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## WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

### ABSTRACT

Despite the vast research on human resources, little is known about the perspective of perceived organizational support in helping women faculty in professional education to strike the desirable balance between their work and non-work activities. This paper studies the role of Organizational Support in relation to Work-Life Balance of working women. India in general and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in particular, shows paucity of research conducted in this area. Therefore, this paper empirically examines the influence of these three dimensions on the Work-Life Balance of women faculty at college and university level in Kashmir. The results of the study indicated that all the factors were significantly related to a woman's Work-Life Balance. This means that modern organizations should frame robust organizational policies aimed at supporting and enhancing career development of women professionals at work.

*Key Words: Organizational support, Work-life balance, Women professionals*

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## INTRODUCTION

Women employment rate has increased very rapidly over the last several years (Judy and d'Amico, 1997). Entry of women in the field of salaried jobs was a result of a number of factors such as economic needs, spread of education among women, social and national reform movements which attracted the attention of people towards women empowerment, search of identity, freedom to women all over the world by recognizing equality as a fundamental right irrespective of gender, race etc. The education of women is not only important for women themselves but also important for the progress of society (Jean-Marie, 2006). As suggested by the “World Employment Social Outlook Report” made by International Labour Organization (2018) women from all corners have started working in government, semi government or private salaried jobs. According to a study conducted by The World Bank, gender equality and women participation in workforce is imperative for ending poverty. The World Bank has estimated that women make up 48% of Indian population. According to a recent study conducted by The World Bank (2020), “Through the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin project, the Indian government and the World Bank are together using systematic knowledge-sharing and learning as an approach to support and change behaviors.” Therefore, the entry of women in the workforce brings changes in the structure and function of their family and as well as society by and large.

## WOMEN AND THEIR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

According to Brough, Timms, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit, and Lo (2014), Work-Life Balance is an individual's subjective assessment of the harmony between his work and non-work activities. An individual's well-being is related to the perceived balance between his or her work and non-work activities (Fisher, 2002; Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw, 2003). In other words, attainment of goals pertaining to Work-Life Balance result in an individual's well-being (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999).

The problems women face while negotiating between work and family need to be understood from a gender perspective (Ferree, 1990) where in focusing on gender as a hierarchical structure helps in understanding how women feel about balancing the two central roles of work and family. With reference to hierarchical structure, a woman's location allows her less control and liberty in work and family arenas and this lack of

control manifests itself as more work-load, greater sacrifices and complications in balancing work and life (Mirowsky and Ross, 1995; Pearlin, 1989). According to Emmons, Biernat, Tiedje, Lang, and Wortman (1990), it is very difficult to delegate one's responsibility to others because time spent on job indicates commitment and time spent on family again indicates commitment. While trying to satisfy the incessant demands of work and family, many expectations remain unmet. It has been widely found in literature that the overwhelming demand of work and family responsibilities is one central challenge that working women encounter on a day to day basis. The type of roles a woman plays and their various combinations have an impact on her well-being and certain role combinations can produce strain (Barnett, 1997). A woman's responsibility to home is likely to be greater and in trying to enjoy her role as homemaker and worker equally, she may sacrifice more (McCullough, 1993). Therefore, it is extremely important for organizations to facilitate women and extend them all possible support so that they emerge as productive workers.

## **THE DIMENSION OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

Organizational Support is one of the basic backing mechanisms that can help women in attaining a desired Work-Life Balance. Organizational Support is defined as the perception that an individual's organization cares about his or her well-being. Factually speaking, as far as one's Work-Life Balance is concerned, supportive workplace may be an important variable according to many researchers (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg, 2005; Choi and Kim, 2017). Several studies that have been conducted have conceptually as well as empirically examined the impact of Organizational Support on Work-Life Balance of working women. Among the various predictors of organizational support that have been identified by researchers, this piece of work focuses on three dimensions of organizational support viz. Supportive Organizational Policies, Superior Support, Co-worker/ Colleague Support.

### **Impact of organizational support on work-life balance of working women**

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) suggested that employees must believe that their superiors value their work and are concerned about their welfare, referred to as "perceived organizational support." As a matter of fact, Organizational Support is an important factor that has a strong influencing ability on the overall work-life

balance equation of women workers. In other words, Organizational Support has a significant impact on the work-life balance of women professionals across various job sectors. Allen (2001) found that Organizational Support showed a significant influence on the ability of employees to balance work and family responsibilities. Thompson and Prottas (2006) reported that high levels of supervisor support have a statistically significant and positive impact on work-family spillover. Similarly, the importance of supportive organizational policies and helpful colleagues cannot be under-estimated.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There exists a dearth of literature in India in general and J&K in particular as far as understanding the role of organizations in helping women maintain a desired Work-Life Balance equilibrium is concerned. Logically, the factors responsible for helping women achieve Work-Life Balance may not be the same between eastern and western societies. However, unlike west, not enough research has been done to explore eastern perspective especially in Indian context. Given the paucity of research, some researchers have taken vital steps towards understanding the impact of organizational support on the working lives of women workers (Agarwala, Arizkuren-Eleta, Del Castillo, Muniz-Ferrer, and Gartzia, 2014; Haynes and Ghosh, 2012; Nilsson, Blomqvist, and Andersson, 2017; Reddy, Vranda, Ahmed, Nirmala, and Siddaramu, 2010). According to Jawahar and Hemmasi (2006) an organization's failure to support a woman's career can lead to increased turnover of well-qualified and experienced women professionals. This paper empirically examines the influence of different dimensions of organizational support on Work-Life Balance of working women. In doing so, the paper develops and empirically tests a comprehensive model comprising of the three dimensions of organizational support.

## HYPOTHESES

*Hypothesis 1: Supportive organizational policies have a significant and positive impact on Work-Life Balance of working women.*

*Hypothesis 2: Superior support has a significant and positive impact on Work-Life Balance of working women.*

*Hypothesis 3: Co-worker/Colleague Support has a significant and positive impact on Work-Life Balance of working women.*

## SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional descriptive study using a survey methodology was carried out using simple random stratified sampling. The sample of this study consists of 110 working women living in J&K. Only those respondents were recruited as participants of this study who were married and worked in a college/university on a substantive basis. Data for the study was collected from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh divisions using online as well as offline method. In the offline mode, self-administered survey questionnaires were given to the respondents at various universities and colleges where they worked. A 5-point likert scale was used to measure the responses. Three organizational support measures that comprise of supportive organizational policies, superior support, colleague/co-worker support were borrowed from various scales. The nine-item survey of Perceived Organizational Support by Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro (1990) was used to measure supportive policies. In order to measure supervisor support, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli's (2001) four-item survey was administered. To measure co-worker/colleague support, Ladd and Henry's (2000) nine-item survey was administered. The study uses 9 items to measure the impact of organizational support on Work-Life Balance of women in the present study. Table 1 shows the sampling characteristics of the sample in this study.

**Table 1. Demographics of the sample**

S. No	Respondent Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age Group		
	Up to 30	15	14
	31-40	72	65
	41-50	20	18
	Above 50	3	3
2.	Division		
	Jammu	50	45
	Kashmir	48	44
	Ladakh	12	11
3.	Designation		
	Assistant Professor	61	55
	Associate Professor	29	26
	Professor	13	12
	Administration	2	2
	Other	5	5
4.	Number of Children		
	None	9	8
	One	36	33
	Two	54	49

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5.	More than Two	11	10
	Type of Family		
	Alone	5	5
6.	Nuclear	50	45
	Joint	55	50
	Annual Income		
	Above 9,00,000 per annum	57	52
	Between 5,00,000-6,99,999 per annum	18	16
	Between 7,00,000 - 8,99,999 per annum	23	21
	Under 4,99,999 per annum	12	11

## DATA ANALYSIS

The mean score for each of the statements of three independent variables and the dependent variable are presented in Table 2. Independent variables include three dimensions of organizational support which are Supportive Organizational Policies, Superior Support, Co-worker/ Colleague Support. A five-point likert scale was used with item operationalization from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. From Table 2 we can infer that the highest mean score or highest agreement in other words, is for all items of supportive organizational policies. Women have mostly agreed that supportive organizational policies are a must for women who work and want a healthy Work-Life Balance as well. Similar result was revealed in the overall mean score for supportive organizational policies (3.59).

**Table 2. Item statements with their means and standard deviations**

Name	Items	Mean	SD
	<b>Strongly Agree (1)</b> <b>Strongly Disagree (5)</b>		
<b>Supportive Organizational Policies</b>	The work-life balance policies provided by the organization I work for are easy to understand (SP1)	3.67	.843
	Employees are encouraged to use 'work-life balance' policies at my work place (SP2)	3.81	.845
	My organization provides employer assistance with childcare (e.g., employers paying for an existing or on-site child care center) (SP3)	3.76	.891
<b>Superior Support</b>	My supervisor/HOD asks for suggestions to make it easier for employees to balance work and non-work demands (SS1)	3.53	1.30
	My supervisor/HOD is willing to listen to my problems	3.44	.974

	in juggling work and non-work life (SS2)		
	The management of the organization I work for is accommodating of family-related needs (SS3)	3.56	1.01
<b>Co-worker/Colleague Support</b>	I can rely on my colleagues to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated non-work demands (CS1)	3.39	1.00
	My colleagues take out time to learn about my problems (CS2)	3.34	1.00
	My colleagues easily accommodate me if care arrangements for children and other dependents break-down (CS3)	3.39	1.22
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	I am successful in managing my home and work demands (WLB1)	3.52	.949
	I am happy with the contributions I make towards my home and family (WLB2)	3.56	.884
	I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal life (WLB3)	3.66	.925

Table 3 shows the correlations between all variable ranging from .433 (lowest) to .536 (highest). The results of the correlation matrix show that there is a significant and positive correlation between all dimensions of organizational support and Work-Life Balance. However, supportive organizational policies have the most significant correlation with Work-Life Balance.

**Table 3. Item Statements with their means and standard deviations**

Name	Supportive Organizational Policies	Superior Support	Co-worker/Colleague Support	Work-Life Balance
Supportive Organizational Policies		.433**	.532**	.461**
Superior Support	.433**		.521**	.536*
Co-worker/Colleague Support	.532**	.521**		.499**
Work-Life Balance	.461**	.536*	.499**	
Mean	3.59	3.58	3.61	3.50

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

The three independent variables comprised of 9 items on which factor analysis was performed. It was assumed that the observed variables could be better explained in terms

of smaller number of underlying dimensions therefore principal components technique with varimax rotation was used. Table 4 shows the value of KMO static is strong (.771) and Bartell's Test of Sphericity is significant (sig=.000). This indicates that the data is appropriate for factor analysis. The value of Cronbach's alpha for the independent variables of supportive organizational policies (SOP mean score), supervisor support (SS mean score) and co-worker/colleague support (CCS mean score) is .845, .859 and .861 respectively which are satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha value for Work-Life Balance (WLB mean score) is .895, which is highly reliable.

**Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's test**

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		.770
<b>Bartell's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-square	777.492
	Df	77
	Sig.	.000

The factor analysis (Total Variance Explained) shows that almost 80% of the variance is contributed by three factors. Table 5 shows the factor loadings for Work-Life Balance that is comprised of supportive organizational policies, supervisor support and co-worker/colleague support. As can be seen from Table 5, all the factor loadings are greater than 0.5 and are significant ( $p < .01$ ). The significance level obtained is greater than the level recommended by scholars.

**Table 5. Results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA)**

Variable	Statements	Factor Loadings
<b>Supportive Organizational Policies</b>	The work-life balance policies provided by the organization I work for are easy to understand	.849
	Employees are encouraged to use 'work-life balance' policies at my work place	.856
	My organization provides employer assistance with childcare (e.g., employers paying for an existing or on-site child care center)	.980
<b>Supervisor Support</b>	My supervisor/HOD asks for suggestions to make it easier for employees to balance work and non-work demands	.863
	My supervisor/HOD is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and non-work life	.837



	The management of the organization I work for is accommodating of family-related needs	.754
<b>Co-worker/colleague support</b>	I can rely on my colleagues to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated non-work demands	.876
	My colleagues take out time to learn about my problems	.835
	My colleagues easily accommodate me if care arrangements for children and other dependents break-down	.811
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	I am successful in managing my home and work demands	.895
	I am happy with the contributions I make towards my home and family	.869
	I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal life	.877

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## REGRESSION ANALYSIS

A linear multiple regression analysis was conducted using work-life balance as the dependent variable and three dimensions of organizational support as independent variables. All the variables explained a variance of 38.3 percent towards organizational support and are significant ( $p$  value=.000). Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the regression model arrived at is a good fit of the data. As far as assumed hypothesis is concerned, supportive organizational policies have a significant and positive effect on work-life balance of working women ( $\beta = .354$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Women who have supportive supervisors will also have a better work-life balance ( $\beta = .204$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Co-worker/colleague support also has a positive relationship with work-life balance ( $\beta = .198$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This clearly indicates that H1a, H1b and H1c are all supported by empirical evidence.

**Table 6. Results of multiple regression analysis**

Independent Variable	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Supportive Organizational Policies	.354	2.058	.000
Supervisor Support	.204	3.758	.050
Co-worker/colleague support	.198	2.122	.037
N			
F-Value			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>			

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01;

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This article incorporates the importance of the perceived organizational support in helping women faculty in professional education to strike the desirable balance between their work and non-work activities. In this context, an understanding of the presence of supportive organizational policies towards reassuring the work-life balance of women professionals is much needed. This article also explores the role of three types of Organizational Support (i.e., Supportive Organizational Policies, Superior Support, Co-worker/Colleague Support) in relation to Work-Life Balance of working women. The idea is to effectively explain the general patterns and features of the dual roles played by women with a relevant explanation for the presence of a unique supportive environment within organizations for them.

The findings clearly reveal that all the three dimensions of organizational support (Supportive Organizational Policies, Supervisor Support and Co-worker/Colleague support) are significantly and positively related to Work-Life Balance. Amongst the three dimensions of organizational support; Supportive Organizational Policies is the most significant predictor for a better Work-Life Balance. Women getting more organizational support are more content with their Work-Life Balance equation as has been found in earlier studies (Agarwala et al., 2014). Supervisor support which manifests itself in terms

of suggestions, accommodation and willingness to listen to problems is also important to working women. This means that supervisors can play a big role in helping women solve their work-life balance related problems. The positive relationship between co-worker/colleague support and work-life balance reveals that women professionals can enjoy a better work-life balance with the help and support from contemporaries at work. By understanding the role of these factors, organizations can improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of women at work.

The findings also reveal that emphatic and supportive workplaces help women in juggling between family and work better. Supportive colleagues and understanding supervisors allow women to get more control over their work schedules, tasks and time. Clearly the findings highlight the importance of organizational support in helping women maintain professional and personal balance.

In conclusion, the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis of Work-Life Balance highlight important factors that impact the Work-Life Balance of a working woman. Societal expectations and domestic obligations often come in the way of a woman who tries to smoothen the path between her profession and family life. It must be understood that besides being a teacher, a woman is also a care provider and a homemaker. Therefore, these conflicting identities are bound to create friction between work and life. Understanding, negotiation and encouragement at work front is an absolute must. Women who prefer or are made to prefer family needs over career often report slow-paced careers or career breaks. Henceforth, it becomes absolutely imperative to understand the essential roles women play at work and family especially in the wake of a good number of women professional working in our higher education sector.

The standard of education sector can improve by leaps and bounds with efficient employees. As mentioned earlier females form a sizeable number of the employees working as teachers and academicians. Contented and balanced employees are what organizations require. A good connection between a woman's Work-Life Balance with an organizational support has to be worked upon and be established.

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