

Chapter 14

The Road Less Travelled: Challenges Related to the Work– Family Balance of Women Managers in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

One of the most crucial factors affecting development in the 21st century is the increased participation of women in the economy of a country and increased entrance to managerial positions. Even though such tremendous changes have taken place, the patriarchal social set up insists on women's responsibilities towards family and children. The domestic roles of women are not shared by men despite the fact that women have shared the economic and social responsibilities of men. This causes conflict among work and family roles, which ultimately affects the physical and psychological well-being of women managers. This chapter deals with the problems and challenges faced by women managers in higher education in India and how family support and suitable coping strategies help them maintain work-family balance.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made the situations more favorable to women round the world as it imparted varied opportunities for women to go for higher education, to enter the labor force, to choose 'paid work' suitable for their qualifications and life situations and excel in them. The public sector has become adaptive, and inclusive of women as labor force, considering the hardworking and sincere approach of women towards jobs assigned to them. Statistics from different countries around the world also shows that when women control the household income of a family, either their own earnings or income from husband or other sources, the benefit to the family and children will be doubled, since the first priority of women will be the welfare of their children (UN Women, 2013).

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The economic development of any country will improve only when the gap between the labor force participation of men and women reduces. Female work participation rate is invariably identified as an indicator of the status of women in any society. In the global sense, the last few decades have witnessed a considerable increase in the number of women entering into managerial positions, and this is especially true in the case of married women having children. The “dual role conflict” of women managers is one of the consequences of a many faceted discrimination and lack of egalitarian men women relations within families and at workplaces. Most of the studies conducted on the dual role conflict have found that women experience more work-family conflict than men (Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994). In such a scenario, the situation of women managers is obviously more complicated, since they have to spend more time and energy at work and perform multiple roles both at the work place and at home. In a patriarchal society which follows a strict gender division of labor as part of the age-old culture where the sharing of family responsibilities is almost nil, married women managers often face higher role conflict than men managers while performing their personal and professional roles (Apperson, Schmidt, Moore, & Grunberg, 2002; Cortis & Cassar, 2005). Even in the 21st century, women abstain from the work field merely to perform their family responsibilities. But still there is hope, as opined by Wittenberg, Cox and Maitland (2008), the 20th century saw an increase in participation of women, and the 21st century will see the economic, political and social effects of this rise, as in US and UK where women occupy more than 50% of the professional and managerial positions.

The World Health Organization defines occupational or work-related stress as “the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope”. Integrating work and family responsibilities have become a serious problem in the present society at large and especially to women. An imbalance in these domains is termed as conflict and this occurs when the demand from one domain interfaces with the other (Blair, 2018). Most of the studies conducted on the dual role conflict have found that working women experience more work family conflict than working men (Lian & Tam, 2014).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ROLE CONFLICT

This chapter is based on an empirical work conducted on the role conflict of women managers in higher education which has drawn its underlying assumptions from the Social Role Theory of Eagly (1984). Hirsch (2015) and Grant-Vallone and Donaldson (2001) identify role theory as a useful theoretical framework to understand the balance of multiple roles played by men and women in their daily life. Anselmi and Law (1998) defined Gender roles as “socially and culturally defined prescriptions and beliefs about the behavior and emotions of men and women” (p. 195). The Gender Role Theory states that women are more likely to see the family role as part of their social identity than men (Ben, 1993). Moreover, the role expectations of women in the work place has increased, but the familial roles remain unshared and hence unchanged (Hochschild, 1997). Thus, when work interferes with familial roles, conflict of roles arises. Gender roles of men and women as parents become more differentiated since family responsibilities are imposed on the women parent and they are expected to provide direct care to children and spend more time with them. The unequal gender division of household labor and childcare, with women entrusted with the bulk of the work, is inferred to contribute to the lower marital satisfaction for women. Conflict theory implies that there is an inevitable conflict between work and family because

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