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Work life balance: An empirical study of female nurses in Kashmir

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Abstract

It is very challenging for the working women to maintain a proper balance between work and family commitments. Due to their busy work schedules majority of the women often struggle to achieve work life balance. Women in the workforce frequently report that their lives have become a juggling act due to their multiple personal and professional responsibilities. The hospital administration need to take a proper cognizance of these apprehension of nurses and should periodically review their status. Administration need to create a conducive environment at workplace so that female nurses are able to achieve a proper balance between personal life and professional life. In this backdrop, the article is aimed to empirically evaluate the work life balance of female nurses in Kashmir. The study has adopted survey by questionnaire methodology to collect data from the respondents (female nurses).

Keywords: Work life balance, family, women, nurses, stress

Introduction

Work life balance is of crucial importance in both contemporary business practices and academia. It has become a key research area in different fields. There has been a general consensus that work life balance is important for the psychological wellbeing of an individual and outcomes like satisfaction, overall sense of harmony etc. Self-esteem can be thought to elicit a balance between work and life domains. Work-family research has its origins in the theory of role stress, in which the negative aspect of work interacting with family has been highlighted. In recent years, there has been a shift in emphasis toward the study of the positive relationship between work and family roles, as well as roles outside of work and family life, and researchers have begun to focus on the true meaning of work-life balance. (Jones *et al.*, 2006) ^[1].

The colossal transformations in the social, political, technological and economic aspect of countries have greatly influenced people's life inside and outside the work. The new world order in the shape of interlinking of countries, technological innovations and easy movability of all resources has transformed the way work is done. At the same time, it has added challenging demands on individuals and families to catch up the pace. Out of this realization, the employees and employers alike are incessantly put into pressure to meet demands of work and non-work. This has put Work-Life Balance (WLB) in the limelight in today's ever dynamic work environment. WLB refers to the simultaneous pursuing of the roles in work and life without any conflict or imbalance – work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work-life enhancement. According to Baral and Bhargava (2010) ^[2], the relationship between work-family domains in a socio-cultural context. The study found that work-family enrichment mediates the impact of organisational interventions on job outcomes.

In the broader perspective WLB is also termed as "life style balance". Due to urbanisation and modernization, Indian families are undergoing rapid transformation. In India, women from various segments of society have entered the workforce. Women in India, particularly in urban areas, are exploring the various educational institution opportunities available to them. This has paved the way for greater awareness and increased aspirations for personal development. Women are required to simultaneously fulfil an accumulation of diverse roles, each with its own unique pressure.

Multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the physical and mental health of working women. WLB in broadest sense can be understood as the prioritization of work with personal chores. Reportedly, women with multiple roles have better physical and psychological health than those with fewer responsibilities. WLB is a global phenomenon for most employees, who are struggling in balancing domains of work and life. Although the concept of WLB and its research has evolved from the west and other advanced countries, the issue is no longer restricted to them. Already, most employees are witnessing work-life merge where work obligations are merged with life responsibilities. The merge of work and life domains owes to technological innovation in the work space- telecommunicating, high-speed internet and other facilities. The spatial separation between work and life which was physical is getting blurred, giving way to virtual space.

Literature Review

In the present era of technology innovations, it is quite challenging to prioritize official and personal work. In the past it has been observed that poor WLB leads to stress and unhappiness, which results in poor productivity of employees. Mani (2013)^[14] identified the key factors that influence the WLB of women professionals in India. These factors include role conflict, a lack of recognition, organisational politics, gender discrimination, elderly and child care issues, poor health, time management issues, and a lack of adequate social support. (Venkataraman *et al.*, 2016)^[20]. According to Eaton (2003)^[6], employees consider work and family policies to be key variables in organisations where supervisors are more flexible than in organisations with formal policies regarding annual leave, sick leave, etc. Furthermore, Morgan and Milliken (1992)^[10] discovered that career planning, alternative work arrangements, and offsite working arrangements are important factors that help employees balance their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, some researchers have identified three types of work-life policies, including parental leave, alternative work arrangements, and employer-sponsored child care (Glass and Finley, 2002; Nurumal *et al.*, 2017)^[7, 17]. Carlson and Perrewé's (1999) approach to developing a work-family conflict model was used to investigate the relationship between organisational support and work-life issues.

Kossek *et al.* (1998)^[11] studied employer work-life policies and practises as potential organisational change phenomena. They have observed that work-life policies assist in improving the organizational structure and cultural support for work, family, and personal life. Structural support comes in the form of job redesign, reduced workloads, occupational safety, and formal policies on absenteeism, vacations, and sick time, whereas cultural support comes in the form of informal workplace social and relational support from supervisors and coworkers. Previous research concentrated on the conflicts brought on by family at work (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998; Eby *et al.*, 2005)^[12, 5].

Lewis & Cooper (2005) observed that WLB policies are associated with offering employees the chance to work flexibly and notions of flexible working were originally considered within equal opportunities programmes, with a particular focus on working mothers. Rebecca (2006)^[18]

concluded in her study that men and women have different perceptions of work-life balance. According to the researcher, women spend more time with their families, while men spend more time with their personal interests. According to the study, balance is not only about separating time spent on work and personal life, but also about establishing harmony that reflects on an individual's priorities.

The issue of work-life balance has become the hot topic in present scenario. Sverko *et al.* (2002)^[19] emphasized that changes in technology, values and demographic trends contributed to the emergent relevance of work-life balance in industrialized societies. It is supplemented by other factors which include increasing complexity of work, change in nature of family and the extended number of women entering the workforce. Work-life balance refers to the divergence between the work place demands and the demands of personal life. When either side becomes unbalanced for extended periods of time, the effect is likely to be visible in unhealthy symptoms (fatigue, stress, depression, etc.). A lack of synchronization between domestic life and work life causes great personal and financial hardship, both to the individual and the company. In the competitive era, organizations are under competitive pressure to achieve high productivity and require employees with healthy work-life balance as an employee with good work-life balance will be in a position to contribute more towards the organizational growth and success (Naithani, 2010)^[15]. Therefore it is a high time for employers to draw out strategies and help the women employees to enjoy their work and live life to the fullest. The outcomes of imperfect work-life balance faced in the day-to-day life are stress. Employees must be ever performing and ever learning to adapt themselves to the dynamic market conditions. Adding to this is the constant pressure from the superiors to meet the targets. Thus, employees have no other choice but to sacrifice their personal space. The entire process is creating stress on the employees which are the root cause for many other problems.

Higgins & Duxbury, (1992)^[8] found that the challenges of balancing work and family affect both males and females and women reported higher level of difficulty and related stress. Wise (2003)^[21] reported that there was low awareness of work-life balance by business and employees and work-life balance policies are often poorly understood by both line managers and employees, and that family friendly or flexible work arrangements are more commonly found in larger organizations and in the public sector.

Allen, *et al.* (2000)^[1] found that when work-family conflict increased, job satisfaction decreased, and that this was true for individuals of both genders in a variety of professions, career stages, and countries.

Narayanan *et al.* (2012)^[16] demonstrated that some factors like Workplace rigidity, family circumstances, personal obligations, job content, situational issues, and time management have a significant impact on the work-life balance of IT sector software professionals. Buddeberg-Fischer *et al.* (2008)^[3] emphasised that a key objective for the new generation is a well-balanced integration of professional and private life, as well as the importance of informal arrangements and managerial discretion in achieving this goal.

Statement of the problem

Traditionally, women's roles were limited to cooking, cleaning, raising children, and so on. They were regarded as caregivers or housekeepers and were denied access to jobs outside the home. The story has changed, and they now play an important role outside the home. With today's potential education and employment opportunities, most households have become dual earners due to rising expenses and necessities. Higher education has also increased job opportunities for women, and the role models have shifted from stay-at-home mothers to successful professional women. Women have made tremendous progress in every field and have left their mark wherever they go. Her role at home, however, has remained largely unchanged. The wife still cooks, does housework, looks after family members, fulfils family obligations, and runs the household. With increased workplace pressure and significant demands at home, the work-life balance is jeopardised.

They chose their profession based on their interests and qualifications. Nursing profession is one of the most important careers among them. The health-care industry is entirely service-oriented. Because of the large population and changes in people's lifestyles, the demand for healthcare services has increased in a competitive world. The healthcare sector is still in a growth phase with certain limitations, which puts a strain on Nursing Professionals and affects their work life. The pressure from extended working hours, mandatory overtime, the possibility of death, and the increased stress level at their job has resulted in job dissatisfaction, which has resulted in a higher attrition rate and low morale. In this context, it would be more appropriate to investigate the problem of Nurses' Work Life Balance, which could aid the healthcare sector in significantly reducing attrition rates and providing high levels of job satisfaction to Nurses.

Scope of the study

Though lot of work has been done on the issue but no such study has been carried out on Kashmir. Thus there is a need to study the work life balance among working women in Kashmir with special reference to female nurses. The present study will make an attempt to study the problem in Kashmir which has peculiar socio-cultural dimensions with respect to family environment, work environment, socio-economic relationships influencing individual's work life balance.

Objectives of the study

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To investigate the demographic profile and level of awareness of work-life balance among nurses in Kashmir.
- To examine the effect of family dimensions such as socio-economic influences, family status, spouse attitudes, residential status, responsibilities and accountabilities on work life balance of nurses.

Methodology

Research design: The information source for the study was primary as well as secondary sources. Secondary data was collected from various hospital records, profiles, published

journals, magazines, books, and prospects, as well as various websites. Using a questionnaire, the primary data for the study were collected from the nursing staff of various hospitals. In order to determine the nursing staff's and hospital administration's perspectives on the current state of work-life balance, personal interviews were conducted. This study examines the effects of demographic profile, physical, psychological, and job characteristics on the work-life balance of female nurses.

Analysis & Findings

This section presents the results of the present study, which were derived using prescribed methodology and standard tools. These in concurrence with the said objectives are described and discussed under different sub – headings as mentioned below:

Table 1(a): Demographic Profile of Respondents

Designation			
Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sr. Nurse	102	28.3	28.3
Staff Nurse	221	61.4	89.7
Jr. Nurse	22	6.1	95.8
Asst. Matron	5	1.4	97.2
N. Supervisor	10	2.8	100.0
Total	360	100.0	
Education			
Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
10 th	34	9.4	9.4
12 th	79	21.9	31.4
Graduation	173	48.1	79.4
M.Sc.	74	20.6	100.0
Total	360	100.0	
Type of family			
Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Nuclear	287	79.7	79.7
Joint	73	20.3	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	
Number of children			
Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	88	24.4	24.4
1	46	12.8	37.2
2	167	46.4	83.6
3	58	16.1	99.7
4	1	.3	100.0
Total	360	100.0	

It can be observed from the data provided in the Table 1(a) that out of the total 360 respondents, 61.40% have the job profile of Staff nurse, 28.30% are senior nurses, 6.1% are junior nurses, 2.8 are nurse supervisors whereas 1.4% have the job profile of assistant matron. The sample respondents are further categorized on basis of their education. Out of the sample for present study, 48.10% are graduates, 21.90% are 12th pass, 20.60% have a qualification of M.Sc. whereas the remaining 9.40% are 10th pass. Based on the type of family, 79.70 respondents belong to nuclear families and only 20.30% belong to joint families. When categorized on basis of number of children, 46.40% reported having 2 children, 24.20% reported no children, 16.10% reported having 3 children, 12.80% reported having 1 child and only 0.30% respondents reported having 4 children.

Table 1(b): Descriptive Statistics of WLB Characteristics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Needs	360	2.93	0.71
Social Needs	360	2.77	0.74
Time management	360	2.83	1.06
Team Work	360	2.81	1.02
Compensation	360	2.71	0.99
Work Itself	360	3.50	0.81
Life Quality	360	4.07	1.06
Job Discrimination	360	3.79	1.10
Job Environment	360	3.58	1.08
Competency Development	360	3.34	1.03
Job Stress	360	3.48	0.99
Autonomy	360	3.05	1.20
Co-workers	360	4.09	0.99
Supervision	360	3.66	1.14

Work-life balance has been studied with help of 14 dimensions namely, Personal needs, Social needs, Time management, Team Work, Compensation, Work Itself, Life quality, Job discrimination, Job environment, Competency development, Job stress, Autonomy, Co-workers and Supervision. The descriptive analysis is carried on with help of mean and standard deviation of the different dimensions of Work-life balance and same is present in the Table 1 (b). As can be exacted from the descriptive analysis, the highest mean score (4.09) is reported by the dimension co-workers, closely followed by Life quality (mean score=4.07). This indicates that the respondents are extremely satisfied with the nature and behaviour of their co-workers. Also the respondents have reported high satisfaction on Life quality. Life quality dimension aimed to measure whether the respondents are satisfied in personal lives and does their job for contributing to their life quality. High mean score reported on this dimension indicates that the respondent employees find their jobs important and believe that their life goal is fulfilled through their profession which ultimately contributes to their satisfaction in their personal lives. The dimensions like Work Itself, Job discrimination, Job environment, Competency development, Job stress, Autonomy and Supervision have reported mean scores of above 3, indicating that the sample respondents are satisfied with the nature of their work and enjoy their work, don't face any discrimination and harassment at their workplaces, feel safe and secure in their work environment, receive information and training to upgrade their skills, don't face extreme work load and lack of job resources which can result in job stress, have a sense of autonomy and freedom with respect to their role in the organization and are happy with the nature of supervision depicted by their supervisors. Among the 14 dimensions, the lowest mean scores are reported by Compensation (mean score=2.71), followed by social needs (mean score=2.77). This indicates that the respondents are not satisfied with the salary that they receive from their jobs. Compensations form an important source of motivations for employees and as such dissatisfaction among employees with regard to compensation can prove detrimental to individual as well as overall organizational productivity. Low mean score (mean score=2.77) reported on Social needs dimension indicates that the sample respondents find it difficult to attend to their household requirements owing to their jobs and the lack the support of their family members and relatives with regard to their profession. This is also indicative of the fact that

respondents don't believe that their family members in specific and society in general feel pride in their work. Also dimensions like Personal needs, Time management and Team Work have reported relatively lower mean scores indicating that sample respondents don't find time to attend to their personal commitments owing to the nature of their job responsibilities, find difficulty in adjusting their work schedule to meet their personal and familial priorities and experience work pressures while performing group tasks. Further, the standard deviations as reported in Table 1(b) for all variables under study are either under the value of 1 or around 1. This indicates that the results have lesser variability and therefore are reliable and trustworthy.

Conclusion

The nursing profession in India, which is dominated by women, faces difficult working conditions, including abuse from employers, coworkers, and patients' families; poor salaries, workplace restrictions, poor work environments, and a lack of social acceptance. It is now essential to identify the obstacles faced by nurses in their workplace in order to address these issues. Assessing the quality of nurses' work lives is a promising way to investigate and comprehend nurse recruitment and retention. Assessing the work-life of nurses enables organisations to comprehend how work environments, work design, societal influences, and work-life balance issues affect the work-life of nurses and, ultimately, organisational productivity. A healthy work-life balance is essential for attracting and retaining employees. Therefore, health organisations are searching for ways to address recruitment and retention issues by achieving a high quality of work-life. Concentrating on enhancing this quality and boosting the happiness and satisfaction of employees can result in numerous benefits for the employee, the organisation, and the patients. These include strengthening organisational commitment, enhancing the quality of care, and increasing the individual and organisational productivity.

In this context, the present study attempt to study the problem related to work-life balance of nurses which may help the healthcare sector to drastically reduce the attrition rate and to provide a high level of job satisfaction to the nurses. This study thus attempted to study the problem in Kashmir which had peculiar socio-cultural dimensions with respect to family environment, work environment, socio-economic relationships influencing an individual's work-life balance.

This study examined 14 dimensions namely, Personal needs, Social needs, Time management, Team Work, Compensation, Work Itself, Life quality, Job discrimination, Job environment, Competency development, Job stress, Autonomy, Co-workers, and Supervision. Compensations form an important source of motivation for employees and as such dissatisfaction among employees with regard to compensation can prove detrimental to the individual as well as overall organizational productivity. Dimensions like Personal needs, Time management are hardcore as women don't find time to attend to their personal commitments owing to the nature of their job responsibilities, find difficulty in adjusting their work schedule to meet their personal and familial priorities, and experience work pressures while performing group tasks. Every dimension has its pros and cons.

Recommendations

In light of the study, it is clear that the issue of work-life balance persists due to a variety of factors, including work culture/environment, HR policies, job insecurity, compensation packages, etc. As a result of juggling work and personal responsibilities, women employees experience a great deal of stress, which affects not only their performance at work but also at home. To achieve a work-life balance, female employees must set the standard and excel in both their careers and families (Sudha *et al.*, 2012). It requires the participation of multiple parties, including the employee, the organisation for which the employee works, family, friends, and the society in which all are embedded. In their study, Sharma & Bajpai (2013) found that age, marital status, and number of dependents have a significant impact on work-life balance, confirming the study's findings that demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, and income of the employees have a significant impact on work-life balance. In light of the preceding discussion, the following recommendations have been made:

- Work-life balance is a broad concept that encompasses proper prioritisation between one's professional life, which includes career, challenges, pressure, achievement, and ambition, and one's private life, which includes pleasure, leisure, family, and spiritual growth.
- Institutions must create counselling services by employing full-time counsellors who can assist employees in balancing their mental and physical rhythms.
- There should be utmost care taken in taking decisions in adopting and implementing the policies as it impacts both employees and the organization.
- Some of the employees who lack work-life balance should be given more care through providing them with facilities like counseling.
- The women employees should not be forced to work overtime in the hospitals since they have to take care of the family. Therefore the schedule should be set in such a manner that it is not affecting their work-life balance.
- Free health screenings, health insurance, and exercise facilities are not only initiatives that employees expect, but also initiatives that will be decisive factors in their employment decisions. These can be utilised not only as work-life initiatives, but also as effective retention tools during times of high health care costs.
- Employees are advised that careful planning and personal effort are essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Employers can only facilitate work-life balance with a variety of programmes that can attract employees and meet their needs; it is the employees' responsibility to plan, prioritise, and schedule their work and personal obligations.
- The organizational supervisors have to change the negative attitude and have to be more confident and affirmative to subordinates, then only the women employees would be able to perform at their job.
- Most of the nurses having two kids are not in the position to balance the work and family and will have more emotional and stress problems. This may affect the productivity of women employees, hence the organization has to arrange to take care of their kids

during business hours, if children's age is between one and three the hospitals must provide a day-care facility.

- Maternity leave policy of the hospitals should be improved by extending their leaves so that the employees who are not satisfied with the leave policy will be satisfied.

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