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Work -Life Balance among Women Entrepreneurs of Assam

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ABSTRACT

Work life balance is the state of equilibrium between an individual's work and personal life. This study was taken up to examine the level of issues the women face in proper balancing of work life and finding out the problems faced by them in work life balance. The study was conducted with 50 women entrepreneurs involved in different nature of enterprises in Assam, India. Findings revealed that the more than half of the women entrepreneurs face high level of issues in proper work life balance. It was also found that the selected women entrepreneurs faced various issues like health, family, social and psychological problems which are affecting their lives to a great extent.

Keywords: Women entrepreneur; Work life balance; Role overload; Work life stress; Work family balance; Assam

INTRODUCTION

The upliftment in the education system of women, changing mindset of the society and also the increased economical needs of the family have urged women to participate in the workforce and this has given birth to the Work-Life Balance (WLB) concept. As more women started working, the art of juggling responsibilities between both the spheres came into picture. The physical and psychological stress imparted on the working women has a great impact in performing their multiple roles both at home and workplace (Bhattacharya and Banerjee, 2019).

Likewise, the women of Assam appear to be engaging in a variety of traditional and non-traditional activities lately. The state of Assam, consist of a major rural population and is marked with a new developmental growth as

per the recent GDP records, considerable rise in the gender ratio, literacy rate of women and self employment of women. And to accomplish the foresaid objectives, the state Government has played an indisputable role by adopting innumerable schemes and programmes for women (Pareek and Satapathy, 2021). Thus, a positive hike is visible in the number of women entrepreneurs (both in urban and rural) due to the extensive State government support and rising interest of women.

However, just as there is always a flip side to a coin, women employment had brought some negative consequences as well. Families have shrunk and become nuclear. Wives and other female members of the household have become busy with various activities, which have led to the crisis. One of the major issues the women

face is their ability to balance work and family life. The work-family balance has become a great challenge for women as they take on the role of working professional in addition to their traditional role of homemaker.

Despite the fact that the problem of work-life balance concerns among female entrepreneurs is receiving a lot of attention these days, research on the topic of work-life balance among entrepreneurial women in India are exceedingly rare (Mathew and Panchanatham, 2009). Hence, the current study is a step towards examining the work-life balance challenges that Assamese women entrepreneurs face. The study deals with work-life balance of such women who have a life inside and outside their house. For a state like Assam, where work-life balance still has not received limelight, due to various ignorant reasons, the most important aspect of this study is 'awareness', making the policymakers, government and family members familiar with this concept, so that women can expect higher cooperation and facilities from them.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the demographic profile of the women entrepreneurs.
2. To analyze the level of issues they face in proper balancing of work life.
3. To enlist the problems faced by the women entrepreneurs while maintaining proper work life balance.

METHODOLOGY

Locale of the study: The study was conducted in the state of Assam in the month of August, 2021 and the district Lakhimpur was selected as the study area. North Lakhimpur Sub division was selected from Lakhimpur district, followed by the Boginadi block using purposive sampling method, since this study area consists significantly higher numbers of women

entrepreneurs engaged in small enterprises as compared to the other localities.

Sample size for the study: The investigator has randomly selected two villages from the Boginadi block viz., Sariani Gaon and Maaz Gaon and a sample of 25 entrepreneurs were selected from each village randomly. Thus, the total sample size for the study comes out to be 50.

Method and tool for data collection: The investigator has used methods like face to face communication and observation and structured interview schedule as the tool for data collection.

Data analysis: Analysis of data includes frequency, percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation.

Selection of variables and their measurement: Keeping the specific objectives of the study in view, different independent variables were selected such as age, religion, caste, marital status, type of family, size of family, educational qualification, main occupation and monthly income of the family. Age was assessed as per the chronological age of the respondents. The variables such as caste, marital status, type of the family and main occupation of the family were examined using Trivedi and Pareek scale (1963), and size of the family and educational qualification were examined using scales of NSSO (2007-2008) with slight modifications. The variables such as religion and monthly income of the family were assessed with the help of the structured interview schedule.

Development of work life balance issues statements: To measure the level of issues in work life balance of the women entrepreneurs, a scale consisting of 15 statements was prepared. The scale consisted different categories of issues in work life balance. The responses were recorded on a 3-point continuum as 'agree,

'to some extent, and 'disagree following Likert scale and were scored as 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A weightage of 2, 1 and 0, respectively were assigned to the response categories in the statements. Total score of the respondents was obtained by summing up the scores recorded. The respondents could obtain a minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 30 since there were a total of 15 statements. Based on total score of the respondents, the respondents were classified into three categories viz. high, medium and low, where the mean score is 39.86 and standard deviation is 5.02.

Table 1. Statistical Analysis and Scoring of Level of Issues of Work Life Balance of Respondents

Category	Score Range	Score
High	Mean + SD	3
Medium	Mean- SD to mean + SD	2
Low	Mean - SD	1

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the investigation are presented herender.

Demographic Profile of the Women Entrepreneurs

Regarding demographic profile of the respondents, the findings of the study reveal that majority of the respondents (40%) included in the study were of 21-30 years. Considering the fact that women of rural areas generally get married at younger ages, therefore, it is obvious that they start their own families at younger ages. But keeping in mind that the level of maturity and capacity to manage everything efficiently comes with age and experience, the young respondents find it difficult to handle all the household and professional chores smoothly.

Again, it was found that majority of the respondents belonged to OBC/MOBC caste (54%) and here the findings show that the respondents of sample villages were from different castes of which OBC caste dominated the entire group.

Majority was hindu (92%) and married (84%) because unlike urban areas, rural girls get married at young age, had nuclear families (72%) with small family sizes (60%). This finding is a clear indication of the touch of urbanization in the rural areas. Nuclear family prevails generally in the urban areas, which is gradually penetrating in the rural areas too.

Majority of the respondents (46%) attained higher secondary level in regard to educational qualification. This is a good picture for the respondents as higher secondary education, although not a high level of education in general, is expected to be enough to help them understand and manage the work life balance in a proper way.

A large majority of the respondents' families (88%) had farming as their main occupation; since the study is in rural area, therefore it is an obvious picture that a large majority of people will have farming as an occupation.

Most of the respondents (56%) had monthly income of Rs. 30001-40000, followed by 20% with income of Rs. 20001-30000. Here it is found that more than half of the whole respondents (51%) have very moderate income considering the hike in prices of almost all good and commodities.

Enterprises Owned by Respondents

The enterprises owned by the women entrepreneurs were assessed and given in Table 2.

Table 2. Type of Enterprises Owned by the Respondents

Sl. No.	Enterprise	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
1	Beauty salons	10	20
2	Tailoring units	6	12
3	Handloom & sericulture Boutiques	23	46
4	Bakery units	4	8
5	Bamboo craft units	1	2
6	Restaurants	4	8
7	Pottery units	2	4

From the table, it can be observed that different types of enterprises were run by the respondents. The respondents were found to run beauty salons (20%), tailoring units (12%), handloom and sericulture boutique (46%), bakery units (8%), bamboo craft (2%), restaurants (8%) and pottery (4%). Assam, being quite popular for handloom and sericulture, therefore, it is very predictable that this sector would come the highest in number in the study area.

Work- life Balance issues of the Respondents

In work life balance of the respondents, the distribution of respondents according to the level of issues in work life balance of women entrepreneurs is shown in the figure 1. The level of issues in work life balance of the respondents was categorized as 'high', 'medium', and 'low' on the basis of mean scores and standard deviation. The values for Mean Score and Standard Deviation (SD) were found to be 39.86 and 5.02 respectively.

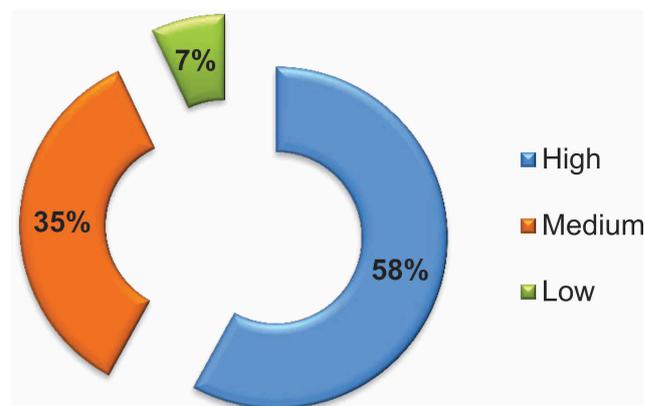


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents according to their level of issues in work life balance (n=50)

Figure 1 indicates that 58 per cent of the respondents had high level of issues in proper balance of work life, followed by 35 per cent that had medium level of issues and 7 per cent of the respondents had low level of issues in proper balance of work life.

It might be due to the fact that the majority of the respondents were found to be of 21-30 years and married. This implies that they have little or young children that need more care and attention. Another finding shows that majority of them were belonged to nuclear family. This family

type creates a very significant issue in managing all the works at home as well as work as they need to provide special care and attention to the needs of the children and the husband also all by themselves without any helping hand, being the families very patriarchal in those areas. As specified by the women, they had to get up early in the morning to finish their household chores, get the children ready for school, prepare breakfast and lunch for their husbands and school going children, clean the house before they are ready to go to their own duty. When they come back in the evening, they have to help their children with their studies, prepare evening meals and try and look pleasant in front of family members and guests. The western concept of the husband helping in household chores has not taken much root in the households yet. 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. Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the more harder.

A study conducted by Jain and Joon (2019) among women teachers reported that the work-life balance among the women teachers is higher especially among the married teachers in higher education. The important causes for their work-life imbalance are lack of social support and their work related factors. The work life imbalances are affecting the organizational commitment and the job performance of the employees.

Ranking of Top ten Statements Based on their Mean scores

The perception of the women entrepreneurs towards the identified statements were assessed and the details are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Ranking of Statements Based on their Mean Scores

Sl No.	Statement	Mean Score	Rank
1	I have to perform many roles in a given time.	3.02	I
2	As I am burdened with business and family roles, I find it difficult to attend social activities.	3.00	II
3	Due to the work/family issues and lack of time, I find it difficult to take care of my health.	2.99	III
4	The role conflicts in the business and family life given me a lot of stress.	2.97	IV
5	My time resources are equally distributed between the business and home.	2.85	V
6	My spouse understands and accommodates my pre-occupation as an entrepreneur.	2.69	VI
7	My spouse demands greater attention from me.	2.56	VII
8	I can't concentrate in my business due to dependent care problems.	2.55	VIII
9	I feel free and enjoy my profession as I have no dependent care issues.	2.50	IX
10	Being satisfied in the entrepreneurial and family domains, I feel relaxed.	2.48	X

Table 3 shows that highest mean score was found in the statement "I have to perform many roles in a given time" whose mean score is found to be 3.02. The respondents scored second and third highest mean score in the statements "As I am burdened with business and family roles, I find it difficult to attend social activities" and "Due to the work/family issues and lack of time, I find it difficult to take care of my health" respectively. It is well known that Indian families are mostly patriarchal in nature. In a patriarchal family, all the household activities need to be done only by the wives or the daughter-in-laws. There is no relaxation even if the woman is working somewhere else outside the home in a formal job. Similar is the situation for the selected respondents as well. Since the respondents needed to do all the activities inclusive of being a mother, a wife, a daughter-in-law, it is evident that they would be living a hectic life with tight routines. Hence, it might be quite difficult for them to take out time for other activities, be it taking care of own health or attending social events.

Kirchmeyer (2000) considers a balanced life as one in which the individual achieves satisfying experiences in all life domains. However, in this highly competitive and globalised society, it is very difficult for women entrepreneurs to carry out all roles simultaneously. As a result, they become mentally and physically exhausted because of the role demands arising from the work and family domains. This often leads to health impairment, dissatisfaction and decreased commitment to life and work roles. Compared to those of an employee, the role demands of an entrepreneur are multiplied because the latter has to act simultaneously as an employee, business owner, manager and motivating leader. The present study suggests that women entrepreneurs experience a high degree of role overload and associated work life balance issues.

Problems faced by the Selected Women Entrepreneurs in Work-life Balance

The problems encountered by the respondents while balancing proper work life have been analyzed, consolidated and presented in the following table under four main categories.

Table 4. Problems faced by the Respondents*

Sl. No.	Problems Encountered	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
1	Health Problems		
	Body pain due to posture	36	72
	Abnormalities in blood sugar level because of stress	27	54
	Abnormalities in Blood pressure	25	50
	Gastritis because of skipping meals due to lack of time	42	84
	Supreme Tiredness	50	100
2	Family related Problems		
	Unable to spend quality time with children and spouse	45	90
	Conflict with spouse	30	60
	Children feeling lonely and left out	22	44
	Fear of detachment from the children	18	36
	Under cared elderly parents	40	80

Sl. No.	Problems Encountered	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
3	Psychological Problems		
	Stress and hypertension	48	96
	Anxiety	37	74
	Frustration	45	90
	Short temperedness	40	80
	Insomnia	32	64
4	Social Problems		
	No time or too tired for social functions	35	70
	Conflict with neighbours	20	40
	Victim of gossip by the neighbours	15	30
	Fear of disconnection from social life	40	80
	Fear of rejection by the society	28	56

*Multiple Responses

The problems have been categorized into four main parts such as health, social, family related and psychological. Regarding health problems, it was found that cent percent of the respondents were suffering from supreme tiredness, followed by gastritis that was suffered by 84% of the respondents. Regarding family related problems, data shows that large majority of the respondents i.e. 90% were not able to spend quality time with their children and spouse, followed by 80% respondents who were not able to take care of their elderly parents and in laws.

In terms of psychological problems, it was seen that a very large majority of the respondents (96%) were suffering from stress and hypertension, followed by 90% respondents suffering from frustration.

When inquired about social problems, it was found that 80% of the respondents were facing the fear of disconnection from social life, followed by 70% who had no time or too tired for social functions. All these problems were mainly faced because of lack of time of the respondents or maybe they

were not able to manage time well. Vanitha and Meenakumari (2020) in their study stated women have to play multifaceted roles at family, society and at work places with unprecedented pressures at different situations. The unbalanced co-ordination and support belatedly indulge both family and work conflicts and it also mutually influences each other. The impact of these influences impetus with work and family problems and sometimes leads to undesirable health hazards.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted among selected women entrepreneurs of Assam to assess the work life balance issues of the women. It also studied the problems faced by the women in proper balancing of work life. From the study, it was found that the issues faced by majority of the respondents were found to be in high level based on the mean scores and standard deviation. They were bound with duties and responsibilities in the family as well as at their enterprises. As a result, the respondents have been facing various challenges like health, psychological, family and

social problems. Balance is the key to happiness and imbalance can break many chords of harmony and serenity which in turn affects all the spheres of a women. This study may draw the attention of Government and policy makers to make apt work- life balance policies for better empowered women workforce to bring the economy of India to next level.

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