



## Factors Affecting the Work-Family Balance: A Literature Review.

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### Abstract

Work-Family balance is an appealing and inquisitive concept since last two - three decades. Scholars, academicians, public and private sector executives, all of them have been trying to explore the factors that are responsible for work-family conflict? On the other hand, what are the factors that help the employees maintain balance between work and family life? This paper is aimed to answer some of these questions. This study is purely based on literature review. Finally, we explored various dimensions related to work-family balance such as: Time, Strain, behaviour and Management support. Work-family conflict arises due to demands related to time, behaviour and work policies of an organization. Whilst management support, flexible working hour, Work-from home and emotional support from family are some of the factors responsible for balancing a better work-family life.

**Keywords:** Work-Family balance, Time-based conflict, Strain-based conflict, Behaviour-based conflict, Management support, Work-Family conflict

### 1. Introduction

Employees as well as employers both are struggling with work and family balance. They face lots of challenges due to work and family imbalance on a daily basis. These are arising due to various factors such as time, strain, behaviour of the individual etc.(Pleck et al., 1980; Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996).This paper also analyses various conflict factors from demographic characteristics like gender, age, marital status (Henly and Lambert, 2008;Shankar and Bhatnagar, 2010;Devi and Nagini, 2013;Goswami, 2014). Now a day's family structure changed, the development of single parent families, ageing parents, and having working spouse are responsible for work-family conflict. As nuclear family structure is very common so employee cannot seeks help from the other family members. Which leads to strain and time based conflict. Employees alone cannot easily cope up with these problems. There should be collective efforts from the family members as well as organizations. Family member can support them by helping in house hold chores and by emotional support. Organization can support them by providing flexible work hours, work from home, carers leave and maternity leave etc.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Source of conflict Between Work-Life and Family-Life:

There are various sources and factors that are responsible for conflict between work life and family life. The following constraints are accountable for work-family conflict: a) time dedicated to the duty of one role (work life) makes it tough to fulfil the duty of another (family life) and vice-versa. (b) Strain from the effect of one role makes it tough to fulfil the duty of another and (c) specific behaviours needed by one role make it tough to fulfil the duty of another. (Pleck et al., 1980; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Their study also states that time based conflict depends on the excessive work time and schedule conflict dimensions identified. Strain based conflict is dependent on fatigue and irritability dimensions identified. Behaviour based conflict arises due to expectation of particular behaviour at work, e.g. formal at work place; emotional stability etc. While the behaviour expected is different in family like informal, warm and emotional.

Various researches suggested that though a lot of employees agree to earn extra time for family, but job related issues like security, high profile and flexible working time were at the priority. This leads to behaviour based conflict, strain based conflicts and time based conflict, which result in worse performance at work. They revealed that home-work interference (HWI) and the need for recovery of physical, mental fatigue had a negative lagged impact on concentration which leads to work-family conflict (Ahmad and Skitmore, 2003; Demerouti et al., 2007; Goswami, 2014). These studies also concluded that strain factors like feeling of physical fatigue, frustration; time-constraints like missing family gatherings due to work duties are statistically significant to calculate the work-family conflict.

The level of work-family conflict also depends on demographic characteristics of a person such as age, gender, marital status and family responsibility (Henly and Lambert, 2008; Shankar and Bhatnagar, 2010; Devi and Nagini, 2013; Goswami, 2014). They illustrated the source of conflict from work duties across the demographic characteristics. They found that there is a significant imbalance between various age groups. As per these studies the employees age between 20-25 years' experience more work-family imbalance as compared to elder employees. An employee who has more dependent responsibilities like children and aged parents face higher work-life imbalance as compared to employee with no dependent responsibility.

Henly and Lambert (2008) examined unpredictable working hours specifically for women dominated roles like retail store sales associate. Hours are unpredictable because part-time work is common and overtime is rare, also due to high work demands during weekends and evenings. The results of this study proved that unpredictability is significantly associated with three consequences: strain-based conflict, time-based conflict and general work-family conflict, measured by perceived workers stress. The experience of last-minute changes to the work schedule was related to work-family conflict, specifically

for strain-based conflict .They also found that unpredictability experienced through different sources enhances employee’s level strain-based conflict and time-based conflict.

Family structure also affects the work-family balance, especially in countries like India where family structure is in the transition state. It means in India, where families are transforming from joint families structure into nuclear families. Employees living in nuclear family face more challenges to balance their work-family conflict as comparison to employees living in joint family (Goswami, 2014).

**Table 1:**

S. No.	Factors responsible for Work-family conflict	Various studies related to them
1.	Time	Plecket al., 1980,Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985,Netemeyer et al., 1996),Ahamd and Skitmore (2003),Demerouti et. al. (2007)
2.	Strain	Plecket al., 1980,Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985,Netemeyer et al., 1996),Ahamd and Skitmore (2003),Demerouti et. al. (2007).
3.	Behaviour	Pleck et al., 1980; Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996).
4.	Demographic Characteristics such as: A. Age B. Gender C. Marital Status D. Education	(Henly and Lambert (2008),Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010),Devi and Nagini(2013),Goswami (2014).
5.	Family structure: A. Nuclear family B. Joint family	Goswami (2014), Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010).

## 2.2. Factors supporting Work-family Balance:

In absence of a supportive work-life organisation culture, even very good work-family balance policies will not essentially yield in better work-family balance results. The key elements of family-friendly organization culture was identified as: (1) Managerial support (2) Time demands (3) Career consequences of using provisions for spending time with his/her family. (3) Organizational flexibility (Bond, 2004). Studies suggested that without a supportive work-family culture organizations may not experience other benefits from the family friendly policies (such as performance and employee engagement, etc.).

Flexible work provisions, teleworking and different type of leaves, family support and wellness programs are very often integrated with the business objectives. It has been suggested that workplace culture and managerial support are key factors for the effectiveness of work-family balance. Work-family balance should be supported and encouraged at all levels of the organization including senior level, middle level and at lower level (Susi and Jawaharrani, 2010).

Most of the workers have stated that pregnancy and childcare policies, flexible working- time and leaves are vital at the organization for enhancing the work-family balance of the workers. The practices and policies such as flexitime, work from home, career leave, childcare leave, maternity leave, job sharing and meditation should be promoted in the organizations in India, so that workers can maintain a healthy work-family and social life balance (Parmar, 2012).

(McPherson, 2007; Namita, 2014) found in their study that the most common work-family practices utilised by workers were flexible work finish and start time, carer's leave, sick leave, etc. The least available practice was the capacity to work part-time and just half of the employees agreed that they were able to use unpaid leave and utilise that time for cultural activities, study and sports. They also suggested that availability of work-family arrangements and effective work-family culture were significantly related to the better work-family balance. Work-family balance also has a significant relationship with employee engagement.

(Zulch et. al., 2012; Sivatte and Guadamillas, 2013; Yuile et. al. 2012) discussed flexible working-time arrangements in their study. They stated that organizations try to support work-family balance of their workforce with some suitable methods in order to improve their commitment to the organisation. In this perspective, flexible working-time arrangement is a provision which can affect the worker's personal life enormously; therefore the specification of work time measurement should be according to the persons need. It is a bit time consuming and complex task but it is the need of the hour. These studies also illustrated about the strain on retail sector employees. Employees need flexible work-time provision to balance time required to carry out their various social responsibilities. Strain will arise if an employee is not able to perform his/her responsibility; therefore organizations need to apply a suitable work-time provision for the employees.

(Galvez et. al., 2012; Eldridge and Nisar, 2011) analysed how telework implementation is a way of enhancing better work-family balance for employees in various companies. They took interview of Spanish female teleworkers and found that any organization that provide more support and autonomy to the employees have telework as an effective measure. On the other hand, any company that does not include telework into their organizational culture, work-life imbalance and conflict persists there. With

this implication they suggested that organization’s readiness to enhance work-family balance of their employees do not depend very much on the availability of the policies (for e.g. telework). In fact more on the shifting to an open and supportive culture that helps to implement work-family balance policies effectively and efficiently.

Family support means support from life-partner, family member and relatives. Family support can be of two types, Instrumental support and emotional support. Instrumental supports are related to domestic activities such as (1) cleaning (2) food preparation (3) taking care of children and elder parents. Distribution of home responsibilities can be helpful in balancing unity and adaptability among family members. On the other hand emotional support can assist worker well-being (e.g. better mood) which can support his/her work -life (Namayandeh et. al.,2010; Ahmad & Omar,2012; Selvarajan et. al.,2013).

**Table 2:**

S. No.	Supportive factor for work-life balance	Various studies related to them
1.	Family Support	Demerouti et. al. (2007) ,Susi and Jawaharrani(2010),Namayandeh et al., 2010),Aminah Ahmad &Zoharah Omar (2012),Selvarajan et. al. (2013).
2.	Organization work Culture: (A). Flexible work polices. (B). Supervisor support. (C). Carer’s leave & Maternity leave. (D)Telecommuting. (E). Employees health and wellness Programs.	Bond (2004),McPherson (2007),Richman et. al. (2008), Eldridge and Nisar (2011),Parmar(2012),Galvez et. al. (2012),Yuile et. al. (2012),Zulch et. al.(2012),Sivatteand Guadamillas (2013),Namita (2014)

**3. Discussion and Managerial Implications:**

Various factors such as time, strain, behaviour and lack of family and organizational support are responsible for work-family conflict. When employees are able to pay equal attention to both personal and professional lives they like their jobs and feel committed. Supportive work-family policies represent an organizational support and specifically contribute to a co-operative work culture. The findings of this study have vital implications for management practices in organizations. An organization that implemented better flexible work policies would see improvement in employee engagement and talent retention which will also lead to business success(Devi and Nagini,2013;Richman et. al.,2008;Goswami ,2014;Sivatte and Guadamillas,2013).

The benefits of work-life balance practices are not only essential for the organization, but also for the employees, society and family. Work-life balance practices lead to the following organizational outcomes such as improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, increased employee retention, lower worker turnover rate and improved company's image. On the other hand, work-family balance policies have the following benefits to the employees such as better mental and physical health, job security, reduced stress level, enhanced job satisfaction and improved control over work and life environment (Lazar et. al.,2010;Devi and Nagini ,2013;Richman et. al.,2008).

#### **4. Limitations and Future Research Directions:**

This study is purely based on review literature. So we consider only those factors which have been discussed by various studies. As the living style of people has evolved over the last ten years,so have the factors that can be responsible for work-family conflict. Therefore, scholars can explore many more factors, by empirical studies. This study is a generalised study, one can also find out factors on the basis of rural area or metro cities. There may be a chance that some factors are applicable to the employees staying in metro cities and not to the employees working in small cities. There are very few studies on behaviour-based conflict; this area needs to be more researched as compared to other factors.

#### **5. Conclusion:**

Employees are facing work-family imbalance due to following constraints such as time, strain, role based conflict. These are inevitable conflicts, but the family as well as an organization can support employees with their emotional as well as instrumental support. Work-life balance is not only essential for married, working mothers or couples with children but also important for working individuals (Shankar and Bhatnagar ,2010). Studies revealed that various factors that one experiences in their family life affect an individual's work performance. Problems faced by employees in the family life may negatively affect performance in the work domain. Therefore, organization, governments and policy makers should enhance the means and policies to facilitate family life better. Such policies will be beneficial for the organization themselves as it would translate into better performance and thus higher profitability (Ahamd and Skitmore, 2003;Demerouti et. al., 2007).

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