`

The Determinants Of The Work-Life Balance Of The Women Employees In The IT Sector Of Kerala

Tina Blossom Francis
Research Scholar
Department of Commerce
BAM College
Thuruthicad-689 597, India

Rajesh P.
Assistant Professor
Department of Economics
Government Engineering College
Thrissur – 680 009, India

Abstract

This study investigates the determinants of Work life balance (WLB) of women employees in information technology sector in Kerala. The analysis was based on a primary survey data set collected through a multi-stage random sampling from a sample consisting of 360 women employees working in the IT sector of Kerala. Initially, the important constructs associated to the work-life balance factor were explored and validated using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), this preliminary analysis has identified and validated four important constructs viz., "job characteristics", "work-life balance polices", "work domain support", and "work-life balance". In the second stage, a multiple linear regression model specified and estimated incorporating these four constructs and a few more socio-demographic variables, to explore the determinants of the determinants of the WLB of women employees in the IT sector of Kerala. The findings brought to light that the job characteristics, work-life balance policies, and whether the employee has children or not were the only factors which had statistically significant influence on the work-life balance of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala.
Keyword*-Work Life Balance, Job Characteristics, Work Domain Support, Work Life Balance Policies*

I. INTRODUCTION

The millennial woman is hollering out to the world to open wide the doors of organizations to let her freely and happily work, to attain her dreams and aspirations. This is the rumination of urban Indian women uncompromisingly declaring their urge to beautify her selfhood. The conventional role of women is dramatically shifting in today's world. They make the home, in addition to winning the bread, equally with the male counterparts. But being able to handle all facets of life in a reasonably well manner is a challenge for today's working women. Work domain and non-work domain of every woman is demanding, and these have to be attended to, rightly and timely. When the working women fail to meet the demands of both domains sufficiently, it causes imbalance, ultimately leaving certain requirements or expectation of domains unattended, this calls for conflicts or inter role interferences.

To be precise, Work- life balance (WLB) refers to the extent to which an employee is able to meet the competing demands of the two domains of life, i.e. work domain and personal domain (health, career, family, societal relationships and commitments, friends, leisure, etc.) by reducing the conflicts and interference and enhancing enrichment and facilitation between the domains. When considering the status of women working in information technology (IT) sector, it can be inferred that more research is essential into this area as studies till date have brought to light that this category lacks work life balance the most. In addition, if the employee is married and has children then it seems to worsen the situation apparently.

`

One of the main sectors where women tend to resort to employment is IT sector. It is a promising sector with plenty of employment opportunities. Moreover, the scenario seems to be like, women choose IT stream based on academic records and interest, but later, majority of them find it difficult to pursue it profoundly. Main reason for this being the work culture of the IT sector that hampers the balance called for. This ultimately, either cultivate turnover intention or a stressed-out lot ending up with a handful of problems created by facing work life imbalance. An overwhelming majority of IT women fear about losing or leaving the job they are in, as they confess that the biggest worry, they have is in terms of this herculean task of balancing their professional and personal life.

The preparedness of the IT companies to accommodate the upcoming growth in terms of employment generation is very significant as there are human resources that are available and ready to partner in the endeavor but facilitating their growth and retention in their job and career is to a very extend the task of the employers. WLB is one of the strategies to hold them to the organization by making them feel good and contented.

In this context, this study investigates the factors influencing the work-life balance of the women working in the IT sector of Kerala; and the study has special significance in the absence of any major study in this vital area of research. This paper is organized in five sections including the introductory section. The second section presents a review of literature on the determinants of work life balance of women employees; third section explains the materials and methods used in the study; the fourth section gives findings and discussion and the last section presents the concluding observations.

II. DETERMINANTS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES- A REVIEW

Researchers have been trying to bring to light the determinants of work life balance and also suggesting the organizations to consider its prevalence as a vital factor for the existence and growth of the organization.

Favorable job characteristics is crucial for an employee to feel good at work. It includes the factors like how autonomous the job is, to what extend the task related to the job is significant and holds identity, what about the fairness of pay, how manageable is the workload and lastly, is the job being monitored to get feedback therefrom. This is in tune to the JCM Model by [1]. Job characteristics play a significant role in deciding how motivated [2] the employees of an organization are and how it impacts work life balance [3]. Job satisfaction and thereby work life balance can be attained, through focusing on three themes and they are creating an ambience where job autonomy can be practiced, freedom to be flexible and a good manager - employee relationship [4]. This is to a great extend in tune to the findings of previous researchers in the corresponding area of Work Life Balance.

Another crucial determinant of work life balance of an employee is the work life balance policy provided by the organization [5]. Companies may have a policy of WLB, but the matter is whether the employees really benefit out of it. Three approaches to this determinant implies whether WLB policies is available, are the employees made aware of it and is the policy genuine. Thus, the management should give bounteous stress on adopting WLB practices genuinely as it is of paramount significance to the organization as employees tend to react negatively when they have work-life imbalance which ultimately hampers overall performance and productivity [6].

Likewise, work domain support is a determinant of WLB as it directly and indirectly impacts the employees in several ways. The attitude of the organization towards the employees act as a vital factor to determine how happy a job is made. How supportive is the organization in facilitating the employees with a work

`

environment to ensure good quality of work, as well as how the organization perceive the significance of its employees having work life balance are important aspects of organizational support. The next work domain support is supervisor support. The supervisors play an important role in increasing the intake of WLB programs by the employees [7]. The supervisors support brings forth less role conflicts, better job and life satisfaction, lesser turnover intentions. The mere existence of WLB policies and programmes does not ensure WLB of employees, the mediating role of supervisors in policy uptake and attaining positive outcomes of WLB was highlighted by the results of the study. Organisational support (in the form of availability of WLB policies and programs) clubbed with supervisor's support and positive attitude can bring forth better WLB outcomes.

Table 1: Description of the Variables Used in the Regression Model

Sl. No.	Variables used in the Regression Model	Variable Description
1	Y (Work-life Balance)	It is the dependent variable in the model. It is 'Work-life Balance' score generated from the eight Likert scale items manifesting various aspects of the WLB of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala [Cronbach's Alpha (α) = .935].
2	X_1(Age)	The age of the women IT employee expressed in years.
3	X_2 (Experience)	The professional experience of the employee measured in number of years.
4	X_3 (Job Characteristics)	It a construct measuring the job characteristics of the IT employees, which is constructed from six Likert scale items [Cronbach's Alpha (α) = .907].
5	X_4 (Work-life Balance Policies)	It is a construct generated from seven Likert Scale items measuring various aspects of the work life balance policies followed in the organization [Cronbach's Alpha (α) = .919].
6	X_5 (Work Domain Support)	It is the score generated from seven Likert-type scale items that measure the magnitude of the work domain support received by the employees [Cronbach's Alpha (α) = .902].
7	D_1 (Marital Status)	It is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent's marital status is 'married' and 0 otherwise.
8	D_2 (Children)	It is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent has children and 0 otherwise.
9	D_3 (Family Type)	It is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent is from a nuclear family and 0 otherwise.
10	D_4 (Middle Level)	It is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent is a middle level employee in the company and 0 otherwise.
11	D_5 (Higher Level)	It is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent higher level position in the company and 0 otherwise.

Thus, the constructs that act as determinants have been summarized as 1) job characteristics (job autonomy, fairness of pay, task significance, task identity, manageable workload, feedback), 2) work life balance policies and 3) work domain support(organizational support, supervisor support, peer support). A few important socio-demographic variables such as age, professional experience, marital status, child-rearing status, type of family, and designation level of employment also were identified as the potential factors influencing the WLB of the women employees.

III.MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data was collected through a primary survey by employing the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a set of five-point Likert scale statements. The responses on the Likert scale statements were

`
measured on the five points labeled as: "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree", and these responses were coded as 1,2,3,4 and 5. Fixing the right sample size is a crucial step for data collection and inferential statistical analysis. The sample size was 360 women employees, which was determined using the standard sample size determination formula [8]. A pilot study was conducted among 70 women IT employees from the target population for the purpose of pre-testing the questionnaire and collecting the relevant information for the sample size determination. A multistage random sampling was adopted collecting the sample data.

(A). Exploration of Constructs and Reliability Tests

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to investigate the constructs measuring the determinants of work life balance and to ensure the unidimensionality of the items forming the constructs. Originally the analysis was performed using 37 Likert Scale Items measuring the determinants of WLB of women employees in IT sector in Kerala. Items that failed to meet minimum communality and factor loading requirements were eliminated and further analysis was carried out with 28 items. Prior to the extraction of the factors, the suitability of the sample data for factor analysis was examined adopting the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, the results of which indicated that the sample data was factorable. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .914 {'marvelous' according to [9]}; and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated that the correlation matrix was significantly different from an identity matrix, χ^2 (820) = 11075.67, p<.001.

Maximum Likelihood method using Promax rotation Method was used for the extraction of the factors to keep consistency with the subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). A four-factor structure was derived for the subsequent analysis. Based on the factor loadings, the four factors were identified as "work-life balance", "job characteristics", "work-life balance policies, and "work-domain support". Reliability of these constructs were identified through Cronbach's Alpha(α) and Construct Reliability (CR), values of both these measures fort all the four constructs were well above .70, suggesting that the scales used to measure the constructs were free from random error and therefore reliable.

(B). Testing the Validity of the Constructs

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs used in our model. A four factor measurement model was specified and tested to validate the psychometric properties of our measures.
The measurement model had four latent factors, *viz.,* "job characteristics", "work-life balance polices", "work domain support", and "work-life balance". After confirmation of the measurement model fit, we examined the other psychometric properties of the scales, such as composite reliability and validity.All the factor standardized loadings in the measurement model were above the minimum cut-off level of 0.70 and statistically significant at one percent, signifying the convergent validity of the scales. The convergent validity of our measurement model was further evidenced by the AVE which was all above 0.50. While examining the discriminant validity of the model, we found that in all cases the square root of the AVE was greater than the corresponding inter-factor correlation estimates. It provides empirical support to the discriminant validity of our measurement model.

Overall, the our EFA and CFA analysis helped us to explore and confirm the reliability and validity of the four constructs namely, "job characteristics", "work-life balance polices", "work domain support", and "work-life balance", which we have used in the subsequent regression analysis.

`

(C). Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis has been carried out to understand the factors influencing the work-life balance (WLB) of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala. The following linear regression model was identified and estimated for this purpose:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \sum_{i=1}^{5} \beta_i X_i + \sum_{i=1}^{5} \gamma_i D_i + \varepsilon_i \quad \text{--- (1)}$$

where, α is intercept, βs are the slope coefficients for continuous (quantitative) explanatory variables, γs are the coefficients of dummy independent variables, and ε is the stochastic error term. The details of the construction of the variables are explained in Table 1. The WLB score imputed from the CFA was taken as the dependent variable and five continuous variables and five dummy variables were used as the independent variables in the model. These explanatory variables are included to measure the influence of five quantitative and four qualitative factors on the intensity of the work-life balance (WLB) of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala.

The descriptive summary statistics of the variables used in the regression model is given in Table2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables used in the Regression Model

Sl. No.	Variables used in the Regression Model	Mean	S. D.	N
1	Y (Work-life Balance)	3.32	0.90	360
2	X_1 (Age)	28.17	4.91	360
3	X_2 (Experience)	3.26	2.74	360
4	X_3 (Job Characteristics)	3.40	0.94	360
5	X_4 (Work-life Balance Policies)	3.59	0.76	360
6	X_5 (Work Domain Support)	3.79	0.67	360
7	D_1 (Marital Status)	0.57	0.50	360
8	D_2 (Children)	0.37	0.48	360
9	D_3 (Family Type)	0.74	0.44	360
10	D_4 (Middle Level)	0.80	0.40	360
11	D_5 (Higher Level)	0.10	0.30	360

The model was estimated using the ordinary least square method (OLS). The estimated regression results are presented in Table3. The model adequacy tests were conducted. The Ramsey's *Regression Specification Error Test* (RESET) shows that the model specification is adequate, F (2, 347) = 0.713, *p* = .491). The *Jarque-Bera (JB) test* revealed that distribution of the error terms was not significantly different from the normal distribution, χ^2 (2) = 5.013, *p* =.082. The *variance inflation factor (VIF)* indicated that there was no serious multicollinearity among the regressors (the VIF for all the explanatory variables were less the cut off value of 10 and the average VIF was 1.86).

However, the presence of heteroskedasticy can be noticed from the *White's test* results, *LM* = 92.53, *p* = .003. In the presence heteroskedasticy problem in the estimated model, *heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors* have been used for the significance testing of the estimated regression coefficients. Therefore, valid inferences can be drawn from the estimated model as it was found adequate as per the important model

`

adequacy tests and resultant adjustments. The results reported in Table 3 indicate that the model as a whole is statistically significant, $F (10, 349) = 20.36$, $p < .001$. However, the goodness of fit of the model was moderate as indicated by the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .369$); but this R^2 value was statistically significant as per the F-test reported above.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The estimated regression model presented in Table 2 indicate that there were only two out of the five quantitative variables and one out of the four qualitative variables had statistically significant influence on the work-life balance of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala. To be more specific, the job characteristics construct, work-life balance policies, and whether the employee has children or not were the three factors which had statistically significant effect on the work-life balance of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala. The job characteristics and work-life balance policies had a significant positive effect on the WLB of the employees in the population. It suggests that, other things remaining constant, better job characteristics and favourable work-life balance policies lead to more work-life balance among the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala.

The statistically significant negative coefficient of the 'Children' dummy variable indicates that the IT employees having children had less work-life balance compared to the employees having no children, *ceteris paribus*. The statistically non-significant coefficients of the remaining quantitative and qualitative variables included in the model suggest that the intensity of the work-life balance of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala was not influenced by any of these variables. To be more specific, the age and professional experience of the employee and the available work domain support had no influence on their work-life balance. The intensity of the WLB of the married women employees were not significantly different from that of the unmarried and other women employees in the IT sector of Kerala.

Similarly, the level of WLB of the women employees from nuclear families was not significantly different from that that of the joint families. Lastly, the designation level of the employee also did not make any significant effect on the WLB of the women employees in the IT sector of Kerala. It means the level of WLB of the lower level, middle level and upper level women employees in the IT sector was not significantly different in Kerala.

Table3Multiple Linear Regression Results on the Factors Influencing the Work-Life Balance of the Women Employees in the IT Sector of Kerala

Method: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)

Dependent Variable: WLB Score

Sl. No.	Regressors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t - ratio	p-value	Significance@	Collinearity Statistics	Model Summary Statistics
		B	Std. Error#	Beta				VIF	
1	(Constant)	0.584	0.438	--	1.33	.183	ns	--	$R^2 = 0.368$ Adj. $R^2 = 0.350$
2	X_1(Age)	0.004	0.012	0.020	0.30	.766	ns	2.704	$F (10, 349) = 26.25$, $p < .001$

`

									AIC = 800.817
3	X_2 (Experience)	-0.025	0.017	-0.076	−1.45	.149	ns	1.596	BIC = 843.56
4	X_3 (Job Characteristics)	0.095	0.043	0.099	2.22	.027	**	1.083	
5	X_4 (Work-life Balance Policies)	0.610	0.063	0.516	9.63	<.001	***	1.683	
6	X_5 (Work Domain Support)	0.108	0.072	0.081	1.51	.133	ns	1.687	
7	D_1 (Marital Status)	0.109	0.110	0.060	1.00	.319	ns	2.100	
8	D_2 (Children)	-0.340	0.114	-0.183	−2.98	.003	***	2.573	
9	D_3 (Family Type)	-0.007	0.089	-0.004	−0.08	.934	ns	1.087	
10	D_4 (Middle Level)	-0.147	0.144	-0.065	−1.02	.309	ns	1.963	
11	D_5 (Higher Level)	-0.207	0.196	-0.069	−1.05	.293	ns	2.154	

Notes: # Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors, variant HC1;

@ *** indicate significant at 01 percent level, ** indicate significant at 05 percent level, and '*ns' indicates* not significant.

V.CONCLUSION

Let the women employees feel lesser burdened, more enlightened and fairly balanced. We can witness a better today as well as a promising tomorrow. The organisations are aware of the benefits of having a happy human resource base, but are they pretending to be still unaware! Whatsoever, this study brings to light that favourable job characteristics and work life balance policies are the most significant determinants of having work life balance for women employees in Kerala. Work domain support (which includes supervisor support, organisational support and peer support) could not be proved as a significant factor, contradicting the research literature till date. It may be because women employees in IT sector in Kerala find support from family as the crux of defeating all work life conflicts to Strike.

REFERENCES

[1] Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16(2)*,250-279.

[2] Singh, A., Singh , K.S.,& Khan, S. (2016). Job Characteristics Model (JCM): Utility and Impact on working professionals in the UAE. *International Journal of Organisational Analysis, 24(4)*,692-705

[3] Friday, S. & Friday, E. (2003). Racioethnic Perceptions of Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction. *The Journal Of Management Development,22(5),*426-442.

`

[4] Cookson, C.S. (2016). *The Role of Work-Life Balance Programs in Job Satisfaction*, (Doctoral Dissertation). Walden University

[5] Usha, S. (2016). *A study on Work Life Balance of women employee's performance of IT sector with special reference to Chennai* (Doctoral Dissertation, Manomanian Sundaranar University, India). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10603/70689

[6] Akinyele, S. T., Peters, M. C., & Akinyele, F. E. (2017). Work-Life Balance Practices as Panacea for Employee Performance : Empirical Evidence from River State Television, Nigeria. *Oman Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*. https://doi.org/10.12816/0036841

[7] McCarthy, A., Cleveland, J. N., Hunter, S., Darcy, C., & Grady, G. (2013). Employee work-life balance outcomes in Ireland: A multilevel investigation of supervisory support and perceived organizational support. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.709189

[8] Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling Techniques* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.