
Work-life Balance Among Married Working Women

Achieving the balance between work and personal life is becoming increasingly difficult due to the pressure current society has placed on individuals. Social and demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives. Having working mothers is almost must for the average families. The knowledge economy has created greater access for women coupled with factors such as changes in marital patterns and smaller families. This has led to an increase in the number of working women and, hence, working mothers (Grossman). Family-work conflict and work-family conflict are more likely to exert negative influences in the family domain, resulting in lower satisfaction and greater internal conflict within family.

Nepalese families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization and modernization. Nepalese women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. At the present time, Nepalese women's exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago, especially in the urban setting. This has opened new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth. This, along with economic pressure, has been instrumental in influencing women's decision to enter the work force. Most studies of employed married women have reported economic need as being the primary reason given for working.

Women's employment outside the home generally has a positive rather than negative effect on marriage. Campbellet al. studied the effects of family life on women's job performance and work attitudes. The result revealed that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children; contrary to expectation, women with younger children outperformed women with older children. Makowska studied psychosocial determinants of stress and well-being among working women. The significance of the work-related stressors was evidently greater than that of the stressors associated with the family function, although the relationship between family functioning, stress and well-being was also significant. By fulfilling their economic needs, employment has no doubt made women independent with an identifiable social status but it has also made them to juggle into two main domains of life- work and family. They have stepped into work place but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same, i.e., women may be a top executive, still the "nurturing" or "care giving" roles are considered much a part of feminine roles.

According to G. Delina, married working women find it hard to balance their work and personal life irrespective of the sector they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children

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they have and their spouse's profession. The multiple roles performed by women, role conflict and role overload, organization culture and work dynamics (organizational values supporting work–life balance) have considerable work–personal well-being consequences. Personal resources and social support (the positive relationship between personalities, spouse's work–life balance and support, emotional support and well-being) also impact the professional and personal life balance of married women. Moreover, career orientation and career stage in which women careers need to be viewed in the context of their life course and time lines are also the important factors in this regard.

Super identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures. Multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the mental health and well-being of professional women. In certain instances, women with multiple roles reported better physical and psychological health than women with less role involvement. In other words, they cherished motivational stimulation, self-esteem, a sense of control, physical stamina, and bursts of energy. However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, overindulgence, and back pains.

Nevertheless, work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work–family conflict. These conflicts are intensified by the “cultural contradictions of motherhood”, as women are increasingly encouraged to seek self-fulfillment in demanding careers; they also face intensified pressures to sacrifice themselves for their children by providing “intensive parenting”, highly involved childrearing and development, (Hays S.). Additional problems faced by employed women are those associated with finding adequate, affordable access to child and elderly care, (Reskin B, Ross CE.).

Work–family conflict has been defined as a type of inter–role conflict wherein some responsibilities from the work and family domains are not compatible and have a negative influence on an employee's work situation. These roles tend to cause stress or inter–role conflict among married women. Results of previous research indicate that work–family conflict is related to a number of negative job attitudes and consequences including lower overall job satisfaction and greater propensity to leave a position.

Family–work conflict is also a type of inter–role conflict in which family and work responsibilities are not compatible. It is more likely to exert negative influences in the home domain, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family unit. However, it is related to attitudes about the job or workplace. Both work–family conflict and family–work conflict basically

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result from an individual trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which women are operating.

Workplace characteristics can also contribute to higher levels of conflict. Researchers have found that the number of hours worked per week, the amount and frequency of overtime required an inflexible work schedule, unsupportive supervisor, and an inhospitable organizational culture increase the likelihood that women employees will experience conflict between their work and family role (Grenhaus, JH and Beutell NJ, Galinsky, et al.). Baruch and Barnett found that women who had multiple life roles (e.g., mother, wife, employee, and so on) were less depressed and had higher self-esteem than women who were more satisfied in their marriages and jobs compared to women and men who were not married, unemployed, or childless. However, authors argued quality of role rather than the quantity of roles that matters. That is, there is a positive association between multiple roles and good mental health when a woman likes her job and likes her home life.

Research to date has primarily investigated how work interferes or conflicts with family. From work–family and family–work perspectives, this type of conflict reflects the degree to which role responsibilities from the work and family domains are incompatible. That is “participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role”. Work–role conflict, work–role overload, and work–role ambiguity causes stress in married working women. Kandel et al. studied the nature of specific strains and stresses among married women in their marital, occupational and house work roles. They found that strains and stresses are lower in family roles than in occupational and household roles among the married women. These have more severe consequences for the psychological well-being of women than occupational strains and stresses. Strains predicted distress through role-specific stress, with strains deriving from contribution of role-specific stress. Chassin et al. found three types of conflicts in their study research on a sample of 83 dual worker couples with pre-school children. These are:

- 1) Conflict between demands of multiple roles,
- 2) Conflict between role expectations of self and spouse, and
- 3) Lack of congruence between expectation and reality of roles. The authors felt that self-role congruence in women leads to better mental health.

Research studies have identified several variables that influence the level of work-family conflicts. Variables such as the size of family, the age of children, and number of hours worked outside the home, the level of control one has over one's work hours, flexible or inflexible work hours and the level of social support impact the experience of family-work conflicts. However,

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these variables have been conceptualized as antecedents of work-family and family-work conflicts; it is also important to consider the consequences these variables have on psychological distress and well-being of the working women. Most of these studies revied are in western context; there is a scarcity of research in this area in the Nepalese context. Hence, the researchers made an attempt to study various factors which could lead to conflicts between professional and personal domains of life among married women employees.

It is clear from the current study that married women employees indeed experience work-family conflict while attempting to balance their work and family lives. Thus, Nepalese organizations need to formulate guidelines for the management of work-life conflicts since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees. Further, there is a need to conduct research by considering working environment, job satisfaction, family support and number of working hours in the future research. In order to attain in-depth understanding of one's work and family life, researchers who study work–family roles should include multiple perspectives such as job stress, quality of life, mental health, and work demands. In addition, it is necessary to explore multiple waves of data collection over a longer period of time to better understand the changing nature of work family roles over time. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted to examine how the stages of life (e.g., marriage, child birth, and child rearing) affect work and family concerns.

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