Review Article

Challenges Experienced by Women Employees in Career Development in India

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research paper is to study the challenges experienced by women employees in career development in India. This concept suggests one of the most important reasons hindering the rise of women employees to the top management positions and these are primarily their commitment to the family and household. The women employees experience work-life conflict because of their strong commitment to family responsibilities. Challenges do take place within the working environment, but it is vital to implement solutions to the problems and prevent them from becoming barriers within the course of career development. The main areas that have been highlighted in this research paper include, the Indian context, employment trends for women in India, challenges experienced by women in career development, barriers to career development, measures to provide solutions to challenges, work life balance of women employees, creating a balance between professional and personal life, and recommendations.

Keywords: Career Development; Challenges; Employees; Women; Work Life Balance

Introduction

In the history of human development, women have rendered a significant contribution. The higher status of women and the work performed by them within the society is a noteworthy indicator leading to overall progress of the country. Undoubtedly, without the active participation of women, social, economic and political progression of the country will decline and become stagnant. Women employees generally are not given much recognition by their superiors, colleagues or the society at large. Women have numerous household responsibilities, and these pose major impediments within the course of their career development. Traditionally, Indian women have been homemakers, but due to advancement in technology, modern and innovative techniques and methods, education system and better awareness and increase in the ever increasing cost of living; these factors have made them to go out and choose their careers. Indian women are engaged in employment, but they have to work hard culturally, socially and economically to bring about positive attitudinal changes within the mind-sets of the individuals [1].

It is generally perceived that gender bias against working women begins right from the stage of recruitment. There has been viewpoint among the individuals that women do not possess the skills and capabilities to get engaged in similar kinds of jobs as men. The capabilities of the women are underestimated as a result of which Indian women usually get engaged in less demanding and less strenuous jobs, even though they possess the skills and qualifications [1]. There are number of challenges that women experience within the course of progression of their careers. These include, household work, family responsibilities, gender bias, indifferent attitude on the part of the other members at the workplace, lack of effective mentoring, skills, capabilities and sometimes, the necessary qualifications. These impose impediments within the course of their career development. It is vital to initiate measures that would facilitate career development of women.

The Indian context

The increase in the number of educated women in India, who are in the present existence, participating in the urban, organized, industrial sector in technical, professional, and managerial positions, have been accompanied by a stable growth in double career families. Research on career development of women in India shows that work and family predicaments are often different from those reported by women in the west. As compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world, Indian employees experience numerous difficulties in managing their professional and personal life. Women in India experience considerable pressure, especially in the morning before going out to work and after work as well, they are obligated to perform the necessary tasks and functions for the family. The relative absence of an infrastructure that provides a consistent supply of electricity, water, time saving, modern day kitchen and other appliances, renders the performance of domestic responsibilities. When these are not available, then usually pressure is put upon women to work manually and implementation of tasks is also time consuming. In addition, unyielding working hours and the absence of child care facilities create impediments rather than sources of support for employed women. Though in urban India, things have started improving, yet they are not satisfactory [2].

For maintaining work-life balance, social support plays a significant role for women managers. Social support is acquired not only from the family members, but also from employers, colleagues and other members of the organization. It is considered to be of utmost significance when women employees have to progress in their careers. In societies, where there is low gender egalitarianism, such as in India, the support from the spouse is important for women. Within the country, even though husbands are understanding and supportive of their wives' participation within the workforce, still they are yet to assume the responsibility for sharing domestic chores. In India, instrumental support for most working women come in the form of hired domestic helpers or female members of extended families. Although hired domestic helpers in some cases, within urban India, have been noted to be expensive and untrustworthy. On the other hand, they continue to be a major source of support for the increasing number of nuclear families, who live at a distance from their relatives [2].

Although the occurrence of conflicts between career and family roles can be a source of stress for both women as well as male employees. It affects women in India more than men because of many reasons. While social, legal, and economic reforms have been helpful to women in getting engaged in employment opportunities. The continuing influence of normative attitudes and values have prevented them from modifying the perceptions of the society as well as their own regarding their gender roles. Equal distribution of domestic responsibilities is thus a distant possibility in the present existence. The expectation that women should give priority to their family needs leads to higher levels of personal role-overload for women than men. This has positively affected the career prospects of women in particular. In many cases, the supervisors and managers are sensitive to this issue, listen to the problems and difficulties experienced by the employees and make provision of solutions. However, in the absence of any organized policy to address this important issue, the women experience more than men in terms of their career advancement and familial role fulfilment [2].

Employment trends for women in India

The increase in the number of women within the labour market indicates an important trend regarding women's employment. This has been taking place along with increase in labour force and workforce, especially for women in urban areas. Women employees in rural areas prevail in terms of participation rates and global magnitude. The increasing share of women's participation in the labour force and its significant contribution to household income as well as Gross Domestic Product require some policy attention to be paid to the gender dimensions of employment. Emphasis has been put upon the multi-pronged approach to address the issues concerning women workers, such as provision of basic rights and reinforcement of institutional mechanisms [3].

The increase in the growth of employment appears to be much higher for female workers as compared to male workers. Even where the proportion of working women is reflected in the female work participation rate, it may be low, the absolute numbers have considerably increased, given the rate of population growth over time. The increase in work opportunities from 1999-2000 to 2004-2005 has been to the tune of 9.3 million jobs per annum. This acceleration in employment growth from 1.25 percent per annum, i.e. 1993-94 to 1999-2000 to 2.62 percent per annum in the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05 has been beneficial to women's participation. Of the 46 million job opportunities created from 1999-2000 to 2004-05, approximately 15 million women joined the workforce. In urban areas, the number of women workers doubled, whereas in

rural areas, they increased from nine to twelve million. This positive change is noted more influentially within the urban framework, where requisite educational inputs, modern thinking and women's work is becoming noticeable [3].

There has been an increase in women labour in rural agriculture, with over four-fifths of the women in rural areas are employed in this sector. This gains significance amidst the declining share of male workers, from 74 percent in 1993-94 to 66 percent in 2004-05. Thus, it seems that women in rural areas are finding it difficult to shift away from agriculture. Involvement of women in agriculture is as cultivators, farmers as well as agricultural labourers. Nevertheless, there has been a slight decrease in the share of women as agricultural labourers, while their share among cultivators has increased. In urban areas, women have achieved significantly higher growth of employment in manufacturing and have been able to increase their share, especially after 1999-2000, from 24 percent to above 28 percent in 2004-05. Thus, in urban areas, the share of female workers in manufacturing has increased significantly while that of male workers has not. Even in the services sector, women have gained in terms of employment, particularly in the domestic and personal services category [3].

With globalization, there have been introduction of technological inputs and this causes marginalization of women in economic activities and men being provided new opportunities of learning and training. Therefore, there has been an increase in the female workers within the informal sector or casual labour force. The economically weaker sections of the society, especially women, are denied the physical care, hence, there is absence of abilities for the majority of Indian women to get involved in any valuable functioning. Most women in India, work and contribute to the economy in one form or the other, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women are engaged in the agricultural sector, they weave and make handicrafts, work in household industries, sell food items and gather wood, while working in the informal sector. In addition, they are responsible for performing domestic tasks, child development and in taking care of the needs of other family members [3].

The cultural restraints, women are experiencing are undergoing transformations. In the present existence, they still experience problems in participating within the formal economy. In the past, cultural restraints were the primary barriers to acquisition of jobs by women. The Indian census divides workers into two categories: main and marginal. Main workers include individuals, who work for six months or more during the year, while marginal workers include those, who work for a shorter period. Many of these workers are agricultural labourers. Unpaid farm and family enterprise workers are supposed to be included in either the main worker or the marginal worker category. Women account for a small proportion of the formal Indian labour force, even though the number of female main workers have increased rapidly in recent years than that of their male counterparts [3].

Challenges experienced by women in career development

The challenges experienced by women in career development have been stated as follows: [3].

- **Occupational Stress:** Occupational stress is the stress that is caused due to work. In some cases, jobs are challenging, demanding and require individuals to work long hours. When one is engaged in work for long hours and is under pressure to complete the assignment or project, then one may feel stressed. When individuals are unable to complete the job duties or the required target on time, this causes occupational stress. When they lack the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the job requirements, then too occupational stress takes place. For women employees, occupational stress at the workplace is one of the major challenges within the course of career development.

- **Household and Family Responsibilities:** Women have important roles to play in the household and family. They are the ones, who are primarily responsible for the functioning of the household, child development and in taking care of the needs and requirements of other family members. When women have to create a balance between family and work, then it may give rise to challenges within the course of their career development. In some cases, family obligations may compel them to take leave from work, hence, they are not able to concentrate upon their job duties. Creating a balance between work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue in many societies.

- **Mental Harassment:** There has been prevalence of the viewpoint among communities that women are less capable, efficient and skilled as compared to men. This attitude among the other individuals within the working environment prove to be an impediment within the course of their career development. They are usually dis-

couraged from getting engaged in any kinds of jobs and functions that require manual labour. Therefore, possession of the viewpoint among the individuals that women are not capable of performing certain job duties is a mental harassment to them. Gender bias gives rise to barriers within the course of their recruitment and women are paid less than men for the same work performed. The prevalence of this kind of attitude makes them less interested in their work.

- **Sexual Harassment:** In the present world, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment, irrespective of their background and categories, personal characteristics and the types of employment. Sexual harassment is not only at the workplace, but it is also prevalent in educational institutions, hospitals, and public places. The main reason that cause the occurrence of this criminal act is, when women are concentrated in subordinate positions and deprived service jobs, whereas men are in the supervisory positions. This gives them an opportunity to exploit and subordinate women. When women experience this act within the working environment, they even get compelled to leave their jobs.

- **Discrimination at the Workplace:** Indian women still experience discriminatory treatment at the workplaces. They are often deprived of promotion and growth opportunities, but this does not apply to all working women. In the present existence, women are obtaining higher education and are engaged in reputed jobs. On the other hand, on the basis of their skills, qualifications and experience, they get promoted and are working in higher positions in educational institutions and other organizations. A majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay, under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and are low paid in comparison to their male colleagues. This is usually the case in factories and labour oriented industries.

- **Absence of Safety of Working Women while Travelling**: Usually, the traditional mind-set of the individuals within the Indian society makes it difficult for working women to create a balance between the domestic environment and professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to stay at work after six p.m. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety on a daily basis regarding woman's safety, especially while traveling. So most of the issues affect a working woman, the reason being, she is closely protected or watched by her family and society. In the present existence, there have been number of women, who have experienced violent and criminal acts while travelling. Hence, this is a major impediment within the course of career development.

- **Lack of Family Support:** Lack of family support is another issue that working women experience. At times, the family members encourage women to get engaged in household work and not in employment opportunities. Elderly members of the household in some cases, possess this viewpoint that women are meant to stay at home and participate in domestic chores, whereas employment opportunities are meant for men. When women have to work late in the office, the family members normally have an objection. When family members are not supportive towards working women, then it is an impediment within the course of their job performance, promotional opportunities and career development. In order to achieve the organizational and personal objectives, it is vital to have family support.

- **Job Insecurity:** There are numerous factors that cause job insecurity. These include, lack of knowledge, skills and abilities, inability to complete the job requirements, long working hours, lack of facilities within the working environment, inability to get along with the employers or colleagues, lack of proper infrastructure, lack of promotional opportunities, insufficient pay and so forth. Unrealistic expectations, especially at the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes puts unnatural, unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employee, can be a major source of stress and anxiety. Increased workload and strong pressures to perform at peak levels, all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stressors.

- **Workplace Adjustment:** Adjusting to the cultures and norms of the workplace can be cumbersome for the individuals. There are number of factors within the working environment, regarding which employees may experience problems. For instance, the working environmental conditions, inability to get along with others, occurrence of conflicting situations, lack of participation in decision making and other functions, inability to get engaged into effective communication processes and so forth. When individuals are unable to adjust within the working environment, then they would certainly encounter problems and challenges within the course of their career development. In many cases, office politics and gossips can be major stress inducers.

- **Other Reasons:** Other reasons that can be impediments within the course of career development can be personal demographics, such as, age, educational qualifications, marital

status, number of children, place of residence, other sources of income, length of employment and so forth. Work situation characteristics, such as, job tenure, size of the organization, hours worked per week, skills and abilities possessed by the employees, experience and so forth. These factors in all kinds of employment opportunities determine, whether employees are capable of promotional opportunities that may lead to their career development. When a person within the organization has to be promoted, it is vital to take into consideration, all the demographic factors, personality traits, skills, capabilities, experience, time duration, he has been in the organization and the terms and relationships that he has established with the other members.

Barriers to career development

In addition to the challenges, there are certain barriers that women employees experience regarding career development. They restrict their upward mobility and have been stated as follows: [2].

- **Stereotyping and Perceptions of Roles and Abilities of Women:** Within the organizations, there are prevalence of certain stereotypes and perceptions regarding the roles and abilities of women. Women are regarded to be possessing low skills and abilities as compared to their male counterparts. Individuals form this viewpoint that they possess low abilities to get engaged in any kind of manual work and would generate less productivity as compared to men. These kinds of stereotypes and perceptions prove to be barriers within the course of their career development. In traditional India and in the present world, also among the socio-economically backward sections of the societies and rural communities, there has been prevalence of the viewpoint that women are meant to perform the household chores and education and employment is not meant for them.

- **Commitment to Family Responsibilities:** Family responsibilities are numerous and women are the ones, who are primarily responsible. Particularly among the rural communities, they are trained from the initial stage regarding the performance of domestic chores. These include, preparation of meals, cleaning, washing, fetching water, taking care of the livestock, child development, health care needs and looking after the needs and requirements of other family members, especially the elderly. Commitment to family responsibilities even prove to be barriers within the course of career development

of well educated women in urban areas. Though it is not applicable in all, but in some cases, they have to wake up early, perform all the household chores and then go to work. In most cases, even though they are engaged in employment, but experience problems in career development.

- **Exclusion of Women Professionals from Informal Networks and Communications:** Within the organization, it is vital to make provision of equal opportunities to both men and women. Women employees are usually excluded from getting engaged in any informal networks and communications. Within the workplace, they need to establish appropriate terms and relationships with the other members, acquire efficient knowledge regarding the performance of tasks and functions, and incur job satisfaction. Their exclusion from informal networks and communications are barriers within the course of career development. For career development, it is not only essential to be skilled and proficient in the performance of work duties, but one needs to participate effectively in informal networks and communications.

- **Lack of Significant General or Line Experience**: Some of the women employees are novice, and need to be trained regarding the performance of job duties. When women employees are not experienced or efficient in the performance of job duties, then they are not given promotional opportunities. In reputed organizations, career development and promotional opportunities require efficient knowledge, awareness and experience. Experience is of utmost significance to attain career development. When one aims to achieve an increase in pay, or get posted to a higher position, then there are number of factors that are taken into consideration. These include, time duration that one has spent within the organization, information regarding the performance of job duties, demographic information, such as, place of residence, family background etc. personality traits, communication processes with the other members of the organizations, and one's attitude and behavioural traits. When one establishes mutual terms and relationships with others and is knowledgeable, approachable, ethical and principled, then he does not experience problems in career development.

- **Lack of Mentoring:** With advancement in technology and introduction of innovative techniques and methods, individuals need to be trained regarding how to make effective use of these methods and techniques. In order to acquire appropriate knowledge, and information, it is essential to obtain mentoring. Mentors are the individuals, who make provision of assistance to others regarding how to provide solutions to

their problems, one redress their grievances to the mentors to seek remedies and they perform the functions of leading, directing and guiding the employees towards the right direction. When appropriate mentoring is not available within the organizations, then employees are not able to seek guidance and adequate assistance, hence, they experience problems in career development.

- **Lack of Gender-Sensitive Policies by the Employer:** Lack of gender-sensitive policies, i.e. women employee friendly policies by the employer was also perceived as an important factor for imposing restraints upon career development of female professionals. Within the organizations, it is vital to promote policies that are favourable and beneficial to the women employees. It is essential to be kind and courteous to women employees in order to make use of their skills and abilities to achieve the desired goals and objectives and to retain them. Employers and managers in most cases, are concerned towards the needs and problems of women employees and make provision of assistance. There have been formulation of measures and procedures that make the workings of women employees manageable within the organizations. As it has been understood that women employees have many other responsibilities, relating to family, household, and so forth. In some cases, they are able to manage all their responsibilities and work. Whereas in some, they experience problems, hence, the lack of gender-sensitive policies impose barriers upon career development.

Measures to provide solutions to challenges

The measures that are being put into practice to provide solutions to challenges have been stated as follows: [4].

- **Focus on Soft Skills:** It is vital to establish soft skills among individuals within the working environment. These refer to social skills, communication skills, high order thinking, self-control, positive self-concept, problem solving skills, creativity, team-work capability, negotiating skills, self-management, time management, conflict resolution, cultural awareness and responsibility. On the other hand, it is vital for the individuals to be courteous, sociable, honest and truthful in the performance of job duties. Some of the soft skills are inherent within the individuals, whereas some need to be learned. Hence, it is vital to implement proper training programs and qualified trainers to develop soft skills among the individuals.

- **Employee Motivation:** The working environmental conditions should always be encouraging and motivating to the employees. It is vital for the employers to possess an approachable attitude and listen to the concerns and grievances of women. When women employees experience problems and challenges concerning various issues, it is vital for the managers and leaders to make provision of solutions and motivate them. Presence of an approachable and an amiable attitude on the part of employers, managers, colleagues and other members of the organizations, in most cases proves to be beneficial to women employees in providing solutions to all kinds of challenges and problems. Within the working environment, it is essential to make provision of materials, equipment and other facilities that may make the workings of women employees manageable.

- **Training:** For the purpose of acquiring promotional opportunities and career development, it is vital for the women employees to possess the required skills and qualifications. Lack of knowledge, information and skills are the major factors that prove to be impediments within the course of their job performance. Training is an essential area that needs to be implemented in an appropriate manner within the organizations. It makes provision of all the required knowledge and information to the individuals that are needed to render an appropriate job performance. Employees may have experience, but acquisition of training enables them to obtain the required information to perform their job duties in an appropriate manner. Proper training programs enhance the skills and knowledge among the employees and they are able to gain more confidence in themselves to provide solutions to challenges and lead to career development.

- **Retention Strategies:** The main retention strategies that are required to be put into practice to retain the women employees are, making provision of a positive working environment, emphasising upon the social impact and rewarding performance. Apart from these three factors, opportunities need to be provided to the employees for flexible working hours. Women employees need to be permitted to work from home and there should be provision of opportunities leading to their personal development. Appropriate retention strategies render an effective contribution in providing solutions to the challenges experienced by women employees. In follow-up conversations, founders put emphasis upon the need to adopt non-monetary retention strategies.

- **Conflict Resolution Methods:** At the workplace, there are sometimes occurrence of conflicts among the members over some issues, which may be in a major form or minor form. Women employees may undergo detrimental effects, when they get engaged into any kinds of conflicting situations or disputes. Occurrence of conflicts may impose many challenges and problems in the appropriate performance of job duties. As within the organizations, one cannot work in isolation and it is necessary to integrate with each other in the achievement of organizational goals. Effective conflict resolution methods are measures of making provision of solutions to the problems and challenges that one may experience as a result of conflicting situations.

- **Amiable Working Environment:** It is essential for the working environmental conditions to be suitable for the employees, especially women. The amiable working environment comprises of facilities and infrastructure that is necessary in the performance of tasks and functions. Terms and relationships among the individuals should be sociable and this can be formed by the establishment of effective communication skills and mutual understanding. Within the working environment, it is necessary to make provision of the conditions that makes the women employees feel comfortable in collaborating with others. When the tasks are time consuming and complicated, then employers need to ensure, they are given sufficient time. The organization and the employees are required to be committed to each other in the achievement of common goals and objectives.

- **Induction Programs:** Induction and orientation sessions for new recruitments prove to be beneficial in providing solutions to the problems and challenges, especially, when the information is adequately understood and implemented by the employees. Reputed organizations in most cases, put into practice, appropriate strategies and measures within the induction programs. Apart from these, they recruit skilled, capable and well qualified trainers, who are proficient in imparting information in an appropriate manner. One of the most imperative areas is, the employees need to understand and implement the information in the performance of job duties to provide solutions to challenges and problems.

- **Human Resources Systems**: Systems and processes that formulate the rules and policies lay down the rules of engagement, such as leave policy, travel policy, expense reimbursement and dress code. When formulating any kinds of rules and policies within the organization, it is necessary to take into consideration the needs of women employees and any norms should not outrage their modesty. The norms and values need to take into consideration the morals and ethics. All the employees should benefit from the human resources systems and they should not impose any kinds of disadvantages in any manner.

- **Performance Appraisal Methods:** The implementation of performance appraisal methods are considered essential in enhancing the performance of the employees. Women employees are from different backgrounds, age groups, and possess different learning abilities, they may perform well in their job duties or in some cases they may experience limitations in their job performance. Performance appraisal methods help in finding out the flaws and inconsistencies and enable the individuals to make improvements. These methods assist the women employees in detecting the limitations and challenges in their job performance and how to make improvements in them. In making improvements, women employees may need to collaborate with other members of the organization, including colleagues, managers, leaders or supervisors, they would need to improve their knowledge regarding the strategies and approaches and develop dedication and enthusiasm towards their job performance.

- **Equal Rights and Opportunities**: When women are not considered to be capable and proficient, when they are not consulted, when they are not allowed to give their ideas and suggestions and when they are not allowed to have a say in the decision making processes, then they do feel downgraded, lose interest in the performance of job duties and develop negative viewpoints. Downgrading and absence of equal rights and opportunities may impose challenges for women employees. Therefore, in order to provide solutions to these challenges, it is essential to make provision of equal rights and opportunities to the women employees and consider them equal to their male counterparts.

Work-Life balance of women employees

Work-life balance of women employees is an important subject area. The reason being, women are equally sharing the responsibilities for rendering an effective job performance and working for the betterment of their families. Usually, women work after their marriage. Marriage is an institution that imposes numerous responsibilities upon women. It is vital for working women to create a balance between household responsibilities and job requirements. When they are in full time employment, it is vital for them to ensure that they regularly attend the training programs, prepare their as-

signments, projects, attend meetings, and manage the work timings as well as the implementation of household chores. Married women have more responsibilities as compared to men towards their families and households. It is essential for women employees to possess the traits of diligence, resourcefulness and conscientiousness. Commitment and perseverance are the essential traits that are required to efficiently overcome the challenges. The participation of women in income generation activities enables them to meet the household needs and requirements adequately [5]. Women employees have to satisfy both work and family. The major factors that influence the work-life balance of women employees have been stated as follows: [5].

- **Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict:** Research has indicated that the incompatibility between the domain of work and the domain of family is work-family conflict. Conflict between these domains takes place, when participation in one role is more difficult as compared to participation in another role. In the present existence, work-family conflict is more prevalent than family-work conflict. When one is unable to create a balance and there is occurrence of inequity, it causes pressure and stress. Usually in India, when women have household responsibilities, children to take care of, and full time jobs, they have to look for means to make provision of assistance, so that they do not experience major challenges. For instance, they hire helpers or obtain assistance from their in-laws or parents. In most cases, preference is given to jobs, as they not only generate a source of income but also help them to enhance their careers and utilize their qualifications, skills and abilities.

- **Women in Various Roles**: Full time jobs, in most cases are six days a week and of eight to ten hours. Employees have to devote time towards travelling as well, especially, when their workplaces are located at a distance. Most of the women carry out their work duties as well as perform the household functions, but when they feel overwhelmed and stressed, it is vital for them to implement solutions in an operative manner. Women have to cope up with the demands and requirements of jobs, office commitments, tight meeting schedules, work timings and other duties and responsibilities of one's home and personal life. As it has been stated that preference is given to jobs over household and family responsibilities and

women employees are required to generate awareness of the traits that are needed to perform various roles. For instance, if the child is ill, then she may have to take leave from work, when she has to go to meet a friend or a relative, she may have to take leave from work and so forth. Employers need to focus upon formulation of schemes and policies to facilitate work-life balance and retain women employees.

- **Career Advancement:** It is vital for the women employees to not only focus upon enhancing the skills and abilities to perform their job duties in a well-organized manner, but also towards career advancement. Career development and acquisition of promotional opportunities are always considered gratifying, stimulating and motivating to the individuals. When a woman employee, who has been recruited within the organization gradually gains promotion over the period of time and at one point of time, she attains the position of a leader, in this way, she has experienced advancement and development in her career. In order to lead to career advancement, women employees need to possess certain skills and abilities. They have to be hard-working, meticulous, ingenious and creative. It is vital for them to put into practice the traits of decency, morality, ethics, honesty, and truthfulness. These traits not only contribute in one's career advancement, but also one establishes mutual terms and relationships with others and turn into a principled, moral and ethical human being.

- **Work Stress and Work-Life Imbalance:** It is not all the time manageable for women to maintain a balance between personal and professional life. They are required to implement proper time management skills and when they experience too much work pressure, they tend to perform poorly in their job duties. Work stress and work-life imbalance is detrimental to not just the living conditions of the individuals, but also to one's health and wellbeing. Stress is often developed, when an individual is assigned a major responsibility without proper authority and delegation of power, inter-personal factors such as, group cohesiveness, functional dependence, communication frequency, and relative authority. One of the major factors that leads to work stress and work-life imbalance is when one is career oriented to a major extent and is engaged in work, without paying attention to other factors. These may include leisure activities. Overwork is one of the factors that causes work stress and work-life imbalance. Therefore, it is vital for women employees to implement proper time management skills and dedicate themselves efficiently to the performance of various tasks and functions.

- **Child Care:** Child care and development is a major function, for which women are predominantly responsible. Women have a major role to play towards child development and there are numerous jobs that are associated with it. Nurturing and development of the child or children often requires women to take leave from work or when they feel they will not be able to take leave, then they may seek assistance from either care givers or other members of the family to take care of their children. When working women do not have any other means to take care of their children, they get compelled to leave them in day care centres. When women employees are not able to devote themselves adequately towards child care, then usually they are more anxious and are unable to focus upon their job duties. Hence, child care is one of the factors that influence work-life balance of women employees.

Creating a balance between professional and personal life

- Throughout their lives, women have numerous roles to perform. These include, of a spouse, mother, daughter, sibling, colleague, friend, employee and community member. These roles are within the home as well as outside the home environment. The roles of the spouse, mother, daughter, sibling is within the home. On the other hand, roles of the friend, colleague, employer and community member is outside the home, within the working environment. Most of the women try to cope up with these roles competently and are able to cope with the demands that each role has. In order to perform each role in an efficient manner, it is essential to develop certain skills and abilities. Individuals have to experience challenges, when conflicting situations take place between professional and personal lives [6].

- The biggest problem experienced by working professionals is the incompetence to create a balance between the demands and pressure at work and demands and pressures on the home front. There are two major issues that need to be understood to resolve the work-life imbalance taking place within the lives of women employees. Role overload (RO) i.e. having too much to do and too less time to do it within the limited time frame and Role interference (RI) i.e. when unsuited demands make it difficult, if not impossible, for the women employees to perform all their roles well. Role interference in turn consists of two factors i.e. work to family interference (WTF), where work gets in the way of family life and family to work interference (FTW), where family demands, such as, child

or elderly care or other domestic chores have an effect upon work. Nevertheless, achieving work-life balance may be a priority and a desire of woman employees. However, it is not her sole responsibility to be a lonely fighter. Employers being the advocates of setting the norms and conditions at the workplace are considered to be the implementers of work-life balance [6].

- The contemporary India is observing weakening in the quality of home and community life amongst urban women. The main reason being, women are acquiring higher education and are becoming career oriented. They aspire to enhance their careers, hence, due to this, they are unable to participate in home and community life. Women are usually engaged in full time jobs, which enable them to devote most of their time and energy towards work. Work-life balance as a concept has received significant attention and as a campaign has been practiced in various organizations in the form of policy and strategy. However, many of their human resources policy makers are not sure about what should create an ideal work-life balance program. In this framework, it is observed that some organizations provide a package of policies and programs, such as alternative work arrangements, leave policies, child-care centres, while some others provide gymnasiums and recreation, and sports facilities at the workplace in the name of work-life balance programs. Since, work-life balance as a concept of women employees has received recognition from employers and human resources managers in India only in the recent years, hence, the organizational initiatives in this regard are hardly having clarity in their strategy, policy and intent. Therefore, it is apparent to understand work-life balance and its challenges because of its useful incompleteness [6].

- Over the past years, there was a change in terminology from work-family balance to present work-life balance, which recognizes that besides family, women are occupied with multiple roles in their personal and professional life to fulfil varied objectives. The family members should be supportive towards women and understand that they need to work hard and dedicate themselves to full time jobs. The revised term "work-life balance (WLB)" till date remains to be defined incoherently. It has been mentioned that, despite the contradiction in the definition, a large part of literature has defined work-life balance as being either the absence of work-life conflict or work-life spill over. This is primarily influenced with less defined role with the genders creating the opportunity for more work-life spill over. When women have families to look after as well as full time jobs that are demanding, then certainly they experience challenges in meeting the requirements of both areas.

When one is unable to pay adequate attention to something, it causes the feelings of guilt [6].

- When professional women employees are able to recognize their roles and personal needs with the organizational values and goals, then their attachment gets much stronger. It is believed that organizations showing concern for their employee's lives through work-life balance programs can improve and stabilize an employee's perception about their employer in return. Work-life balance is an issue not just for individuals, but for employers, the market, the state and the society as a whole. The future workforce and consumer market of contemporary society is dependent upon women, primarily for the purpose of raising a family and child development. The transformation from where the man was considered as the bread-winner to the one, where both parents are engaged in paid employment has made it difficult to maintain the work-life balance. Therefore, the issue of work-life balance has been developed out of demographic and social changes, which have resulted in a more varied workforce with different family and work models [6].

Recommendations

The various kinds of problems and challenges that women employees experience within the organizations need to be solved. Providing effective solutions and measures are fundamental to carry out ones household as well as job responsibilities in an appropriate manner. The recommendations have been stated as follows: [7].

- **Counselling and Guidance:** The organization should appoint a counsellor with appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities, who can make provision of proper guidance and direction to women employees, who are experiencing challenges within the working environment. Professional counsellors possess adequate knowledge and information and make provision of effective solutions to the problems communicated to them by women employees. They acquire understanding of what kinds of challenges, they are experiencing and then accordingly guide them. When women employees are finding job duties stressful and demanding, when they are not able to get along with other members at the workplace, or unable to meet the family responsibilities, and so forth, then consulting a counsellor may enable them to provide solutions to their problems.

- **Approachable Attitude on the part of Leaders and Managers:** In most cases, employees approach their leaders, supervisors and managers to redress their grievances. It is vital that managers and supervisors should possess an approachable and an amiable attitude and should listen to the problems of the employees, especially women and provide remedies. Women employees usually feel comfortable within the working environment, when their managers and employers are approachable, kind and courteous towards them. When women have number of family responsibilities, then it is vital for the administrators to create a climate that is soothing for bringing up a family.

- **Congenial Working Environmental Conditions:** The presence of congenial working environmental conditions are imperative not only to retain and make the women employees feel contented, but also in the achievement of desired goals and objectives. These are of utmost significance in making provision of solutions to challenges and problems experienced by women employees. Managers can make provision of a supportive environment that permits flexibility in schedules, telecommuting options, personal time off, onsite child care, and other family-oriented programs. Internal social network, forum, blog, mentor, and coaches need to be made available for working parents. Provision of wellness, and resource rooms are required for meditation, prayer, and back-up child care.

- **Management of Work-Family Balance:** Organizations need to formulate measures and guidelines for work-family balance, since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees. When women employees are not able to concentrate well upon their job duties, due to family obligations or when they are unable to meet the desired goals within the time-frame, then it is essential that the managers and employers should understand their problems and provide them assistance. The assistance can be made available in the form of training programs, giving them more time to complete the tasks, providing the necessary tools, equipment, technology and materials that may make the job duties less time consuming and more manageable and making the working conditions pleasant that may promote job satisfaction. Assistance from one's superiors in most cases, is beneficial in the management of work-family balance.

- **Additional Research**: Additional research should be conducted on economically weaker sections of the society. This research will provide information regarding how women, who lack the basic literacy skills, are able to sustain their

living conditions. They are usually engaged in minority jobs and have large families, i.e. more than two children. In such cases, what kinds of challenges they experience and how they seek solutions to them need to be identified. Additional research is also needed to compare both men and women, the reason being, there may be differences in experiences with regards to work and family balances and also helps to find out more consequences of work and family conflict. In order to acquire in-depth understanding of one's work and family life, researchers have to study multiple perspectives such as, job stress, quality of life, mental health and wellbeing, and job requirements.

Conclusion

Women in India, in urban as well as in rural areas have an important role to play in the functioning of the household. They are possessed with the responsibilities to perform all kinds of domestic chores, child development and in meeting the needs and requirements of family members. The household and family responsibilities are the major challenges that hinder their career development. The other challenges that women experience include, occupational stress, mental harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination at the workplace, absence of safety of working women while travelling, lack of family support, job insecurity, workplace adjustment, demographic and work situation characteristics, stereotyping and perceptions of roles and abilities of women, commitment to family responsibilities, exclusion of women professionals from informal networks and communications, lack of significant general or line experience, lack of mentoring and lack of gender-sensitive policies by the employer.

It is important to put into practice the measures to curb the challenges and make provision of room for career development. Family responsibilities are fundamental, but career development of a well-educated woman is also important and any kinds of responsibilities should not impose any barriers. The women employees appeared to think that they are not able to utilize their complete potential and at times they had to make career trade-offs because of family responsibilities. This could also be because of the fact that they believed that putting career ahead of family led to social discontentment and rejection and they also felt that major responsibility of child development hindered the abilities of women employees to progress.

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