

Work Life Balance of Women Workers in Construction Industry

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Abstract:

Work-life balance is the term used to describe practices in achieving a balance between the stress of employees' family and work life. The demands and pressures of work make difficult to stretch time for balancing work-life activities. Women taking up work life balance challenges have an impact on women's advancement. The position and status of women in any society is an indicator of the socio-economic and cultural achievement of that society. Construction industry is the backbone of the economy as it builds the infrastructure necessary for industrial growth. About one-third of these workers are women with low level of skills and education and they face serious problems related to work, viz., wage discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, unhealthy job relationship, lower wages, In present study the existing literature in concerned with work life balances among the construction and workers was reviewed. There have been some changes in the position of women in India over the years but these changes are not uniform. The working conditions in the construction industry have been improved during the past decades and efforts have been made to reduce the amount of heavy lifting and carrying, but hard physical labour, static work, climatic influences, noise, and dust are still consider able burden for construction workers, Women choose to postpone childbirth or to remain childless in order to pursue a working

career. The increase in women's labour force participation may thus entail a certain polarization of behavior.

Key words: Construction industry, Socio-economic, Women workers. Working place environment, Work life conflicts, Work life balance.

Introduction

Women constitute 48 per cent of India's population but their share and participation in its development is nominal. Reforms, special legislations, creation of a number of institutions supposed to cater to their needs and increase in the, budgetary allotments over the years have not altered the basic life-styles of large masses of women. Although women now, work in diverse fields and occupy positions of importance, official statistics themselves indicate that three decades of 'development' has not been very kind to women workers in general. This is especially so in regard to the women working in the unorganized sector. In the unorganized sector, a significant percentage of women are engaged in construction industry. Although this industry offers difficult jobs, women are employed to undertake certain specified works. Wage differentiation, turnover of equal work and the more submissive nature of women are important attractions for the employers to use women in this field. The industry, however, does not guarantee permanent work since it depends upon a number of factors such as volume and intensity of construction work, type of work, migration trends, contractors' choice, wage-rates and manipulations of employers. Despite the unpredictability, hundreds of thousands of women have contributed in the construction of buildings, projects, dams, roads. (K. Murali Manohar et.al. (1981).

The present study is review of past research work related to the women work force employed in construction industry in India. The major focus of the study is to identify the

key factors related to the status of female worker in the industry. Women work as unskilled labour and face several other difficulties in comparison to males. Sexual harassment, gender biasness, wage discrimination are the major factor due to which the working environment becomes difficult for them in the industry and women's are remains at same level of skill even after working few number of years. (K. Devi and U.V. Kiran, 2013).

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. In India men do not share on most of the household chores, it is women who have to cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, get their children ready for school etc. Men just took care of few chores that are to be dealt outside the house. So the major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all the chores as long as they were homemakers. If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. This leads to relationship problems.

Women employees feel staying beyond the working hours and compelling them to finish others work seems to be highly challenging and they are not willing to share the burden of others. They also feel that their ability to be financially independent does not have a negative impact on Husband's self-esteem moreover the family expects to be an equal partner in brining financial prosperity to the family. Domestic Challenges have greater impact on the career of women, they also feel they are compromising on the social obligations and people around them also take advantage because they are working. Attending corporate meetings, corporate communication, policy and

procedures are highly challenging than other issues like challenging work and leadership.

Challenges Faced by Working Women in family:

The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming fiercer by day. The sky rocketing cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up careers.

Challenges Faced by Working Women in the society:

It's been over sixty years since our country gained independence, but Indian women are still not allowed to move independently. Though woman are worshipped here as Goddess, people can't just restrain from committing atrocities against them. Another problem that many of the women in rural areas of India face is that they can't move about freely at nights. Another very critical issue for women is to maintain a balance between home and office. Many problems are faced by women regarding this needs a great deal of strength and support for them to go through this stage. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband. Listen to their complaints that they make against her and turn deaf ears towards them and so on. She has to almost always shoulder the burden of household chores as well. (R. Sundari and P.A.Sathyanarayana September (2012).

Work-Life Balance:

Work-life balance is the term used to describe those practices at workplace that acknowledge and aim to support the needs of employees in achieving a balance between the demands of their family (life) and work lives.

The work Foundation, earlier known as the Industrial Society, believes that 'Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

The concept of work-family (life) balance has emerged from the acknowledgement that an individual's work-life and personal/family life may exert conflicting demands on each other. Conflict is a normal part of life and is a natural result of the conflicting demands arising from multiple roles such as that of a mother, daughter, daughter-in law, wife, friend and employee. In order to manage the negative spillover of conflict, it is important to balance the demands from both the domains. Work-life balance is about adjusting work patterns to achieve overall fulfillment.

Work-life balance should not be understood as suggesting an equal balance or scheduling equal number of hours for each one's work and personal activities. A positive work-life balance involves achievement and enjoyment. A good working definition of work-life balance may be meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four quadrants of life-work, family, friends and self. The best work-life balance varies for an individual over time at different stages of career and age; different factors become important for an individual.

Work-Family Conflict:

The demands and pressures of work and family may give rise to work-family conflict in an individual. An employee may be faced with work-family conflict, when he/she has to attend the parent-teacher meeting in the child's school or when he/she has a doctor's appointment for an ageing parent. The demands and pressures of work make it difficult for the employee to stretch time for such activities.

Types of work-family conflict:

Three major types of work/family conflicts have been identified in work family literature.

Time-based conflicts:

These arise when time spent on role performance in one domain precludes time spent in the other domain because of depletion of energy or stress.

Strain-Based conflicts:

These arise when strain in one role affects an employee's performance in another role. This type of conflict does not connote conflicting demands. Rather, it occurs when the demands from one domain cause tension, anxiety, fatigue, or dissatisfaction for the employee thereby reducing his/her personal resources of energy and physical or mental capacity. When employee is tending to a terminally sick spouse or parent, the mental and physical strain resulting from the experience may hamper the employee's performance at work.

Behavior-based conflicts:

These occur when there is incompatibility between the behavior pattern that is desirable in the two domains and employee is unable to adjust behavior when moving from one domain to

another. Behavior-based conflict too, need not involve conflicting demands. It occurs when a behavior developed in one domain interferes with the role performance in another domain.

Conflict between work and family (life) is viewed in terms of the interference of the demands from family role on the performance of an individual's work role. Most firms developed HR practices that would provide the employee with time off for fulfilling family demands. Work demands are also equally likely to interfere with an individual's capacity to fulfill family (life) demands. (Jyotbi Sree V.* and Jyotbi P. June (2012).

Literature Review

The position and status of women in any society is an index of the socio- economic and cultural achievement of that society. There have been changes in the position of women in India over the years but these changes are not uniform. The position and status of women also significantly varies from urban to rural, educated to uneducated, employed to unemployed, 'free' and privileged class to unprivileged class and the upper economic strata to lower economic strata of women. It also varies among the women doing different jobs. Though the position of women in India is not unique when compared to the women in other developing countries, it still presents certain distinct features due to traditions, economic backwardness and long history of ex- ploitation of women in various facets of Indian social life. The reasons for the low status and position of women belonging to lower strata are one and the same in all the ages irrespective of the changes that have occurred in society.

A well-established finding in the literature is that self-employment enables mothers to accommodate work and family needs better than when they are engaged in organizational employment. With this result in mind (Rocio Bonet, Cristina

Cruz) investigate within a dual system of job protection. Women under temporary contracts face greater work–family conflicts than those under permanent contracts. Under a temporary contract increases women’s likelihood of transitioning to self-employment upon childbirth. (Rocio Bonet and Cristina Cruz (2013).

The way men and women experience the multiple claims on their time and to attempt to understand the differences between European countries in this respect. Are we able to draw a sharp line in the work-family balance experienced in eastern and Western Europe? Expectations are formulated at the individual level (work and home-related factors) and at the contextual level (gender culture and family policy). Results reflect more support for the gender culture hypothesis than for the family friendly policy hypothesis. The multiplicity of options in western European countries due to the emancipation process causes time pressure. Individual factors are especially important in explaining combination pressure in the three western European countries: long working hours, overtime work, demanding job and having young children all add to the pressure men and women experience. (Tanja vander Lippe U. et al (2006).

The impact of gender and life-cycle stage on three components of work-family conflict was examined using a sample of 3,616 respondents. Significant differences were found for gender and life cycle. For all components of work-family conflict, an interaction between gender and life-cycle was observed. For men, levels of work-family conflict were moderately lower in each successive life-cycle stage. For women, levels were similar in the two early life-cycle stages but were significantly lower in the later life-cycle stage.

Changes in both social policy and business conditions make this a critical as well as an opportune time to extend a work- family perspective to lower-wage workers and to organizations in the community that, in addition to the

workplace, affect the well-being of low-income families. Drawing on literature from the fields of work and family, public policy, and organizational sociology, the author reviews what current research tells us about the special challenges that confront lower-wage workers as they combine work and family responsibilities. Integrating knowledge from these fields leads to concerns about current welfare-to-work efforts and opens up new avenues for improving the prospects of lower-wage workers and their families. The sources of productivity change in the construction industry in U.S. between 1968 and 1978 are examined. Production function analysis indicates that productivity is declined. The biggest factor in this decline was the reduction in skilled labor intensity resulting from a shift in the mix of output from large scale commercial, industrial, and institutional projects to single-family houses. (Steven G. Allen (1985).

Women are underrepresented in capital-intensive industries but that their industrial distribution is not strongly associated with a wide range of marginality characteristics. Furthermore, some types of industries (such as durable-goods manufacturing) employ fewer than expected numbers of women, even when the average marginality of industries in those groups is taken into account. (William P. Bridges, (1980).

Using data on a sub-sample of workers in dual-earner families (from the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce), we examine the strategies they use to manage work/life pressures, as well as how these strategies, along with workers' life stage and work conditions, predict multiple measures of psychological life quality (low work/family conflict, stress, and overload, along with high coping/mastery). Strategies and work conditions are gendered, with workers in dual-earner couples most apt to be in neo traditional arrangements (husbands in professional and/or long-hour jobs and wives working fewer hours, often in non-professional occupations). Life quality is gendered as well, with women in

dual-earner arrangements reporting more stress and overload, as well as lower levels of coping/mastery than men. However, the factors associated with life quality are similar across gender, with conditions at work serving as key predictors of life quality indicators for both men and women. Specifically, having a demanding job and job insecurity are associated with low life quality, while having a supportive supervisor is positively linked to life quality outcomes. Work hours and work-hour preferences matter as well. Men and women in couples where both spouses work regular (39-45) full-time hours, tend to score high on indicators of life quality, while those working long hours and those preferring to work less, are less likely to do so. (Phyllis Moen and Yan YU (2000).

Work-life 'balance' is an EU policy priority, within Europe there are considerable variations in the nature and extent of supports that national governments have offered to dual-earner families. In general, the Nordic welfare states offer the highest level of supports, although other countries, such as France, have historically offered extensive childcare supports to working mothers. We examine national variations in reported levels of work-life conflict, drawing upon questions fielded in the 2002 Family module International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) surveys for Britain, France, Finland, Norway and Portugal. We find evidence of a 'societal effect' in the cases of Finland and Norway, in that significantly lower levels of work-life conflict are reported in these countries even after a range of factors have been controlled for. However, support for childcare in France does not appear to have had a similar impact. Further explorations of the data reveal that the domestic division of labor is relatively traditional in France, and that this is associated with higher levels of work-life conflict. (Rosemary Crompton and Clare Lyonette (2006).

The European Union launched the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 with the aim of establishing itself as the world's most powerful economy. A composite index for quality of work life

using the dimensional structure provided by the European Commission, and present our results for regions, sectors, professional categories and sizes of firm in Spain in the period 2001-2004 is constructed. Better results are found in the more developed regions, in service sectors, in bigger firms and in jobs with more responsibility. Finally, we compare the results of the index with workers' subjective perceptions of job satisfaction, measured by a quality of work life survey. The test results reveal a strong relationship between the two measurements. (Vicente Royuela. et al (2009).

We have observed different trends in female employment rates and household structure across Europe. While the increase in the female employment rate is partially due to the reduction in family size or the postponement of family formation, the labour force participation of women with children has nonetheless increased thanks to a more favorable context for reconciling work and family life and to the development of specific forms of support. Another type of behavior appears to be emerging, however, namely the decision to have a child only if its birth can be reconciled with employment. The growing proportion of working mothers illustrates in this case the increasing polarization associated with this choice. We find indicators reflecting this situation in Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal, where support for managing the work-life balance is limited. In these countries, the growing proportion of working mothers has been accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of women without children or who have postponed the birth of their first child. Conversely, a lesser reduction in family size is observed in Belgium and in France, where the context is historically more favorable to reconciling work and children. (Olivier Thévenon and Krystyna Horko (2002).

A study conducted in the Klang Valley, the central business hub of Malaysia to examine whether flexibility at the workplace may have an effect on women's ability to balance

work and family responsibilities. Whether working arrangements may have an effect on lifestyles of working women and found that workplace flexibility is preferred by women who are more educated, at the higher end of the occupational status and who earn a higher income. Workplace flexibility can change the quality of life of working women especially, married women who have young children. (Ershad Ali. et al (2011).

Health status of older construction workers and the occurrence of early retirement due to disability or of mortality within a five year follow in and compared with the white collar workers, a higher prevalence of hearing deficiencies, signs of obstructive lung diseases, increased body mass index, and musculoskeletal abnormalities were found among the construction workers at the baseline exam. Its there are need and possibilities for further health pro motion in workers employed in the construction industry, targeting both work related conditions and personal lifestyle factors. Rehabilitation measures should be enforced to limit the rate of disability among construction workers. Volker Arndt, Dietrich Rothenbacher et al (1996).

Henk F van der Molen, Judith K Sluiter, Caret TJ Hulshof, Peter Vink, Cor vanDuivenbooden and Monique HW Frings-Dresen suggest a Conceptual framework for the implementation of ergonomic interventions in the construction industry in 2005 discuss as below.

<u>EFFECTIVENESS MEASURE</u>		<u>EFFECTIVENESS IMPLEMENTATIO STRATEGY</u>		
Independent variables	→	Dependent variables	Independent Variables	Process variables Dependent variables
Measure(1)→Manual handling (1)→(2)→(3) →Musculoskeletal symptoms (1)			Implementation strategy (4)→(5)→ Process (6)→Manual handling(6) Musculoskeletal symptoms (6)	

Figure 1. Scheme for the development and evaluation of intervention aimed at reducing physical work demands related to manual handling, musculoskeletal symptoms, and process variables, categorized according to

the effectiveness of the measures and the effectiveness of the implementation strategies [van der Molen et al (10)]. The numbers in the figure refer to the steps from the framework for defining the implementation of intervention measure. [modified from Grol (7)]: (1) selection of intervention measures, (2) analysis of social & organization context, (3) goalsetting – specification of targets, (4) selection of intervention strategies, (5) implementation plan, (6) implementation & evaluation.

The framework was found appropriate for defining implementation strategies and measures in the construction industry. Through knowing their way of life, health related problem, occupational related problem, level or satisfaction and working condition.

Discussion & Conclusion

The position and status of women in any society is an indicator of the socio-economic and cultural achievement of that society. There have been some changes in the position of women in India over the years but these changes are not uniform. The working conditions in the construction industry have been improved during the past decades and efforts have been made to reduce the amount of heavy lifting and carrying, but hard physical labour, static work, climatic influences, noise, and dust are still consider able burdens for construction workers.

The work life balance is directly reflected through the practices at work place. The work place flexibility is an important factor but limited to the high income and position of women, where as in the sector where women's are low earner and have young child it becomes very difficult to establish work life balance. The women working in construction industry have to work for long hours, over time increase the stress level at family needs. The impact of these problems leads to the shift in the family structure as there are several women loss their mortality, post phone their first child birth. Therefore in order to improve health and productivity of the worker an organization or employer have to provide supporting facility to the women workers in such like child care support, health and medical services, rehabilitations.

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