

A Study on Work Life Balance in working women in Private and Public Sector in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Work life balance is an emerging concept, which plays a vital role in today's business world. Every organization, public or private both need to focus on this to ensure the effectiveness and wellbeing of the employees. The moment the individual fails to balance the professional life and the personal life, it leads to a conflict, which ultimately results job and family dissatisfaction. This study aimed to find out the factors leading to work life conflicts and the ways on supporting to eliminate them. In an attempt to realize the objectives of the study, 180 questionnaires were administered to the sample size selected from Academic, IT, Healthcare and Banking sector, both private and public organizations and information was analyzed using Chi square test, descriptive statistics and such by using SPSS. Through this study, it was revealed age, number of children, working sector & industry; spouse profession does have a significant association on work life balance. Lastly, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were proposed through a comparison from different countries to increase the work life balance of working women in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Employment Practices, Work Life Balance, Work Life Conflicts

I. Introduction

According to Clark (2000) and Ungerson&Yeandle, (2005) Work life balance is defined as an employee's perception that multiple domains of personal time, family care, and work are maintained and integrated with a minimum of role conflict. This is considered as a key issue especially in dual career families. Work family conflict is an inter role conflict. (Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985). It is with two directions. Work can interfere with the family matters and same time family can interfere with work matters. Apart from that time based, strain based, or behavior-based work family conflicts can be found. (Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985).

Work family enrichment has been defined as a form of synergy in which resources related with one role improve or make easier contribution in the other role. (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004) This can be seen as the positive side of work life conflicts.

Anju (2014) on her research on Employees' Perception regarding impact of Work-Life Balance facilities on their Performance clearly identified that there is a relationship between work life balance and performance level of the employee. Welford (2008) in his research on work life balance had mentioned that there is an alarmingly high percentage of respondents who feel that work is the cause of health problems.

According to the research finding of Panchanatham (2011) found that female entrepreneurs face work life balancing issues such as role overload, health maintenance problems, poor time management, dependent care issues and lack of sufficient support networks.

II. Literature Review

The concept of the quality of working life emerged in the 1970s (Wilson, 1973) but has been less prominent recently, with the interest of work life balance. The quality of work life deals with the extrinsic motivational factors and intrinsic motivational factors.

According to Martin (1967), people are entitled to be treated as full human beings with personal needs as well. Therefore, there comes a need where the organizations need to consider about providing betterment for the personal lives of the employees as well. Which means organizations need to support the employees to uplift their personal lives by supporting to balance their professional and personal life. This had been largely replaced by ‘family- friendly policy’. According to Kodz et al (2002), the principle of work – life balance is ‘there should be a balance between an individual’s work and their outside work, and that this balance should be healthy’.

High work demands and long working hours had become a key issue for the family conflicts in present. Therefore, it had become an important factor for the employers to support the employees to create a peaceful mindset among their personal and professional work itself. It had become a big challenge for the employers as most of the employees are searching for flexible employment practices than being in the traditional work role. The importance of helping employees achieve a balance between the demands of their work and their home lives has been emphasized. (Delina, 2013) Work-life balance of working women affects their health who report more stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gain and depression than their male counterparts. (Delina, 2013). Work life balance is not a problem for female employees only. Most of the time female entrepreneurs are also suffering from this. Panchanatham (2011) found that female entrepreneurs face work life balancing issues such as role overload, health maintenance problems, poor time management, dependent care issues and lack of adequate support networks.

Comprehensive review of literature shows that developed countries used different methods to overcome issues regarding this. As an example, in European Union work life balance is a policy priority. The countries use different practices, therefore.

The French system’s viewpoint on health, education and employment is that all individuals are entitled to a fundamental quality of life. France traditionally offered wide childcare supports to occupied mothers. Nordic welfare states offer the highest level of support to working woman. Single salary allowance or housewife allowance are being given for the women at home with the aim of contribute to the welfare of young children and to the rise of fertility. (Work life balance, 2011)

Belgium had introduced “time credits” system which gives the employees the chance to convert for part time working condition for

one year without breaking the contract of employment. (Work life balance, 2011)

“Work and family month “is celebrated at the national level by the government in USA. The new policy for US employees on workplace flexibility provides telework, predictable schedule and compressed workweeks facility. Some companies had introduced after school care facilities, elder care programs and adoption benefits as well. (Work life balance, 2011)

Mexico’s IT sector provides flexible working arrangement like shortened workdays on Friday, and telecommuting. Argentina employers offer day care centers and nurseries at the workplace.

In 2000, UK government-initiated work life balance campaign. Parents with children under six years or disabled children under 18 have the right to apply for flexibly, and employer has a statutory duty to consider the request and provide job sharing, shift working, compressed hours, flextime, unpaid leave during school holidays and staggered hours. (Work life balance, 2011)

New Zealand is also promoting work life balance practices. It is done through different legislations and the organizations also must provide enough evidence whether the work life balance policies are benefitting the employees and the organization. (Leave and holidays » Employment New Zealand, 2018). The adjustment of hours law (2000) in Netherlands allows new parents to shift to a four day schedule when they are raising young children. Also, the law provides the opportunity for long term care leave in a situation of terminal illness of a child, partner or parent or a life-threatening illness of a child.

In Denmark the government provide public childcare services. This is available for children older than 24 weeks up until 6 years. Denmark and Sweden both have a good history on social and family policy. Both countries provide paternity leave, family leave and given the chance to change the working time.(Work life balance, 2011). Japan has also introduced flexible work during pregnancy, childcare paid leave, childcare short time work, the at homework system and use of paid annual leave on hourly basis are some of them. Singapore do have family friendly policies such as flexi-hours, telecommuting, and family care leave and concierge services and financial assistance for childcare facilities(Work life balance, 2011).

III. Significance of the study:

This study is basically for assessing the prevalence of work life among working women. Previously, the female labor force in Sri Lanka was mainly employed in non-managerial, subordinate or low-profile positions in limited industries. The given figure below shows

how this has been changed. According to this highest number of women employees are into the professional carder and it has been increase over the past years.

Year	Total	Occupation group									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2014	2,625,065	87,646	315,988	149,041	170,388	272,429	544,444	431,084	76,085	577,256	704
2015	2,733,178	124,454	336,586	151,900	161,209	267,267	492,267	432,631	96,342	665,326	5,196
2016	2,797,735	136,307	330,973	174,120	164,865	284,980	504,509	443,739	94,874	656,046	7,322
2017	2,929,021	154,639	346,838	198,667	173,408	269,145	512,325	468,150	108,550	693,881	3,418
2016Q1	2,866,496	135,376	344,755	164,633	168,319	286,867	526,532	458,424	86,039	688,276	7,276
2017Q1	2,995,161	123,986	342,811	189,373	178,986	284,685	509,663	516,019	112,270	734,692	2,676
2018Q1	2,669,210	167,131	318,501	210,110	134,980	192,785	445,169	413,051	98,597	687,810	1,075

These figures are to be treated with caution as the corresponding CV (Cofficient of variation) values are high.

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| 1 Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators | 6 Skilled Agricultura, Forestry and Fishery workers |
| 2 Professionals | 7 Craft and Related Trades workers |
| 3 Technicians and Associate Professionals | 8 Plant and Machine operators and Assemblers |
| 4 Clerks and Clerical support workers | 9 Elementary occupations |
| 5 Services and Sales workers | 10 Armed Forces Occupations & unidentified occupations |

Figure 01: Female employment in different sectors. (Source: Department of Census & Statistics, 2018)

Modifications in work cultures have introduced to women's responsibilities and duties to their circle of relatives in addition to society (Mathew & Panchanatham 2009a; 2009b). The conflicts between competing in demands in private and family needs seem to be the maximum possible reason for labor conflicts. This is not only a problem to Sri Lanka. Research performed through Rout, Lewis and Kagan (1999) reveals that ladies in India revel in giant pressure in managing the daily chores before and after the work. There comes a need to implement the concept of Work Life Balance as to cover up the issues arising in trying to balance the private and professional life. This study aims to find out the factors leading to work life conflicts and the ways on supporting to eliminate them. This study has been vital for assessing the growing want for supporting to create work life balance in working women in Sri Lanka.

IV. The objectives of the study are:

- The research is aiming to analyze the issues faced by married working woman on balancing their personal and professional life.

- To find out the association between demographic factors and work life balance.
- To study the outcomes of imperfect work life balance.
- Furthermore, researcher aim to suggest HR implications on this area.

V. Methodology

A. Description of Sample

The study was conducted among the working women in Colombo district, the economic capital and the largest city with female labour force participation of 35.9%. (Department of Census & Statistics, 2018) According to non-probability sampling 200 working women were selected, using Convenient Sampling. They were from Academic, IT, Healthcare and banking sectors. Both public and private sector working women were selected. A questionnaire of 33 questions were given which is consist with demographic questions, General statement with Yes and No option to answer and Likert scale questions. Researcher got respond from 180 participants.

VI. Results & Discussion

Reliability Analysis: The data were subjected to Alpha tests of reliability and they had acceptable (0.731) Cronbach's Alpha value, which indicates a good level of internal consistency for the scale with the specific sample, used for the study.

B. Demographic analysis of the selected sample.

Profile of the Respondents: Among the 180 collected respondents, maximum number of respondents belonged to the age group of 21-30 (50.0%). Out of the 48.9% of married women, 50.5% had 01 or more children. In terms of educational background, 94.5 % obtain a degree, professional qualification or a postgraduate qualification. 38.9% works in private and public organization and 11.1% engaged in self-employment and as employers. Whereas 7.2% contribute to the family but not get any payment. Majority of the women are working in education and health industry and majority of the spouses worked in Health and IT industry.

TABLE 01
Demographic Analysis

Age group of respondents	Frequency	Percent
21-30	90	50.0
31-40	51	28.3
41-50	23	12.8
51-60	16	8.9
Marital Status of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Married	88	48.9
Single	71	39.4
Divorce	12	6.7
Widow	9	5.0
Educational level of respondents	Frequency	Percent
A/Ls	10	5.6
Degree	84	46.7
Post Graduate	46	25.6

Professional Qualification	40	22.2
Number of children of respondents	Frequency	Percent
None	89	49.4
01	56	31.1
02	26	14.4
More than 02	9	5.0
Working sector of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Public Sector	70	38.9
Private Sector	70	38.9
Employer	4	2.2
Self-employment	16	8.9
Contributing to the family but not paid	13	7.2
Other	7	3.9
Industry of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Health	36	20.0
Education	44	24.4
IT	29	16.1
Banking	32	17.8
Other	39	21.7
Spouse profession of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Health care	18	10.0
IT	19	10.6
Business	13	7.2
Engineering	15	8.3
Accounting/ Finance / Banking	16	8.9
Marketing	14	7.8

Other	85	47.2
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When considering the factors associated with work life balance, the author found number of children has a significant association with work life balance.

TABLE 02:

Association between Work Life Balance and Number of Children.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	64.154 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	68.745	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	44.035	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	179		

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.84.

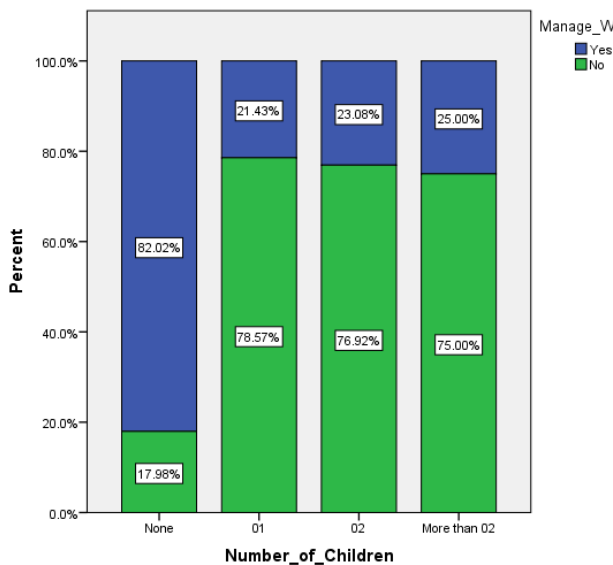


Figure 02: work life balance and number of children

It is found that 78.57% of married women with one child says they don't have a proper work life balance. This finding is same as the finding of previous research done by Delina (2013) & Raya (2013) when comparing with the number of the

children level of work life balance has gone down. The respondents with no children, does have work life balance than those with children. This depict workers with caring responsibility has an influence on their work life balance.

When considering about the working industry, private sector employees complains about the work life conflicts than the public sector as shown below. The below graph shows working sector category with the relevant industry. Out of the selected industries women in banking sector have work life imbalance (64.52%) and they come under the private sector. 39.53% in the education industry works in government organizations and they agree with work life balance. Most of the time teachers, lecturers who comes under this category needs to work less hours and have more than 42 days of leave. Especially they are entitle for vacations. This obviously supports them in their personal life, which finally create a better work life balance comparing to other professionals. By comparing both it can be said public sector employees in most of the industries do have work life balance than the private sector employees in the same sector.

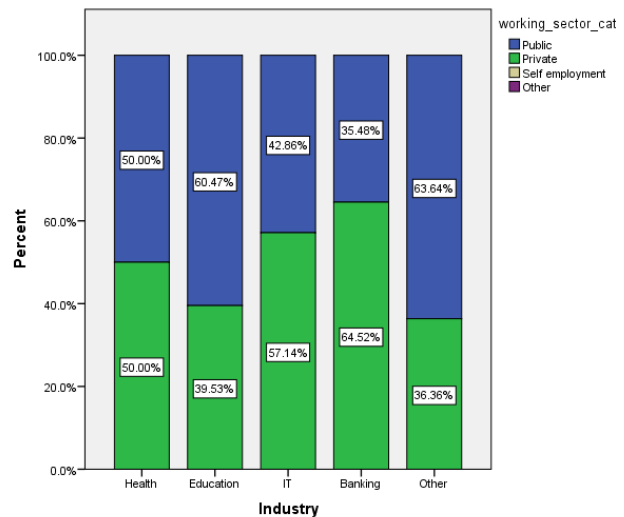


Figure 02: Work life balance sectorial wise in different industries

To manage the personal and professional life spouse support is needed. It was proven by previous studies as well. Delina (2013). In this research, a significant association can be found in between these variables.

Table 03:

Association between Work Life Balance and Support from the Spouse.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.606 ^a	6	
Likelihood Ratio	35.132	6	
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.572	1	
N of Valid Cases	178		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.21.

Table 04:

Association between Work Life Balance and Support from the Spouse.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.962 ^a	3	.030
Likelihood Ratio	9.110	3	.028
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.195	1	.074
N of Valid Cases	180		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.47.

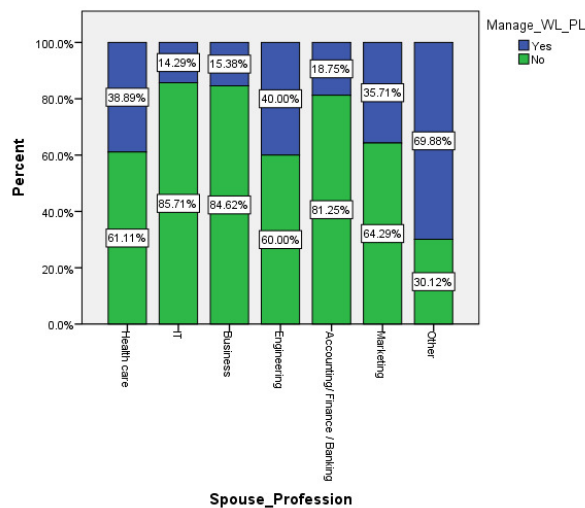


Figure 03: Work life balance and spouse profession

The women who married IT professionals do not agree with work life balance (85.71%). This was same for the women who married businessperson as well. (84.62%) This finding was same as (Delina& Raya, 2013). The reason behind this might be due to the busy schedules they might not be able to support the wives.

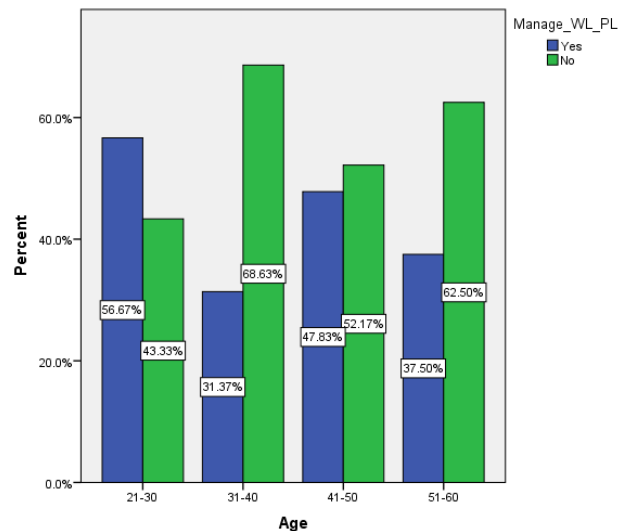


Figure 04: work life balance and the age of the working - women

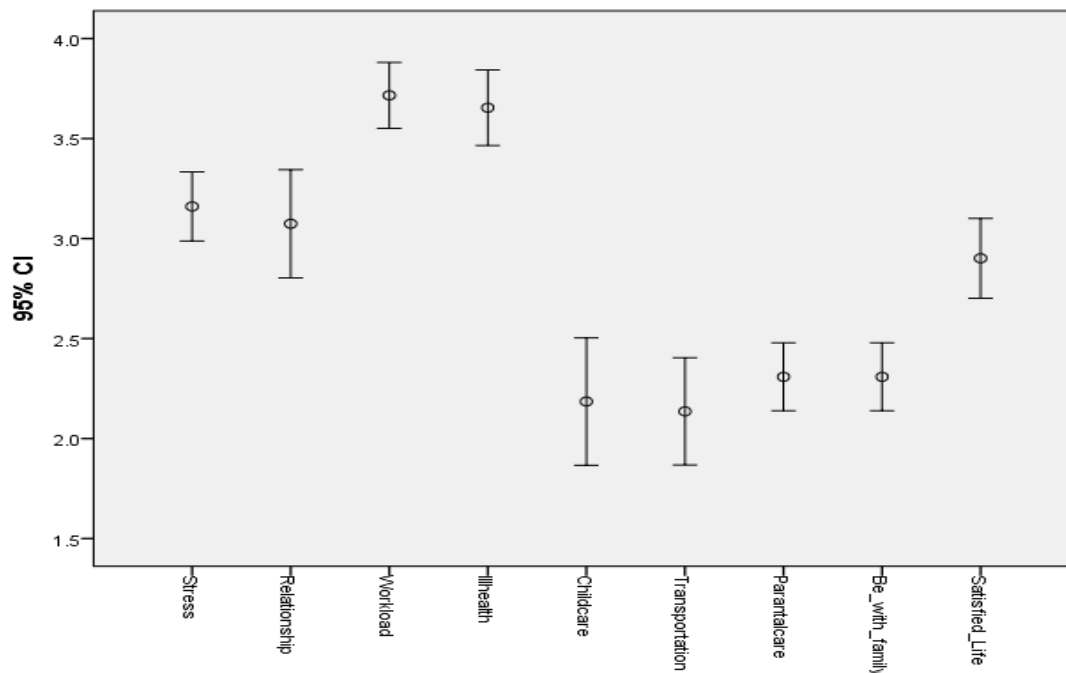
The author found Age and work life balance has a significant association.

The most who disagree with work life balance comes in between 31-40 years. Majority of women in this age category are married and with children. This finding was same as (Delina& Raya, 2013).

Table 05

When studying the outcomes of imperfect work life balance the author found the following findings 95% which has been given in 95% confident interval graph as below.

Outcomes of Imperfect Work Life Balance on Working - Women.



C. Summary of findings.

This study was able to measure the work–life balance of working women finding that married working women find it very hard to keep the work life balance irrespective of the industry they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their husband’s profession. The private sector working women were found to have more difficulties. The main reason for this was the smaller number of leaves when comparing to the public sector. Especially when it comes to maternity leave public sector is more privileged. Banking professionals suffer on not having proper work life balance compared to the others. Married women of 31-40 with their first child found to have issues in managing their personal & professional life. It was seen married women get less support from the spouses in IT sector in this regard. When considering the age in between 51-60 also shows

imbalance in their lives. Physical weakness due to different reasons might be the problem in this category.

The married working women does not have much leisure time or enough time for socializing. This led to a high stress level and majority agree that they get health problems due to this. Researchers findings revealed the importance of work-life balance and the need to have work-life balance to improve the performance level as well as to avoid the social issues.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendation

Through this study the researcher found age, number of children, working sector & industry, spouse profession does have a significant relationship on work life balance.

Singley and Hynes (2005) suggest when considering the working patterns flexible working will create positive impact on women. Flexible time-management models suited to the needs of the employee and his or her family. De Ruijter and Van der Lippe (2007) suggests different options to create work life balance as facilitating professional network of family support services, including public childcare, elderly care services, different forms of leaves, as well as arrangements to outsource housework . When implementing these strategies the government and the employers need to see the suitability of them to the country. Most of the time organizations are worried on how they can control the employees if they are given flexible policies. To meet this concern firms can link flexible work arrangements with management by objectives (MBO) and supportive management. Furthermore human resource department need to have trainings to change the attitude of the management regarding this issue, as this is something that relates with their personal values and beliefs. Though it is necessary to consider gender equality, In Sri Lanka from the 1978 constitution itself had given the chance to improve the facilities for the women. This can be considered as a good move to support the local women in their occupation.

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