Work Life Imbalance as a Cause of Withdrawal Attitude in Women: An Exploratory Study of the Challenges Faced By Women.

Shilpi Gupta, Dr. Prachi Singh

[1]*Assistant Professor,* [2]*Independent Professional*
MATS University, Pandri

Abstract: *Indian families of the 21st century are experiencing a revolution due to increased modernization and globalization. Women are making an entry into the paid occupations for acquiring independence and growth in career. But the career women of the 21st century are challenged at every front of modern life. This paper tries to explore the complexities of majority of women struggling to achieve work-life balance i.e. handling multiple responsibilities at a time. This paper also tries to explore the perception of women professionals of the major barriers in their advancement towards a flourishing career.*

The sample taken for study is professional women in the age group between 25 -40 years. The sample size is 92 women professionals. The study used in depth qualitative interviews with the sample under consideration and a 5 point Likert scale is used to cumulate the results ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The study highlighted that overload of multiple roles, responsibility of dependents, lack of proper family support and above all time management are the major constraints.
Keywords: *Professionals, Modernization, Work-life balance, responsibility, Perception*

I. Introduction:

Today's women are both sharers and carers. Sharer of family responsibility in financial terms and carers of all the members of the family. Often it is found that bright, intelligent and efficient women are forced to drop out of the workforce trying to manage both fronts of family and home front. A research report(2006); states that family commitments and persisting male dominance in the corporate job front are often the most cited explanations as a barrier to career progression. An Australian research study by Kirchmeyer (1998) found that lack of supportive relationship from mentors, superiors and access for network as determinants for career progression of women executives. The study conducted by Marshall (1995) had found that many organizations explain high turnover of women employees in terms of low level of adaptability to work environment, lack of job involvement due to higher levels of job stress and long working hours and break in career graphs due to maternity. Today the culture of dual earners is on hype and to a certain extent it has become a necessity also to maintain the standard of living. With advancement of higher education the job prospects and scope of better education has opened the gateway for women to come forward and join the workforce. Women need to take an extra bit of care for personal and professional life balancing. Professional life means the aim to excel in one's profession, earn name fame and respect and be recognized in society at large. Personal life means taking care of the home front, near and dear ones. No particular charter can be drawn to balance work and life as every individual faces a different set of challenges in home front and job front but if some basic fallacies can be removed one can really enhance her skills and help them to attain heights. Women of India have been rated as the most efficient. They have broken all myths and joined the league of top Entrepreneurs, Technocrats etc. It is said that efficient work –life balance increases the productivity, level of commitment and performance of women. Women of the 21st century have built bridges rising from zero to professional platforms.

Good Work life balance is of utmost importance for successful balancing of psychological and physiological stress. Priorities need to be set for achieving the targets as per planned schedules. When women go out for work they add a new dimension to their already challenging life. Often the lesser flexibility at work place, long working hours and added on responsibility of both fronts makes her unavailable to her only. The greatest negligence of herself is evident on her both physical and mental health. Maclnnes (2005) examined in his research that WLB policies aimed at reduced working hours are often assumed to be of particular interest to workers with family responsibilities such as young children. No matter what heights women attain professionally ,at home she is expected to do some basic routine works for eg, taking care of children, cooking food , looking after her in-laws. With ever increasing professional demand and also an equal excellence at home front puts the women community at stake of choosing anyone. Don't you think this is wrong? As Jeffrey Pfeffer

states "Time spent on the quest of power and status is time you cannot spend on other things such as …family. The price seems to be particularly severe for women."

Objectives Of The Study:
The basic objectives of the research are:
a) To determine the factors determining Work-Life balance of professional women in Raipur City.
b) To examine the effect of WLB on women's performance and work attitude.
c) To study whether marriage increases or decreases the efficiency of women professionals.
d) To study the effect of the type of family (Joint family/ Nuclear family) on the performance of women professionals.

Research Methodology:
The present study is mainly focused on 92 women employees of the age group between 25 yrs – 45 yrs. The respondents belonged to different professions which formed the strata of study for choosing the sample respondents. A structured questionnaire based on Likert's Scale was given to the respondents for measuring their responses. Stratified Random Sampling is used for convenience. The sample respondents belong to different professions eg marketing, medicine, IT, Banking and Teaching.

Profile Of The Respondents:
a) Based on Profession:

S.NO	PROFESSION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Marketing	22	24%
2	Medicine	5	5%
3	IT	20	22%
4	Banking	15	16%
5	Teaching	30	33%
TOTAL		92	100%

b) Based on Age:

S.NO	AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	25-30	14	15%
2	30-35	34	37%
3	35-40	29	31%
4	40-45	15	17%
TOTAL		92	100%

c) Based on number of dependants:

S.NO	STATUS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Married	24	26%
2	Married with children	30	33%
3	Married with dependent in laws	38	41%
TOTAL		92	100%

d) Based on type of family.

S.NO	FAMILY TYPE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Nuclear	43	47%
2	Joint	49	53%
TOTAL		92	100%

Findings And Observation:
The probable causes that were attributed by women professionals belonging to different fields for their hindrance in their career were:
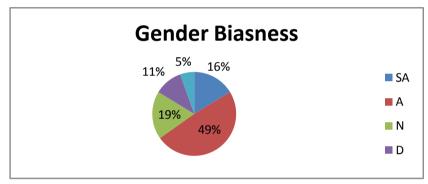
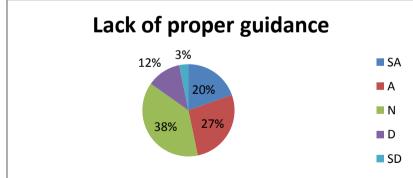**1) Commitment to family responsibility**

Comment

: It was observed that 79% of the respondents agreed to the fact that family responsibility of different types is the most common barrier in their professional life. Women are till date considered as home carers only. They are expected to follow the stereotypic roles framed by the society.

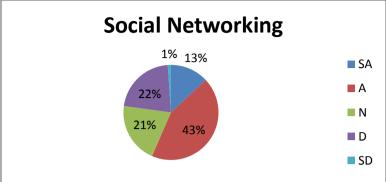**2) Gender biasness still existing in the society.**

Comment: After continuous proving of their excellence, still now the male dominated society is unable to accept women in higher and senior post. Gender biasness still exists in the society to a large extent hindering the growth of women in their professional life. 64% of the respondents agreed to the fact that women were not viewed at the same level of their male counterparts.

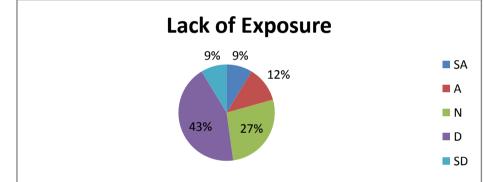**3) Lack of proper guidance at the right time.**

Comment: It is observed that the views of the respondents were mixed in this case. Though 47% of the respondents agreed that there is lack of proper guidance due to the inherent culture of the society but 38% of the employees had a neutral view. Many respondents were themselves unaware of the meaning of right decision at the right time.

4) Lack of time for social Networking.

Comment: As per the observations from the survey it was found that 56% of the respondents considered lack of time for social networking as one of the major barrier in career advancement. Social Networking increases the exposure of the person and brings forth the latent talents of an individual which increases the self confidence and opens new avenues for the women to excel in different fields.
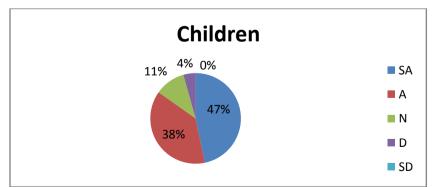
5) Lack of exposure in the required field.

Comment: Lack of exposure means the developments and advancements taking place around the world in the required field. Due to lack of social networking maximum respondents around 39% agreed to the fact 52% of the respondents disagreed to the fact. They argued that due to technological advancement everything is available on the click of a finger in the internet. So if a person is really interested in updating oneself resources are plenty.

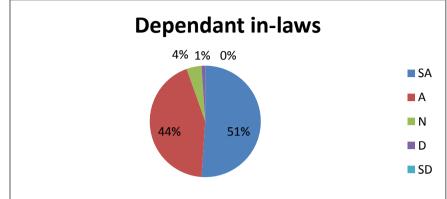**Types Of Family Responsibility Acting As A Hindrance:**
It was found that maximum women professionals stressed on commitment to family responsibility as the major barrier to carrier growth and personal development. The most common family responsibilities highlighted by women were

a) **Taking care of children**.

Comment: The consent of the majority is very evident from the above pie chart. 85% of the respondents agreed to the fact that taking care and looking after the children is the most common barrier for the growth of women professionals. Till date children are considered the responsibility of the mother more than father. Father is basically considered as an earner and mother as carrer. So women usually forced to sacrifice their career for
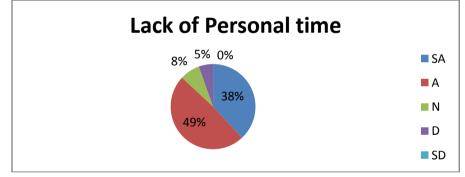
bringing up the children. Being mother women cannot revolt to this and the urge to excel in Profession takes a back seat. After five years the women has to start from scrap and one can imagine that in this competitive era the world takes a leap and it is very difficult to cope with it. This induces frustration among the ambitious women.

b) Taking care of dependent in-laws

Dependant in-laws

4% 1% 0%
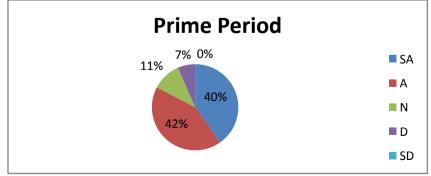
44%   51%

SA
A
N
D
SD

Comment: 95% of the respondents agreed to the fact that taking care of dependant in-laws is considered as a framed religion for the women. If they are unable to adjust to this they are presented with many hurdles in their path of growth. When the society has progressed so much why should all the expectations be placed on the shoulders of the women? This culture created a huge communication gap within the family increasing the tensions and hence reducing working efficiency of the respondents. The respondents were of the view that these experiences increased the bitterness and adamancy of women for non-cooperation.

c) Lack of personal time after fulfilling family responsibility.

Lack of Personal time
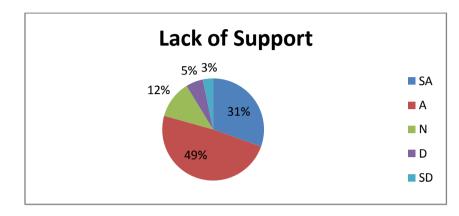
8% 5% 0%

38%

49%

SA
A
N
D
SD

Comment: 87% of the respondents agreed to the fact that family responsibilities occupied their 99% of time and they had no time for hobbies or fulfilling their dreams. They are always running short of time when the question of their self development comes. The society is so rigid that they believe that if a woman is advancing professionally that must be at the cost of their family and responsibilities. Nobody tries to go into the matter and believe that this is her life tonic and self identity.

d) Prime period of hard work and excellence lost in family responsibility.

Prime Period
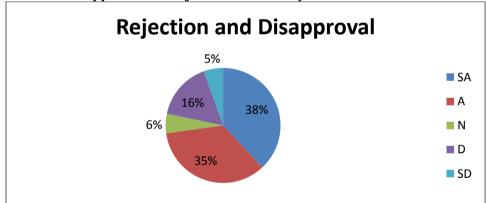
11%   7% 0%

40%

42%

SA
A
N
D
SD

Comment: 82% of the respondents believed that their prime period of hard work is spent on fulfilling family responsibilities for which they are never repaid and never acknowledged in their life. It is considered part of their duty of existing on this world. Career for them should always come after family. But once the family and children gets established no one bothers about the likings and appreciation of the women who sacrificed so much for the family.

e) Lack of enough support from spouse and in-laws.

Comment: 80% of the respondents agreed to the fact that their family never stops them from doing work outside but the level of cooperation is very low. She is expected to fulfill all her responsibilities within the stipulated time and go to work, then again come and take care of others without having any time for herself just because she is pursuing her dreams. This creates a friction among the family and increases the stress.

f) Fear of social disapproval and rejection from family.

Comment: Women are supposed to be ruled by society and their norms. 73% of the respondents stated that if a woman takes a step ahead either the traditions or the family or the views of neighbors comes as a free piece of advice to them. They are socially the topic of gossip and Disapproval. This also creates a stress in the minds of women and acts as a hindrance in the path of their development.

II.   Conclusion:

No matter how much the society has advanced in its thinking and development, still some roots of hypocracy always remains. The study of Work life balance was conducted to find out the most common causes leading to work life imbalance in women professionals. Observations indicated that working women undergo tremendous stress as they try to balance their domestic life and professional life. Huge workload results in the deteoration of family life as well as poor performance in professional front. The ultimate result of coping with the 2 fronts results in downfall of her health which indirectly affects the family as well as her workplace. The major factors identified were
- Responsibility of family
- Lack of motivation to excel in the direction of their dreams.
- Non co-operation from family and society.
- Loss of their prime period of growth in managing the family.
- Gender biasness existing in the society and non acceptability of modern role of women.

In order to excel in professional front than her other colleagues and show her real talent, one has to devote time on her subject and field. But after fulfilling family responsibilities she is lacking personal time for herself. It was observed that her prime age of excellence in career always coincides with her marriage settlement and time is lost in fulfilling family responsibility. Over and above lack of family support from in-laws and spouse also hinders their growth. It is usually found that women are still in the fear of disapproval and rejection from family and society, if they do not fulfill set traditional family norms. There is a need of innovative and supportive methods to enable working women to give the same facilities as working males.

The expansion of education has enhanced prospects for women and there is a shift from stay home mothers to professional mothers. It was found that the changing nature of the psychological contract at work, turbulence in organizations has increased the challenges at the work place. The pressures and demands of work are reflected in longer hours, more exhaustion and less scope for quality family time.

The root of the work life conflict may come from organizational norms and ideologies. Usually when the two identities are in conflict, the sense of a healthy work life may be affected. Life is a game whose rules are not defined from before and one has to play with family, work, health, friends with a positive spirit.

It was also observes that marriage in 54% of the cases increased the responsibilities of women professionals and acted as a barrier in their growth. They were destined to give more weightage to their family rather than profession which created stress and low performance in the job-front. It was also found by the answers generated by the respondents that joint family and nuclear family had their own sets of advantages and disadvantages. According to 49% of the respondents joint family women faced more problems due to the large size and more responsibilities entrusted on them. Nuclear families were better as respondents thought that spouse is more compromising than in laws. But no matter what type of family one belongs to every women is to fight the battle of her life to maintain a proper Work life balance alone.

III.   Suggestions:

Though a formulated charter cannot be made as the nature of problems differs from individual to individual along with their own set of constraints but some general rules can be framed to facilitate women in balancing their multiple responsibilities both by the family as well as the organization she is working. Some major reforms required are:

- Proper and reliable facilities for child care.
- Flexible timings after studying the individual case of the respondent.
- Counseling services for problems like managing work and the home.
- Work sharing by the family and friends.
- Realistic and achievable workloads.
- Proper communication between the family members and office colleagues for better understanding of the problem and its solution.
- No gender biasness in the society.
- Family engagement programs should be organized by the organization so that employees meet and have a learning experience.

Every woman should also follow the three mantras:
- **PLAN**
- **PRIORTIZE and**
- **SCHEDULE**.

Along with society she also needs to take a positive stand of her life by acquiring proper skills and confidence. Then only she can change her position in society and balance her Work and Life together.

Limitations:

The present study suffered from the limitation that the women were not willing to mention their family as a cause for their deteoration in career due to fear and social rejection. Many women had less time and so were not willing to answer the questions. Many also believed that this is the tradition and culture of the society which cannot be changed and many researches have been done with no substantive result so no benefit of responding to these questions. Many respondents were not sure of their basic problem which again caused inconvenience to record their responses. The above mentioned causes are the generalized reasons as concluded from the study and can vary from individual to individual.

Scope Of The Study:

The scope of the study was limited to middle class working women of Raipur City. It can further be extended to upper class. This study focused on women holding middle level position in their workplace and it

can further be extended to senior and women holding higher posts in their workplace. Besides the scope can be limited to a particular profession to highlight the specific problems existing in the job front.

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