Work-life Conflict of Working Women and its Coping Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

Work-life conflict is the struggle people go through when the responsibilities of their jobs get in the way of their personal lives, or the other way around. This conflict results from an imbalance in the amount of time and energy spent at work compared to personal activities including family, hobbies, and self-care. This study tries to understand the concept of work-life conflict and its coping mechanismsin the context of working women. The research is a descriptive study that is qualitative in nature and uses Multi-Stage Sampling and Random Sampling for selecting respondents, it uses an interview schedule for collecting data. Working women often face obstacles including stress, unrealized expectations, and lack of resources, which negatively affect their general wellbeing. These difficulties are made worse by financial limitations and stress brought on by technology; major worries include work spillover and availability of employment at all times. However, there are several coping mechanisms which are used by working women to ease such conflicts, be it from family support, time management, and other methods. Establishing boundaries between work and personal time, prioritising activities, assigning responsibilities, and engaging in self-care are all effective ways to reduce work-life conflict. Employers are essential in creating a work climate that is flexible, supportive of work-life initiatives, and considerate of employees' personal lives.

Keywords: Responsibilities, Working Women, Work-life conflict, Coping Mechanisms, Inter-role Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Throughout their lives, people play many roles: parents, siblings, spouses, sons/daughters, friends, employees, colleagues and the list goes on. Age-old societal roles state that the major roles shared by men and women vary in society. Men are considered breadwinners of the family and the domestic responsibility was solely taken care of by the women. In the contemporary world, there is an alteration in the societal roles played by both men and women. Women now share the financial responsibility of the family alongside the domestic roles. This juggling act has led to exhaustion both mentally and physically. The change in the family system from joint to nuclear families adds to the tension shared by the women in society. Working round the clock in today's technologically connected work, striking a work-life balance seems almost impossible. The changing nature of the workplace coupled with changes in the socio-cultural level has led to an imbalance in the work and personal lives of employees all over.

The study of work-family conflict and its consequences has grown in importance in recent years and current conditions will make it continue to increase in the future (Kao et al., 2020). Work-family conflict has serious consequences for employees and it is related to psychological health (Nigatu& Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2020), burnout (Jerg-Bretzke et al., 2020; Medrano &Trógolo, 2018; Smith et al., 2018; Terry & Woo, 2020), and stress (Tziner&Sharoni, 2014). Such outcomes of work-family conflict conflicts, like burnout, could, for its part, develop into significant problems for employees and organizations (Palenzuela et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that women have greater family demands while men suffer more from work demands which has led to a rising interest in addressing the study of work-family conflict and its consequences from a gender perspective (Quinn & Smith, 2018).

The review of the literature indicated that coping strategies can be adopted in various ways. For example, a person can employ coping mechanisms that focus on either emotions or problems (Lazarus, 1999), or opt for palliative or direct-action coping methods (Dewe, 1985). Owolabi and Ajibose (2019) found that introducing family-friendly measures such as a compressed work week, time off in lieu, flexible working hours, elder care, and childcare support can assist employees in managing work-life conflicts. Anand and Vohra (2022) identified four key strategies for coping with work-life conflict- passive acceptance of work-life conflict as it is inevitable, unambiguous communication, emotional and instrumental support from family, and informational support at work. Kibriya et al. (2021) suggested five strategies for coping with work-life conflict, namely, prompt family support, time management, stress management,

determining priorities, and task crafting. Singh (2015) identified several befitting strategies adopted by some selected companies for improving work-life balance, such as flexi-work, telecommuting, parental leave, and job sharing.

Conceptual Framework:
Cropanzano's Inter-role Conflict Theory (1999) proposed that inter-role conflict leads to stress because resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and family roles. Inter-role conflict theory refers to what occurs when meeting the demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet the demands in the other domain (Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) averts that an individual encounter role conflict when the sent expectations or demands from one role interfere with the individual's capacity to meet the sent expectations or demands from another role (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Metron, 1957).

Emotional Exhaustion Model
According to the Emotional Exhaustion Model developed by Yavas, et.al, (2008) as given in Fig.1 reveals that the inter-role conflicts arising from the demands of the two domains, work and family can lead to emotional exhaustion. Poor job performance and a higher propensity to leave the organization or work are the results of emotional exhaustion. Work-family conflict and family-work conflict impact the job outcomes of performance both directly as well as indirectly through the mediating role of emotional exhaustion. Therefore, Emotional Exhaustion Model views that employees facing conflicts from their work and family lives become emotionally exhausted.
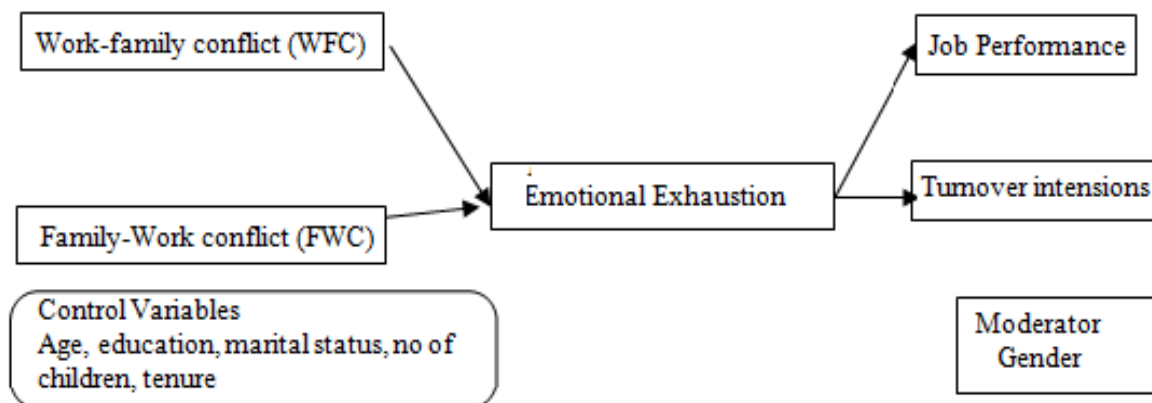

Figure 1: Emotional Exhaustion Model, Reference: Emotional Exhaustion Model of Work-family conflict proposed by Yuvas, et.al. (2008)

Working Hours model of work-family conflict
The Working Hours Model of WLB as given in Fig. 2 has been proposed by Alam, et al. (2009). This model throws light on the interlink between long working hours and work family conflict. This model states that at the personnel level work-family conflict precipitates to emotional exhaustion and at the organizational level it is translated into potential loss of female talent. Woman managers feel a strong pull to maintain balance between work and family due to extended working hours, i.e., 9-10 hours. The long working hours leads to work-family conflict (WFC). Schedule inflexibility, work stressors and working hours have a link to work-family conflict. Shorter working hours, i.e., 5-7 hours helps the women employees to maintain Work-life Balance. Working Hours Model suggests that organizations should have shorter working hours such from five to seven hours for the female workforce so that they will have a better WLB and the corresponding contribution to organizational productivity.
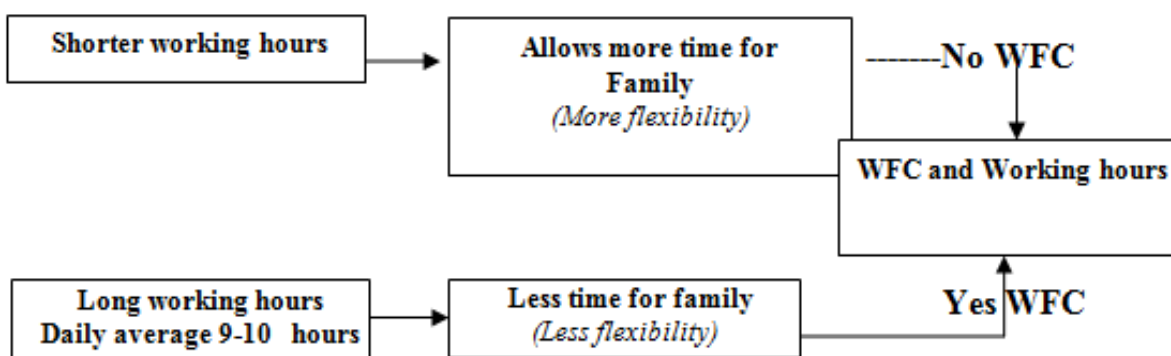

Figure 2: Working Hours Model Reference: Working Hours model of work-family conflict proposed by Alam, et al. (2009)

Career Progression Model

The Career Progression Model of WLB as given in Fig.3 has been proposed by Asiedu-Appiah, et.al. (2014). This model identifies that if a greater number of women employees is present in the organizations, Work-life Balance practices must be deliberately designed by the organizations. WLB practices reduce absenteeism and results in increase morale and retention. There is a strong positive relationship between child bearing and child care and job progression of female workers. Reducing work-life conflict could help to create a healthier, productive and motivated workforce and help to position the organization as an employer of choice.
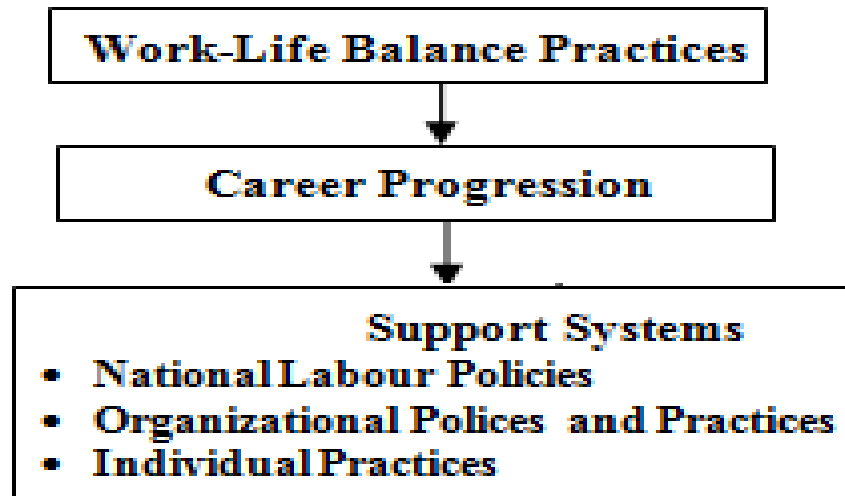

Figure 3: Career Progression Model, Reference: Conceptual framework for Work-life Balance of female lecturers proposed by Asiedu-Appiah, et.al. (2014)

Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory (1984) is an important theory that is related to social support theory and empowerment theory (Lakey& Cohen, 2000). Research on coping has identified and conceptualized two main coping processes; coping resources and coping strategies (Thoits, 1995). The concept of coping strategies consists of behavioural and cognitive attempts to manage specific stressors which are assumed as exceeding one's ability to adapt (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping efforts may be directed at the demands themselves (problem-focused strategies) or at the emotional reactions which often accompany those demands (emotion-focused strategies) (Thoit, 1995). Researchers assume that individuals with more coping resources, that is, social support, sense of control and self-esteem, are more likely to use problem-focused coping responses (DeLongis&Holtzman, 2005). Those with few coping resources are more likely to use more passive or avoidant emotion-focused coping. Studies have established that individuals typically use both problem and emotion focused strategies when dealing with stress (DeLongis&Holtzman, 2005; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Objectives
1. To find out the Work-life conflicts faced by the respondents.
2. To find out the coping mechanism of Work-life balance of the respondents.

Research Questions Posed
- What influence does parental status has on Work-life balance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life Conflict:

Ryan et. al. (2009) indicated that as role ambiguity and work hours worked per week increased the level of work-family conflict increased, and role ambiguity was the strongest contributor to work-family conflict. Some role conflict has a negative influence on, but too many roles can be detrimental. Ryan et. al. (2009) also indicated that role conflict is negatively related to work-family Conflict, which implies that multiple roles are actually good for a better balance between work and life. Mathew & Panchanatham (2011) stated that work interference in personal life (WIPL) and personal life interference in work (PLIW) are quite leading to role overload, work-life imbalance and overall stress. Reddy et. al. (2010) indicates that dual role demands and expectation from working women by husbands was significantly related to high WFC and FWC among the working women, Family–work conflict (FWC) and work–family conflict (WFC) is more likely to exert negative influences in the family domain, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family. Mehta &Kundnani (2015) found out that Work-life balance and stress affects employee's satisfaction. Kaur & Mahajan (2017) pointed out that there exists a positive correlation between work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Melissa et. al. (2010) identified cultural imperatives for "good" parenting include spending time with children and ensuring that they do well in life. Several authors pointed out that gender differences in parenting practices remain strong remain strong, with mothers more likely than fathers to spend time with children (Bianchiet. al., 2006), to orchestrate children's leisure time to cultivate their talents (Lareau, 2003), and to regard themselves as accountable for ensuring children's well-being (Hays, 1996) Singh (2004) stated that given mothers' greater responsibility for developing children's talents and for overcoming children's problems, time with children and satisfaction with how children are doing may matter more for mothers' sense of balance than for fathers' sense of balance.

Work-life Conflict and Coping Mechanisms:

Kshirsagar(2018) found out that woman employees undergo through a lot of stress due to lack of work–life balance. Mohanty& Jena (2016) stated that the rising awareness among women have made it difficult for people to cope with their work and family lives. Belaniet. al. (2016) found out that women avoid promotion in order to avoid the extra stress from balancing family and work. Rendon (2016) suggested that the support by their workplaces would be one way for women to find their path to work-life balance. Julka&Mathur (2017) agrees that organizations need to adopt human resource strategies and policies to overcome the issues of the work-life balance of women in the current business environment. Muasya (2016) found out that as the cost of hiring domestic workers increased, women became indifferent in their choice between employing domestic workers and using daycare centers. Women with older children who employed day domestic workers were more likely to use daycare centers than women with younger children who employed live-in domestic workers. Women with young children in preschool and primary school found their universities less accommodating in helping them balance work and family demands. Purushottam (2013) found out that while working heavy work & extended working hours followed by inability to priorities and manages time, strategies such as flexi - time, reduced working hours & other facilities at working place leads to achieve work-life balance. He also emphasized that Work-life balance is a very important factor which influences the quality of our life. Begumandet. al. (2015) found out that social status is believed to reduce the negative effects of role conflict and have a positive impact on psychological health and work-life satisfaction.

Kotwal (2019) in the research paper, wrote on improving Work-Life Balance. Most experts believe that the chief responsibility for reducing stress and improving work-life balance should be of management. Women employee in India faces biasness because of their gender. They are considered less productive because of their roles in the family. This conception is now changing and management is taking steps to improve flexibility in work-life of a women employee. Organisations should choose to make an investment in the wellbeing of their workforce. Many organisations do this by providing stress management programmes such as stress management workshops, management training, quite rooms and walking groups. Management offers flexible and part-time working arrangements such as variable hours to complete work related to home, care of elderly relatives and children, and a gradual change in working hours to facilitate full time working. Organisations provide facilities and benefits regarding maternity. Women employees are having paid maternity leaves and after childbirth facilities in the organisations so that they can take care of themselves as well as their child during this period. Organisations ensure a lighter workload for women returning from maternity leave and help them to achieve a work-life balance and re-establish their base. Organisations ensure childcare facilities at the workplace so that the women who returned from maternity can take care of their new born.

Kotwal (2019) wrote on Organisational Policies Related to Work-Life Balance in India. Organisations continuously focusing on developing work-life balance policies for employees. The strategies which organisations are adopting can be classified into Flexible working, Paid leaves, Child and dependent care facilities. These aspects include policies and practices which help an employee to maintain work-life balance. These are such as part-time work, work from home, compressed work weeks, shorter working days for women, maternity leaves, health care programmes. Recommendations were also made to make an organisation "women-friendly", like create training and development programmes for women, develop policies which support a women-friendly working environment, include women in business strategies, reduce biases regarding gender, hire and promote women, and provide necessary accommodations to women.

Work-life Balance and parental status:

Rdernset. al. (2009) in their study stated that having children increased the odds of poor self-rated health and fatigue in employed women, female students and job seekers. In dual-earner couples, mothers reported anxiety symptoms less often than women without children. The odds of poor self-rated health and fatigue increased with increasing number of children in employed women. In the research by Reddy et. al. (2010), WFC and FWC were found to be more among the women having the eldest child between 6 and 10 years. Tijdens & Peper (2012) noted that the presence of small children barely contributes to the explanation of the perceived work-life balance. Rayaand&Delina (2013) indicated that married working women find it very hard to balance their work and personal life irrespective of the sector they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's profession. Tripathiet. al. (2014) views that working mothers are mostly stressed with their primary responsibility of motherhood to the extent of forgetting one's own well-being and physical health. Chassinet. al. (1985) women with pre-school children experience different types of conflicts and concluded that self-role congruence in women leads to better mental health. It was also reported that women having younger children experience more role conflicts. Mani (2013) found out that women

combine work and family life with the help of a 'mother' or 'mother-in-law' accepting the concept of one child and giving birth to a child only after settling in a job.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study and Population:
The study is a descriptive study and it is qualitative in nature. The population of the present study comprises of the working women population in Shillong City.

Sample:
Determination of the sample size for the study has been done through the sample size formula by Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Formula (1970), the total number of samples to be taken for the purpose of this study is 381.

From the population of the study, it is seen that Shillong Urban Agglomeration is divided into three categories of Urban Settings; the Shillong Municipality having 27 wards, the Shillong Cantonment having 7 wards and 10 Census towns. Using Multi-Stage Sampling, the researcher intends to randomly select 4 wards / census towns from each urban setting. Thus, the total number selected will be 12 from all the 3 urban settings.

Tools used
The researcher developed a standardized interview schedule according to the objectives of the study for collection of data. The tool is structured in nature. The data collected through a face-to-face interaction with each respondent.

MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective – 1 - To find out the Work-life conflicts faced by the respondents.
- Working women report various responsibilities causing conflict, with 14.1% citing care for children, 47.7% household chores, 9.4% personal care, 13% care for elders, and 15.9% social responsibility, with household chores significantly prevalent.
- When it comes to life conflicts, 33.3% of working women attribute issues to hours of work, 11.7% to overtime work, 12.8% to too much workload, 21.4% to the nature of work, and 20.8% to pressure from employers/superiors, with hours of work being the most significant factor.
- Employed women spend varying durations at work, with 57.3% spending 5-7 hours, 2.6% below 3 hours, 8.3% 3-5 hours, 4.2% over 12 hours, and 27.6% 7-12 hours, with 5-7 hours being the most common.
- Regarding commute times, 29.4% of working women take 10-15 minutes, 43.8% take 15-30 minutes, 18% take 30 minutes to 1 hour, and 8.9% take 1-2 hours, with 15-30 minutes being the most frequent.
- When it comes to lunch, 71.6% of working women bring lunch packed by self, 7.3% visit tea stalls, 6.5% use the canteen, and 14.6% have their lunch packed by their spouse/family, with lunch packed by self being the most common practice.
- Women in workforce have access to various types of leaves, with 35.9% able to take casual leaves, 10.2% earned leaves, 31% sick leaves, 4.9% maternity leave, and 18% other types of leave, with casual leaves being the most common.
- For working women, consequences of taking leaves vary, with 29.9% facing deduction of available leaves, 6% wage deduction, 16.9% compensating for the day, and 47.1% experiencing no consequences in majority.
- Additional benefits for working women include retirement benefits (23.4%), medical reimbursement (15.9%), professional development (24%), and for 36.7%, there are no additional benefits, with a significant majority reporting no additional benefit.
- Among working women, 48.2% spend 2-3 hours, 0.8% spend 0-1 hour, 9.9% spend more than 4 hours, 20.3% spend 1-2 hours, and 20.8% spend 3-4 hours, with a significant majority spending 2-3 hours on domestic activities.
- Amidst employed women, 22.1% spend quality time with themselves, 19% with their child/children, 40.4% with their spouse and other family members, 14.3% with friends, and 4.2% do not spend quality time with anyone, with a significant majority prioritizing quality time with spouse and family members.
- Working women deal with misunderstandings by 27.9% accepting differences, 6% ignoring the situation, 10.2% not having a specific resolution, 28.6% through adjustment, and 27.3% through forgiveness, with a significant majority opting for adjustment.
- Of working women, 33.1% experience stress, 3.9% report no consequences, 23.7% have a confused mind, 16.7% face conflicts in performing work roles, and 22.7% feel anger, with a significant majority citing stress as a consequence.
- In the context of employed women, the main factors causing conflict include working overtime (31.8%), working on Sundays and holidays (23.7%), and bringing work home (26.8%), with working overtime being the most significant factor.
- The majority of working women (50%) report that family members assist with household activities, followed by help/maid (30.2%), spouse (12.5%), and children (7.3%).

- When it comes to the major share of household activities, 49% of working women indicate they handle it themselves, while others report spouses (7%), mothers (21.9%), children (10.4%), or help/maids (11.7%).
- A significant number of working women (32.6%) report having no spouse, while others share responsibilities such as grocery shopping (15.6%), household chores (8.9%), taking care of children (8.1%), or cooking (5.2%).
- Among working women, 19.8% cite family expectations, 31.5% work roles and conflict, 24% work overload, 15.4% family responsibilities overload, and 9.4% health issues, with a significant majority citing work roles and responsibilities as the primary pressure point.
- Women in workforce experience various stressors, with 17.7% feeling irritable at home due to work stress, 14.8% irritable with others outside work, 9.6% irritable at work due to home stress, 31% experiencing all, and 26.8% none, with a significant majority experiencing all stressors.
- Amidst employed women, 41.9% stress due to lack of personal time, 13.5% deprivation of social life, 14.8% experience time pressure at work, 18.5% have time constraints at home, and 11.2% too much workload, with lack of personal time being the most significant stressor.
- Women in workforce women report various impacts of stress, with 28.4% experiencing fatigue, 20% depression, 17.7% anxiety, 26.6% feeling frustrated, and 7.3% experiencing all of the mentioned effects, with fatigue being the most common.
- When considering conflicts between work and family demands, 12.8% of working women find family responsibilities challenging in meeting work demands, while 34.9% struggle with work responsibilities conflicting with family demands, 24.7% face challenges with personal/social responsibilities conflicting with work and family demands, and 27.6% deal with conflicts between work and family responsibilities and other life demands, with work responsibilities posing a significant challenge in meeting family demands.
- Employed women identify various domains in work-life conflict, with 25.3% highlighting work, 8.3% family, and 12% personal/social aspects, while 35.9% acknowledge conflicts in all mentioned domains and 18.5% state none, with work, family, and personal/social aspects being dominant in their work-life conflicts.

Objective – 2 - To find out the coping mechanism of Work-life balance of the respondents.
- Working women employ various strategies, with 24.7% opting for work delegation, 20.1% choosing multi-tasking, 25% seeking help, 20.6% avoiding procrastination, and 9.6% taking short breaks, with seeking help being the most common approach.
- To prevent life problems from interfering with work, working women use diverse methods, with 16.4% employing stress-relieving techniques, 20.3% seeking help, 27.3% leaving life responsibilities at home, and 35.9% adhering to a strict work-life routine, with the latter being the most prevalent strategy.
- When managing time, working women utilize various strategies, with 24.5% listing tasks for the day, 50.5% prioritizing tasks, 13.8% taking shorter breaks, and 11.2% using technology to complete tasks, with prioritization being the most favored approach.
- When faced with excessive physical demands at work, working women employ different approaches, with 49.7% taking breaks, 25% seeking help, 13.5% exercising, and 11.7% delegating tasks, with taking breaks being the predominant strategy.
- When work becomes mentally taxing, working women use a variety of strategies. Of these, 23.4% choose power naps, 13.8% look for social support, 19.3% engage in yoga, meditation, or breathing exercises, 6.8% take breaks, and 36.7% rely on self-motivation and support. However, a sizable majority choose self-motivation and support as their main strategy.
- When coping with work-related stress, working women utilize different methods, with 35.9% listening to music, 14.1% exercising, 6.5% reading, 34.9% prioritizing sleep, and 8.6% employing a combination of methods, with a significant majority finding relief through listening to music.
- Organizations offer various policies to support work-life balance, with 20.8% providing maternity benefits, 27.3% offering flexible working hours, 10.9% having no known policies, 29.4% offering paid leaves, and 11.5% allowing work from home, with a significant majority valuing paid leaves as a beneficial policy.
- These policies yield diverse benefits for working women, with 27.6% feeling motivated to work more efficiently, 9.4% perceiving no benefit, 25.8% gaining time for family and friends, 9.9% enjoying rest and personal time, and 27.3% being able to meet life demands, with a significant majority feeling motivated to work more efficiently due to these policies.
- The coping mechanisms used by working women are as follows: 38% prioritize time management, 18.2% choose work delegation, 8.9% avoid working overtime or on last-minute tasks, 32.3% leave work at the workplace, and 2.6% ask for assistance, with time management being the most commonly employed strategy.
- Opportunities for work-related flexibility are available to working women in different proportions: 24.2% have access to flexible work schedules, 16.4% to work from home, 9.6% have access to additional compensation for overtime, 39.1% have the ability to leave work early for personal reasons, and 10.7% have access to all of the aforementioned options. The most common reason for leaving early is personal matters.

- Conflicts with colleagues is reported as the most significant workplace stressor by (28.6%) of working women, followed by long hours (20.1%), heavy workload (21.1%), negative attitudes from supervisors (20.3%), and (9.9%) indicating all factors affect them.

- The majority of working women opt to allocate their time between work, family, and other obligations (44.3%), while a smaller proportion choose to focus on dealing with other aspects of life (13.5%) or seeking social support (4.4%). Additionally, 8.6% choose to select all of the above, while 29.2% prefer to remain calm and seek solutions.

- When faced with stress from family expectations, 43% of working women prefer to "take it out," followed by 17.7% choosing meditation and 27.9% relying on self-motivation, while 1.6% seek help and support, and 9.9% utilize all available coping strategies.

- Among self-adopted coping strategies, 40.9% of working women prioritize time management, 15.9% prioritize work, 16.9% practice multitasking, and 13.5% delegate chores, while 12.8% employ all of the mentioned strategies.

- Of working women who have kids, 22.4% rely on their parents for child care, with 15.6% hiring babysitters, 11.2% preferring spouses, and 9.9% utilizing creches, while 40.9% of women do not have children.

- While away at work, 34.6% of working women rely on family members to care for their parents, 14.6% employ helpers, 3.9% spouses, and 6.3% report their parents have passed away, while 40.6% state their parents look after themselves, showing a significant preference for self-care among parents.

- According to working women, setting priorities is beneficial. Of them, 42.7% emphasize completing urgent and essential tasks first, 10.7% think it's ineffective, 24.2% find it keeps things organized, 13.5% think it saves time, and 8.9% list all the benefits.

- Majority of the working women (41.1%) consider outing as a leisure activity, followed by (12%) for recreational activities, (30.7%) for spending time with family, (9.4%) for pursuing hobbies, and (6.8%) considering all mentioned activities.

- Working women attribute maintaining balance to various activities, with 26.6% emphasizing leisure, 19.5% pursuing hobbies, 21.6% seeking emotional support, 28.1% engaging in health and fitness activities like yoga or gym, and 4.2% considering all activities important.

- Family members are the closest social supporters for 67.2% of working women, followed by 10.2% from work community, 8.1% from church groups, and 14.6% from friends, with family being the significant majority.

DISCUSSION

Objective – 1- Working women have to balance a wide range of responsibilities, including personal and professional obligations that frequently collide and cause complicated tensions and conflicts. The complex processes at work are clarified by a qualitative investigation of their experiences.

Within the domain of domestic responsibilities, women are faced with balancing a variety of obligations, with housework standing out as a significant obstacle. The vast majority struggle with the never-ending responsibilities of house ownership, highlighting the persistent weight that women in conventional gender roles bear. Their time and energy are further taxed by these duties, which go beyond the walls of the home and include taking care of children, the elderly, and social commitments. This aligns with Cropanzano's Inter-role Conflict Theory, which posits that the stress women experience from juggling professional and domestic responsibilities stems from the loss of resources such as time and energy. The struggle with housework, childcare, elder care, and social commitments exemplifies how the demands of one role can impede the ability to fulfill the demands of another, leading to significant inter-role conflict and stress (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Working women have significant challenges in the professional realm due to the temporal limitations of their labor. The fact that lengthy hours and demanding trips are commonplace highlights the sacrifices people make in order to support their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the nature of their employment and employer expectations become major sources of stress, emphasizing the fine line individuals have to walk between advancing their careers and maintaining their personal lives (Siltanen, 2021).

Amidst these challenges women grapple with the consequences of taking time off, navigating a system where penalty frequently takes prominence over the need for relaxation and recovery. Their situation is made worse by the lack of significant benefits, which highlights structural shortcomings in assisting women in the workforce. Among the chaos, women try to find moments of calm in their quest for balance. Their well-being is based on spending quality time with their family, which provides comfort in the face of the constant pressures of both job and home. However, stress remains a constant threat, showing up in a variety of ways that affect both their personal and work life (Alon et al., 2022). Ultimately, the complex interactions between their responsibilities to their families and their jobs define the features of their lives and mold their experiences and goals. Working women are resilient in the face of hardship, forged by their empowerment as they navigate the confusing complexities of modern life. The findings resonate with the Emotional Exhaustion Model by Yavas et al. (2008), which suggests that the inter-role conflicts working women face between professional demands and domestic responsibilities lead to emotional exhaustion. This emotional

exhaustion directly and indirectly impacts their job performance and increases their likelihood of leaving their jobs, highlighting the significant toll that these overlapping stressors take on their overall well-being and career stability.

Objective – 2 - Professional women face several obstacles when trying to strike a balance between their personal and professional obligations. Using a qualitative approach, helps in exploring the procedures and strategies they use to stay in balance in the face of the complexity of contemporary life. Working women utilize a variety of coping methods to efficiently handle their burden. Setting priorities becomes a fundamental approach, allowing people to efficiently and precisely negotiate the complex web of duties. They reduce the possibility of overload and burnout by making a clear distinction between tasks that are urgent and those that are not (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020).

Working women show remarkable resilience in the face of challenges, using a variety of coping mechanisms to reduce stress and promote wellbeing. Through proactive measures such as seeking social support and participating in stress-relieving activities, individuals protect their mental and emotional well-being. Notably, following a rigid work-life schedule becomes a common approach, highlighting the critical function that structure and discipline play in preserving balance. When faced with disproportionate physical or mental demands at work, women are inventive in overcoming these obstacles. They put their well-being first despite the demands of their careers, whether by taking breaks, asking for assistance, or engaging in self-care routines like exercise and meditation (Gupta & Srivastava, 2020). The findings indicate that professional women utilize a range of coping strategies to balance their personal and professional lives, aligning closely with Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory. These women employ both problem-focused strategies, such as setting priorities and maintaining a rigid work-life schedule, and emotion-focused strategies, like seeking social support and engaging in stress-relieving activities, to manage their stress and promote well-being (Thoit, 1995). This approach demonstrates their use of both behavioral and cognitive attempts to address and adapt to the complex demands they face.

Organizations are essential in promoting work-life balance because they provide opportunities and policies that are specifically designed to address the requirements of working women. Benefits like paid time off, adjustable work schedules, and telecommuting become crucial tools that enable women to balance their career goals with responsibilities to their families and themselves (De Clercq&Brieger, 2022). The findings on the importance of organizational policies align well with the Career Progression Model of Work Life Balance (WLB) by Asiedu-Appiah et al. (2014). This model emphasizes the significance of deliberate design of WLB practices. This can significantly contribute to reducing work-life conflict, thereby fostering a more productive and motivated workforce.

Similarly, these findings support the Working Hours Model of WLB by Alam et al. (2009), which highlights the detrimental effects of long working hours on work-family balance. By implementing adjustable work schedules, organizations can mitigate the work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion that arise from extended working hours. This approach aligns with the model's suggestion that shorter, more flexible working hours can help women maintain better work-life balance and contribute positively to organizational productivity.

In terms of social support, family members are the cornerstone that most working women rely on. In the face of life's challenges, their unfailing support and presence offer a source of strength and comfort.

A working woman's path is essentially characterized by her creativity, perseverance, and unwavering dedication to preserving balance in the face of the conflicting demands of her personal and professional lives. They symbolize empowerment and perseverance in the face of hardship as they manage the complexity of modern living with elegance and determination, weaving together a patchwork of strategies and support networks.The findings highlight the pivotal role of family support in helping working women navigate life's challenges, which aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory. This theory posits that individuals utilize coping resources like social support to manage stress through both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies (Thoit, 1995). The resilience and empowerment of working women, bolstered by their families, exemplify the effective use of these coping strategies, enabling them to balance professional and personal demands with grace and determination.

CONCLUSION

The research offers a thorough examination of the complex relationships encompassing the lives of working women, revealing a variety of lifestyle, socioeconomic, and demographic elements that influence their experiences. Married women with graduate degrees who are mostly between the ages of 26 and 35 make up a significant proportion of the working population in a variety of occupations. Their lives are impacted by common issues including unreasonable expectations, financial constraints, and stress from technology, which frequently cause conflicts between work and personal responsibilities, even when their salary levels and types of jobs differ.

These difficulties are exacerbated by parenthood, marital status, and income; single parents and those with lesser incomes encounter particular difficulties in striking a work-life balance. Navigating these issues consistently revolves around valuing family support, no matter the circumstances. Coping skills including time management, seeking

emotional support, and practicing self-care are essential for reducing stress and building resilience in the face of conflicting demands. It is impossible to underestimate the critical role employers play in promoting work-life balance, with measures like flexible work schedules and maternity benefits functioning as vital catalysts that help women successfully manage their multiple responsibilities. Organizations may create inclusive and empowered work cultures that enhance employee well-being and productivity by recognizing the varied demands and problems encountered by women in the workforce and adopting supportive initiatives in place.

Therefore, attaining work-life balance for employed women requires a comprehensive and diverse strategy that includes efficient time management, social support systems, and personalized interventions based on unique situations. Stakeholders may work together to build a more equal and long-lasting workplace where women can succeed on all levels, personally and professionally, by adopting these principles.

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