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Management of dual roles of women in information technology industry

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Abstract

This article explores the role of information Technology in women empowerment. India has become a dominant player in the information technology industry globally. Information Technology industry is unique with regard to participation of women in the workforce. Every second fresh recruit in IT industry now is a woman. E-governance initiative of government has also opened an opportunity for women empowerment by increasing access to information for women. IT provides access to same information to women as it is available to men. This information flow is uncensored and without any distortions. The major players in IT industry are now offering an environment that will retain the talented women workforce. To develop women friendly work environment leading companies are now offering benefits like lactation centers, extra maternity leave, work from home policies, creches, and option to relocate to city of their choice in case of transfer of the husband. Not just a good human resource practice, but it has become a matter of survival for companies facing talent crunch. Gender diversity has become a business need. Educated Women have had significant breakthrough by breaking the traditional household, child rearing, socially oppressed life style, because of access to IT.

In India, entrepreneurship has traditionally been considered a male prerogative. Many women entered the world of business and they have become successful entrepreneurs in various business activities. These women entrepreneurs are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. Their relentless zeal, incessant quench for success and willingness to walk the extra mile has broken all myths about their inborn limitation. However, in the existing domestic and societal setup where, emphasis is more given to family and relationships, entrepreneurial women are overburdened and find it increasingly difficult to balance their work and life roles.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, microfinance, e-governance, gender discrimination, migration, degree of vulnerability

1. Introduction

A great majority of people in the developing nations are under the line of poverty. They are deprived of adequate access to the basic needs of life such health, education, housing, food, security, employment, justice and equality. Issues of sustainable livelihood, social and political participation of the vulnerable groups exists as the major problem in the developing nations. Governments have failed to guarantee people's right in the implementation level. People who belong to the vulnerable groups are unable to acquire and use their rights (Chatterjee & Sheoran 2007) ^[4]. Human right applies universally to all.

The process of identifying vulnerable groups within the health and human right generated from the pressing reality on the ground that stemmed from the fact that there are certain groups who are vulnerable and marginalized lacking full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including rights to political participation, health and education. Vulnerability within the right to health framework means deprivation of certain individuals and groups whose rights have been violated from the exercising agency (Yamin, 2005) ^[5]. Certain groups in the society often encounter discriminatory treatment and need special attention to avoid potential exploitation. This population constitutes what is referred to as Vulnerable Groups. Vulnerable groups are disadvantaged as compared to others mainly on account of their reduced access to medical services and the underlying determinants of health such as safe and potable drinking water, nutrition, housing, sanitation etc. (Chatterjee & Sheoran 2007) ^[4]. Quality of employment has been one of the main concerns in labour market studies in developing countries.

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In India, the reported status of a worker as “employed does not necessarily imply a reasonable level of earnings; nor does it reflect the status of living of workers. This is particularly evident from the fact that while the unemployment rate even by the highest estimate was 8.3%, the percentage of people below the poverty line was as high as 28% in 2004-05. It essentially implies that the problem in India is not only of unemployment but also of low productivity of work in which the poor are engaged. “Inclusive growth being one of the central concerns of the growth process India is presently following, improving the quality of work and raising levels of living standards of workers occupy the central place in the overall growth process [6]. This will definitely open up avenues towards reducing the occupational vulnerability of informal women workers at large.

2. Employment in the Informal Sector

An important aspect of quality of employment in India is the predominance of the informal sector. The size of the organised sector, characterised by higher earnings and job security is small, it accounted for less than 6% of the total employment in 2004-05. Around two-thirds of the total organised sector employment is in the public sector. Over the years, organised sector employment has grown more slowly than the total employment, reflecting the faster growth of employment in the unorganised sector. As a result, there has been increasing informalisation of employment over the years. This informalisation has been more pronounced in the case of female workers. As a whole, about 96% of female employment is in the unorganised sector as against about 91% of males. In urban areas, the percentage of unorganised sector workers is close to 65-70%. Not all of them are poor but crude estimates suggest that close to half of this number is in dire need of occupational up-scaling.

A large proportion of the workers engaged in the urban unorganised sector is migrants from rural areas with poor educational, training and skill background and are employed in low-paying, semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. The productivity and earning levels in most of the enterprises are low and do not often provide full time work to those engaged. For the employees, the working environment is not conducive; working hours are long and most of the conditions of decent employment (e.g. paid leave, pension, bonus, medical support and health insurance, maternity leave benefits, compensation against accident, etc.) are nearly non-existent. The past trends and all the available evidence suggest that the bulk of the growth in employment in future will come from the unorganised sector. It will be an important challenge to ensure that employment in this sector consists of jobs with safe conditions of work, decent and growing earnings and a measure of income and social security. Moreover, increasing the proportion of organised sector employment will be an important task to accomplish in the near future [6].

3. Categories of Workers in the Informal Sector

Indian economy has preponderance of informal and unorganised sector both in terms of number of workers and enterprises. This segment of economy has inbuilt vulnerabilities, and the study of unorganised sector based on reliable data is important for informed decision making and addressing the problems faced [7]. The biggest problem with

the informal sector in India is that here is no precise information about the total number of workers what to say of women engaged in this sector and also their respective ratios in various diversified occupations. The Report of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector highlights the existence and qualification of unorganised or informal workers, defined as those who do not have employment security, work security and social security. This universe of informal workers now constitutes 92 per cent of the total workforce. Informal wage employment is comprised of employees of informal enterprises as well as various types of informal wage workers who work for formal enterprises, households, or who have no fixed employer.

3.1. Women entrepreneurs and work-life balance (WLB) issues

In the past, women are taken only as house managers but with the change of time, change in thinking and spread of education the role of women in society also changed. In recent years, women have been taking interest in income generating activities, self employment and entrepreneurship. In addition to their challenging entrepreneurial work, many of these women also perform several roles in their families. Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. In Indian context, having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business (Starcher, 1996). Women also face the conflict of performing of home role as they are not available to spend enough time with their families. The married woman entrepreneurs have a major challenge to make a perfect balance between domestic activities and business activities. The woman entrepreneur cannot succeed without the support and approval of spouse.

4. Review of literature

The studies on women entrepreneurship became prominent from the 1980s when the focus of development shifted from women the „objects“ to „subjects“ of development. To analyse the WLB issues faced by women entrepreneurs of India where societal etiquette, male dominance and deep-rooted discriminatory socio-cultural values and traditions persist. There are very few limited studies available from India on women entrepreneurship (Khanka, 2010; Mann & Phukan, 2010; Anitha & Laksmisha, 1999) which either concentrate on the reasons for female emancipation or highlight the contributions of the few successful women entrepreneurs.

Surthi and Sarupriya (2003) investigated the psychological factors affecting women entrepreneurs. They examined the role stress experienced by women entrepreneurs on the effect of demographic variables, such as marital status and type of family, and how women entrepreneurs copewith stress.

Cf. Mathur 2011; Singh N.P. 1986 highlight that as Indians, most of the women are very serious about family obligations but they do not equally focus on career obligations and are not concerned with their self-development. Women's family and personal obligations are sometimes a great barrier for succeeding in business career. Only few women are able to manage both home and business efficiently, devoting enough time to perform all their responsibilities in priority.

Singh, Sengal, Tinani and Sengupta (1986) carried out an exploratory study of successful women entrepreneurs and examined their identity, expectations, and motivations, types of problems encountered by them to reach the level of success and to identify the operational problems they were confronting.

Banerjee and Talukdars (2007) in their empirical study reveal that women entrepreneurs had greater motivations, greater job involvement and higher annual family incomes. At the same time, those with high entrepreneurship faced less conflict in their roles as entrepreneurs and housewives whereas those with low entrepreneurship faced more conflict comparatively more number of women belonged to joint families, approached institutions for financing their enterprises and hired labour from outside than those having low extent of entrepreneurship.

In past decades, the female workforces in India were mainly employed in non-managerial, subordinate or low-profile positions. But now, they occupy almost all categories of positions in the workplace. These changes in work culture have added to women's duties and responsibilities to their family as well as to society. Therefore, the concept of WLB, along with its implications, is a core issue that must be investigated as more women become entrepreneurs in Indian society.

5. Research methodology

5.1 Significance of the research

Majority of the literature revives highlight on the major critical issues of WLB of women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, there are limited research studies on the WLB issues of married women entrepreneurs. The issue of WLB for married women entrepreneurs thus need to be recognised and hence this study.

5.2 Statement of the problem

Married women entrepreneurs face greater challenges when compared to single women entrepreneurs. WLB issues are more critical for married women entrepreneurs. Thus the study was carried out in Mangalore city where freedom of women is not restricted and Mangalore is also known for its diverse social culture.

5.3 Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study was to explore the WLB challenges faced by married women entrepreneurs in Mangalore City. The specific aim was to develop and validate an appropriate research instrument to assess these issues. Based on this research instrument, the important factors influencing the WLB of married entrepreneurial women in Mangalore city were explored using Factor Analysis. The other objectives are:

- a) To study if women entrepreneurs are good at balancing work and life.
- b) To test the significance differences of WLB issues of entrepreneurial women belonging to service and manufacturing sector.

5.4 Scope of the Research: The scope of the study was restricted to married women entrepreneurs of the city of Mangalore city, Karnataka. For the study the samples with monthly income of Rs.25, 000 to Rs.1,00,000 were selected. The primary data was collected through structured interviews and a questionnaire.

5.5 Research Design: The present study is exploratory in nature. This also includes the descriptive study which involved the researcher in collecting the primary data by making use of the questionnaires as a research instrument to a very large extent for the purpose of the study.

5.6 Sampling Design: Sample design is a plan for drawing the samples from the population. For the purpose of sampling the various concepts that are important are as follows.

5.6.1 Sampling Frame: The study was restricted within the city limits of Mangalore. The Women entrepreneurs list was obtained from District Industry Centre, Mangalore which is a centre having information on small and medium enterprises.

5.6.2 Sample Size: A total of 75 women entrepreneurs belonging to the various locations of Mangalore city were contacted personally to participate in this survey. Of the 75 questionnaires distributed, 69 duly completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 92%. Respondents in the study were classified into two sectors, 36 from the service sector and 33 from the manufacturing sector. The service related entrepreneurial activities include: managing photo copying centres, telephone booths, tailoring & fashion designers, beauty parlours etc. The manufacturing related entrepreneurial activities include: food industry, home food products, cooking masala units, stuff toy units, leather product units, oil & flour mills etc.

5.7 Limitations and implications for future research: The present study included women entrepreneurs who were married and who were doing business activities in Mangalore city. Thus this was the major limitation for the lower sample size and hence the results cannot be generalized to metropolitan cities. Hence there is a scope for including all women entrepreneurs of other life statuses for better derived results. The respondents themselves are in the midst of an array of WLB issues, they were probably not objective when they studied and answered the questionnaire. Although the feedback related the direct behaviour of the respondents to a WLB issues, there exists a high possibility that the respondents might actually reveal an ideal response rather than their actual behaviour to a given context. The study focused on married women entrepreneurs who belonged to service and manufacturing sectors only. Thus there is wide scope for future research to incorporate other sectors too. To conclude, study may be applicable only to the prevailing social setup of the Indian entrepreneurial sectors because of its unique blend of culture and etiquette. Finally, as India is a multilingual, multiethnic, multi-religious and hierarchical society comprising various economic groupings, research across all states in the country may result in more conclusive data.

5.8 Validating the research instrument: The pilot study was conducted by collecting the preliminary data needed for the development of the research instrument from 23 women entrepreneurs via qualitative methods, such as elaborate semi-structured interviews involving 42 questions and in-depth discussions regarding WLB issues. These qualitative methods were intended to explore the diversity and intensity of the problem and its possible dimensions among the

interviewees. Thus finally, 37 statements concerning the WLB issues of the married women entrepreneurs in Mangalore were developed based on extensive literature review and with consultation of research experts.

7. Data analysis and interpretation

7.1 Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

In this empirical study, respondents were married women entrepreneurs engaged in various entrepreneurial activities. A summary of the demographic details of respondents are in table below.

Categorical Variables	Service Sector		Manufacturing Sector		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Qualification						
Below SSLC	1	2.8	6	18.2	7	10.1
SSLC	10	27.8	4	12.1	14	20.3
PUC	9	25	5	15.2	14	20.3
Graduation	12	33	14	42.4	26	37.7
Post-Graduation	4	11.1	4	12.1	8	11.6
Total	36	100	33	100	69	100
Family Type						
Nuclear Family	24	66.7	19	57.6	43	62.3
Joint Family	10	27.8	11	33.3	21	30.4
Extended Family	2	5.6	3	9.1	5	7.2
Total	36	100	33	100	69	100
Present Status						
Married	33	91.7	30	90.9	63	91.3
Married & Divorced/Separated	0	0	1	3	1	1.4
Married and Widowed	3	8.3	2	6.1	5	7.2
Total	36	100	33	100	69	100
Spouse Employment						
Government Employee	6	16.7	5	15.2	11	15.9
Private Employee	12	33.3	15	45.5	27	39.1
Businessmen	10	27.8	7	21.2	17	24.6
Professional	2	5.6	3	9.1	5	7.2
Retired	4	11.1	2	6.1	6	8.7
Not Living	2	5.6	1	3	3	4.3
Total	36	100	33	100	69	100
Age						
Less than 30 years	4	11.1	9	27.3	13	18.8
30 years - 40 years	14	38.9	12	36.4	26	37.7
40 years -50 years	10	27.8	9	27.3	19	27.5
50 years - 60 years	7	19.4	1	3	8	11.6
More than 60 years	1	2.8	2	6.1	3	4.3
Total	36	100	33	100	69	100

Interpretation: It can be seen from the above table that out of 69 respondents, 51.9% of them were graduates and maximum respondents belonged to the age group of 30-40 years. Likewise, 91.3% of respondents were married and the rest were divorced/separated or widowed. With respect to the spouse's employment, 39.1% of respondents spouses were employed privately followed by them being

businessmen. Family is the primary group where in every member is directly associated with its activities. The type and size of the family determines the extent to which an entrepreneur can take decisions by herself without much dependence. The data in the above table shows that 62.3% women belonged to nuclear family setup.

Quantitative Variables	Service Sector		Manufacturing Sector	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age of Respondents	40.89	10.45	38.82	10.44
No. of Dependents in Family	0.94	0.79	0.97	1.05
No. of Children in Family	1.81	1.06	1.64	1.06
Family Size	4.47	1.44	4.39	1.58
No. of Servants (Domestic helpers)	0.78	0.80	0.61	0.61
Years of Entrepreneurial Experience	11.83	8.45	10.73	8.04
Total Sample Size: N=69	36		33	

Interpretation: From the above table, it is noticed that out of 69 women entrepreneurs, 36 of them are from the service sector and remaining 33 come from the manufacturing sector. Above descriptive analysis table summarizes that on an average women entrepreneurs had at least one dependent and about an average of two children in each family with the

average family size of 4 people and at least one servant or domestic help. It is vivid to know that the women who ventured into entrepreneurial activities are from the age group of 30-40 years and maximum women entrepreneurs had an average entrepreneurial experience of 11 years. This indicated that women ventured in their mid age of life. The discussion also

revealed the main reasons for venturing into entrepreneurial activities such as increased needs in family, growing household expenses, education of children and marriage of children which forced married women to look for sources of income to support their family.

7.3 Internal Consistency or Reliability

Internal consistency or reliability defines the consistency of the results delivered in a test, ensuring that various items under assessment of conflict management issues are measured correctly and reliably by respondents on Likert scale. This is checked statistically through Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of reliability Alpha (α) which is depicted below.

First Research instrument used for Pilot Survey	Number of items	Cronbach’s α	Revised Research instrument used after the Pilot Survey	Number of items	Cronbach’s α
	42 statements	0.718		37 Statements	0.799

Interpretation: After revising the questionnaire from the pilot survey of 23 respondents with 42 statements measuring various issues regarding WLB, Reliability test using Cronbach’s α was tested to test the validity of the questionnaire. From the above table both Cronbach’s α values of pilot survey and research survey are greater than 0.70, thus it can be statistically concluded that there is a consistency or inter-reliability in measuring various items of various issues regarding WLB. In a sense, the result ensures that the responses are not too varied across time in a summated scale.

7.4 Mean ratings of work life balance (WLB) Issues (N=69)

The research study contained 37 statements related to WLB issues. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Among all of the WLB-related statements presented in above table, the statement “Family

is my first priority” was rated highest, with a mean score of 4.09 followed by statements such as “I give attention to the educational needs of my children” with a mean score of 3.91 and “I manage my childcare issues with ease” with a mean score of 3.84. This proves that women entrepreneurs in Mangalore give lot of priority for family and childcare issues. On the other hand observing the mean score of the statement “I remain engaged in my business related work for more than ten hours per day” which is 3.81, it can be concluded that women entrepreneurs of Mangalore agree to the fact that spending more time in business and other entrepreneurial activities they find less time for personal work which is proved from the statement "I find time for physical activities as an anti-stress technique." scored the lowest mean score of 2.67. Thus majority of women entrepreneur respondents experienced a strong relationship when it comes to family setup and least regarding managing time for physical activities as an anti-stress technique to balance work and life.

Issues	Factor Loading	Name of the Factor	Eigen Value	Cumulative variance
I am part of my family during family function and festival celebrations.	.800	F1	6.97	11.05
I give attention to the educational needs of my children.	.739			
Family is my first priority.	.710			
I manage my childcare issues with ease.	.647			
I plan my schedule for entrepreneurial activities.	.576			
I have time for my family and all their needs.	.560	F2	5.16	18.53
I get help in entrepreneurial activities from family members.	.863			
I get social support for being an entrepreneur from friends and relatives.	.836			
I personally buy all the household items.	-.547	F3	2.78	25.84
I am socially active person.	.783			
I find time for physical activities as an anti-stress technique.	.679			
I am good at balancing all the facets of life.	.623			
I am good at networking.	.616	F4	2.34	32.64
I can balance work and family domain in a satisfactory way.	.483			
I get family members support in daily chores at home.	.683			
I am a successful entrepreneur by scarifying many of my family roles.	.632			
My family supports me financially in business endeavors.	.549			
I forget I am business person when with family.	.472	F5	1.94	39.12
My family members willingly listen to my work / personal problems.	.458			
I do not have sleep irregularities after assuming entrepreneurial role.	.853			
I do not have health issues after assuming entrepreneurial role.	.766	F6	1.89	45.59
My time resources are equally distributed between business and home.	.836			
As I can balance both work and Life, I am relaxed	.759			
I do not feel stressed often when assuming entrepreneurial role.	.572	F7	1.52	51.92
I do not lose patience when handling dual roles.	.797			
I feel free and enjoy my profession as I have no dependent care issues.	.762			
I do not face family conflicts on a regular basis	.525			
I spend weekends and holidays with my family.	.749	F8	1.37	57.52
Being an entrepreneur, I am respected and helped by society.	.629			
Due to multiple roles, I could not succeed in entrepreneurial domain.	-.524			
I get equal support from my employees.	.869	F9	1.19	67.53
I remain engaged in my business related work for more than ten hours	.777			

I am healthy enough to meet various role obligations	.502			
I visit the physician on regular intervals.	.812			
I manage my roles and duties in a satisfactory manner.	.573	F10	1.05	76.88
I do not experience work life imbalance.	.521			
I feel difficulty in assuming entrepreneurial role.	-.862			

Interpretation

37 statements regarding WLB in above table were factor-analysed using principal component analysis and the varimax rotation method to determine the underlying dimensions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also implemented to test the fitness of the data. It is observed from above table, the KMO statistic is 0.650 (which is greater than 0.60) indicating that there is an adequacy of sampling to conduct factor analysis. Furthermore, the Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to check whether all the variables are uncorrelated to each other. The results of the KMO measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity clearly indicate the appropriateness of the use of factor analysis. The factor loadings of all accepted statements are greater than 0.5, and the eigenvalues of all dimensions/factors are higher than 1.0. This fully confirms the appropriateness of data for factor analysis. As evidenced from the factor analysis, the major WLB issues observed among married women entrepreneurs are Time management factors (F1), Social Support factors (F2), Self-management factors (F3), Family Support Factors (F4), Health factors (F5), Role Clarity factors (F6), Stress Management factors (F7), Esteem factors (F8), Work factors (F9) and Role demand factors (F10).

The above factors explored explain the areas that lead to work life balance issues of married women entrepreneurs of Mangalore city. The most prominent in them are time management, support, self management and family factors. When entrepreneurs balance the above four major factors, WLB is experienced by them.

Conclusion

The present study incorporates the results of an empirical analysis of the WLB issues faced by the married women entrepreneurs using factor analysis. Processing the data through this statistical tool revealed a number of issues related to WLB, including the fact that women entrepreneurs struggle to juggle between highly demanding familial, entrepreneurial, personal and societal duties and needs. The following are the prominent WLB issues i.e., time management, support, self management and family factors. When entrepreneurs balance the above four major factors, healthier WLB is experienced by them. When this happens families revive and in turn the society experiences a favorable happiness index. This transition in society adds to the growth index of the nation. When a country aspires inclusive growth, women are a part of it and women entrepreneurs form the crux. This study elucidates the relevance of women and their contribution in nation building. This paper validates that the path is difficult for women to make a mark in the business world but this walk is essential for them to be a part of inclusive growth, where both men and women make an equal contribution.

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