

An Empirical Study on Work Life Balance and Quality of Life of Working Women in Public and Private Sector

Hetanshi Vakta ⁺

Department of Business Administration, School of Liberal Studies, Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat-India

Abstract. Researches show that the number of working women today has increased from 5.1 million in 1900 to 18.4 million in 1950 to 66.2 million in 2009 [1], [2]. Maintaining a proper work-life balance and having a good quality of life can be difficult. Both employers and employees must appreciate the importance of the Quality of work life in an organization [3]. Success of an organization mainly depends on the productivity of its workforce and this productivity can be sustained only when special care is taken to reduce job-induced stress at every level of output. A character of an organization and its potential for progress can be judged from the way it handles its female employees. The present study seeks to explore the work-life balance and quality of life among women employees of public and private sector. A sample of 94 was taken and two scales were used to assess the two parameters. Recent studies have predicted that employee performance is correlated with quality of work-life [4]. Findings show that most of the work-related factors have a negative impact on quality of life. The results also highlight that employed women are not favorably placed and this has severe implications on the families, organizations and society in general. It is highly recommended for organizations to have women-friendly policies; on the other hand, families should also be more supportive and encouraging so that women have harmony, good quality of life and a work-life balance.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Quality of Life, Working women, Psychological wellbeing, human resource

1. Introduction

According to the Quality of Life Research Unit (2004), the study of quality of life is an examination of factors that lead to goodness and well being of life, as well as people's happiness [5]. One term which is widely used with reference to quality of life is work-life balance, which is a continuous string of efforts in terms of time management of the employees between their work and other aspects of life [6]. Today, work life balance is becoming a major issue and a matter of concern for individuals as well as organizations due to the changing male centric workplace environment and huge expectations from women, which has been leading to stress and disturbing the quality of life. A Woman is the backbone of the society. The quality of life of a woman can be a better indicator of a nation's health than GDP [7]. The multiple-roles that women are compelled to play these days lead to a major energy leak both at a psychological and physical level which adversely affects their well-being [8] and leads to role conflict. Work is becoming more intensive and dense these days and this has a direct impact on a woman's free time and her family responsibilities. According to a survey conducted by Maid Brigade, more than 78% of women felt they worked a "second shift" when it came to their daily life responsibilities. Another annual survey also suggested that daily home responsibilities prevent women from realizing their hobbies and personal health goals, adding to stress in their lives [9]. Work-life balance is needed, in order to have a good quality of life and achieve a harmonious balance between work and private responsibilities and interests [10]. This research aims to study whether and how work-life balance and quality of life varies between public and private sector.

The role played by an individual is as important as the role played by an organization in managing this conflict. It is important to remember that striking a balance between work-life is an ongoing process, and not a one-shot deal. If there is a tilt in this balance, chances of surviving after effects becomes difficult. Sadly, in

⁺ Corresponding Author. *Tel:* +91-9974450657
Email address: hetanshivakta@gmail.com

today's modern world, there is no 'one-size fits all' balance that you can look for because of different priorities and lifestyles among women [11].

2. Methodology

The primary methods of data collection were paper-pencil tests on public and private sector.

2.1. Participants

Sample size of 94 was taken from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Both single and married women working in private and public sector were included in the study. All the women were of middle level post.

2.2. Instruments used

The study comprised of two questionnaire assessments:

- The World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL-BREF): It consists of 26 items based on physical health, psychological status, social relationship, and environment. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale [12]. It helps in a broad and Comprehensive assessment of these domains.
- Work-life balance Questionnaire: It consists of 30 items focused on exploring the daily Work-Home experiences of the participants.

3. Results and Discussions

Table. 1: Duration of working days per week and work hours per day

SECTOR	Working Days			Working hours		
	7 Days	6 days	5 Days	9-10 Hours	8-9 Hours	7-8 Hours
Public	8%	23%	69%	13%	29%	58%
Private	5%	78%	17%	27%	42%	31%

Women in most of the public sector enterprises enjoy 5 days a week schedule. No. of working hours in private sector is also more than that in the public sector. Previous studies also show that Employees of public sector are more comfortable with their time schedule than the private sector [13].

Table. 2: Time spent with children

SECTOR	Less than 2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4-5 hours	More than 5 hours
Public	14%	18%	21%	28%	19%
Private	28%	36%	12%	14%	10%

28% women of public sector spend 4-5 hours with their children, whereas 36% of private sector get only 2-3 hours. Past researches show links between women entering the workforce and childhood obesity. Working mothers spend less time on their children's diet and physical activities as compared to non-working [14].

Table . 3: Taking care of older people and dependable Adults and time Spent with them

SECTOR	Taking care of:		Time spent with older people and dependable adults				
	Older people	Dependable Adults	<2Hours	2-3 Hours	3-4Hours	4-5Hours	>5Hours
Public	46%	29%	40%	12%	24%	8%	16%
Private	41%	18%	42.42%	20.27%	16.1%	6.06%	15.15%

Women of both the sectors had similar family responsibilities with reference to taking care of older people and dependent adults. There is also no significant difference between the times they get to spend with them. Moreover, there are few young women who have no such responsibilities.

Table. 4: Anxiety Related to Work-Life Balance and major stress related diseases

SECTOR	Anxiety Related to Work-Life Balance			Stress-Related Diseases			
	Sometimes	Often	Always	Hypertension	Obesity	Diabetes	Frequent Headaches
Public	51%	20%	19%	6%	17%	14%	20%
Private	27%	44%	22%	5%	8%	0%	50%

The present study reveals that women in private sector are more often having anxiety related to their work-life balance. A study found that women are more likely to feel sad and anxious because of stress than men and are also more likely to ruminate on those feelings [15]. 10% women in public sector and 7 % in private sector felt no anxiety. Moreover, the table clearly shows that a larger number of women have frequent headaches in private sector than public sector. But hypertension, obesity and diabetes are more

among women in the public sector. When stress interferes with your ability to live a normal life for a long period of time, it can become dangerous. It can lead to fatigue, loss of concentration, irritation. Chronic stress can also cause wear and tear on a person's body [16].

Table. 5 : Fatigue/depression faced due to stress and Major stress busters

SECTOR	Fatigue/depression faced due to stress		Major Stress busters				
	Yes	No	Yoga	Meditation	Entertainment	Music	Dance
Public	77%	23%	37%	17%	15%	43%	0%
Private	89%	11%	25%	12%	52%	44%	10%

77% women in public sector are usually tired or depressed due to stressful life as compared to whopping 89% women in private sector. Occupational stress affects all the countries, professions, workers of all categories health and family both sectors in general [17]. Both job stress, and entertainment, music and dance

Table. 6: Feelings about working hours and Missing out on quality time with family/friends

SECTOR	Feelings about working hours			Missing out on quality time with family/friends				
	Not happy	Happy	Very happy	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Public	11%	74%	15%	11.4%	21.5%	48%	11.5%	7.6%
Private	23%	67%	10%	6%	15%	46%	25%	8%

These statistics show that private sector employees are less happy than the public sector employees with reference to workload. Many Studies also show that time pressures, ergonomic deficiencies, role conflicts, excessive demands are common stressors among the employees [17]. Also, as per the table, women in both the sector most of the time miss out on spending quality time with family and friends.

Table. 7: Hindrances to work-life balance

SECTOR	Long work-hours	Over-time	Training after work	Comm-uting	shifts	Technology	Negative attitude of peers	Negative attitude of supervisors
Public	28%	3%	0%	11%	5%	2%	31%	20%
Private	30%	7%	10%	8%	5%	14%	14%	12%

Long working hours, commuting to the workplace and negative attitude of peers and supervisors are the major hindrances to work - life balance.

Table. 8 : Work-life balance policies and opinion on their customization.

SECTOR	Existence of Work-life balance policies			Opinion on customization of work-life balance policies		
	Policies exist	No policies	Not aware	Strongly Agree	Indifferent	Agree
Public	17%	71%	12%	25.7%	8.5%	65.8%
Private	31%	12%	52%	34%	12%	54%

The presence of work-life balance policies is minimal in both public and private sector. However, results show that the presence is higher in private sector. There is a need for reducing the gap between the current service level of HR practices and the desired service level of HR practices with reference to work-life balance polices. [18]. Most of the women in public sector (65.8%) and private sector (54%) agree that customization of work life balance policies would make a difference

Table. 9 : Existence of Work achievement rewards, Social functions and Routine health checkups

SECTOR	Work achievement rewards		Social functions held for family		Routine Health check-ups	
	Provided	Not Provided	Held	Not Held	Conducted	Not Conducted
Public	19%	81%	74%	26%	13.5%	86.5%
Private	71%	29%	19%	81%	7%	93%

From the table it is apparent that the presence of work achievement rewards is higher in private sector than in public sector. Previous research also shows that Employees of Private sector get rewards or compensations that match with their responsibilities. Rewards aid attraction and retention of employees, facilitate satisfaction and commitment, and ultimately, enhances motivation to exhibit work performance. But, in case of social functions, the presence is higher in public sector. The presence of routine health checkups is minimal in both public and private sector.

Table. 10: Quality of life among women of private sector

Range	Physical Health	Psychological Health	Social Relationships	Environment	
0-20	0	0	0	1	0.42%
21-40	6	1	4	0	4.67%
41-60	24	20	12	12	28.81%
61-80	29	31	18	26	44.07%
81-100	0	7	25	20	22.03%
	59	59	59	59	

Table.11: Quality of life among women of Public sector

Range	Physical Health	Psychological Health	Social Relationships	Environment	
0-20	0	0	0	0	0%
21-40	3	0	0	0	2%
41-60	13	13	3	5	24%
61-80	18	19	12	17	47%
81-100	1	3	20	13	27%
	35	35	35	35	

The above two tables indicate that maximum women in both the sectors have an ‘average’ level of quality of life with reference to physical health, psychological health and environment whereas, they have a ‘high’ level of quality of life with reference to social relationships.

4. Recommendations and Conclusion

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in an organization as they are responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and thus they should be treated with dignity and respect [19]. The most important factor that has come out of this study is that working women in both the sectors feel stressed out and cannot maintain work-life balance due to lack of time for self and family. Employed women are not favourably placed in today’s society. Work life balance is becoming a major issue and a matter of concern for individuals as well as organizations as life today has become so complex at home as well as at work that it has affected the quality of life and career attainment among women. This has forced women to choose between a satisfying career or marriage and children. This research has provided insight into the problems faced by women working in private as well as public sector and their quality of life in relation to their work.

It is necessary for organizations to have good HR practices and processes in place, especially for its women employees to ensure that they enjoy good quality of life. Organizations should give them flexibility to plan their office hours around their personal commitments, option to work from home, and a friendly leave policy to help them juggle roles so as to maintain a good quality of life and proper work-life balance. Crèche can be provided in the office premises to help women employees concentrate more on work and simultaneously see to the well being of their children [20]. Moreover, the policies of maternity leave, prevention of sexual harassment, compulsory annual health checkups should be formulated for all the employees in both the sectors. Financial rewards such as commission, bonuses, profit-sharing and stock option plans supplemented by non- financial rewards like vacations, company car, health insurance and pension cover would be a major boost. An extensive in-house employee survey should be conducted every year in which all employees have the opportunity to voice their opinion on working conditions, management, job satisfaction, well-being, etc. which would help the HR fraternity to frame women friendly policies.

Work-life balance policies have the potential to improve employee morale, job satisfaction, performance level and reduce absenteeism. Problems have to be tackled at grass roots level by families as well as organizations and policies have to be multi-pronged. In today’s global marketplace, companies should champion work-life balance programs. Be it married women trying to make a place in the working arena, single mothers who are trying to raise their children and make a living, couples struggling to manage dual-career marriages, or companies losing employees for other opportunities, work/life programs offer a win-win situation for employers as well as employees [21].

Thus awareness about the stressors and the stress busters among the working women, their families, their organizations and community at large and their willingness and ability to tackle the same will make the world a better place to live in.

5. Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the women who participated in this study and helped me conduct this research. I would like to thank my faculty guide Dr. Ritu Sharma for her guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this research. Lastly, I would also like to thank my parents for their constant support.

6. References

- [1] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Perspectives on Working Women: A Databook", Bulletin 2008, 1980.
- [2] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey Table 10, "Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity", 2010
- [3] Gupta.M, Sharma.P (2011). Factor credentials boosting Quality of work life of BSNL employees in Jammu region.
- [4] Shalini Sheel, Bhawna Khosla Sindhvani, Shashank Goel, Sunil Pathak (2012). Quality of Work life, employee performance and career growth opportunities: a literature review. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research.
- [5] Iran Asadi Sadeghi Azar, Maryam Heidari, Elahe Asadi Bidmeshki, Forugh Forghani, Nasrollah Basiran (2008) Multiple Roles and Women's Quality Of Life: In Iran (Zabol). Iran J Psychiatry 2008, 3:93-99.
- [6] Susan M. Heathfield. Work-life Balance, About.com.
- [7] Eisler,R., Loye,D., Norgaard,K. (1995) Purchase women, men and the global quality of life: A 1995 report of the gender equity and quality of life project of the centre for partnership studies.
- [8] Jaya Ramesh. Stress and the working women.
- [9] Susan Jackson (2013). Daily Life Factors that Contribute to Women's Stress.
- [10] Redmond,J., Valiulis,M., Drew,E. (2006) Literature review of issues related to work-life balance workplace culture and maternity/childcare issues. Crises pregnancy agency report No.16.
- [11] Work and life balance essay. MBA Rendezvous.
- [12] WHOQOL-Bref introduction, administration, scoring and generic version of the assessment (1996). Field trial version. Programme of mental health. World Health Organization Geneva.
- [13] Shobhna Gupta J, Hartesh Pannu K (2013) A Comparative Study of Job Satisfaction in Public and Private Sector Indian Journal of Arts, Volume 1, Number1 January 2013.
- [14] Ted Boscia (2012) Working moms spend less time daily on kids' diet, exercise; fathers not picking up slack. Cornell chronicle.
- [15] Chaplin.T.M, Hong.K, Bergquist.K, and Sinha.R. (2008) Gender Differences in Response to Emotional Stress: An Assessment across Subjective, Behavioral, and Physiological Domains and Relations to Alcohol Craving.
- [16] How stress affects your health, APA.
- [17] M. Nadeem. (2011). A study on occupational stress experienced by private and public banks employees in Quetta city. African Journal of Business Management
- [18] Kumar,Y., Mishra.A.K.(2011). Measuring Human Resource Functions: A Comparison of Public sector and Private Sector Organizations. Vol. VII, No. 1; June, 2011
- [19] Bagga Rajesh, Arora Garima, Arora Sanjeev. (2008). Quality of Work Life: A Comparative Study of Public Sector VS. Private Sector Banks.
- [20] Work Life Balance An overview (2011). Government of South Australia.
- [21] Lockwood.N.R (2003). Work/Life Balance: Challenges and Solutions. SHRM Research Quarterly.