
Pressure and Balance Between Workplace and Family for Women Professionals: a literature review

¹Dr. Punam Chauhan

¹Assistant Professor (Library) Govt. Degree College Gosaikheda, Unnao, Uttar Pradesh (India)

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Abstract

The contemporary workforce landscape has witnessed a substantial increase in the participation of women in professional careers. While this transformation is commendable, it has also brought to the forefront an intricate challenge for women professionals: balancing their responsibilities in the workplace with those in the family domain. This research paper aims to explore the pressures and challenges faced by women professionals in achieving this delicate equilibrium. Drawing upon an extensive body of literature, this paper delves into the multifaceted aspects of this issue, including societal expectations, workplace dynamics, policy implications, and personal strategies employed by women professionals. By shedding light on these complexities, this research paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pressures and the strategies employed by women professionals to balance their work and family lives.

Key words: - Constitution Right, Women, Professionals, Work Place, Pressure and balance.

Introduction

The 21st century has seen significant progress in terms of gender equality in the workplace. Women have made substantial strides in pursuing professional careers across various industries and sectors. However, this progress has not been without its challenges. One of the most pressing issues faced by women professionals today is the struggle to balance their responsibilities at work with those in their family life. The pressure to excel in their careers while fulfilling societal expectations of being caregivers and homemakers can be overwhelming. The role of women in the workforce has evolved dramatically over the past century. Women are increasingly pursuing careers and achieving professional success in various fields. However, despite these advancements, women professionals continue to face unique challenges, particularly when it comes to balancing their work and family responsibilities. This research paper delves into the multifaceted issue of pressure and balance between the workplace and family for women professionals.

Right of Women in the Constitution of India

Often it is stated that gender is a western concept and it has no relevance in Indian context. India is the original home of the Mother Goddess. In ancient Indian history, there are several instances of women scholars and women rulers. Stories from mythology and folklore can be recounted to prove that women in India have always been honoured and respected. The women in India have been given equal right to vote. The Indian Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world, and guarantees equal rights for men and women. The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women,

- Equality before the law. [Article 14]
- No discrimination by the State on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of these. [Article 15(1)]

- Special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children. [Article 15(3)]
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. [Article 16]
- State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood. [Article 39(a)]
- Equal pay for equal work for both men and women. [Article 39(d)]
- Provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. [Article 42]
- To promote harmony and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. [Article 51(A) (e)]

Estimation for 2010, there will be 1000 women per 1080 man. Regardless of caste, class or age, most Indian women are expected to be responsible and accountable for the invisible and unpaid work within the home. Women's right to work outside the home, on the other hand, cannot always be taken for granted. For women in India, as everywhere else, the right is to gain her employment. For many women, work provides the only opportunity to step outside the four walls of the home, and to meet and interact with other women. If it is work that earns a significant wage and builds self-esteem, and if she is able to exercise control over her income, work can enable a woman to increase her autonomy and bargaining power within the family.

A vast majority of Indian women work throughout their lives. The irony is that this fact is not officially recognized. Statistics on work-force participation rates continue to show low figures for women workers. For instance, according to UNDP report about Indian women in 2001 only 22% of women in rural India were recorded as workers by end of 1997. National data collection agencies accept the fact that there is a serious under-estimation of women's contribution as workers – the National Sample Survey calculates that as many as 17% of rural women and nearly 6% of urban women are incorrectly recorded as “non-workers”.

Sociological Point of View

The status as a working female has given greater mobility, hence greater freedom to female. She now relies and looks for support systems even outside the family as she can identify herself with her new found colleagues too. Her professional compulsions are demanded from her husband's too. Hence, nuclear families witnessed role reversals in the family structure.

Marriage and babies are getting pushed further. Family is no longer being considered as the final settlement. She is striving for professional success, before entering into personal commitments in family. Today, a female looks at herself through her own eyes. There is change in her attitude to ageing. Widows are fighting back. No more are they clad in whites and remained aloof. They continue to live vibrantly and lead a happy and wholesome life.

Young females today are resorting to all types of entertainment. In fact, they are doing everything what the earlier generation wanted to do but was afraid to do. The females are now more communicative. They have come to terms with her sexual, dating, premarital affairs, extramarital relations, remarriage and a physical expressiveness have acquired a new candour. They are freely asking regarding their sexual problems and preferences as may be evident in going through the advisory columns of all women magazines. Nothing comes in the territory of shame anymore.

The freedom to work of female is a burning topic of debate. Patriarchal oppression continues and females are still striving for equality and emancipation. A majority of the world's illiterates are female. They are treated as commodities and possessions of men. However, with the spread of education and democratic ideas, enormous changes have taken place with regard to female's position in society. Women are receiving education and are doing well in all the walks of life. They are entering profession such as engineering, medicine and defense. They can fly planes, are full-fledged soldiers, and are well able to travel in space.

Professional Point of View

The women's of today has become career-oriented and knows what she wants. She is self-confident and breaching existing male-dominated structure by finding fissures in their citadels. During last three decades, there was more than threefold increase in the enrolment of female students for higher education. This was made possible due to the efforts of earlier generations of women (Prasad, S. 1995). Further, as a working careerist woman, she won economic independence which served as the mother of all other independences.

The female is taking the professions such as that of stockbroker, commercial pilot, air force, navy, police officers, fashion-photographer, film director, film producer, transport company owner, auto mechanic, truck driver, industrialist, architect, engineer, journalist and dairy farmer, etc. The list of professions is indicative and not exhaustive.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research paper seeks to explore the pressures and challenges that women professionals face in achieving a balance between their work and family responsibilities. It aims to analyze the societal, workplace, and family-related factors that contribute to this pressure and the strategies employed by women professionals to manage these demands successfully. Additionally, this paper aims to shed light on the implications of this delicate balance on women's career progression and provides policy recommendations to address these challenges.

The objectives of the study are as follows: -

1. To understand the problems to attend the family needs due to women's professional.
2. To investigate the Family preference towards domestic affairs over professional work.
3. To identify the Family support towards professional advancement.
4. To identify the Family tensions arising out of busy professional schedule
5. Balance between domestic responsibilities and professional commitments

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The scope of this research paper encompasses a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic, including academic studies, government reports, and scholarly articles. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are employed to analyze the pressures faced by women professionals and the strategies they use to balance their work and family lives. The research is focused on women professionals across various industries and job positions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Understanding the pressures and challenges faced by women professionals in balancing their work and family lives is of paramount importance. This research paper not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also provides insights that can inform policies and practices in the workplace and society at large. It seeks to empower women professionals to navigate the complexities of their careers and personal lives successfully.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Perspective

The struggle for women to balance their work and family roles is not a recent phenomenon. Throughout history, women have faced societal expectations that often prioritize their roles as caregivers and homemakers over their professional ambitions. The feminist movement of the 20th century brought attention to the need for gender equality in the workplace, leading to legal and social changes that enabled more women to pursue professional careers.

Societal Expectations

Societal expectations continue to exert significant pressure on women professionals. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes persist, casting women as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners. These expectations can lead to guilt, stress, and internal conflict for women who aspire to excel in their careers while maintaining their family responsibilities.

Workplace Dynamics

Workplace dynamics also play a crucial role in the pressure experienced by women professionals. Gender bias, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for advancement are some of the challenges they may face. Additionally, inflexible work schedules and a lack of family-friendly policies can hinder women's ability to balance their work and family lives effectively.

Policy Implications

Government policies and corporate initiatives have a significant impact on women's ability to balance work and family. Countries with comprehensive family leave policies, affordable childcare, and flexible work arrangements tend to have better outcomes for women professionals. However, many regions still lack such supportive policies, leaving women at a disadvantage.

Personal Strategies

Despite the challenges they face, women professionals employ various strategies to balance their work and family lives successfully. These strategies include negotiating flexible work arrangements, seeking support from spouses and family members, practicing self-care, and building networks of support within and outside the workplace.

Gaps in Existing Research

While substantial research exists on the topic of work-family balance, there are still gaps in understanding the unique challenges faced by women professionals in different industries and cultural contexts. Additionally, the long-term career implications of balancing work and family remain a relatively underexplored area.

Related Review of Literature

According to Sandeep (2017), women whose status and roles traditionally were well defined and fixed in the society have undergone far reaching changes. Today women have made a mark in fields that were unknown to her earlier. Women of the current generation have received higher

education which has resulted in significant improvements in the economic status of the families (Sandeep, 2017). Mathew and Panchanatham (2011) observed that earlier the female working population in India was mainly employed in subordinate jobs, however due to higher education and globalisation; women have made careers at par with men. Today, increasing number of women are working and sharing the financial responsibilities of their family. However, being a professional woman, she is playing multiple roles or role of a fourfold status or role sequences (Sandeep, 2017). These roles can be better described as that of a 'daughter', 'wife', housewife 'and 'mother'.

This transition stems from the fact that work life balance includes nonpaid or nonwork responsibilities besides children and family and can be applied to a diverse workforce of men, women, singles, parents, dual career families etc (Vasumathi, 2018).

Today's working women are facing conflicting demands from both work and life domains. They find it difficult to manage and balance between the pressures of work place and duties belonging to home and family. Achieving a balance between work and life is a critical issue for women employees these days. Work life balance is a concept that deals with maintaining a proper balance between work and home responsibilities (Shanker, 2019).

PRESSURES FACED BY WOMEN PROFESSIONALS

Societal Pressure

Societal pressure on women professionals to fulfill traditional gender roles can be overwhelming. Women often find themselves torn between the expectations of being devoted mothers and achieving professional success. This pressure can lead to feelings of guilt and anxiety.

Workplace Pressure

Workplaces are not always accommodating to the needs of women professionals. Gender bias and discrimination can hinder career progression, and the lack of family-friendly policies can make it challenging to balance work and family responsibilities effectively. The expectation to be constantly available and responsive can also increase workplace stress.

Family Pressure

While many women professionals strive to balance their careers and family life, they may face resistance or lack of support from family members, especially in cultures where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained. Striking a balance often requires negotiating with family members and setting clear boundaries.

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

Flexible Work Arrangements

One of the most effective strategies employed by women professionals is negotiating flexible work arrangements. This may include options such as telecommuting, flexible hours, or job-sharing. These arrangements allow women to better manage their work and family responsibilities.

Supportive Spousal Roles

Supportive spouses play a crucial role in helping women professionals balance their work and family lives. Couples who share household responsibilities and childcare duties have been found to have more successful work-family balance.

Family-Friendly Policies

Companies that offer family-friendly policies such as paid parental leave, on-site childcare facilities, and lactation rooms are more likely to retain and support women professionals. These policies not only benefit employees but also contribute to a more inclusive workplace culture.

Self-Care and Wellbeing

Maintaining self-care and wellbeing is essential for women professionals. Strategies such as setting boundaries, practicing mindfulness, and seeking professional help when needed can help manage stress and prevent burnout.

Role of Mentorship and Networks

Mentorship and professional networks can provide valuable support to women professionals. Having mentors who understand the challenges of balancing work and family can offer guidance and encouragement. Building a strong network of peers can also provide a sense of community and shared experiences.

THE IMPACT ON CAREER PROGRESSION

Glass Ceilings and Gender Pay Gap

Balancing work and family responsibilities can have a significant impact on women's career progression. The "glass ceiling" phenomenon, where women face barriers to advancing into top leadership positions, still exists in many industries. Additionally, the gender pay gap persists, partly due to career interruptions for family reasons.

Career Interruptions and Opportunities

Taking time off for maternity leave or family emergencies can lead to career interruptions for women professionals. While some organizations offer opportunities for re-entry programs, women may still face challenges in regaining their career momentum after a hiatus.

The Importance of Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentorship and sponsorship can play a pivotal role in mitigating the career impact of balancing work and family. Women who have access to mentors and sponsors are more likely to receive guidance, advocacy, and opportunities for advancement.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Laws

Governments and organizations should enforce equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws to eliminate gender bias and create a level playing field for women professionals.

Family-Friendly Workplace Policies

Companies should implement family-friendly workplace policies, including flexible work arrangements, paid parental leave, and childcare support, to help women professionals balance their responsibilities.

Promoting Work-Life Balance Initiatives

Promoting work-life balance initiatives, such as employee assistance programs and wellness programs, can contribute to the mental and emotional well-being of women professionals.

Advocacy and Awareness Programs

Advocacy and awareness programs should be launched to challenge societal expectations and stereotypes regarding gender roles, helping to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in both their professional and family lives.

CONCLUSION

Balancing work and family is a complex challenge for women professionals, influenced by societal expectations, workplace dynamics, and personal strategies. The pressures they face can impact their career progression and overall well-being. However, women professionals employ various strategies to manage these pressures successfully. Achieving gender equality and promoting work-family balance is not only a matter of social justice but also critical for the economic and societal progress of any nation. Future research and policy efforts should continue to focus on creating an environment where women can thrive both professionally and personally, without having to compromise either aspect of their lives.

Implications for Women Professionals

Understanding the pressures and challenges faced by women professionals is essential for their empowerment and career advancement. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, women can make informed choices and advocate for supportive workplace policies and societal changes.

Future Research Directions

Future research should continue to explore the unique challenges faced by women professionals in different industries, regions, and cultural contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies can provide insights into the long-term career implications of balancing work and family. By expanding our knowledge in these areas, we can work towards a more equitable and inclusive professional landscape for women.

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