

# Work Life Balance: Growth and Importance for Working Women in Organised Sectors

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## Abstract

*The field of work-life balance is vast. Work-life research spans a wide array of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, organisational behaviour, human development, labour economics, industrial relations, management, demography, and women's studies. There has been a wealth of research undertaken on the topic over the past 30 years; but there is a little research exploring the experiences of people (especially women) in organized sector and 'minimal qualitative research in this area has undertaken. This paper therefore aims to fill this gap in the literature. With a focus on the organised sector of developing nations, a review of the literature around the topic of work-life balance and more specifically work-life balance initiatives is presented in this paper. This paper analyses the emergence of work-life balance discourse, from the days of early communal living till the present day theories, and presents a micro level model of work-life balance. Further, a detailed analysis of proven and anticipated benefits of work-life balance is presented to justify the need of work-life balance initiatives at organisational level during the present economic downturn as well as the role of government in applying work life balance initiative in the organised sector is also presented.*

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, Work-life balance model, Work-life Balance benefits, spill over theory, Role of government

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## INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance has important consequences for employee attitudes toward their organisations as well as for the lives of employees (Scholaris & Marks, 2004:54). Guest (2002) believes that it is possible to investigate the trend of work-life balance and its developments which influence the well-being and job outcomes of employees at work. The issues relating to maintaining and obtaining a work-life balance have received substantial attention over recent years (Deery, 2008). But less attention has been

given to understand the work life balance satisfaction of women employees in the organised sector. Work-life balance is multifaceted and can be addressed on multiple levels (De Bruin & Dupuis, 2004). Defining the concept of Work Life Balance is a complex task, as it can be viewed from the meaning of 'work', 'life' and 'balance' (Deery, 2008). Dundas (2008:7) argues that work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and all other activities that are important to people such as family, community activities, voluntary work, personal development and leisure and recreation. Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) define work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in - and equally satisfied with - his or her work role and family role. Thus, employees who experience high work-life balance are those who exhibit similar investment of time and commitment, to work and non-work domains (Virick, Lily & Casper, and 2007:465).

### SEARCH STRATEGY

The literature was searched using the online databases Web of Knowledge and Medline, and the search engine Google Scholar, for articles written in English with titles or abstracts featuring various combinations of keywords, including: work-life, work-family, balancing work, balancing life, time management stress, women, and female, organised sectors. The main criterion for selection was that the study examined the area of 'work-life balance' in relation to organised sectors. Studies related to medical issues were not included. Following this search, additional books and articles were obtained from bibliographies and recommendations from colleagues. Relevant journal articles, books and reports were also obtained through mailing lists and networks. Regular electronic journal table of contents alerts were received using the keywords given above, and various books, in particular theory-based texts, were obtained through searching university library catalogues.

### INTRODUCTION & GROWTH OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

History of work/life programs can be traced back to 1930s, when introduction of reduced working hours with four shifts of six-hours instead of the usual three daily eight hours shifts in W.K. Kellogg Company resulted into enhanced employee morale and productivity (Lockwood 2003).

In the 1960s, research on working mothers and dual earner families came into light as women's participation grew significantly in the workforce (Lewis et al. 2007). Rappaport and Rappaport (1965) researched on how in the agrarian societies work and family were closer to each other and how industrial revolution in the 18th and the 19th century created a divide between work and personal life. Their research studied segmentation of work and family life due to movement of work away from home/family to the factories and cities. Rappaport and Rappaport (1965) covered a limited scope of work and life balance. Their research was primarily about work and its impact on family and they did not relate work and its impact on other aspects of life. Still, there was a significant beginning and more research followed soon.

Before the 1970s, 'work' and 'family' were primarily treated as separate segments (Clark 2000 as cited by Blunsdon et al. 2006). Interdependence of 'work' and 'family' was highlighted by Kanter (1977) who suggested giving importance to aspects of work affecting family life and aspects of family life affecting work, as work and life both were interdependent on each other. During the same time Pleck (1977) analyzed work-family role system as a collection of male work role, female work role, male family role and female family role. Pleck (1977) further stated that women experience spill-over from family role into work role and men experience spill-over from work role into family role.

Hate (1978) in her book stated that there is positive change in the political, economic and

social status of middle class working and non-working women.

Kapur (1979) in her study on working women, in Delhi states that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to the social structure which is still more dominant

Sharpe (1979) in his book titled 'Double Identity' stated that, there are some signs of change. Men are now recognizing and having to reconcile work and family demands. When it comes to the division of labour in the home, however, despite some optimistic forecasting women still do the large majority of tasks associated with house work and childcare... This makes it more difficult for most women to be serious contenders in the competition for promotion in their career.

Locke (1979) in his study stated that a cause-effect relationship is available between family functioning and work life, this cause-effect relationship could work in both directions, that is, work attitudes could affect family attitudes and vice versa. The mechanism that is positive in bringing about such effect is emotional generalization of spill over.

The 'spill-over theory' was further strengthened by Staines (1980) who suggested that spill-over from one segment of life into another can have both positive and negative consequences. Staines (1980) supplemented the discussion on work-life aspects through 'compensation theory', according to which a person attempts to compensate deficit in one aspect of life through additional investment in other aspect of life.

Beth Anne Shelton (1980) in their book presented her analysis that paid work and household responsibilities not only impact on each other but may conflict. That is time spent in one sphere mean less time spent in another. If commitments to paid labour and household labour call for full time participants in both, that time must come either at the expense of leisure or else some of the demands of paid labour or household labour must go unmet.

Desai (1984) conducted a study on "Economic Opportunities in Women". Had been managed the dual roles of homemaker and worker, poses serious problems without working women in large cities, particularly with young mothers who often get no help of supportive services such as day care, community crèche, foster day care etc. Their difficulties got further eventuated when they had to commute from long distances. Under these circumstances the traditional pattern of mutual help by in-laws, friends, and neighbours had been found extremely helpful whenever possible. However, it was not always available. Despite this widely held perception, 70 percent of the women with children decreased their hours of work after the birth of their first child.

Jaya Arunachalam (1984) in her report on "Empowering Women for a positive revolution" as cited by Hemlata Vivek Gaikwad (2013) revealed attitude of families towards women's domestic responsibilities, the unsympathetic attitude of employers, lack of training, limiting employment opportunities and above all, women's low perception in the labour market and had provided ample impressions both to employers and the society that women work only to make subsidiary income to the families, whereas the principal breadwinner were still men. It had also given rise to belief that women were not career-minded and therefore does not mind dead end jobs without promotion options. The facts mentioned precede that even that small percentage of women who get into formal sector, face discrimination and exploitation in their factories and were pushed to accept jobs not accepted by men. A critical examination of these facts would reveal how labour intensive industries had more women workers on low schedule of payment leading to capital accumulation.

L. Krishnaveni (1984) in her report on "Status of Indian Women" mentioned that a "Working Women" referred to a woman who works outside her home for a wage or salary. Now-a-days most of the women had been coming

forward to work in order to create a meaning for them or out of economic necessity.

Kapur (1988) in his book stated that women are getting into jobs or professions and are continuing to be in them even after marriage. Also an educated women's attitude towards herself and her employment is ambivalent. She likes to work because of the various social-psycho-economics satisfaction that she derives out of working and of being financially useful.

As cited by Pickering (2006), Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) gave a new direction of work-family research by presenting the work-family conflict theory according to which an individual has to perform different roles and family and work compete in demanding time, attention and commitment to perform these roles. Role behaviours in family and work thus conflict with each other, and create work-family conflict.

Alva Myrdar et al's (1992) work on "Women's two roles home and work sought to present that would enable women for combine their traditional family obligations with paid work in the employment market. Interestingly these authors have gone further to capture multi-faceted dimensional role of women in the name of sequencing solutions besides the dual role mentioned continues to hold as a strong base for further research in this area.

The theory of boundary work (Nippert-Eng 1996a; 1996b as cited by Warhurst et al. 2008 and Nippert-Eng 1996a; 1996b as cited by Blunsdon et al. 2006) presented a broader meaning of work-life balance through classification of workers as 'segmentors' and 'integrators' who manage work-life along a continuum of segregation and integration. Work-life is integrated when there is no distinction and mental boundary between work and home and segmentation occurs when there is a clear cut mental boundary separating work and home. In between segmentation and integration lies a range. An individual can be at either ends of segmentation or integration or can be at any point of the range, actively engaged in mentally defining the boundaries.

Hyman and Summers (2004) classified seven major problems which are associated with current practices over work-life balance these are unevenness of adoption across different sectors and organizations, lack of formalization of policies at organizational level, restricted employee voice over the introduction and implementation of policies, policies are primarily to meet business needs rather than those of employees, there is no evidence of reduction in working hours, tangible and intangible work intrusions into domestic life, domestic responsibilities are still conducted primarily by women irrespective of their employment status Human Resource Management International Digest, Vol. 12 Iss: 7 (2004) which emphasized that the employers are realizing for its responsiveness and take incentive in trying to meet employee expectations for flexible benefits that help with their work-life balance.

Becker's (2005) model of effort allocation implies that an hour of a man's time produces more of value to an employer than an hour of equally skilled and experienced women who has greater responsibilities. This in true influences both employer's treatment of equally capable male and female employees and worker's subsequent decisions about investing time and energy in household versus market-work. The model implies that small initial disadvantages faced by women in the work-place can lead to extreme results in the division of labour in the household, occupational segregation and earning difference. Even a small amount of discrimination against women in the work place gives men a comparative advantage in market work. Likewise a small "natural" advantage in child-care activities gives women an advantage in household work.

A simpler understanding of work-life balance can be presented with the help of balanced wheel of life in which is commonly cited in work-life balance literature. Byrne (2005) presented the age old concept of balanced wheel of life and related work-life balance with it. Byrne (2005) suggests eight important sections of life as the eight spokes

in a wheel. The sections are work, finances, spiritual, hobbies, self, social, family and health. According to Byrne, all these eight sections of life are important for every human being and each individual attempts to achieve a balance amongst these different sections. Byrne thus treats all the eight sections with equal weight and importance, which might not be true with every individual. Over looking this limitation of the model, the balanced wheel of life can be termed as the easiest way to understand the concept of work-life balance as this model look into different segments of life.

Among the reasons for the increasing interest in the work-life balance there is an increase in female employment, feminism, de-industrialization, higher unemployment among men, low-level (new) service jobs as well as an intensification of "life" (see Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; MacInnes, 2006).

However, as revealed by the researchers Eikhof et. al. (2007), the current work-life balance policies are narrow-minded in terms of addressing the needs and aspirations of employees but there is need for its realization as reflected in Emerald article, Bloom et al. (2007) stated that on average larger firms which are typically more globalize have better work-life balance practices and Employers are being encouraged to introduce work-life policies and make them more inclusive in order to enhance their business performance (Wise and Bond, 2003) as policies which help employees balance their work and non-work priorities have become increasingly popular among employers in recent years (Wise and Bond, 2003).

Rethinam and Ismai (2008) revealed that it is difficult to separate home and work life in an increasing competitive environment. Researcher, Buddeberg-Fischer et al (2008) stressed that a well balanced integration of professional and private life is an essential goal for the new generation Moreover, informal arrangements and managerial discretion are important in realizing work and care balance (Burgess et al., 2007).

Rebecca Bundhun quotes in -The National (2009), an Abu Dhabi National Paper that - Women and men generally have a different perception of what the "life" part of the balance involves. For women it tends to be devoting more time to family, while for men it is spending more time pursuing personal interests. She also quoted the paper of Dr Katty Marmenout, a research fellow at the INSEAD School in Abu Dhabi with his words that -work-life balance is not simply about equally dividing the time spent on one's work and personal life, but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual's priorities. So, this allows for acceptance of the happy workaholic or the satisfied stay-at-home mum or dad.

Ulrick Lidwall (2010) in their article "Work family interference and long term sickness absence" says that alongside work environment factors, interference between work and domestic life has been an important explanation for long term sickness absence especially for women. Therefore women would hamper the balance between work and family and increase the risk of long term sick leave.

Murphy and Doherty (2011) revealed that it is not possible to measure work-life balance in an absolute way as there are personal circumstances which influence the way that is perceived but establishing a harmony that reflects an individual's priorities whereas employees must draw a firm line between their home and work lives and be confident that the line is in the right place (Harvard Business Review, page184).

K. Thriveni Kumari (2012) in her study "An Impact of Work life Balance on Women employee's Absenteeism and Turnover-An Emerging Paradigm in Issues of HR Practices." Stated that the proportion of women in workforce is increasing and it is a major challenge for them to balance the competing demands of work and family. Women are reporting that their lives are becoming a juggling act that include multiple responsibilities at work, heavy meeting schedules, business trips, on top of managing the daily routine responsibilities of

life and home. These heavy schedules at organisation and family are impacting on women employees increasing in absenteeism and turnover at present. In fact it is one of the major challenges being faced by many organisations in maintaining their HR practices. Companies are considering it as a major problem among women employees and many Corporate are trying to implementing many policies and procedures in order to reduce their absenteeism and turnover among their employees especially women employees.

Initial work-life policies and programmes in the 1980s were primarily focused on women with children (Lockwood 2003). 1990s witnessed the shift from working mother specific narrow focus to a broader focus on married and unmarried men and women with or without children. Focus on 'work-family' and 'family-friendly policies' broadened to a larger 'work-life balance' discourse (Lewis et al. 2007).

## **FACTORS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE**

In second half of the 20th century (phase six) gender division was reversed due to the technological advancements and computerisation which reduced the dependence on human strength in factories thus facilitating greater participation of women in workforce (Snooks 1996). As the number of women increased in the global workforce, 1980s and 1990s witnessed increasing number of companies offering work-life programs primarily to support working mothers (Lockwood 2003). Thus Second half of the twentieth century onwards wide array of factors influenced the work and family life spheres of individuals. Majority of these factors originated from the developed nations. Summary of such important factors compiled from analysis of various journal articles.

### **Women's participation in workforce has increased**

Women's participation in the workforce has been increasing globally on account of increased levels

of education among women, social acceptance of working mothers, declining fertility rates, better access to childcare services and part-time work and more flexible working arrangements (Evans and Kelley 2004). The growth of women in workforce was primarily led by advanced nations such as, Australia, Canada, European Union, UK and the USA, where women's participation in the workforce ranged from 45 to 55 percent (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006; Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Bond et al. 2002; Marchington and Wilkinson 2002; Johnson et al. 2001).

### **Dual earner participation in the workforce has increased**

Rise in dual earner families reduced the dominance of traditional concept of men at work and women at home (Hudson 2005; Bond et al. 2002; Marshall 1998 as cited by Johnson et al. 2001). Primary reason for rise in dual career couples is financial as both the partners generate sources of income (Sauve 2001 as cited by Johnson et al. 2001). In bargain, dual career couples have to face additional work-life balance challenges (especially childcare) which they attempt to tackle by prioritising career of one partner or by focusing on careers in turn (Hand and Lewis 2002 as cited by Thornthwaite 2004). With higher participation of mothers in workforce and rise in dual earner couples though men gradually took more responsibilities at home yet women were still primarily responsible for the household chores. Though the time spent by fathers with their children has been rising since 1970 yet it was only one third of the total parental contact in the beginning of the 21st century (Gershuny 2001 as cited by Wise et al. 2004) and mothers still were primarily responsible for family and childcare. This generated childcare pressure induced work-life imbalance due to which working parents took higher number of unpaid leave, took up lower paying jobs with fewer responsibilities, refused promotions (Todd 2004), lost concentration at work, had less energy during workday, and reached work late (Fursman 2006).

### **Single parent/single person household increased**

With the changing social and cultural dynamics, rising incidences of divorce and separation has resulted into a noticeable increase in single parent and single person households (Crompton 2002 and Esping-Andersen 1999 as cited by Blunsdon 2006). This has created a new and additional segment of employees with special and specific work-life balance challenges. As the number of this segment increased in advanced nations, addressing work-life balance issues of single parent and single person households became important for the employers.

### **Burden of child-care/ elder care on employees**

Increasing participation of women in workforce, increasing participation of child bearing women in workforce, increasing participation of dual career couples in workforce and increase in single-parent/ single person households directly resulted into increase in child/elder care burden on employees and this forced the organisations to introduce flexible working option so as to help employees with child and elder care balance their work and personal life.

### **Health and well being considerations**

Long working hours and excessive overtime culture has brought in much health related issues such as higher levels of fatigue, burnout, depression, higher accident rates and other serious health related issues such as increased blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases (Golden and Jorgensen 2002). According to Shields (Shields 1999 as cited by Johnson et al. 2001) long work hours also induce increased alcoholism, smoking and weight gain.

### **Long working hour, unpaid overtime and increasing work intensity**

Long working hours (working beyond 48 hours a week) culture is practiced in growing number of countries by growing number of employees (Fagan et al. 2006; Messenger 2004; Johnson et al. 2001) which has reduced the available time for family and disrupted social life of employees (La Valle et al. 2002 as cited by Wise et al. 2004). Not only are workers working longer, a large

numbers are also working at odd hours (Hogarth et al. 2001) as this practice is being encouraged by the corporate focus on 24x7 availability (Moen 2001 and Heymann 2000 as cited by Bailyn et al. 2001). In addition to long and odd working hours, unpaid overtime (HREOC 2005) and increasing work intensity is affecting a large number of employees' work-life balance (Duxbury and Higgins 2003; Paoli and Merllie 2001).

### **Increasing demand for shorter working hours**

Due to long working hours, unpaid overtime, changing work time and increase in work intensity employees are facing 'time squeeze' and have started to demand for shorter working hours (Latta & O'Conghaile 2000 as cited by Thornthwaite 2004; Thornthwaite 2002 as cited by Todd 2004).

### **Increase in part-time workers**

Part time work opportunities have grown significantly in the recent decades in Australia, Europe, USA (Corral and Isusi 2003 as cited by Riedmann et al. 2006; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005; Wirth 2001) and other countries across the world. Organisations also introduce part time working to attract, retain and motivate that category of employees who are essentially needed but are not willing to commit to a full time job due to personal reasons such as child and elder care responsibilities, education etc. Increase in part time work has helped married women with family responsibilities to join the workforce (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005) but in turn also translates into increased time pressure as the total work load of the working partners increases. Part time jobs have poor job stability or benefits (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005) which in turn add on to the poor career prospects of the part time employee (Riedmann et al. 2006).

### **Work intensification and stress**

1990s witnessed increasing number of companies adopting downsizing, reengineering and use of technology. In addition fierce competition in marketplace led to higher

dependence on 24x7 service availability, making workplace faster paced and in turn increased the work intensity and enhanced work related stress (Galinsky and Johnson 1998). Very high speed of work, need to meet tight deadlines and not having enough time to complete the work were three important issues directly contributing to increasing work intensity in the 1990s (Paoli and Merllie 2001). Increasing work intensification in the longer run resulted into increased work related stress and employee health issues (Burchell et al. 1999).

### **Ageing Population**

With decline in birth rate the dependency on elder workforce increased and participation rates rose for people aged 45-64 years who are more inclined to work part time at the last stage of their professional career (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003 as cited by Hudson 2005). Management of generational diversity in the workforce in developed nations has become an important issue in human resource management (Towers Perrin 2005) as countries such as Britain (Fagan et al. 2006), Australia (Hudson 2005) and Canada (Duxbury and Higgins 2001) are facing ageing of its workforce and have to prepare for labour shortages in near future due to reduced availability of young workers.

### **Increase in service sector industries**

In the recent decades, service sector have been a major source of employment generation (Johnson et al. 2001). But most of these jobs are part time or casual with poor salary, working conditions, job security and career growth. Due to which worker tends to take up multiple jobs and this factor adds on to the work-life imbalance of the employee.

### **Technological complexity of work**

With rise in computerisation, use of internet and mobile phones the technological complexities of work have increased. Employee surveys have reported that for a majority of workers technological complexity of their jobs has increased (Statistics Canada & Human Resources Development Canada 1998 as cited by Johnson et al. 2001). With the use of new technology aids at

work such as emails and fax, the boundaries between work and personal life have weakened as now it is easier to work anytime from anywhere (Duxbury and Higgins 2001).

### **Skill Shortages**

Employer surveys have confirmed shortages of skilled labour especially at the non-entry-level technical positions. Not only technically skilled tradespersons, scientists, engineers and technicians are in short supply globally, shortages of experienced middle managers have also been reported (Murphy 2000 as cited by Johnson et al. 2001). This shortage has forced the employers to think new strategies for retention of employees (through work-life balance policies in addition to other human resource practices) and to source human resource from different segments such as working mothers, older workforce and global workforce, resulting into a new structure of workforce with variety of work-life balance issues.

### **Loss of social support network**

Social safety network is in decline (Esping-Andersen 1999 as cited by Blunsdon 2006; Lowe 2000) as people move from their home towns to cities, from one city to another, losing out on network of friends, family, relatives and neighbours. As more and more women are getting into workforce, the social support network non-working women used to provide to working mothers of their own families is also decreasing (Bailyn et al. 2001). Working couples and mothers have to look outside their family and friends circle for issues such as childcare and eldercare.

### **Globalization and demographic shift of workforce**

With the commercial world becoming more global in the recent past, there has been a better flow of knowledge and work from one country to another, especially with off-shoring gaining popularity (Towers Perrin 2005). Ageing population in the developed nations has been a major reason for depleting workforce (Fagan et al. 2006, Hudson 2005, Towers Perrin 2005, Duxbury and Higgins 2001) and to compensate

for this loss in workforce developed nations have logically looked at the relatively younger skilled workforce available in the developing nations (Towers Perrin 2005). This dependence on global workforce has in turn created an ethnically, socially and culturally diverse workforce which has its own set of dispersed work-life balance needs. To cater to such a diverse workforce, naturally there is an emerging need of a diverse and broad based work-life balance programme.

As more and more women and especially mothers started participating in the workforce, human resource managers started facing new demands related to adjustment between work time and family time. Socially, women, especially working mothers found it difficult to segment work and family. Larger number of women and working mothers at workplace meant higher bargaining power and higher dependence of employer on female segment of the workforce. Forced by the bargaining power and dependence factor, employers started introducing policies to help women adjust and align their work and family time. With time other factors such as long working hours, increasing work intensification and stress, changing work time, rise of service sector industries and technological complexities of work created a wider demand for work-life balance issues not only from working parents but also from other segments of workforce.

#### **Work-life balance: A micro level framework**

Duxbury and Higgins (2003) as cited by Dr. Pranav Naithani Dept. of Management - Waljat Colleges of Applied Sciences, Rusaly, Sultanate of Oman, "Overview of Work-Life Balance Discourse and Its Relevance in Current Economic Scenario" developed a theoretical micro level framework for work-life balance. They identified nine separate sections of work and life which create balance/ imbalance in an individual's work-life.

One the work side major influencers are work demands, organizational outcomes and employee outcomes. One the personal life side

major influencers are non-work demands, family outcomes, family moderators and societal outcomes. The framework suggested by Duxbury and Higgins goes a step ahead in an attempt to define, measure, and relate the factors influencing work-life balance of an individual at a micro level.

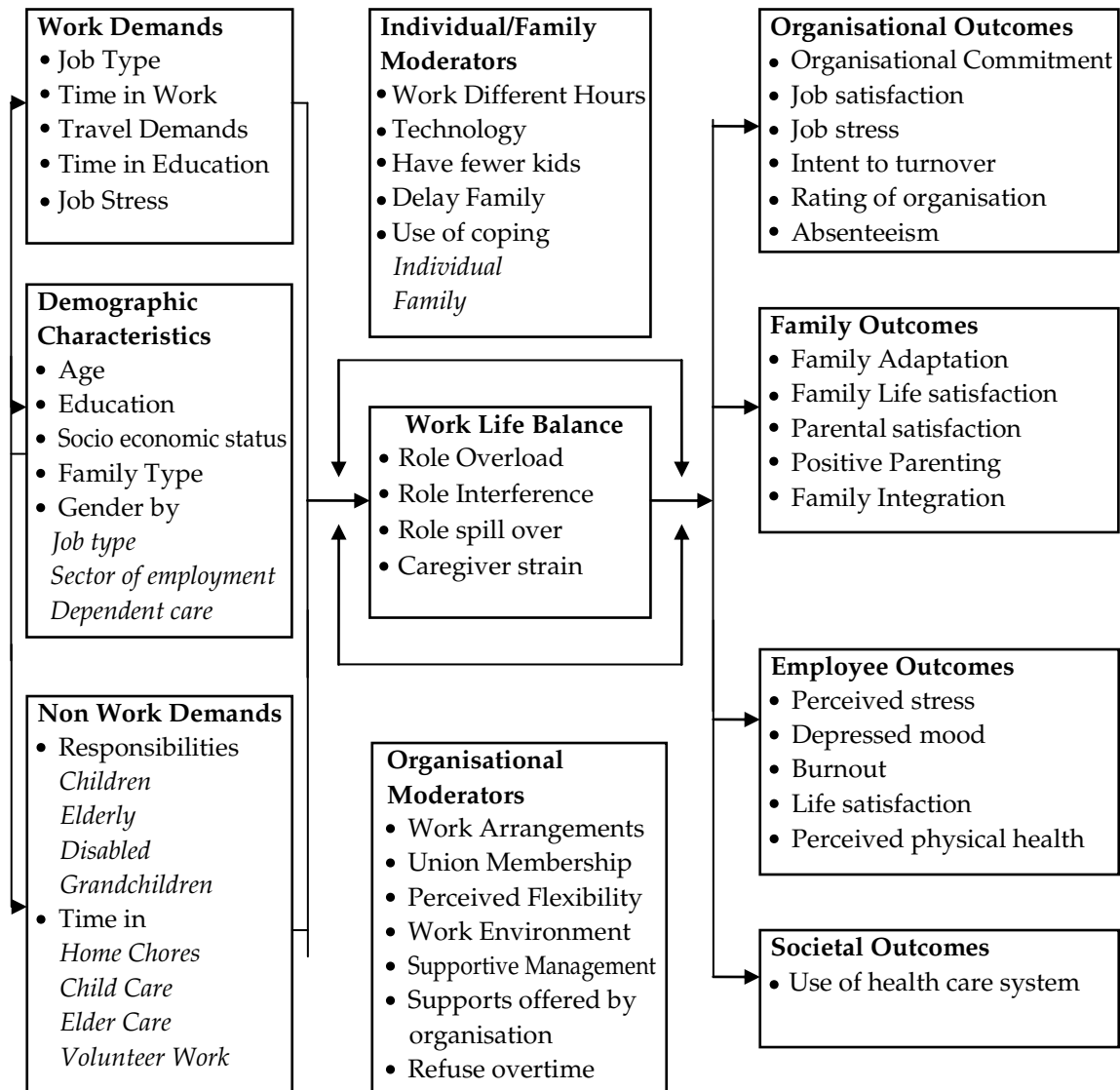
Duxbury and Higgins (2001) stated that each individual plays one set of role at work (employee, boss, subordinate etc.) and another set of role at home / in personal life outside work (spouse, parent, child, sibling, friend, community member etc.). They divided the life of an individual in two distinct separate spheres - work and life - and argued that while playing these two different roles each individual might suffer from:

- a) Role overload and
- b) Role interference (Work interferes with family and family interferes with work)

Role overload and role interference causes what is called 'work-life conflict' (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001). Work-life conflict is defined as the push and pull between work and outside work responsibilities (primarily family responsibilities). Role overload is defined as having too much to do and too little time to do it in. Role overload exists when the total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of multiple roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably. Role overload can occur in professional life because of factors such as working long hours and work intensity, whereas role overload in personal life can occur due to child-care responsibilities, dual earner family etc. Role interference occurs when incompatible demands make it difficult, if not impossible, for an employee to perform all their roles well (at workplace and outside workplace) (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001).

Role interference can be divided into two factors: family interferes with work (FIW) and work interferes with family (WIF). In the first case, interference occurs when family-role

Figure 1: A theoretical framework for work-life



responsibilities hinder performance at work (i.e., a child's illness prevents attendance at work; conflict at home makes concentration at work difficult). In the second case, interference arises when work demands make it harder for an employee to fulfill their family responsibilities (i.e., long hours in paid work prevent attendance at a child's sporting event, preoccupation with the work role prevents an active enjoyment of family life, work stresses spill over into the home environment and increases conflict with the family). In this sense, then, work-life conflict can

be seen to have two major components: the practical aspects associated with time crunches and scheduling conflicts (i.e. an employee cannot be in two different places at the same time), and the perceptual aspect of feeling overwhelmed, overloaded or stressed by the pressures of multiple roles (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001).

This study was primarily based on the issues brought into light by the above discussed micro level work-life balance model presented by Duxbury and Higgins (2003). Work-life balance

of an individual is influenced by multiple factors, as discussed above, and each individual will have different set of priorities and different levels of intensity of factors influencing work-life balance. The important factors which influence women employee's work-life balance and the factors which have been identified and addressed by organized sectors will be discussed in the following section of the chapter. But before that a brief overview on the role of governments in the promotion of work-life balance initiatives at organizational level is presented which is immediately followed by the benefits and criticism of work-life balance discourse in the present day.

### **WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEE'S AND ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**

While discussing growth of research on work-life balance and broadening of its scope, it will not be out of place to mention the role of governments in work-life balance policies and its implementation at organizational level. Introduction of work-life balance tools has also been to some extent initiated and supported by governments, especially in the developed nations, where demand for work-life balance originated due to increasing complexities of work and life of employees. Across the world governments have played a significance role in getting work-life balance initiatives undertaken in public as well as private sector organizations. Governments in U.K. (DTI 2006a; DTI 2006b; DTI 2006c; Nelson et al. 2004), Ireland (DoF Ireland 2006), New Zealand (DoL New Zealand 2008), and Netherlands (HRSDC 2007), Australia (HRSDC 2007) have amended their labor laws to enforce work-life initiatives at organizational levels.

It is worth noting that most of the government work-life balance initiatives have been concentrated in the developed nations, and much is still to be done by governments in regions such as Asia and particularly in the developing countries like India. Till date majority of work-

life balance initiatives in India have been private sector initiated and in state like Jharkhand even private sector has not shown much interest till date. In absence of any major government initiatives in such state on work-life balance the role of private sector organizations in self introducing work-life balance policies and tools becomes more important. This in turn creates and urgent need of research on employee work-life balance, especially in organized sectors of Jharkhand state. The status of Indian women has undergone considerable change. Though Indian women are far more independent and aware of their legal rights, such as right to work, equal treatment, property and maintenance, a majority of women remain unaware of these rights. There are other factors that affect their quality of life such as age of marriage, extent of literacy, role in the family and so on. In many families, women do not have a voice in anything while in several families; the women may have a dominating role. The result is that the empowerment of women in India is highly unbalanced and with huge gaps. Those who are economically independent and literate live the kind of life that other women tend to envy about. This disparity is also a cause for worry because balanced development is not taking place. Laws related to working women in India are as under:

1. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
2. Maternity/Paternity for Government Employees
3. Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
4. Payment of wages Act, 1936
5. Equal remuneration Act, 1976
6. Minimum wages Act, 1948
7. Workmen's compensation Act, 1923
8. Domestic worker's (Registration social security and welfare) Act 2008
9. Factories Act, 1948
10. Plantation Labour Act, 1951
11. Mines Act, 1952
12. Unorganized worker's social security Act, 2008
13. Sexual Harassment of women at their work place (prevention) Bill, 2006.

## **BENEFITS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE TO EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES**

Work-life balance is an important and critical issue in the 21st century. However, human resource practitioners only recently began to see Work Life Balance as a business issue that has benefits for both employees and employers (Clutterbuck, 2003). Research that supports the benefits of Work Life Balance for organisations is substantial. It highlights a positive, although indirect, influence on organisational profit (Michie & Williams, 2003; Morgan, 2009). Organisations and employees are becoming increasingly aware of the potential benefits of employee Work Life Balance. Some of them include employee satisfaction and well-being; reduced absenteeism and turnover; successful recruitment and retention; increased productivity; and customer satisfaction (Mayberry, 2006; Morgan, 2009; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills & Smeaton, 2003). A Roffey Park Institute (2004) study found that 38% of a sample of employees would consider leaving their current employer to gain a better Work Life Balance, even if it meant reduced pay. Mayberry (2006) also states that organisations that invest heavily in Work Life Balance report lower employee turnover. Consequently, Work Life Balance is one of the top employee concerns of today and is a frequent topic of discussion during recruitment interviews (Clutterbuck, 2003). In the 2003 Best Company to Work for Survey, 23 companies reported employee Work Life Balance as a key aspect of their retention strategies (Dex, 2004). Furthermore, in a 2008 study at Johnson and Johnson, employees who used Work Life Balance policies took only half as much sick leave as those who did not (Morgan, 2009). With such important organisational advantages, it is not surprising that the existence and use of Work Life Balance policies have become increasingly prevalent globally (Doherty, 2004; Ferber, O'Farrell & Allen, 1991; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Reynolds, 1999; Sanichar, 2004). Many leading organizations in overseas countries such as IBM, Merrill Lynch, Pfizer and Accenture have introduced work-life

programmes within their organizations to help their employees achieve an effective balance in their work and family/personal life. A further exploration of the literature has also shown that there is a symbiotic relationship between work and person/family life. It is understandable that employees who are able to effectively balance the demands of work and their personal/family life are motivated to give their best a work. While the direct financial payback of Work-Life Programmes is difficult to quantify, there has been already ample research evidence gathered on experience of firms in reaping the intermediate benefits of Work-Life. Employees in companies already implementing work-life practices enjoy significant benefits such as:

- Being able to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at home, work and in the community without guilt or regret.
- Being able to work in flexible ways so that earning an income and managing family/ other commitments become easier.
- Being part of a supportive workplace that values and trusts staff.

Employees want to be able to have:

- a good quality of life
- an enjoyable work life and career progression
- training and development
- good health
- affordable childcare or eldercare
- further education
- more money
- time to travel
- time with friends and family
- time to do sports and hobbies
- time to do voluntary work

Good work-life balance policies and practices are good for business. Some of the benefits for the employer and the staff are:

- Getting and keeping the right staff
- Getting the best from staff
- Being an 'employer of choice' and future proofing
- Improving productivity
- Enhanced ability to attract and retain staff
- Increased productivity

- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased employee engagement
- Increased organization's commitment
- Reduced turnover
- Improved job satisfaction
- Enhanced employer brand and also market respect
- Improve the ability to tap into critical groups to cover skill shortages e.g. working mums, retirees
- Opportunity to reduce labour and associated costs e.g. work from home, less office space required, part time option-lower wage costs than a full time equivalent

Good work-life balance policies and practices also provide some other benefits, such as:

- **Individual benefits:** employees are happier, more productive and have improved health.
- **Family benefits:** improved relationships outside of work, including with partners, kids, family, friends.
- **Community benefits:** ability for an organization's workforce to participate in community activities.
- **Environmental benefits:** some work life balance options offer advantages to the environment as well e.g. work from home opportunities allows less traffic and cars on the road, reducing pollution problem.

Various monetary losses, direct and indirect, have been cited by authors in work-life balance literature, which can be prevented if more effective work-life balance initiatives are undertaken. Further, various business organizations have also been calculating the individual benefits of work-life balance in monetary terms. A relevant case study is of British Telecom as cited by Yeandle et al. (2006). In year 2006 out of total workforce of 102,000 of British Telecom, 75,000 workers were working flexibly. The average increase in productivity for these 75,000 workers was around 21%, which in monetary terms stood at £ five-six million. In addition British Telecom's annual staff turnover came down to below four percent, where as the sector average was as high as 17 percent. Sickness

absence among home workers in British Telecom averaged below 3 days per person per annum. The positive impact of work-life balance initiatives at British Telecom reflected in its customer satisfaction as well. 20 million customers rated quality of service at five percent higher than before and these customers had seven percent higher satisfaction as well.

While many factors determine the success and profitability of a company, those organizations that have an effective and efficient work-life balance program exhibit a better financial performance. A survey conducted by Work-USA (2000) demonstrated the strong relationship between employee commitment and return to shareholders, finding that companies with highly committed employees had a 112% return to shareholders over three years, compared with a 76% return for companies with low employee commitment, and 90% for companies with average commitment. According to Watson, companies that support flexible work arrangements such as flextime, telecommuting, and job sharing have a higher market value and the growth in their market value is also higher (Watson 2002 as cited by Reed and Clark 2004). It is evident that companies which introduce work-life balance initiatives, in the long run get direct quantitative benefits for all its stakeholders. This fact further necessitates introduction of such tools in more number of organizations.

## CRITICISM OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

The review of work-life research over the past two decades concludes work-life research has not significantly helped improve the array of work-life balance issues that are faced by employees and employers today. According to Byrne (2005) managing the performance of people who are not in the office the same time one is a difficult task to accomplish. Equally difficult is being managed by someone who is not in the office the same time as one is. Loss of team spirit and perceived favouritism of certain employees over others are other drawbacks stated by Byrne. Managers in female dominated workplaces have

reported frustration at the gendered take-up of work-life policies as it puts pressure on resources which employers of their employees' male partners don't have to bear (Bond et al. 2002). It has also been postulated that the provision of work-life balance programmes actually reinforce images of ideal employees (Kossek et al., 2010). Eby et al. (2005) review also points out a lack of theory and model development, a lack of exploratory research, and hence a lack of understanding of why certain relationships exist (Eby et al., 2005). Another criticism is that the present day work-life balance research is primarily dominated by the developed nations and there is a scope and need of research in other developing regions and countries. Considering the fact that work-life balance is a multi-levelled issue concerning individuals, supervisors, organisations and societies, there is a gap in cross-level research (Kossek et al., 2010). As well as present day work-life balance research is primarily focused on large homogeneous samples and there is a scope and need of research on niche segments of employees. Much debate also exists around the use of terminology such as terms like "work-family balance" and "family-friendly workplace" were used to refer to the concept of work life balance. Gradually the term "work-life" has started to be used in place of the term "work-family" in attempt to more adequately portray a meaning that also

encompasses people without typical family units (Baroel et al., 2008; Kossek et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2007; McPherson & Reed, 2007). Although "work-life balance" is the most widely accepted term in use today, it is still not unanimously supported.

## CONCLUSION

Work-family research has long been guided by the role stress theory, wherein the negative side of the work-family interaction has been put under the spotlight. Recently, the emphasis has shifted towards the investigation of the positive interaction between work and family roles as well as roles outside work and family lives, and scholars have started to deliberate on the essence of work-life balance (Jones et al., 2006). The topic of work-life balance is wide-ranging. The argument for adequate work-life balance has been increasingly important for women working in organised sectors. Work-life balance initiatives are implemented by employers to help improve work-life balance but there is no one-size-fits-all programme applicable to all businesses and employees. Though the present day work-life balance discourse has its own share of limitations yet due to the practical relevance of work-life balance issue increasing numbers of organizations are introducing work-life balance tools.

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