

Factors Influencing Work Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs: A Case of Quetta (Pakistan)

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Abstract

The issue of work life balance becomes more severe and is considered a women issue in traditional societies. In such societies woman has the prime responsibility for smooth running of daily household operations. Considering that, the current study explores the factors which influence work life balance of women entrepreneurs from perspective of a traditional society that is Quetta, Pakistan. The researchers used the qualitative phenomenological approach for the purpose of better and deeper understanding of women entrepreneurs' work life balance issues. Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the factors that have an effect on the work life balance of women entrepreneurs. The researchers used purposive sampling technique to select 20 women entrepreneurs from Quetta city and applied thematic analysis to analyze their interview transcripts. The findings of this study revealed that the multiple roles, time management, social and family support, family responsibilities, mental and physical issues, dependent care and other challenges are the major factors which affect work and family life balance of women entrepreneurs in Quetta. Additionally, it has been found that the majority of women entrepreneurs who participated in this study suffer from work and life balance issues and these issues vary based on demographic attributes.

Keywords: Work life balance; Women entrepreneurs; Work and family life balance;

Introduction

The work and family life balance is an important concern across the world. A voluminous literature addresses this issue in western world (see White et al., 2003; Lewis and Cooper, 2005 and Lewis et al., 2007 for instance). However, the work life balance is

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more challenging issue for women in traditional societies because of asymmetrical distribution of household responsibilities (Cross and Linehan, 2006). The management of work and family life for women entrepreneurs is an important issue particularly in traditional societies like Pakistan as women are primarily accountable for family responsibilities.

In Pakistan, there have been many studies conducted on work life balance particularly from perspectives of public and private sector organizations like educational, banking, health institutions etc (see Malik et al. 2010; Hanif & Naqvi, 2014; Rehman & Waheed, 2012; Fatima & Sahibzada 2012). However, the work life balance issues of women entrepreneurs ignored in literature especially from perspective of Pakistan (Rehman & Roomi (2012) is an exception). Considering the lack of studies on work life balance of women entrepreneurs particularly from perspective of traditional societies, this study explored the factors influencing the work life balance of Quetta-based women entrepreneurs. It also investigated the extent to which these factors vary across different attributes (for example marital status, education level, age etc). The rest of the paper is organised as follows; section 2 reviews literature, section 3 lays out research methodology, section 4 discusses the results and section 5 concludes.

Brief Review of Literature

Factors influencing Work and family life balance

The traditional approach of society considers a woman's business as less important to her husband's family (Ahl, 2007). There are different roles (like wife, mother, daughter in-law and home caretaker) which a woman has to perform in order to handle daily house chores. Additionally, she also has to act as a working woman to look after various work-related tasks. Work life balance is comprised of these multiple roles ranging from non-work (i.e. family related roles) to work-related roles and women are required to perform these roles in a way to attain the balance between work and family life. This means that problems occur between work and family domains because of multiple roles and it becomes difficult for individual to perform many roles within specified time and consequently it leads to the conflicts between work and family life (Greenhaus et al., 1987). Women have many responsibilities which lead to more work and eventually causes stress and results in work and personal life conflict. The work life imbalance eventually negatively impacts psychological and physical wellbeing (Frone, 2000; Felstead et al., 2002; Moemen et al., 2013). Studies reported that entrepreneurs experience more anxiety, stress and mental health

issues in comparison to other employees and less efficient and social (Mirji, 2015; Aryee, 1992; Bird, 2006).

Another factor which influences work life balance is family structure. The family structure may be divided in two main categories, i.e. nuclear family which is a small family unit comprising of married couples and their kids. While the joint family comprises of husband, wife, children, grand parents, nieces, and nephews. The joint family system makes work life balance further challenging as such families demand more time in comparison to small families due to performing many tasks which may result in conflicts (Keith and Schafer, 1980). On the contrary, women in nuclear families enjoy more freedom (Khan and Chowdhury, 2007). Time management is another imperative factor which affects work and family life. It refers to an individual's ability to divide and utilize time appropriately between the two spheres of life. Skinner and Pocock (2008) reported scarcity of time as one of the primary elements of conflict between the two domains of life which leads to stress.

The issue of dependent care is also one of the influential factors of work life balance. Different studies suggested that family associated factors such as children and the responsibilities of elders etc. lead to the imbalance in both work and personal life roles. It has been reported that working mothers face issues regarding child-care arrangement which results in high level of depression (Ross and Mirowsky, 1988).

According to Padma and Reddy (2013), societal support (which includes support from family, spouse, colleagues etc.) also has an influence on work life balance of individuals. Such a support is essential for women in particular for managing their work and family life (Poulose and Sudarsan, 2014; Poulose and Sudarsan, 2017). It has been found that support from family is crucial determinant in women entrepreneurs' success (Rehman and Roomi, 2012). Further, Dale (2005) pointed out an interesting fact regarding Asia societies where women mostly live in joint family systems and enjoy more societal support from their families.

Research Methodology

Given that little empirical research on factors influencing work and family life of women entrepreneurs particularly from perspective of traditional societies i.e. Quetta (Pakistan), an exploratory research paradigm was essential. Such an approach is deemed suitable when there is lack of understanding regarding the subject and researcher aims to generate new insights (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clark, 2006). This study investigated the factors which influence work life

balance of women entrepreneurs of Quetta. Similar to other studies like Millward (2006) and Woodward (2007), this study applied phenomenological approach to get deeper understanding about the lived experiences of Quetta-based women entrepreneurs about work and family life balance issues. The researchers conducted 20 semi-structured interviews from women entrepreneurs of Quetta based on purposive sampling to find answers of several questions raised by the literature. The reason for choosing qualitative form of interviewing was to investigate experiences of women entrepreneurs about their work and family life domains within socio-cultural context of a traditional society i.e., Quetta. For the purpose of analysis, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed data was analysed through thematic analysis in order to generate themes responsive to our research questions. Thematic analysis provides detailed and rich perspectives of data and helps to identify, analyze and report themes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Discussion and Conclusion

For the purpose of generating themes, the researchers used the prior relevant studies. The following section discusses the factors identified in the current study that influence the work life balance of women entrepreneurs.

Multiple roles

Due to the multiple roles, women juggle between the obligations of family and professional life which creates a stressful atmosphere. Majority of the women entrepreneurs mentioned different roles which they have to perform being a mother, spouse, sister, daughter and entrepreneurs. Two of the women entrepreneurs highlighted their various roles which they have to perform as follows:

My kids are small. I make their feeder, change their clothes. In nut shell, I have to fulfil their all needs. Being a wife I perform many duties.... lik cooking the food, washing and pressing clothes etc. I also help my sibling's in their studies, [look after my] parents(R 12)

..... I do my business online as well...I deal with different companies. I look after finance and manage the order. I hire the poor girls for the job and try to help them.(R 15)

Health issues

It has been reported by many of the participants that work life imbalance badly affected their health. One of the participants described her health conditions in following words.

....After establishing business, I have regular headache. Due to nature of my work, I have to stand most of the time so my feet become swollen. In festive season, I usually have back pain problem due to standing position. Also, when there is work load, I am not able to sleep well in those days. Due to sleeplessness, I face some mental issues like I am not able to concentrate on my work properly and I often behave harshly. (R 20)

Family and Social support

Family and social support play a significant role in life of woman entrepreneurs. It is revealed by the participants of this study that family support really matters in not only success of their business but also have a positive effect on their family life. One of the respondents expressed herself regarding support of her family and spouse as follows:

My in-laws are not in Quetta but my mother in law is here to look after my kids whenever I need. She helps me in different house chores as well. When the season is “on” like in Eid days or in wedding season, I have to work till 4 o’clock in morning. In those days, my husband takes my kids to home from school and looks after them. He even does all the household chores... In fact, my mother in law and husband both support me a lot. (R12)

The social support at work place includes support from supervisor, colleagues which produce positive influence on work outcomes. The participants of this study believed that social support contribute towards success of their businesses and also helps in balancing work and family life domains. One of the participants described the social support as follows:

I did not face any problem in my social life. I have good support from my own staff / workers. Often, I invite my relatives and guests on Friday because my Fridays are off and they are very supportive in that. (R2)

Family responsibilities and Dependents care

Women are expected to contribute towards family care and perform all the family responsibilities. The participants of this study reported that they are required to play main role in family responsibilities being a member of traditional society. Following is a quote taken from one of the participant’s interview transcript:

I look after my sibling's education, fulfil parent's house responsibilities like paying utility bills and buy grocery for them. I play managerial role in my family because I have to fulfil all the family responsibilities. I take my parents to doctors for regular checkups. I have to give supper and medicine on time to my father in law because he has brains tumour. (R3)

It has been reported by majority of participants that they take care of their dependents and fulfil their needs. Being a part of traditional society, they are also required to look after their elders either in the form of their own parents or their spouse parents.

Time management

The component of time management depends on individual's capability of using time effectively between the two spheres of life. They reported that sometimes while performing one role they don't have much time for other activities. Due to lack of time, they even ignore their own medical checkups, their kids, and sometimes family. Following excerpt is taken from interview transcriptions of one of the participants:

Due to lack of time, I did not bring my kids for timely medical check-up. Even in pregnancy I did not go timely for check-up. Time management is difficult in kids' school examination and if someone is ill at home. Family members feel that I do not give time to them. (R12)

Family system

The role of family systems (i.e. nuclear and joint) is crucial in balancing work and family life activities. The requirements of these two systems differ. One of the participants shared her views about the nuclear family as follows:

.... I don't live in joint family that is I don't live with my in-laws. We occasionally visit my in laws. Masha Allah, I have three daughters. The oldest one is 16 years old. The second one is 13 years old. The youngest is 5 years old. I live separately and I am very happy. (R 14)

Most of the participants mentioned that they live in nuclear family system. They described the life style of nuclear family more relax as compared to joint family system as highlighted in the literature (for example Wasim et al., 2008; Ali et al.,

2010). On the contrary, there were also few participants who reported that they live in a joint family system. One of the participants described her experience of living in a joint family system in following words:

I live in joint family system with my in-laws' so I share all the responsibilities. The life of joint family is difficult because you have to follow elders and take permission from them for everything. (R 18)

Marital status

In general, unmarried woman lives with her parents and they have less family responsibilities in comparison to married women. The following excerpt is taken from interview transcripts of one of the participants:

I am married so all the household chores are my responsibilities like washing, cooking, dusting etc. I was running my business before getting married but my routine was not so hectic. After marriage I always wonder that how to fulfil the responsibilities of both spheres of life pleasantly? (R2)

Missing key religious obligations

Sometimes women entrepreneurs are unable to perform their religious obligations on time. That is, they are unable to perform their daily prayers on time and also miss recitation of Holy Quran. One of the participants expressed her views as follows:

Usually I am unable to offer my prayers on time in parlour and sometimes I can't recite Quran in parlour as well. (R 6)

The majority of women entrepreneurs shared the same concern as highlighted in the above quote that they are unable to offer their religious activities on time due to being engaged in fulfilling the needs and requirements of family and work life.

Social life

Many women entrepreneurs mentioned that they are not able to manage their social life activities due to busy routine of family and business life. One of the participants described this in the following excerpt taken from the interview transcripts:

My business activities negatively affect my social life. Sometimes I have to leave condolences, weddings, shopping, hostelling and outing etc. because I have to give time proper to business. (R1)

This study investigated the factors that influence work life balance of women entrepreneurs living in a patriarchal and traditional society of one of the major cities of Pakistan. Although there have been many factors, as highlighted above in literature, which influence work life balance of women in general and women entrepreneurs in particular. In the current study, the researchers found family responsibilities, social and family support, dependents care, multiple roles, time management, marital status, social life, physical and mental health issues and missing key religious obligations as the most prominent factors that influenced work life balance of Quetta-based women entrepreneurs.

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