Work -Family Balance and Challenges faced by Female Employees- A study of I T Sector in Kerala

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Abstract

The role of women has changed throughout the world due to economic conditions and social demands. This has resulted in a scenario in which working women have tremendous pressure to develop a career with simultaneous active engagement in personal life. This affects the person's physical, emotional and social well-being. Achieving work life balance is a necessity for working women to have a good quality of life. This paper is an attempt to analyse the challenges that female employees face in achieving WLB in IT industry. This study was conducted among employees of IT organizations at Info Park, Kochi ,which has a total population of over 12000 women employees .For the quantitative approach, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 350 female employees from 15 selected IT organizations.

Key words

Information Technology, Work Life Balance, work related factors, female employees.

1.1. Introduction

The drastic change in the structure of working women's role occurred on account of the transition of world economic order and social necessities. It apparently transformed women from the established concept of women confined to kitchen environment to the innovative, skilled and professional realm of the modern sophisticated advanced technological and technical world. In early stages, women were not able to access higher education and they were either constrained in the home environment or employed in insignificant

sectors such as shops, farms or even in factories with lesser prioritized areas.With their advancement in education women attained enormous knowledge which ultimately empowered them to be more and more proactive in the area associated robust with their male counterparts in professional arena. Simultaneously, it resulted in tremendous pressure among women to attain ambitious targets and goals while coping with speedy engagements and necessities in personal life. This chapter examinesthe conceptual framework of WLB and constrains faced by the women in achieving WLB.

. 1.2. Work Life Balance (WLB) - Meaning

The term work-family balance for the first time used by U.K. as a definition of an individual's consistency between his personal life and work life.As this term was subjected to change during the past years from work- family balance to present work-life balance. It signifies individual's dedication to multiple roles in personal as well as work life for the accomplishment of various goals and targets. Work–life balance is a broad concept which essentially includes the proper prioritization between work and lifestyle.

1.2.1. Work Life Balance in I.T. Industry

Women are largely involved in various activities in the present world and subsequently expanding their role in all the spheres of life stream not only within household but also outside world also, especially in the labor market. Their representation in IT sector is more impressive and highly demanding. Distinctively, IT sector aims on knowledge as the main factor for the accomplishment of the tasks and consequently gender discrimination is not in practice in this sector. In accordance with NASSCOM survey women representation in IT sector is 38%. On comparative analysis it was found that both men and women are attached to the lucrative jobs offered by the IT sector.

India is distinguished as one of the prime nation with competitive advantage in software industrial services and abundant with software aspirants. India gained enormous reputation for its contributions from IT sector and emerged as one of the leader in the modern software industrial world. As identified by NASSCOM (2010) India is a magnet for software clients owing to the quality of its skilled software manpower. The part of women is perceived to be substantially changing in the passage of time especially over the last decade and half both externally and internally.

1.2.2. Special Features ofJob inIT Industry in India

Unlike other industries IT industry in India ischaracterized by following features

1. This sun rising sector is with excessive workload and prolonged working hours. The duration of working hours and workload is relentlessly in increasing trend for majority of IT firms even though it is scheduled to have a five-day week.

2.The call on duty basis especially software professional are even being utilized for training sessions purposes in long intervals between projects.

3. The advanced studies indicating that IT professionals are experiencing emotional disadvantageous and confronting with inferiority factors on account of night duty works and underutilization of their soft skills and capabilities.

4.   There is also a mounting pressure for completion of tasks in due time and as per target to cope with competitive environment.

1.3. Scope of Study.

A survey was conducted among the women software employees with the help of a questionnaire. The study was conducted in Info Park, Kochi Kerala. Info Park has around 200 software concerns. Info Park represents a miniature of IT industry of Kerala. Top IT companies like TCS, Wipro, Cognizant, EY etc. are operating at Info Park. T C S is the highest women employer in India. So it is the most suitable place to conduct this survey for research.

1.4. Significance of study

It is generally agreed that female participation in economic activities would result in comprehensive economic and social status, consequently empowering them and leading to prosperity of a nation. A good Work Life Balance is central to staff effectiveness, wellbeing and satisfaction, which all have direct impact on both mental and physical health of labour which enhances productivity and contributes development of a nation. Many previous researches highlights an established link between work life balance and employee satisfaction which in turn relates to productivity of employees .Work-life balance is an integral and important part of Corporate Social Responsibility. Hence Work life imbalance is a severe socio economic issue .

1.5. Objective of the Study.

1.   To analyze factors which hinder work life balance of female employees in IT industry.

1.6. Methodology

        For this study, a survey of socio economic background and WLB among women in Kochi IT industry was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire   which was distributed directly to 400 active employees in the industry. These collected data were analyzed by using standard statistical techniques.

1.7. Population and Sample

 Population comprised of all the employees working in IT companies at Info Park ,Kochi and it is identified as the women I T professionals in the companies . There are around 202 companies at Info Park as on August 2017 and 32000 employees are working here. Women IT professionals constitute 12500.Power analysis is used to determine sample size. Accordingly sample size is fixed at 350.

Table 1.1.Employment   Status   of   Info Park as on August 2017

Total number of companies	202
Total number of Employees	32000
Number of women employees	50%

Multi stage random sampling technique was followed for the selection of the sample required for the present study. In the first stage, companies were divided in to large, medium and small on the basis of total number of employees working.

Table No: 1. 2. Classification of Companies on the Basis of Number of Employees

Sl No	No of employees	Size of the firm
1	>100	Small
2	100-500	Medium
3	<500	Large

In the second stage, from the each category   few companies were selected at random. In the third stage, from each selected companies women employees were selected at random

1.8. Data analysis

Women employees in I T industry confront both personal constraints and organizational constrains which hinder balance in Work and Family Commitments. For the purpose the study on Work-Life Balance opinion on aspects hindering balance in Work & Family commitments provided by employees was collected by using Likerts scale as a tool for 5 statements .To find out the barriers to achieving a good work/life balance, we consider Work and Family Related Factors and test the hypothesis. For this we use SEM to test the hypothesis.

Hypothesis

H$_1$: Hours of work (WFR1) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H$_2$: No or less support from colleagues (WFR2) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H$_3$: No or less support from spouse/family members (WFR3) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H4: Overtime and work on holidays(WFR4) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H5: In efficient time management (WFR5) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H6: Frequent updating of knowledge (WFR6) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H7: Work from home after office (WFR7) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H8: Attitude of the family members that are house hold work should be done by woman (WFR8) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

H9: Lack of prudent work life policy from management (WFR9) is a factor affecting Work and Family Related Factors

Table1.3. Model Fit Indices for CFA – Work and Family Related Factors

	χ^2	DF	P	Normed χ^2	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMR	RM
Work and Family Related Factors	22.491	16	.128	1.406	.986	.961	.988	.992	.997	.056	

Source: Computed from primary data

All the attributes loaded significantly on the latent constructs. The value of the fit indices indicates a reasonable fit of the measurement model with data. In table 54 we present the regression coefficients.

Table 1.4.The Regression Coefficients -Work and Family Related Factors

Factors/ Latent Variables (Dependent Variable)	Construct (Independent Variable)	Regression Coefficient	C.R.	P	Variance explained (%)
Work and Family Related Factors	WFR1	0.780	7.892	<0.001	60.8
	WFR2	0.755	7.433	<0.001	57.0
	WFR3	0.715	6.775	<0.001	51.1
	WFR4	0.734	7.077	<0.001	53.9
	WFR5	0.853	9.566	<0.001	72.7
	WFR6	0.782	7.931	<0.001	61.2
	WFR7	0.385	3.065	0.003	14.8
	WFR8	0.630	5.598	<0.001	39.7
	WFR9	0.704	6.608	<0.001	49.6

Source: Computed from primary data

H₁: Hours of work (WFR1) is a factor affecting Work- Family Balance.

The results in the above tableindicates that the regulatory construct WFR1 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.780, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H₁ is accepted and concludes that Hours of workis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H₂: No or less support from colleagues (WFR2) is a factor affecting Work life balance.

The results reveals that the regulatory construct WFR2 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.755, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H₂ is accepted and concludes that No or less support from colleaguesis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H₃: No or less support from spouse/family members (WFR3) is a factor affecting Work and Family balance.

The results shows that the regulatory construct WFR3 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.715, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H₃ is accepted and concludes that No or less support from spouse/family membersis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H₄: Overtime and work on holidays(WFR4) is a factor affecting Work life balance.

The results reveals that the regulatory construct WFR4 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.734, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H₄ is accepted and concludes that Overtime and work on holidaysis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H₅: In efficient time management (WFR5) is a factor affecting Work life balance.

The results exhibited in table shows that the regulatory construct WFR5 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.853, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H₅ is accepted and concludes that inefficient time managementis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H$_6$: Frequent updating of knowledge (WFR6) is a factor affecting Work life balance.

The results exhibited in table reveals that the regulatory construct WFR6 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.782, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H$_6$ is accepted and concludes that frequent updating of knowledgeis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

**H$_7$:** Work from home after office (WFR7) is a factor affecting Work family balance.

The results in table reveals that the regulatory construct WFR5 has no significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.385, which is less than the recommended value of 0.4. So the hypothesis H$_7$ is accepted and concludes that Work from home after officeis a factor that has no significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H$_8$: Attitude of the family members (WFR8) is a factor which hinders work life balance.

The table shows that the regulatory construct WFR8 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.603, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H$_8$ is accepted and concludes that Attitude of the family members that are house hold work should be done by womanis a factor that has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors.

H$_9$: Lack of prudent work life policy from management (WFR9) is a factor affecting Work and life balance.

The results exhibited revealed that the regulatory construct WFR9 has significant effect on Work and Family Related Factors as the standardised direct effect of this construct on work and family related factors is 0.704, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant). So the hypothesis H$_9$ is accepted and concludes that Lack of prudent work life policy from managementis a factor that has significant effect on Work and family related factors influencing WLB.

Figure 1.2 Path Diagram - Work and Family Related Factors of WLB
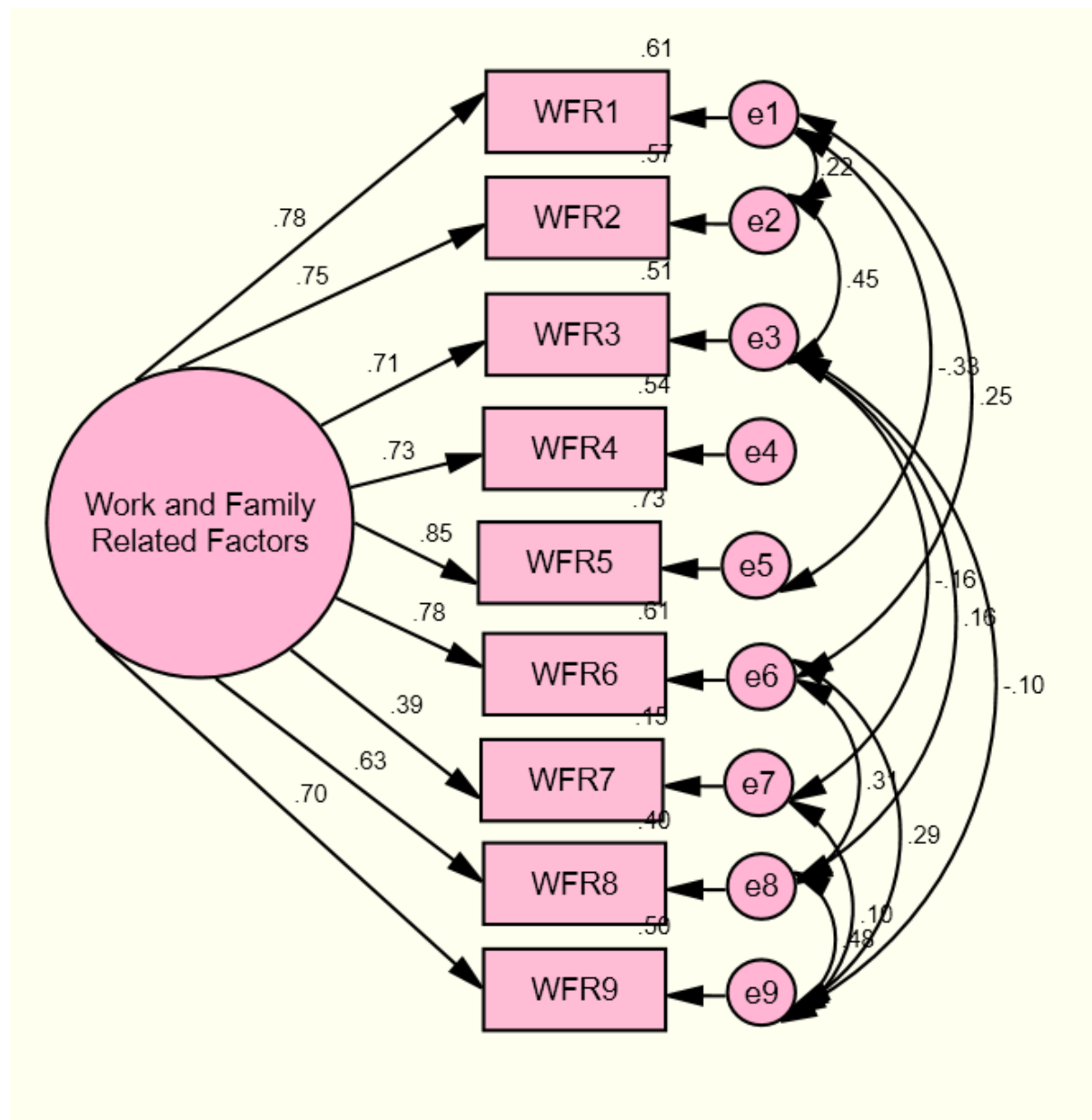
1.9. FINDINS OF THE STUDY

Women employees in I T industry confront both personal constraints and organizational constrains which hinder balance in Work and Family Commitments. The study shows that following are the main challenges faced by the women employees in IT industry.

1. Long hours of work
2. No or less support from colleagues
3. No or less support from spouse/family
4. Overtime and work on holidays
5. In efficient time management

6. Frequent updating of knowledge
7. Lack of prudent work life policy of the organisation

The study also reveals that three major distinctive nature of work that interferes with personal life were long working hours/work on holidays, no /less support from colleques, inefficient time management, and lack of prudent policy from the management and frequent updating of technical knowledge are the major distinctive factors which hinder the work life balance of the women employees.Among them inefficient time management is the main factor.

The two major factors impacting work – life balance of women IT professionals are feeling exhausted at the end of day especially during peak time and they have to either travel late night or have to engage night shift creating conflict in the family .This forces them to think about quitting their jobs or taking a career break.

1.10.Conclusion

Women constitute an important section of the workforce. However, the present situation of a large number of well-qualified women who due to various circumstances have been left out of their jobs needs to be addressed. Achieving a good balance between work and family commitments is a growing concern for contemporary employees and organizations. There is now mounting evidence-linking work–life imbalance to reduced health and wellbeing among individuals and families.

The study shows that various measures should be adopted to utilise the skill and capacity of women in organised sector especially fast developing industries like Information Technology. The study also reveals that the various life programmes implemented the firms satisfy different categories of employees differently. In other words the factors determining work life balance is different for different groups. The institutions should arrange for suitable working conditions, and welfare measures. The salary of the employees should be based on their academic qualifications, experience, leadership qualities, and involvement with the institution without gender discrimination. Flexible Working Arrangements are necessary to achieve the desired outcome of increasing women labour force participation in India.

There needs to be attitudinal changes among households and shifts in mind-set among both men and women regarding house, work and women. The views of society also have to be changed.The problems of working women need to be tackled through multipronged strategies.Mere legislative provisions will not ensure gender equity. What is required is a change in our attitude to women in their multiple roles in society. What is needed is a practical approach to ensure that women get their due share of authority and responsibility.

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