Chapter 13
Women Family Demographics and Work–Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship that the family related characteristics have on women employee work-life balance (WLB) level, with the help of 316 sample data obtained from women who were working in the state of Kerala under three sectors (i.e., banks, educational institutions, and business process outsourcing [BPO]) during the period 1st January 2020 to 28th March 2020. The family-related characteristics of the respondents were assessed on the basis of seven variables (i.e., marital status, spouse status of work, kid's status, kid's number, family strength, family structure, and employee status) of care responsibility. The analysis reveals that the care responsibility is the only family related variable that has significant influence on women employee WLB level. Furthermore, the family-related variables considered in the study all together only have the potential to explain six percent of variance in women employee WLB levels, further validating the small effect that the family demographic characteristics have on WLB levels.

INTRODUCTION

During the period of 1970 itself the sociologists has realised the fact that not only the work role but also the family role plays a significant role in the life of an individual. This initiated a new realm of research – "The Work-Life Balance". That is, studying the consequences on employee work in connection with family. A- Drastic shift from the traditional isolated role specific approach. The mutual interdependence in between work and family has been identified even during 1960s. There is direct visible mutual interdependence between work and family spheres (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1965; Pleck, 1977). Rapoport &

Rapoport (1965) argued that in isolated approach either towards work or towards family role result in the subjectitative understanding of the subject matter. But the argument remained out-of-the-way until Kanter published his book titled 'Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy' through which he critically examines and explain the mutual interdependence in between work and family. There is a need to shift the focus towards work and family interactions instead of customised approach towards the consequences of work or family (Kanter, 1977). Both the work and family are inevitable for an individual. Work is the mean though which an individual can acquire resources not only to meet the basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter, but also to all other needs that has an underlying economic dimension. Whereas the family is the mean through which an individual can fulfil the social needs such as need for love, friendship and belongingness. Kanter (1977) acknowledged that the need arising out from the family often determines the choice for work that one can undertake. Family life has the potential to influence work both positively as well as negatively (Crouter, 1984). The responsibility and demand arising out of the family has the ability to influence the behaviour of an individual and can draw boundaries around him. Sociologists started focusing on work family interaction and the resultant consequences of the interactions. The result of work family interaction can be either positive or negative. If the result of the interaction is positive, the resultant outcome will be role enhancement, role facilitation and role enrichment. On the other hand, if the result of interaction in between role were negative, the resultant outcome will be role conflict, role stress, role ambiguity and role strain. That is, the family related factors can have a dominant role in the level of WLB of an employee.

Traditional conceptualisation of WLB was only based on family and excluded all the forces outside the family. Here in this study also WLB has modelled on the basis of family characteristics of the employee with a view to understand the strength that the family related characteristics on employee WLB. This is in conscience with the old school view on WLB. Stains (1980) is one of the forerunners who modelled WLB based on employee's family related characteristics through his border theory which lights the WLB research till the end of 20th century. It is only from the 21st century onwards the WLB research has become inclusive and started to stretch its wings beyond the work and family spheres. However, family is still and will be the one of the most important factors that defines the WLB level of an employee as an individual is always encaged within the family boundary. As family is socio-cultural frames work that encompass multiple roles, characteristics and responsibilities. For example, an employee unlike at the office, he is bounded play the role of a good partner to his/her spouse, a good parent to his/her kids, a good son/daughter to his parents and so on..., and it's almost crude to define and generalise the family role as well as it's dynamics and magnitude expand and contract in accordance with the family structure, age and structure. That is, an employee is bound to take up variety of roles, obligations, and responsibilities at family level also which is somehow even compete with the work spear errands. Here in this study family related characteristics viz., marital status, kid's status, care responsibility, number of kids, number of members in the family, spouse status of work, and family structure were examined individually as well as collectively on employee WLB in order to understand the impact and influence that the family related characteristics have individually as well as collectively on employee WLB level.

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