duties due to work related duties, and personal/family time being infringed upon by work responsibilities.

Personal life spillover in work
Personal life spillover in work is defined as the degree to which demands of personal life interfere with work-related activities. It includes 5 items assessing spillover like having to postpone things at work because of demands on time at home, inability to do things at work because of the demands of one’s personal life and family related strain precluding proper discharge of work responsibilities.

Work life balance enhancers
Work life balance enhancers are those items that measure the degree to which job and personal life related factors positively impact each other. It includes 3 items relating to the problem solving approach used at job also being effective in resolving problems at home, and things proving effective at work also helping one be a better parent and spouse

Work life balance constrainers
Work life balance constrainers are those items that measure the degree to which job and personal life related factors negatively impact each other. It includes 3 items relating to behavioral response to interpersonal problems, behavioral effectiveness and inability to behave in the same manner at home as well as work place

Table 2: 24 item questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Items</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Spillover in Personal Life</td>
<td>Work demands interfere with my personal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work keeps me away from family more than I like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am rushed in doing the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time taken by job makes it difficult to fulfil family obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work takes up time meant to be spent with family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal chores cannot be done due to job demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job duties force changes in plans for family activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job related strain leads to changes in family activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is no time to finish job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The strain of attempting to balance responsibilities at work and home is often felt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work demands lead to irritability in my personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The tension of balancing responsibilities at home and work often result in feeling emotionally drained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job demands make it difficult to maintain the kind of relationship with spouse and children/ family as I would like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Life Spillover in work</td>
<td>Official work cannot be completed due to family demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home life interferes with responsibilities at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Put off things at work due to family demands on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family related strain interferes with job related duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The demands of family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work life balance enhancers

The things that make me effective at work also help in being a better parent and spouse
What works at home seems to be effective at work as well and vice-versa
The problem solving approach used in job is equally effective in resolving problems at home

Work life balance constrainers

Behaviour effective at work is counter-productive at home
The response to interpersonal problems at work and home is different from each other
It is not possible to act similarly at home as at work

Reliability status was evaluated and internal consistency was found to be good, with Cronbach’s alpha 0.891

Methodology and Sampling
 Sampling: Due to the extensivity of population of professionals, purposeful sampling was used. Middle level managers in a large private sector, services organization were selected for sampling. Questionnaire was sent out to 67 managers, out of which 47 responded. 3 responses were discarded after which 44 responses- 24 from women and 20 from men, were included in the present study
 Measures: Respondents used seven-point Likert-type scales (1 = ‘strongly disagree’, 7 = ‘strongly agree’) to respond to the items

Statistical Analysis: Independent samples T test was used for statistical analysis. For each of the 4 sections of questionnaire, gender difference in responses was assessed for significance

Hypothesis

The proposed study was conducted to investigate the difference between women and men in managerial positions in India, in terms of work spillover in personal life and personal life spillover in work, work life enhancers and work-life constrainers.

Following were the hypothesis set to be evaluated
H1: There is no difference in men vs women in work spillover in personal life: H1 assumes that personal life is affected equally for both men and women, due to work related involvement, and there is no gender related difference
H2: There is no difference in men vs women in personal life spillover in work: H2 assumes that work life is affected equally for both men and women, due to personal life related involvement, and there is no gender related difference
H3: There is no difference in men vs women in work life balance enhancers: H3 assumes that factors enhancing work life balance have similar impact on both men and women, and there is no gender related difference
H4: There is no difference in men vs women in work life balance constrainers: H4 assumes that factors constraining work life balance have similar impact on both men and women, and there is no gender related difference

Results

The inter-gender difference was significant for work spillover in family. (Table 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Men Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error of Mean</th>
<th>Women Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error of Mean</th>
<th>Equal Variance Assumed</th>
<th>Equal Variance Not Assumed</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work spillover in personal life</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>P&lt;0.00</td>
<td>P&lt;0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal life spillover in work</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.951</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>P=0.012</td>
<td>P=0.012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work life balance enhancers</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>P=0.572</td>
<td>P=0.576</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work life balance constrainers</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.191</td>
<td>P=0.356</td>
<td>P=0.351</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women (4.42 ±0.64) were much more likely to answer in affirmative than men (3.48 ± 0.54) to items probing if there was any work spillover in family. This difference was significant at 95% confidence interval with p< 0.00. Thus H1- There is no difference in men vs women in work spillover in personal life was rejected.
Similarly, for items probing if there was any personal life spillover in work, women (4.7 ± 0.95) were much more likely to answer in affirmative than men (3.94 ± 0.95), and this difference was again statistically significant (p=0.012). Thus H2: There is no difference in men vs women in personal life spillover in work, was rejected.

For both work life balance enhancers, and work life balance constrainers, the difference was not statistically significant (p=0.57 and =0.35 respectively). Thus null hypothesis in these cases H3= There is no difference in men vs women in work life balance enhancers, H4=There is no difference in men vs women in work life balance constrainers, were accepted.

Discussion

There are different ways in which work and personal life have been equated and evaluated, such as work-life balance, work-family conflict, spillover, enrichment etc (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, clark 2000). Conflict theory, is a perspective that has been used to understand the work-family interface. It states that various roles lead to role conflict and stress. (Eby et al., 2005; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Conflict Perspective And Current Study

Work-family conflict is among the most widely used concepts (Kelly et al., 2008). It is related to the role theory and is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Recent views suggest that, unlike earlier views on impact of WLB being unidirectional, it is in fact bi-dimensional, that is, work interfering with family and family interfering with work (Frone et al., 1997). However, most studies have tended to focus on one dimensional flow, that is, extent of work interference with life (Kelly et al., 2008).

The present study has focused on bidirectional flow and findings suggested women managers experiencing significantly more work interference in personal life and personal life interference in work, as compared to men. Thus, current study supports Pleck’s hypothesis of inter gender difference in work family boundary permeability, and is at variance with findings of Wesley and Muthuswamy, possibly due to different sector, questionnaire and inclusion of behavioral component in current questionnaire.

Although, statistical assessment of item-wise difference was not part of the current study, the difference was more pronounced for items like “Work takes up time meant to be spent with family,” “Job duties force changes in plans for family activities” “There is no time to finish job” “Family related strain interferes with job related duties” and “The tension of balancing responsibilities at home and work often result in feeling emotionally drained.” This seemed to indicate penetration of both work and family life boundaries across the dimensions of time, strain and behavior.

Enrichment perspective and current study

Enrichment perspective refers to the mutually positive impact of work and family life. Different concepts, such as positive spillover, enhancement engagement, work-family enrichment and facilitation, describe positive link between work and life domains (Carlson, Kacmar, Grzywacz & Wayne, 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The difference between these concepts is their varying emphasis on received benefits, experiences, and improvement of role performance (Carlson et al). Example, resources from one role, facilitating and positively reinforcing involvement in the other role is called work-family facilitation (Wayne, Musica & Fleeson, 2004). Similarly, enrichment refers to the “experiences in one role that can improve the quality of life in the other” while enhancement refers to the acquisition of social and psychological resources through participation in various roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and positive spillover refers to experiences, like moods, skills, values, and behaviors transferred from one role to another (Carlson et al., 2006).

The present study focused on gender differences in enrichment perspective, instead of experience of enrichment perspective per se, and found no statistical difference between men and women in terms of perception of work experiences and life experiences enriching each other.

Conclusion

Women have been seen to be affected more than men by work-family conflict because they traditionally spend more hours in household work than men. Women managers consistently report significantly higher job/family role conflict, which may be accompanied by higher mental and physiological strains than men. The proposed study attempts to measure the impact of societal and possibly patriarchal value structure of the family on women’s career aspirations and motivations for work. Limitations of this study are-samplesize may not be representative of all sectors of industry, age groups of marriage life cycle may be different across similar designations/similar work experience, age group of children may influence the responses and findings and impact of WLB on women’s career progression was not assessed in this study.
There seems to be a continuance of societal perception that women are required to shoulder greater family responsibilities. Married women professionals, especially at the middle managerial level, may be facing significant impact of family responsibilities on the career decisions. This research would prompt one to investigate further in detail the work-life issues of the middle level women professionals because it is at the middle managerial level that the impact of family responsibilities on the career decisions is found to be quite significant.

References


