

Assessing Work Life Balance among Saudi Arabian Working Women – A Descriptive Study on Selected Employees

Dr. Heyam Abdelrahman Al Mousa

Marketing Department, College of Business Administration, King Saud University.

Joharah Alzuwaed,

Health Administration, College of Business Administration, King Saud University.

Dr. Rima H Binsaeed

Management Department, College of Business Administration, King Saud University.

Email: Staj@ksu.edu.sa

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to explore the way in which Saudi Arabian working women balance their work and family life, everyone is trying to keep a pace in this globalization age, universities and institutions are becoming very competitive by providing more training and development opportunities, reducing discrepancies, improving faculty efficiency and morale. Work life balance is when an employee feels satisfied and his or her needs are been met in both personal and professional life, trying to keep a balance between work and life would result in welfare of faculty, students and the institution and similarly imbalance would affect performance in personal and professional life, Universities and Higher education ministries from time to time keep taking initiatives and formulating policies and strategies to maintain Work life balance programs, still women in this country are facing more difficulties in balancing work and family when compared to men, this research investigates the factors influencing work life balance of faculties from three colleges in a public university Riyadh. Data was collected with the help of questionnaire and analyzed by proper tools, hence it has been concluded that women are still struggling in managing work and personal life, but somehow the working women also agrees that employers do understand and recognize their personal and family responsibilities and duties to a certain extent and try to provide help in balancing work life balance.

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I. Introduction

In Today's Fast paced society where an individual has too many responsibilities and commitments, life seems to be a balancing act for everyone, where everyone is trying to balance work and life, in past few decades Work Life Balance has been a major area of discussion and has received huge popularity and investigation, work life balance is rising to the top of many employers' and employees' consciousness. What really is work life balance? WLB is self-satisfaction in various

roles, it's a common topic of discussion, where everyone is trying to manage, handle, juggle between work and life obligations and responsibilities, WLB means different things to different people, it's not just about equal balance of work and life, it's optimistic mind with a capability to organize our professional and personal life to live a peaceful and healthy life.

Work-life balance in broader prospect, is well-defined as a satisfactory level of participation and proper 'fit' between the various roles in a person's

life (Hudson, 2005). WLB is about the communication between waged work and other activities, including unwaged work in families and community, leisure and personal development.

Achieving work life balance for individuals belonging to teaching profession and corporate world has become a greatest challenge today. Teaching professionals are of greatest importance as they create knowledge for all sectors in a society. Lack of balance in family and work life among these educationalists will be harmful for the society. The workload not only demands their time at work but also at their home to prepare for the numerous functional requirements. To face the challenging environment, the educationalist is required to spend extra hours each day to be more effective and productive in their profession. As an educationalist, the only motive is no more just teaching but to emphasize on life skills and employability skills in not only creating great professionals but also to develop good citizens.

An individual would be more happier and content once able to strike a balance between work and life but various different studies have proved the more the desire to achieve, it leads to put in additional/ extreme efforts which increase their work timing and they lose work life balance. As per a study conducted in 2003 states that employees when not working are still preoccupied with work, especially when they are along with family and dear ones, experiencing an inability to be meaningfully engaged in non-work domains. As per researcher Ezzedeen, overworked people always think about work all time, our modern work is more intellectual and has become knowledge based fluid with less physical exertion which makes us stressful about work all time. For many of us work is intellectual intrusive, Professor Swiercz and Doctoral Candidate Ezzedeen of The George Washington University tested and developed a cognitive approach, the "Cognitive Intrusion of Work." In simple words work life balance is not only about finding

"physical time" but more importantly its cognitive space" essential to process, organize, and respond to the thinking demands of life within complex society.

Current studies give importance to strategies and policies for improving work life balance and organizations shall be able to deal with issues across all the different sectors in the market by using work life balance programs as a solution or as a strategic shield, as it would promote family friendly organizations, these programs will enhance and develop the organizations' efforts to plan, source, retain, recruit and motivate their key employees (Nord et al., 2002), the organizations shall not restrict work life balance as a human resource program, strategy or policy but make it a part of the organization's cultural change, which would support a new alteration in employees' career development. (Harrington & Ladage, 2009)

II. Women in Saudi Arabia

The country Saudi Arabia had few of the world's strictest social rules until recently it has experienced few pioneering reforms in social, economic, demographic, and technological domains, the changes are very harder and faster to resist with determination to modernize the ultra-conservative kingdom into an open society for empowering its citizens.

Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman has sought gradual relaxation of laws restricting women's freedom. These include lifting the driving ban, change in guardianship laws, employment discrimination protections and the most recent is a new tourist visa system to attract holidaymakers and investors in the hope of diversifying its economy away from oil exports.

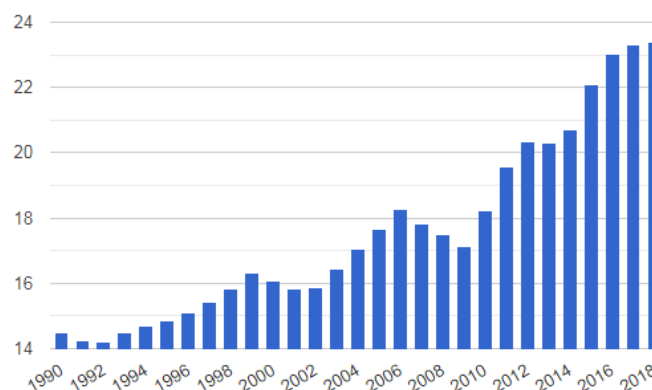
The latest amendments are history in making, and most of the changes have been promoted by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as part of the Vision 2030, a plan to create a vibrant and open society in which all citizens can

accomplish their dreams, hopes and drives to succeed in a flourishing economy.

These changes have transformed the social family system, for years' Saudi women played a regulated role as primary caregivers and was deprived of outside work access, only husbands have been considered as bread winner for the family and wife stay at home, until recently the substantive steps taken by the government for women empowerment. Women is an institution in herself, she is still the primary caretaker to nurture her children's to achieve motherhood and on the other side trying to be financially independent by being determined for a successful career. Both the jobs are highly demanding, accomplish or justifying without ignoring the other is a difficult charge.

Supporting women empowerment and female employment will reduce poverty and is a sign of creating a developing and sustainable economy, the gender gap in terms of educations and health care is been abolished, as per World Bank report, more females enroll in university than men, in the last two decades, maternal mortality in the MENA region has declined 60%, the largest decrease in the world. The drive to attract women workforce at several labor markets activities has been successful as huge number of women have joined the labor work force in private and public sector in last two decades as per the work bank report the percentage of women workforce in labor market has increased from 14.21 % in 1992 to 23.37% in 2018.

Saudi Arabia - Female labor force participation



III. Literature Review

An article titled as “Are Women More Stressed than Men?” written by Meghna Mukherjee (2016), tried putting together many researches that are about stress encountered by men & women, as per the article a married woman stress is all related to her family, house and children's, she tries to strike a balance between happy married life and successful career.

All these factors cause huge pressure, which in turn affects her heart and mind, as per medical expert's stress effects are different on each individual few symptoms could be headaches, insomnia, nervous, frustrated and temperamental, feeling lonely, low self-esteem and depressed, gender -specific reasons such as early Menopause, unbalanced menstrual cycle and pregnancy difficulties and over a period of time it could even worsen up to heart conditions in women's. Women are very sensitive by nature their need someone to entrust in like a partner, parents, friend, siblings or children, by which she can vent out what is she going through, speaking off or confiding in some one can help her feel light & better and take off stress up to 70%

Flexibility is the key advantage of academic jobs as suggested by Glass and Camarigg (1992), but on the other side the key problem is that academic jobs are more demanding and challenging. Usually academic professional criticize that it's a job with never ending demand,

However Jacob (2004) stated that it's a profession with long working hours, it has been found that Male full time faculty members work approximately for 55 hours where else the female full time faculty works for 53 hours per week, working hours are more when compared to any other counterparts in white collar jobs.

Various studies have been conducted on work life balance of teaching faculties and concluded that it's a stressful profession (Rosser, 2004), Teaching profession seems to be the most over whelming for females than any other profession this is one of the main reason many studies are been conducted to study the aspects of teachers work life balance (Acker 1996). Hence it's been concluded by Clark (1989) as teaching profession has many different dimensions like pattern of authority, work, identification and career etc. All these dimensions are differing with different workplace or institution and subjects this could be the reason for teaching field to be most preferred one for work family conflict.

As per Shalini and Bhawana (2012), organizations utilize quality of work life as a strategic tool to maintain, attract and retain their staff, moreover assist the staff in sustaining work life balance with similar focus on performance and commitment.

Working women usually go through problems such as mobility and slow promotion because of family demands and time constrains not only this but also faces issues in dealing with male colleagues, Certain changes are being observed with women getting more liberal such as choosing their own partner for marriage, shift of marriage age from 22 to 26-30, entering into inter religion and inter caste marriages, However, parents' condition married women and society to accept their roles as subordinates to "husband" and the "home" and „children" as their share of responsibility. Single women have less constrains on socializing with friends, relatives and family, Though the society is changing a bit slow but

women have taken the charge of social change audaciously by shifting the traditional rule of marriage to modernity (Vijaya Mani (2013)

Vijaya Mani (2013) in her research conducted on Work Life Balance and Women Professionals, Tamil Nadu concluded that women professionals are faced with problems of mobility and slow promotions due to timeconstraints and family responsibilities. They also faced problems in relationships with male subordinates. The study shows that there is some change leading to emancipation of women as they are increasingly getting married by choice of partners than through arranged marriages and entering into inter -caste, inter-religious choices. The age of marriage is also shifting from 22 to 26-30 years of age. However, parents' condition married women and society to accept their roles as subordinates to "husband" and the „home" and „children" as their share of responsibility". Unmarried women have fewer problems but they have constraints on socializing with friends and family. Change in Indian society is slow, but women have definitely started working towards social change by courageously shifting from traditional rules of marriage to modernity.

Work life balance just not happens, it comprises the efforts of many partners, the society, the family in which the employee lives, the organization for which the employee works are all embedded with mutual understanding, respect for all partners, N. Gayathri & P. Karthikeyan, (2013)

Louise Heslop (2005) have studied that the work and family outcomes such as role interference, stress strain and life satisfaction are related to several strategies and orientation, another study by Rosner (2005) states that school teachers have less pressure when compared to university faculties.

Heather S. McMillan et al, (2011) suggested that the individual harmony and its effects has developed a new Harmony based on conflict and enrichment. N. Krishna Reddy et al, (2010)

concluded that the married women employees indeed experience Work Family Conflict (WFC) while attempting to balance their work and family lives. Thus, Organization needs to formulate guidelines for the management of WFCs since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees

Work life balance among Teaching Professionals in Saudi Arabia.

1962 was the year when Women's Higher education was first established in Riyadh by a special program ENTSAAB. Since then the government has been taking keen initiatives for women equal opportunity in education and employability by eliminating illiteracy, formulating new educational strategy for strengthening and improving the quality of higher education, the country spends 8.8 percent of its gross domestic product on education, against a global average of 4.6 percent, which is almost double the global average on education³. The Golden Period for women started in King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz time, with establishing 24 Public Universities, 8 Private Universities and a total of 494 Colleges in 76 cities within Saudi Arabia⁴. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development there are lot of Saudi women teachers. Among the Women Labor workforce almost half of all are teachers.

Women are a huge asset for the country with 50% of the university graduates being females, the government would continue to develop their abilities and talent to strengthen their future and contribution in development of society and economy as per the vision 2030.

Teacher personality and behavior or practices hugely impact the classroom's environment. The teaching profession is a ultimate intellectual task, where nurture and exchange of thoughts are persistently developing in people's mind, the jobs seem to be most ideal to achieve work life balance as the responsibilities appear to be just giving

lecturing, attending occasional meetings and enjoying annual vacation. But in reality the work is never ending, always occupied with the next class topic, working on next course, designing assignment/ research project or group plays and applying for next grants, there have to spend extra hours' to be productive, effective and competitive in the challenging environment. Apart from developing soft and hard skills for employability, teachers inspire and act as role model to students to acquire skills, abilities and attitude for improving and contributing to the society, for the above point of view the teachers need to be able to attain work life balance to develop responsible citizens.

With the change in nature of work, the work composition, culture and expectations are very different, the advent of globalization, new technology have totally transformed the workplace with speed, convenience and flexibility. Work has become too demanding than before, pressure of deadlines, long working hours, irregular travel schedule is apart of our professional life's. Teaching job has become more challenging in present world, A study on work life balance of women teaching faculties (K. Santhana Lakshmi & S. Sujatha Gopinath, 2011) stated that most of the working women works for 40 -45 hours per week out of which almost half of them struggle to achieve work life balance. Workload and multiple role commitments at work and home is the cause behind the struggle. Constant workload and working under pressure would cause severe stress and results in low performance at work as well as family life.

Since women participation increased in labor market, organizations have turn out to be more cautious about the quality of work environment started making special arrangements and strategies to reduce imbalance, Almalki et al. (2012) integrated four dimensions model of Quality work life which includes work life/home life, work design, work context and work world,

improvement of these factors would lead to higher Quality of work life, improved performance and productivity with increase in employee retention. As per Kamel 2013 the work life balance among the faculty in Saudi Arabia was largely affected by clarity of responsibilities and procedures, equal opportunity for career growth, rewards and compensation, work load and job security.

Employees are looking for cordial atmosphere to balance their work and life, when organizations achieve work life balance with effective strategies and programs, employees become more productive and give their best to the organization. Therefore organizations are always trying out new policies or schemes to attract, maintain and retain employees.

15 Organizations functioning in Saudi Arabia were declared as prize winner of best work environment by Aleqtasadih Newspaper, on 31 August 2014, (Table 1), The competition was conducted to measure the quality of work environment among 50 countries across the world, Capital Market Authority a public organization bagged the 7th position, rest of the companies were small and medium firms in private sector, few multinational companies like Ericsson and Cisco. Great Place To Work Institute (GPTW) with extensive research and employee survey, identifies companies that creates a working environment termed as great place to work, as per Zaid Ghosn MD of GPTW Saudi Arabia, precisely 200 companies have shown interest to develop their workplace, the mindsets of the companies are changing, to provide a employee friendly and high quality workplace.

Order	Name of organizations
1	EMC
2	Saudi Ericsson
3	Cisco
4	Abbvie Company

Order	Name of organizations
5	The Centennial Fund
6	Panda
7	Capital Market Authority
8	McDonald
9	The Saudi Investment Bank (SAIB)
10	Arabian Bupa for medical insurance
11	SEDCO
12	Bin-Saedan Company
13	Alkhabeer Capital
14	Al-Nahdi Medical
15	Tamer Group

Table 1: Organizations with the best work environment in Saudi Arabia in 2014.

IV. Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze the socio- economic factors of the respondent.
- To explore the factors influencing work life balance among the respondents(working women).
- To Identify and observe the benefits and challenges of work life balance among the respondents (working women).

V. Research Methodology:

The Study is based on primary and secondary data, the primary data was collected by questioner survey method, the questionnaire consists of two parts, part one: demographic data, part two: work life balance questions, all together it consisted of 11 items with various questions on personal details, opinion on personal and professional life, support source, pressure faced and factors affecting work life balance etc. All questions were close ended. Simple random sampling method was used to collect the data, Total 100 questionnaires were distributed among working women's in three colleges at a public university of Riyadh out

of which 80 questionnaires were collected back, from that 75 were found complete, Secondary data is collected from internet, Journals and research papers.

Sample Chosen for the study:

S.no	Name of the College	Profession	No of Respondents
1	College of business Administration	Lecturer/ Professors	30
2	College of Education	Lecturer/ Professors	25
3	College of Language and translation	Lecturer/ Professors	20
	Total		75

Limitations:

Major limitation of the present study is, restricted to only three colleges from a public university of

Riyadh, the other colleges were not covered due to time constrain, it would have produced more effective results if the respondents size would have been larger.

Tools used for Analysis:

The data collected was edited, tabulated and analyzed in systematic manner, appropriate tools like Percentage Analysis, weighted average mean and Chi-Square Test were used.

Analysis and interpretation of the study.

Techniques for Data Analysis and Interpretation: The information of all the questionnaires was coded and entered in computer using appropriate tools such as simple percentage analysis, weighted average mean, and chi-square test. To simplify the data charts and figures were used as statistical tools to associate relationship between the various independent variable.

Table 2: Demographic details of the respondents.

Particulars		No of Respondents(75)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	Under 30	22	29
	30-40	28	38
	40 and above	25	33
	Total	75	100
Marital status	Married	51	68
	Single	24	32
	Total	75	100
No of Children's	With Children's	45	60
	Without Children's	35	40
	Total	75	100
Monthly Salary	<10000	17	23
	10001 -20000	43	57
	>20000	15	20
	Total	75	100
Academic Qualification	UG Degree	0	0
	PG Degree	18	24
	Ph.D	57	76

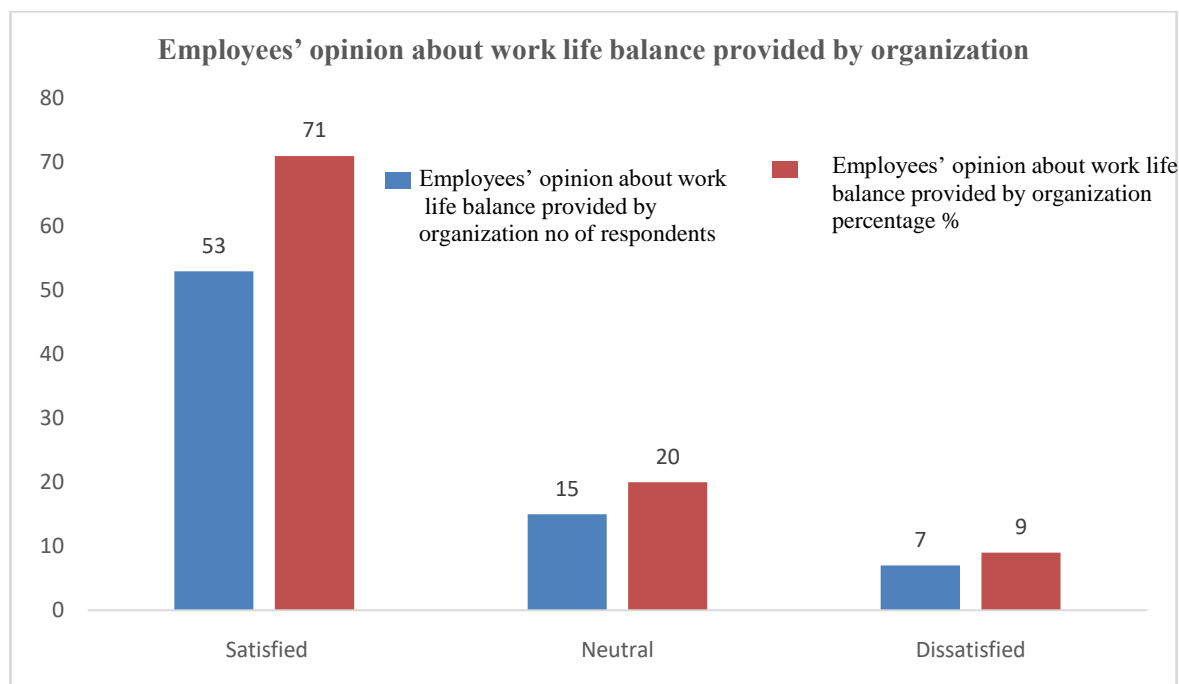
	Others	0	0
	Total	75	100
Experience	<5 Years	6	8
	6-10 Years	28	37
	More than 10 Years	41	55
	Total	75	100
Family Type	Single /Nuclear	53	71
	Joint	22	29
	Total	75	100
Partner Profession	Government	30	40
	Private	25	33
	Business	16	21
	Others	4	6
	Total	75	100
Place of Residence	Urban	15	20
	Rural	60	80
	Total	75	100
Mode of Transportation	Public	9	12
	Own	66	88
	Others	0	0
	Total	75	100

It is inferred from Table 2 that 71 % of the respondents belongs to between 30-40 and 40 years above of age, as the sample size of married respondents constitute to 61%, the respondents with Children's were also on the higher side of around 60%, similar trend was seen on the family type as well, majority of the respondents were around 71% preferred living in a single or nuclear family. Respondents with Monthly income between 10,000 to 20,000 SR constituted to more than half of the sample size i.e. 57%, Majority of the respondents academic qualification is PhD holders constituting to 76%, also more than 90% of the respondent's holds experience more than 6 years and above 10 years. Respondent partner's working for Government sector are around 40%,

for private sector is 33%, rest 27% is doing business or other activities. Majority of the respondents 80% resides in rural area. Most of respondent's prefer to commute by their own Vehicle i.e. around 88%, very few 12% commute via public transport.

Table 3: Employees' opinion about work life balance provided by organization.

Particulars	No of respondent	Percentage (%)
Satisfied	53	71%
Neutral	15	20%
Dissatisfied	7	9%
Total	75	100



It is inferred from table 3 and the Bar graph, that majority 71% of the respondents are satisfied in work life balance, 20% are neutral and a very small percentage 9% seems to be dissatisfied.

This analysis helps to find out the most desired attributes and least undesired attributes based on work life balance of working women opinion about the following nine attributes.

Weighted average score analysis:

Table 4: Factors influencing the work life balance of working women.

Sl no	Source	Always	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Weighted Average	Weighted Average Score	Weighted Mean
1	Have to perform many Jobs in a given time(Limited time)	32	24	8	6	5	222	2.96	2.22
2	Job demands more long working hours after work at home in evenings or at weekends	42	15	12	3	3	240	3.2	2.4
3	Excessive house hold demands/ responsibilities	27	18	20	5	5	217	3.96	2.17
4	Support Network (at organization/Home)	29	24	18	0	0	232	3.09	2.31

5	Time for hobbies, entertainment / leisure, vacation activities is difficult.	28	31	9	7	0	230	3.06	2.3
6	Workplace Welfare Facilities	14	22	16	18	5	172	2.29	1.72
7	Attitude or pressure of supervisor and colleague's	13	17	22	10	10	160	2.13	1.61
8	Enough time to spend on family duties and societal roles	24	22	13	12	12	192	2.56	1.93
9	Advance Information and Technology at work	18	21	19	6	6	184	2.45	1.83

It has been observed from Table 4 that the weighted mean range is between 2.4 to 1.6, as per the respondents the most highly influenced factor is the Job demands more long working hours after work at home in evenings or at weekends (2.4), the second factor is support network at home / work (2.31), followed by the third factor which is Time for hobbies, entertainment / leisure, vacation activities is difficult (2.3), The forth factor is perform many jobs in a limited time (2.2), Excessive House hold demands and responsibilities (2.17) is the fifth most influenced factor. The sixth factor is Enough time to spend on family duties and societal roles (1.93), seventh factor is advance information and technology at work (1.83), eighth and ninth factors are Workplace Welfare Facilities (1.72) and Attitude or pressure of supervisor and colleague's (1.61) respectively. It's clearly concluded that the first three factors affecting work life balance of the respondents are Jobs demands long working Hours after work at home and weekend (2.4) followed by Support network at home/ work (2.31)with third factor Time for hobbies, entertainment / leisure, vacation activities is difficult (2.3).

VI. Employers role in work life balance issue

Various work life balance program, policies and practices are implemented by organizations to empower employees for being more effective and productive at work and to help them in reducing work life issue or stress. Employers are under huge pressure to periodically introduce or revise work life balance programs, policies and practices to facilitate employee's efforts in accomplishing their work and personal commitments. Time to time WLB initiatives have been introduced by the organizations to help employees balance their work and life, different WLB programs or polices such as part time work, flexible working hours, compressed work weeks, job sharing, parental leave, on-site child care facilities and telecommunicating. (Lazar et al, 2010). Apart from this organization also provide health insurance for employees and dependents, personal days, fitness facilities or membership for wellbeing of physical and mental health. By providing all these facilities organizations do have self-driven agendas, one to increase Welfare programs for working women and effective utilization of skills, two to motivate and keep

employees performance high, three to be the best employer choice among the employees and last to participate in corporate social responsibility (Lazar et al, 2010). On the other hand, factors which influence WLB practices as per employee's perspective are job stress, job satisfaction, commitment and turnover. Still absenteeism costs, organizational productivity, job performance and customer satisfaction in turn impacted by these factors. (Lazar et al, 2010).

VII. Findings

The following are the findings of the above research

- Less than 30% of the respondents were neutral and dissatisfied about Work life balance, majority that is 70% were satisfied.
- Majority of 71% respondents were among age group of 30 -40 years and above 40 years, only 29% were below 30 years.
- 81% of respondents experience was above 6 years.
- Above 70% of respondents preferred to live in a nuclear/ single family, less than 30% belongs to joint family.
- Majority of the respondents of 60% were married with children's.
- As per the weighted score analysis the factor influencing the first most is Job demands more long working hours after work at home in evenings or at weekends and second most is Support network at home /organization and the least most is Attitude or pressure of supervisor and colleague's.

VIII. Conclusion

Women still are struggling hard to maintain work life balance, though women are good time managers but still have huge responsibility in maintaining household chores and rearing kids, attaining work life balance not only helps an

individual to balance his/ her profession and family, but along come power, strength and confidence. Over and above it improves efficiency and aids in gaining happiness and inner peace.

Working women undergo stress while juggling between work and personal life, constant stress and pressure would result in low performance, it can be concluded that yet the working women are happy still worried and occupied about work when they are not at work, most of the respondents prefer living in nuclear/single family and hence don't have much of support at home from in laws or relatives are dependent on Care givers for taking care of children/ house when at work. As per the research the factors influencing or causing stress and pressure are family culture, poor support network at home and work, excessive responsibilities at work and home and long working hours at work.

From this research its apparent that working women are very well aware of their work life balance, majority of them have optimistic approach towards the current work life balance, there have been much of development in work life balance polices and program, when compared to previous times, as the country is striking for women employment and empowerment. However periodic check or inspection is required to upgrade and adapt the requirements and needs of the employees, Employers must hold discussion, workshops, develop polices, identify issues, spread the communication or message through different medium like newsletters, handbooks, intranet and etc.

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