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TO STUDY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS-WORK LIFE BALANCE AND WORK ALIENATION AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES OF KERALA STATE GOVERNMENT IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Bureaucracy has always had an eminent and special place in the Indian society. They are the ones who have kept the wheels of government machinery moving, acted as agents for fulfilling the policy of party in power and provided stability to the administration though the governments may be changing. Today we can see a lot of women working in different government departments who are well qualified and are performing well in spite of their busy life schedule. In this light, in the present study an effort is made to identify the causes and impact of stress on the work-life balance and whether the feeling of being alienated is felt by the women employees of Kerala State Government in Trivandrum district. The sample for the study consisted of Women employees working in ten different directorates of Kerala State Government in Trivandrum district. The result of the correlation analysis shows that the variables personal factors, occupational factors and the family related factors have a significant positive correlation with work life balance. The result shows that married women employees have relatively low degree of work life balance as compared with unmarried ones. They tend to have a high degree of stress and based on this study it was found that married employees with low work life balance tend to become alienated from their work too. The implications of the findings of the study are also discussed.

KEYWORDS

Work life balance, Work Alienation, Stress, Family and Occupational.

INTRODUCTION

The world of work and business has undergone a paradigm shift in the recent past. While IT revolution, globalization, liberalization, free trade etc. are seen at the macro level, moving towards urbanization, demand for technical education, increased number of women in higher education and employment etc. are the typical features at the national level. One of the major consequences of these changes is an increased concern for the boundary between employee work and non-work lives (Hochschild, 1997). Due to the fact that more women are joining the workforce dual career couples are becoming increasingly common (Moorhead, Steele, Alexander, Stephen and Duffin 1997). In addition, today's workforce is a mosaic of different genders, ages, races, ethnic groups, religions marked by varied lifestyles (Esty, Griffin & Schoor Hirsch, 1995). Remarkable demographic and social changes mean a host of new challenges for today's workers as they struggle to cope with the often competing pressures of work demands and personal responsibilities. Bureaucracy has always had an eminent and special place in the Indian society. They are the ones who have kept the wheels of government machinery moving, acted as agents for fulfilling the policy of party in power and provided stability to the administration though the governments may be changing. Bureaucracy to a large extent has also contributed to the impressive progress the country has made since Independence in the establishment of heavy industries, development of infrastructure, expansion of education and health services, implementation of schemes for rural development, increased agricultural production and irrigation facilities, and so on. However, in recent years, image of the government organizations and its employees has undergone change, and in the process some organizations are being labeled as ineffective and indifferent. Some are often criticized as being inefficient, achieving low performance standards, being too impersonal and dehumanizing in dealing with individuals. As a result majority of women employees in government organizations are under severe psychological strain causing growing feeling of 'alienation' among them. As a result of these the traditional model explaining the coordination between work and family satisfaction is no longer valid for the modern work force. Balancing work and family satisfaction roles has become an issue of concern not only for women, but also their spouses and families, organizations as well as the State (Rajadhyaksha, 2004). The issue of work life balance is of a major concern for Indian organizations as the percentage of women of employees is steadily on the increase. Women today do not have any reservations in joining organizations that were hitherto male dominated. Dynamics of work life balance for women in nontraditional sectors are different hence it is the need of the hour to analyze it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A survey of literature have repeatedly shown that the stress and work life balance among women and employees serving in service organizations are relatively high and is contingent upon the social support system available to them both at the home and at the work place. Prevailing organizational culture, reward systems were found to moderate the work life balance and stress profile of the employees especially in the government and service sector. Lori and Bradley (2000) Mohan and Chauhan (1999) Kim and Kim et.al (2007). A survey conducted by Padma (2008), on working women in different professions at Hyderabad city revealed that majority of women are working 40-45 hours per week and 53% of the respondents report that they are struggling to achieve work-life balance. Despite accumulating evidence that work and family satisfaction life are interrelated, the available research literature, in the Indian context, is limited. Even, in the area of work-life balance and locus of control, only a few studies have explored the interaction between these variables. The present study aims at investigating women employees serving in the government sector and to analyze how they perceive their occupation and how their perceptions affect work-life balance and whether they are affected by stress and work alienation.

1. **WORK-LIFE BALANCE:** Work-life balance refers to the simultaneous pursuing of the roles in work and life without any conflict or imbalance (Fisher – McAuley et.al. 2003). Work-life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle calm balance" and "life style choices".
2. **STRESS:** The term stress is typically been used to refer both to the adjective demands placed on an organism and to the organisms internal biological and psychological responses to such demands (Hans Selye, 1956, 1976a). Stress is basically an adaptive to respond to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well-being. It is person's reaction to a situation, not the situation itself. Moreover, we experience stress when we believe that something will interfere with our need fulfillment.
3. **WORK ALIENATION:** Alienation is a socio-psychological condition of an individual, which involves his estrangement from certain aspects of his social existence. Work alienation is degree to which an individual identifies psychologically with a specific type of work; it reflects a situation in which an individual cares little about work, approaches work with little energy, and works primarily for extrinsic rewards. This condition may be expressed by passive withdrawal, turnover, absenteeism or active attacks and disruption of work routines. (Clark, 1959:851)
3. **OCCUPATIONAL:** A generalized expectancy about control of reinforcements or rewards at work (Spector P.E. 1988)
4. **PERSONEL FACTORS:** Personal factors represent people's evaluation of their lives and include happiness, pleasant emotions, life satisfaction and a relative absence of unpleasant moods and emotions (Diener & Diener, 2000).
5. **FAMILY FACTORS:** life satisfaction is an overall assessment feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. It is one of three major indicators of well-being. Life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect. (Diener, 1984)

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The issue of work life balance and work alienation is a major concern for Indian organizations as the percentage of women of employees is steadily on the increase. Women today do not have any reservations in joining organizations that were hitherto male dominated. A feeling of being alienated from is seen nowadays mainly in the case of women employees. So it is the need of the hour to study the relationship between alienation and work life balance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To study the relationship between stress-work life balance and work alienation among women employees of Kerala state government in Trivandrum district.

OBJECTIVES

The concept of work life balance has evolved as a result of changing work environment and work culture. Women in the modern days are entering into newer professions that call for the ability to balance between work and life. Hence in the present study an attempt is made to examine the relationship between work life balance, stress and whether work alienation is felt by the women employees. Keeping this in view the specific aim or objectives of this study can be stated as:

1. To understand the concepts of Work-life balance, stress and work alienation among the employees.
2. To study the influences of the various variables that affects work life balance.
3. To analyze whether work life balance, stress and work alienation are interrelated.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no relationship between the work-life balance, perceived stress, psychological well-being, family satisfaction and work alienation.
2. There will be no difference in the work life balance of the employees irrespective of their marital status

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On the basis of convenience sampling technique 10 directorates of Kerala state government departments were selected and from these 30 women employees were selected.

The selected departments are Agriculture department, Animal husbandry, Archaeology Department, Civil Supplies, Dairy Development, Fisheries Department, Industrial Training, Kerala Police, Social Welfare, and State Central Library

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 30 women employees of which -15 married and 15 unmarried. With the help of a questionnaire responses were collected and using SPSS (12.0 version) analysis had been done.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study an attempt is made to examine the correlation between work life balances with its different variables and also to analyze its relationship with stress and work alienation felt by the women employees. **Work-life balance** is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle calm balance" and "life style choices". Several factors affect WLB, they are grouped under personal, family and occupational related factors. 'Stress' word has been borrowed from physics and mechanics where it means the physical pressure exerted upon, and between parts of body, when deformation occurs as result it is called strain. Stress is any change in your normal routine or health. Stress occurs when bad things happen, as well happy things. Getting raise or a promotion is stress, just as getting fired from job is stress. Stress is basically an adaptive to respond to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well-being. It is person's reaction to a situation, not the situation itself. Moreover, we experience stress when we believe that something will interfere with our need fulfillment. Coming to the work alienation is degree to which an individual identifies psychologically with a specific type of work; it reflects a situation in which an individual cares little about work, approaches work with little energy, and works primarily for extrinsic rewards. Likewise if a person is feeling powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, socially isolated and self-estranged then he will be alienated from his job so this type of attitude will affect his work life balance.

FINDINGS

The primary objective of this study was to compare the psychological profile of Kerala State Government women employees. The psychological profile constituted measuring the work-life balance, personal factors, family related factors, occupational related factors, stress, and work alienation. Among these variables work-life balance, stress and work alienation was treated as dependent variable and personal factors, family related factors, occupational related factors constituted the independent variables of the study. Usually the main variables taken for a study of work-life balance are hobbies/interests, religion/spiritual/philosophical concerns, friends and colleagues, community activity, self-care/sports/exercise. In the case of stress also stress due to personal, family and occupational are analyzed. Here I have grouped all the above mentioned variables under personal factors, family related factors, occupational related factors. The data was collected from a total of 30 (15 married and 15 unmarried) of Kerala State Government women employees. The responses were scored using the standard procedure and discussed.

One of the objectives of the study is to analyze the relationship among the variables of the study. Table 1 depicts the correlation among the different variables of the study.

The results of the correlation analysis show a significant positive correlation between work life balance and personal. A negative correlation was observed between work life balance and stress and also with work alienation. Earlier research by Bruke and Greenglass, (1987); Eckenrode and Gore, (1990); Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985) have also observed the negative correlation between Occupational related factors and stress implying that individuals with low degree of work life balance tend to experience higher degree of stress.

In summary, the above results it is clear that higher the degree of personal factors higher will be the work-life balance. Higher degree of family life satisfaction leads to higher degree of work-life balance. As there is a lower degree of stress higher will be the work-life balance. The obtained correlation in the negative direction between work-life balance and stress is in accordance with the theoretical views. If higher degree of work life balance is there lower will be the work alienation level.

The second hypothesis was Work life balance of the employees will be the same irrespective of their marital status. Using one way ANOVA this was analyzed and it can be seen that the null hypothesis is rejected, the work life balance of the women employees is not the same based on their marital status. Unmarried women are having or they are maintaining a very good work life balance. Table 2 depicts the Anova results. The results of the correlation analysis show that the variables personal factors, occupational factors and the family related factors have a significant positive correlation with work life balance. However a negative correlation was observed between work life balance and stress. The result shows that married women employees have relatively low degree of work life balance as compared with unmarried ones. They tend to have a high degree of stress and based on this study it was found that married employees with low work life balance tend to become alienated from their work too. Unmarried women on the other hand have a high degree of work life balance. The parental status of the employees also has an effect on the study; the employees who have children tend to have low degree of work life balance.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

1. Recruitment and placement of women employees require providing sufficient job knowledge and training.
2. Induction training could provide more confidence and skills to perform functions to the degree to which their male counterparts are performing.
3. Training in gender sensitization to both male and female employees is the need of the hour as the job requirement and training being the same for both the gender the discrepancy observed while assigning the job could be more objective without gender discrimination.
4. Performance linked incentives
5. Improving quality of work life.
6. Interpersonal relationship needs to be enhanced.
7. To enhance the degree of work-life balance among women employees a healthy environment should be created in the workplace.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The women employees of Kerala state government were studied to analyze their degree of work-life-balance, personal factors, occupational factors, family related factors, stress and work alienation. From the findings of the study it is evident that a lower degree of stress has led to a higher degree of work-life balance. Likewise it is evident that a lower degree of work alienation has led to a higher degree of work-life balance. Higher degree of psychological well-being, occupational satisfaction level and family satisfaction accounts for the higher degree of work-life balance. With the help of this study a small attempt is done to analyze the relationship between work life balance, stress and work alienation.

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APPENDICES

TABLE NO. 1: SHOWING THE CORRELATION AMONG THE VARIABLES

		Personal	Occupational	Family	Total Stress	Work Alienation	Work Life Balance
Personal	Pearson Correlation	1	.464**	.464**	-.036	-.055	.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.010	.850	.775	.539
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Occupational	Pearson Correlation	.464**	1	.464**	-.036	-.055	.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		.010	.850	.775	.539
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Family	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.464**	1	-.036	-.055	.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.010		.850	.775	.539
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Total Stress	Pearson Correlation	-.036	-.036	-.036	1	.522**	-.455*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.850	.850	.850		.003	.012
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Work Alienation	Pearson Correlation	-.055	-.055	-.055	.522**	1	-.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.775	.775	.775	.003		.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Work Life Balance	Pearson Correlation	.117	.117	.117	-.455*	-.802**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.539	.539	.539	.012	.000	
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
**.		Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*.		Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

TABLE NO. 2: SHOWING THE RESULT OF ONE-WAY ANOVA

Work Life Balance					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.362	1	2.362	16.800	.000
Within Groups	3.938	28	.141		
Total	6.300	29			

TABLE NO 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marital Status	30	1	2	1.50	.509
Health	30	6.00	13.00	7.833	2.43655
Personal	30	7.00	30.00	13.0667	5.26071
Occupational	30	10.00	25.00	17.0667	5.25371
Family	30	14.00	31.00	20.0667	3.25371
Total Stress	30	111.00	211.00	145.5667	23.50401
Work Alienation	30	121.00	210.00	143.6000	24.49827
Work Life Balance	30	55.00	87.00	66.3000	8.46609
Valid N (list wise)	30				

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