

RECONCILIATION OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE: AN EMPIRICAL WORK LIFE BALANCE STUDY ON CONTEXT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Arafatur Rahaman 

School of Business Studies, Southeast University, Bangladesh

a.rahaman133@gmail.com

Khadiza-Tul-Jannat

Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

ktjannat07@gmail.com

Abstract

After entering in professional life, it turns into a struggle for female employees to create a balance between professional and personal life. In particular, the women of developing countries who can't set boundaries between personal responsibility and professional duty.. Work life balance is highly desirable for women employees in current circumstances as without job satisfaction and consistency in life, it creates a dilemma for working women. This paper attempts to identify key factors and challenges that feel overwhelmed to the female by continuous pressure derived from the high expectations of the job. In this study, researchers bring out the concentration on an emerging developing country by focusing ten leading corporate firm's female employees of the several level of the hierarchy. The respondents were interviewed with a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed by SPSS for both descriptive & inferential. Multiple regressions were run to measure the relationship between the identified factors and its impacts on employee's efficiency. The result reveals that due to the personal and professional imbalance, female employees can't deliver their best effort to the organization and thus work-life conflict downwards female employees' career progress as well as the productivity of the organization.

Keywords: Work-family life balance; Work-life conflict; Woman empowerment; Family friendly work policy

INTRODUCTION

Personal life and professional life are inter-connected and independent. Most of the working individuals are familiar with the difficulty of maintaining a balance between personal and work life. The concept of work-life balance is not a new thing, but with the changing pace of life and increase in stress levels and negatively affecting the quality of work, has made many organizations to think about the policies for maintaining a work-life balance. In the late 1970's, the expression Work-life Balance was first used describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life.

Historically, women's participation in work life has been increased more than before. Women with high levels of academic qualifications are also finding it difficult to make the balance between professional life and personal life. Increased participation of women in the job has contributed more to study the interaction between work and family (Ahmad, 2008). The interface between work and family is consistently seen as work-family conflict (WFC) because these two sectors share a common life in individual that makes difficult for each sector because of both sector's demand. Work and family conflict reflects individual incapability between the demands of the family role and the demands of the work role for making balance.

Bangladesh is an overpopulated country and women are nearly half of total population. In Bangladesh, the concern over work-life balance is gradually becoming a common issue, especially for female employees. Between 1999 to 2006 women's involvement in the workforce has increased more than twice than that of males in different sectors in Bangladesh (Ali, 2010). As female assume more family responsibilities in Bangladesh, this growing trend simultaneously increases a concern for female employees to achieve work-life balance. In Bangladeshi society, an individual's identity is largely tied to the identity of the extended family. The majority of Bangladeshi women are still highly responsible for housekeeping, childcare, and all other aspects of running a home. Although the traditional structure of family roles still exist in Bangladesh, with men as the only breadwinners, a number of women now participate in the workplace. Thus, the traditional family is being replaced by the dual career family so that socio-demographic changes are similar to those in developed and developing societies.

Even as women enter in the workplace in increasing numbers, they continue to do the majority of unpaid family roles. As a result, it is becoming more difficult to reconcile family and work responsibilities for female employees, particularly where no strategies are available. Work and family are essential life roles that ideally need to be harmonized, not viewed as competing for time and energy (Johnson, Lero and Rooney, 2001). Like all other countries of the world (Lingard et al., 2007), work-life balance of the female employees has become an issue in Bangladesh. Without maintaining the balance between professional and personal life, female

employees will not be able to look forward to career progress and the productivity of an organization will be hampered simultaneously.

Objective of the study

The objective of this research is to study the work-life balance in the service sector regarding of working women. It has a major influence on keeping the symmetry between professional life and the personal life roles. The concept of work-life balance is very important for work and family life for betterment in both domains. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To give an overview about work-life conflict, the perspective of women.
- To explore work life balance challenges faced by women in reality.
- To find out the reasons why work-life balance is needed for professional and personal life.
- To provide suggestions for making the balance between work and life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the literature on Work-life balance with different perspective has been increased in number because of rising sources and outcomes of conflict between work and family life. A person plays different kind of roles in the span of life such as, roles from work (worker, employer) and non-work (father, spouse, friend, sibling, etc). Work-Life Conflict exists when time and energy demands to satisfy one role make it difficult to participate in other (Duxbury et al., 2001). It is found from the literature review that there are very few specific studies relating to the Work-life balance issues of women working in different kind of private companies.

There is a lack of local research on work-life balance regarding of working women in Bangladesh. Research on this topic is especially necessary in Bangladesh because there are several conditions that, when combined, boost the work-family conflict. First, more female are joining the labor force (Hossain & Tisdell, 2005). For this, the transition from traditional to dual-earner families has been quite radical in Bangladesh. Second, working hours are typically longer making combining work and family more difficult for dual income families (Alam et al., 2011). Third, the family continues to be an important institution in Bangladesh culture which generates a particular pressure to create and look after a family (Crozier & Davies, 2006). Fourth, companies in Bangladesh have not adopted family-friendly policies (Hossan et al., 2012; Alam et al, 2011).

In the dual career family, Work-life conflict is often assumed to affect women more than men (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Usually, women are more exploited because of their illiteracy, unawareness, unorganized, powerless or less political representation, deprivation, rigid social

customs, religious constraints and injustice by their counter partners (Hossain and Rahman, 1999; Afrin et al., 2008; Ranasinghe, 2008).

Although definitions and explanations may vary, work-life balance is generally associated with equilibrium between the amount of time and effort somebody devotes to work and personal activities, in order to maintain an overall sense of harmony in life. (Clarke, et al 2004, 121). According to Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com (an international work-life balance and consulting company), "Work-life balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life". Also, he believes that to achieve better work-life balance, each individual needs to work smarter- to get more done in less time.

Women are continually challenged by the demands of full-time work in today's career and when the day is done at the office, they carry more of the responsibilities and commitments to home. "Employees who have difficulties blending their work and family responsibilities may say no to additional work responsibilities such as, attending meetings before or after business hours, participating in training after hours; they may say no to transfers and may ultimately leave their jobs (MacBride-King & Bachmann, 1999). It becomes more obvious for women workers. The struggle to drive this balance has proved very difficult for many working women, who feel pressured to satisfy the expectations keeping both traditional views of women's roles in the family and contemporary views of female empowerment.

Work-life balance not only affects working women and their friends and families, but it is also pertinent to organizations from a business standpoint. Women now make up the half of workforce, and organizations have to maximize their use of the available talent pool to compete in the globalized marketplace. Work-life imbalance takes a toll on women's job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Kinman, 2001). If women do not receive enough support from employers in managing their work and home demands, they are more likely to go for part-time work or leave paid employment entirely. This has significant business costs associated with absenteeism and turnover and ultimately limits women's full participation in the labor force preventing organizations from hiring the best person for each job (Todd, 2004).

Organizations can take various measures that may help employees to maintain a balance between their work and family responsibilities, gain improvement in well-being and provide organizational benefits. Research by Kenexa, Research Institute in 2007 shows that those employees who were more favorable toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction. Work-life balance practices are designed as deliberate organizational changes in

programs or organizational culture to lessen work-life conflict and enable employees to be more effective at work and in other roles.

The work-life balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life. With many schemes, employers can facilitate work-life balance that can attract women employees and satisfy their needs. If sound work-life balance is exist, it will definitely have a positive effect on organizations, most certainly increases productivity and thus results in growth and success in the workplace.

According to Julie Morgenstern "Work life balance is not about the amount of time you spend working vs. not working. It's more about how you spend your time working and relaxing, recognizing that what you do in one fuels' your energy for the other". A more satisfied workforce can be created through achieving work-life balance, contributes to the organizational benefits and objectives.

RESEARCH METHOD

An exploratory research has been conducted to identify the key factors that create conflict between professional life and personal life. An informal interview was taken from 20 female employees based on the convenient judgment of researchers. From these findings, 8 factors have been selected to design conclusive questionnaire excluding demographic information. The questionnaire used five-point Likert scale. After that the respondents were asked to rate questionnaire ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

The primary data for the study were collected from 100 female employees of Bangladesh from 10 different corporate firms at the different level of the hierarchy. Data was collected both online and paper-based questionnaire. A total 115 data has been collected where 100 samples has been realized for the study. The rest of questionnaire has been discarded because of incomplete data and non-compliance with the set of parameters. The sample selection of this study used non-probabilistic sampling method i.e. convenient sampling. Secondary data were collected from various sources like international journals, scholarly articles, working papers, review articles of the topics and different websites.

After data collection, it was scrutinized and analyzed by statistical tools SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Package of Social Science) for both descriptive & inferential statistics. Reliability test has been conducted to verify the internal consistency of the variables. The result of Cronbach's alpha value (α) is found 0.726 from the test, above the range of satisfactory level 0.5-0.6 recommended by Nunnally (1967).

Table-1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha ^a	N of Items
.726	8

Then researcher run, multiple regressions analysis to measure the relationship between the identified factors and its impacts on employees' efficiency. Total eight variables were constructed for the study where seven were independent and remaining one was dependent.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Result of Regression Analysis: In this study, dependent and independent variables are analyzed by using multiple regression (linear regression) analysis. Researchers have used work-life conflict downwards career progress & productivity as a dependent variable and managing family problem parallelly with job; can devote equal time; support from family; family friendly policy; time flexibility; efficiency compared with male; faced mental stress related diseases as independent variables.

Table-2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.808 ^a	.653	.626	.523

The result of regression analysis shows that the value of *R* is .808 that indicates there is a high positive correlation between the dependent variable and independent variables. The value of *R Square* is the proportion of variability in the dependent variable that can be explained by the estimated multiple regression. Here, *R Square* = .653 which tell us about 65.3% variation of the dependent variable is explained by independent variables. The analysis revealed that- the seven independent variables have 65.3% impacts over the dependent variable (*Work-life conflict downwards your career progress and productivity*).

Table-3. ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.229	7	6.747	24.699	.000 ^a
	Residual	25.131	92	.273		
	Total	72.360	99			

-
- a. Predictors: (Constant), You faced significantly higher rate of anxiety, depression & demoralization due to professional and personal life conflict, You got flexitime from your employers to meet emergencies or family & personal commitments, Female professionals have to manage family problem parallelly with their job responsibility, You got enough support from your family on dependent care responsibility., You can devote equal amount of time to paid job and non-paid family roles, Management is doubt about your efficiency compared to a male employee in same position, Your organization has family friendly policies
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- b. Dependent Variable: Work-life conflict downwards your career progress and productivity
-

The ANOVA (Analysis of variance) shows that the calculated sign. value is .000 which is lower than $\alpha=0.05$. So, we can reject H_0 . Therefore, it accurately explains that the work-life conflict downwards career progress & productivity which depends on variables that has been entered in the multiple regression model as independent variables.

Our descriptive analysis shows that, 57% of respondents are not satisfied with their current job (See *Appendix-1*) and 46% of them are experienced negative perception from their coworker & superiors (See *Appendix-2*), turns into a threat to women's security at corporate sector. Moreover, 31% of respondents are intended to change their job in near future (See *Appendix-3*) and 57% of them would not like to recommend others (See *Appendix-4*) to join their current organization. Frequency of working years and age are shown in *Appendix-5 and Appendix-6*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We know that women are more involved in the service sector in recent times than before. This trend simultaneously is becoming difficult for them as they are also doing family chores at the same time. Women can't maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities. Thus, they can't give their best performance to the organization, ultimately turns into the reduction of productivity of an organization. As a result, women's career progress can't be achieved and often they can't continue their career life. So, it is very necessary to have some strategies for maintaining the balance between professional and personal life. Here are some policies:

- When you are at home, limit discussions of work matters and focus on your family matters and enjoy your time being talked about your hobbies and personal interests. In weekends, travel with your beloved people to different places. It will make you fresh and you will be able to concentrate on your work perfectly.
- Irrational work requests should not be accepted. In that case, you need to talk to your supervisor about reassigning tasks that are not under your job responsibilities. Fair

recognition system should be adapted to each and every employee in the Organization to remove gender discrimination.

- Sometimes, you need to spend time alone for mental refreshment. Your emotional balance can be improved by doing regular exercises, meditation and other soft skill practices. It will help you to that increase your sense of relaxation, well-being and enjoyment outside of work.
- When you are sitting in your office desk, avoid checking your personal email, text messages, and home voice mail. At the same time, you should not be on your smart phone checking work emails while spending time with family. You should use different networks for different purposes such as LinkedIn can be used for professional life and Facebook for personal life as it tends to have more personal information. You should also use a separate phone for communication whether it's official or personal. Because these activities hamper your productive time and it can be taken care of after work hours in many cases.
- Organizations should arrange well designed flexible working hours and provide appropriate support for employees who work in the rotation. In addition, the reward should be provided for overtime duty or employees should be allowed to refuse overtime.
- Management should concentrate on keeping the sound environment for employees to ensure not to have the negative perception from coworkers. Official transport should be provided for employees to ensure safety and security. To achieve work-life balance, an ideal work culture is essential.
- Maternity leave, sick leave, govt. holiday, child care, elder care etc different kind of opportunities should be ensured and flexible to all employees by the management.
- Management should be supportive and can take the initiative to conduct specific counseling programs on work-life balance for employees. Thus, awareness can be created about the impact of work-life balance in personal and professional life among employees.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While conducting this research, the main constrain faced by researchers' is the lack of available respondents as if female workers are less in number than male especially in corporate sector. Besides this, respondents were reluctant to give their own opinion through answering the questionnaire due to job insecurity that management might know their given answer. Samples

were taken from ten various corporate sectors including automobile industry, pharmaceutical, television and radio stations, bank etc only at Dhaka city. Further research can be done by focusing on specific job sectors and also by increasing sample size.

CONCLUSION

Women are not supposed to be more fruitful in the women empowerment where we are failed to create an appropriate work environment for female employees. Successively, women have been entering in different kind of challenging profession, demonstrating their own qualification. Meanwhile, women are performing social and family responsibilities very well. But the patriarchal society has become an obstacle to the development; do we have any concern for it? Have we been able to create an ideal work environment for women? Where will they be able to do their work with efficiency? Most of the organizations do not give importance to the barrier of a working women considering a women during making policies, rather their performance is justified in same measurement with the men during the trial. In the corporate world, success of the organization depends on performance. If we can ensure an appropriate work environment for working women, it is possible to get more skilled women workers than men. Because, naturally women are more loyal than men and they do not quit the job very often. So, management should make long-term policy giving priority to women. And, training should be arranged for working women so that they can overcome the conflict between work and family life.

Indeed, women are opting for work in different kind of organizations in order for empowerment as well as they are taking care of the family with their hardworking dedication. As work and family roles often contradict each other, so working women continuously struggle to keep the balance between professional and personal life. As a result, the work-life imbalance has become a common issue for many working women which hinders the path to their career progress and thus lessens the productivity of an organization. In a true sense, women can be blessings in the workplace when family and organization both will get proper service from them.

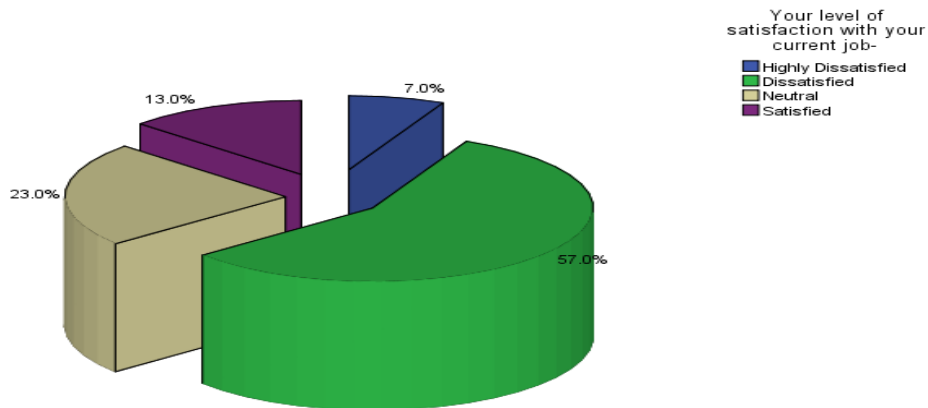
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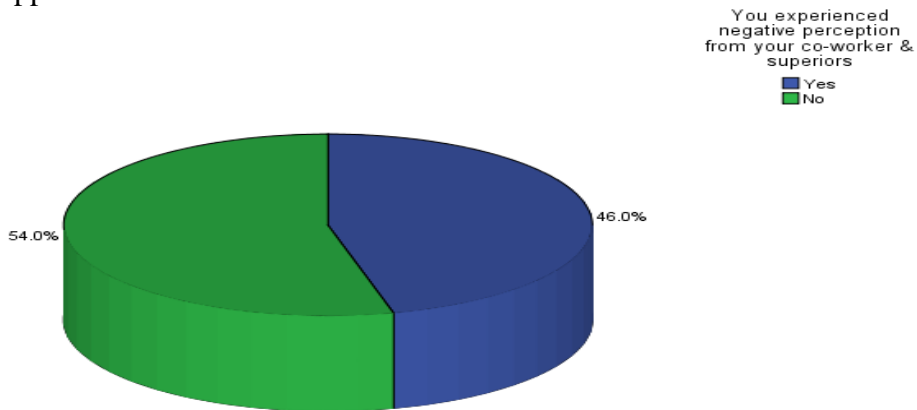
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APPENDICES

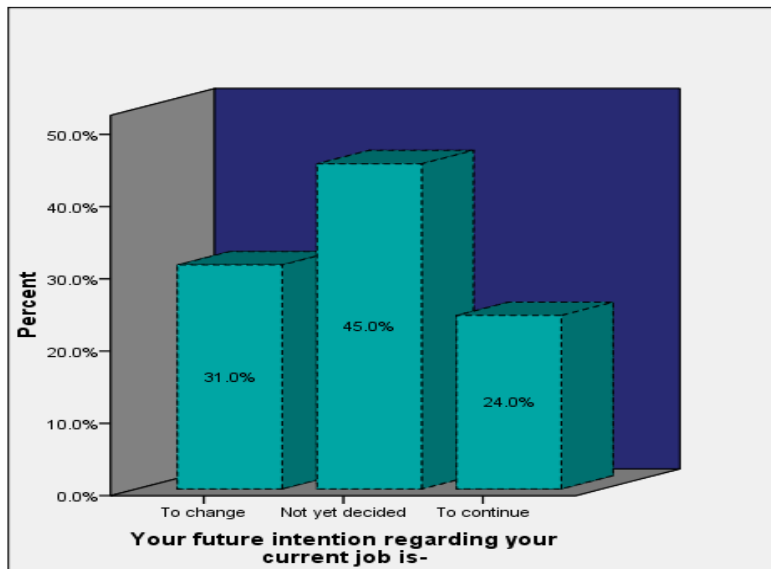
Appendix 1



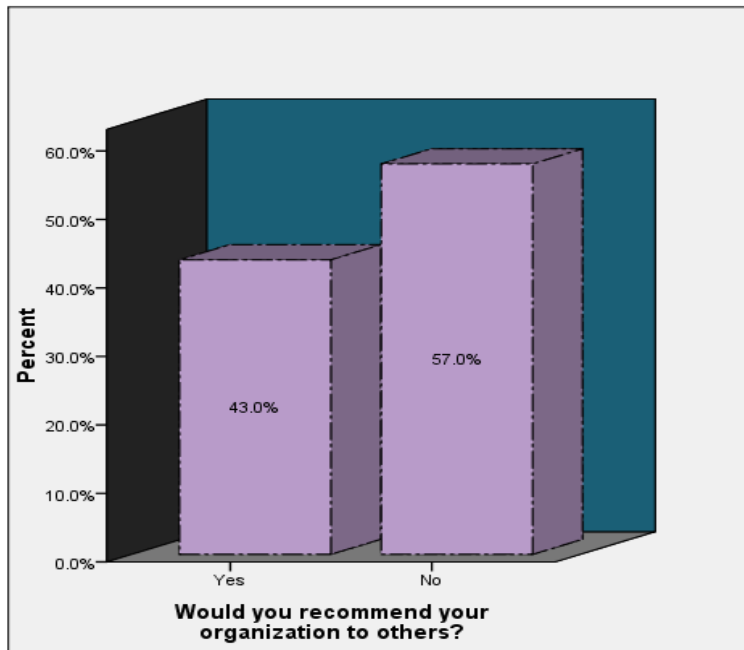
Appendix 2



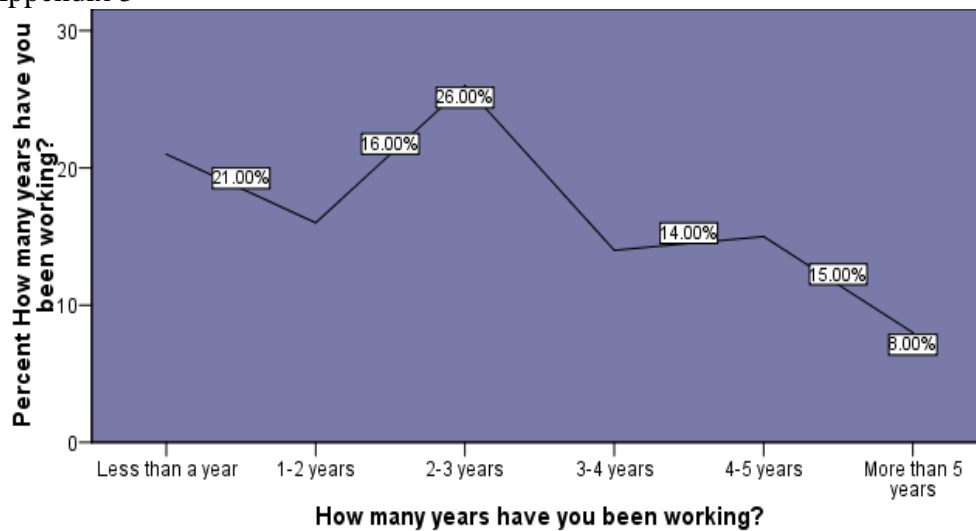
Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



Appendix 6

