

Difficulties on Work-Life Balance of Married Career Women: The Case of Generation X

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Abstract –This study focused on difficulties pertaining to the work-life balance (WLB) of career women belonging to the generation X. This included 250 working women, who were proportionally selected from five (5) work settings such as (1) office workers in the government, corporate executives, managers, and supervisors; (2) academic professionals and teachers; (3) insurance and marketing agents; (4) healthcare and social welfare workers; and (5) information technology professionals in Lucena City, Province of Quezon, Philippines. The difficulties on work-life balance were identified using an adopted 10-item questionnaire from the work of Daniels and McCarragher (2000 as cited in Delina & Raya, 2013), designed in a 5-point Likert scale format. The findings revealed that the respondents (1) disagree that they need to work long hours ($M = 2.27$); (2) agree that they have lesser time to socialize and relax ($M = 3.51$); (3) uncertain in taking work home in the evening ($M = 3.03$); (4) uncertain about working late and during weekends ($M = 3.0$); (5) uncertain with the difficulty in forgetting work issues ($M = 3.25$); (6) disagree in worrying about the effects of stress ($M = 2.36$); (7) agree that their relationship suffer because of work ($M = 3.88$); (8) agree that their family is missing out their inputs ($M = 3.60$); (9) agree with the difficulty in finding time for hobbies and leisure ($M = 3.45$); and uncertain with the control over reducing their working hours ($M = 3.45$). All in all, the respondents were uncertain ($AWM = 3.13$) regarding their work-life balance. Moreover, one-way analysis of variance, disclosed significant differences in the WLB of the respondents along with their nature of work or work settings ($F=3.438$, $p<0.05$). Post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD revealed that weighted mean on WLB of academic professional and teachers ($M=3.19$) was lower as compared to those of the healthcare and social welfare workers ($M=3.22$); while it is lower as compared to those of the insurance and marketing agents ($M=3.25$). This indicated that difficulties in WLB were highest among insurance and marketing agents and that the level of difficulties in WLB varies in terms of work settings. Development and implementation of programs and mechanisms that promote quality and efficient WLB in institutions and agencies where the working women or mothers are affiliated were recommended.

Keywords –generation X, married career women, work-life balance

INTRODUCTION

Work and family are the two most important facets of one's life. Unfortunately, these two domains may sometimes conflict with one another especially when one has to juggle between making a career and raising a family [1]. In the early centuries, women's duties are mostly at home. They have limited freedom and little access to develop their abilities and knowledge. Fortunately, in today's generation where more technology are available, women's privileges becomes equal to men. The fast-developing economy has given place for more women to be enlightened by higher education [2]. Education has not only empowered them but also has given them opportunities to attain highly recognized professions.

In Asian societies, work and family issues are only recently beginning to gain attention [3]. Whereas in Southeast Asia, more and more countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines are recognizing the significant role of women in their economic and societal progress. This has been demonstrated in various researches conducted in these countries (e.g., [4]; [5]).

Traditionally in the Philippines, gender roles were clear and distinct, the father is the bread winner and the mother is the home maker. In the 1960s, less than a third of Filipinas had a chance to work. Today, one in every two women in the Philippines works and more than a third of Filipino families are composed of

dual-career couples [6]. The emergence of dual-career couples challenged these traditional roles.

Striking a balance between work and home life is becoming more and more a priority for a lot of people, mainly for the working women all over the world [7]. Married career women are getting into jobs and continue working even after they get married to help their spouse in terms of the financial needs of their family. This has indeed become a tough challenge for women as they must perform a lot of duties at home and at work at the same time. As working women get married, they have additional responsibilities and when they established a family, they have to manage the primary care for children and extended family under great pressure to continue on a career path [8]. Therefore, work-life balance (WLB) becomes an important issue among them since they also share the responsibility to provide for the betterment of their family [9]. With the foregoing scenario, work-life balance is of great importance.

WLB encompasses achieving its positive aspects in both life and work domains. It is defined as achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, which requires personal resources like energy, time, and commitment that are well-distributed across domains [10]. Time given by career women for their family and for themselves become an issue nowadays, especially when it comes to parenting roles.

Time exploitation studies have shown that married women spend considerable large amount of their time acting multiple roles. Also, the role theory presumes that multiple roles can lead to inter-role conflict, and in turn to symptoms of strain [11]. Another theory that is related to family-work conflict is the spillover theory which asserts that there is similarity between what occurs in a family environment, such that happiness at work leads to happiness at home [12]. According to Piotrkowski [13], spillover is generally discussed in terms of positive relationships, but it is also possible to have negative spillover in which the work is boring or monotonous can result in an energy deficit making the person lazy, which in turn leads to his/her not doing certain things at home.

According to Delina and Raya [2], the attempt of working women to integrate, organize and balance the various problems and activities in their different roles simultaneously puts them under tremendous pressure. As a result, the family becomes an organizational stakeholder and this powerful social trend marked the beginning of the work-life balance paradigm shift. The working women efficiently overcome difficult situations through their commitment and perseverance.

Work-life imbalance is part of the top ten reasons why good employees quit. Sometimes, management would let one person do the job that is usually done by two or more people. Employees tend to work longer

hours or during weekends because of the downsizing and restructuring of some companies. Sometimes, employees tend to choose between personal life and career. Also, WLB has become a popular issue when it comes to discussing everyday living, especially to those who are working under different companies. This is so because there had been changes in terms of historical, economic and social aspects in the workplace. While more women are already joining workforce, the time spent in the family or for child caring is still needed. This is also one reason why flexible work schedules are needed.

Therefore, WLB has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life [14]. With the current characteristics of the workforce, the researchers became interested to examine the work-life balance of women belonging to generation X. Generation X refers to those who are born on the year 1965-1980. They were born at a time when two working parents was becoming the norm, rather than the traditional home unit of husband. Striving to do better in life than their parents, Generation X entered the workplace as enthusiastic and hardworking [15]. Having high expectations for their career, at least 8 out of 10 invested in some form of post-secondary education and 60% of generation X attended college [16]. At least two thirds believed that there is a strong correlation between acquiring tertiary education qualifications with obtaining their preferred work outcome [17]. According to Kane [16], women in generation X are independent, resourceful, and self-sufficient. They value freedom and responsibility in the workplace. Many in this generation display a casual disdain for authority and structured work hours.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the employment situation of women as of October 2015, indicates that 39.4% of the 39.8 million employed individuals were females and 16% of the employed women were at the age group of 35-54 that dominate jobs in education, hospitality, and retail industries. Moreover, generation X, occupying 60% of the current workforce, possesses an entrepreneurial spirit, a do-it-yourself attitude and, in contrast to the generations before them, embrace change in the workplace. They are career-oriented but place a strong emphasis on family time and strive for a good work-life balance [18].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research was conceptualized to explore work-life balance (WLB) of married career women

belonging to generation X. Specifically, this sought to (1) identify the difficulties of the respondents on various aspects of WLB; and (2) determine the differences in the WLB of the respondents when grouped according to their nature of work or work settings.

METHODS

This descriptive-causal-comparative study was conducted in Lucena City, the capital city of Quezon Province, Philippines. It is highly urbanized community where small to large enterprises and companies of different nature, private institutions and government agencies are evident. Two hundred fifty (250) married career women ageing 35 to 50 years old representing the generation X were selected as respondents of this study. They were chosen using stratified-proportional sampling with equal allocation to 5 different work settings that include (1) office workers in the government, corporate executives, managers, and supervisors, (2) academic professionals and teachers, (3) insurance and marketing agents, (4) healthcare and social welfare workers and (5) information technology professionals.

In the conduct of the study, respondents were given informed consent discussing the nature and scope of the study as well as the risks and benefits that can be derived from it. The research questionnaires were personally distributed and retrieved by the researchers. Statistical analyses which include weighted mean, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc Tukey HSD were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Characteristics of the Respondents

In terms of educational attainment, 30 (12.0%) of the respondents have Doctorate degrees; 76 (30.4%) have Master's degrees; and 144 (57.6%) of 250 respondents have Baccalaureate degrees. Meanwhile, their employment status revealed that 181 (72.4%) respondents were regular/ permanent employees. There were 41 (16.4%) casual or temporary employees and the remaining 28 (11.2%) were contractual employees.

Moreover, the monthly income of the respondents indicated that 3 (1.2%) respondents earn 10,000 and below; 49 (19.6%) earn 10,001 to 15,000 pesos; 63 (25.2%) belong to 15,001 to 20,000 monthly income bracket; 59 (23.6%) earn 20,001 to 25,000 monthly; 28 (11.2%) respondents earn ranging from 25,001 to 30, 000; 16 (6.4%) respondents belong to income bracket of 30,001 to 35,000; 7 (2.8%) have 35,001 to

40,000 monthly income; and 25 (10.0%) respondents have 40,000 and above worth of monthly income.

Meanwhile, 111 (44.4%) career women have 1-2 children/dependents; 109 (43.6%) were in-charge of 3-4 children/dependents; and the remaining 30(12%) have at least 5 children/dependents.

Research Instrument

The research instrument is a 10-item questionnaire adapted from the work of Daniels and McCarragher published in 2000 and was used in the study of Delina and Raya [2]. The adapted statements were formed into a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire sought to identify the difficulties of the respondents in WLB practices which underwent pilot testing and content validation before proceeding to the actual distribution to the actual respondents to ensure its validity and suitability to the nature and scope of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Difficulties on Work-Life Balance

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
1. Working long hours	2.27	Disagree
2. Less time to socialize/ relax	3.51	Agree
3. Taking work home in the evenings	3.03	Uncertain
4. Working late/ at weekends	3.00	Uncertain
5. Forgetting about work issues is difficult	3.25	Uncertain
6. Worry about the effect of work stress on health	2.36	Disagree
7. Relationship with partner suffering	3.88	Agree
8. Family missing out on input	3.60	Agree
9. Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities etc. is difficult	3.45	Agree
10. Want to reduce work hours but have no control over it	2.90	Uncertain
Average Weighted Mean (AWM)	3.13	Uncertain

Scale: 4.20 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree (SA); 3.40 – 4.19 = Agree (A); 2.60 – 3.39 = Uncertain (U); 1.80 – 2.59 = Disagree (D); 1.00 – 1.79 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

The responses of the respondents in terms of the difficulties they face in work-life balance (see Table 1) connote that they “disagree” (M=2.27) that they are

working long hours. They also “disagree” ($M=2.36$) that they worry about the effects of work stress on health. Meanwhile, respondents “agree” to have less time to socialize and relax ($M=3.51$); that their relationship with partner is suffering ($M=3.88$); that their family missing out their input ($M=3.60$); and that finding time for hobbies, leisure activities etc. is difficult ($M=3.45$). In support to this, Aguirre-Mateo [19] contends that those with children felt the lack of time even more strongly in most sectors. It was also found out that working women nowadays are missing too much time that is for their family. Furthermore, Levy [20] cited that WLB often involves issues with family, working time, welfare, social security, leisure time, and the list goes on.

Some of the statements were answered by the respondents as “uncertain” or referred to as ambivalent scale, these statements speak of taking work home in the evenings ($M=3.03$); working late/ at weekends ($M=3.00$); forgetting about work issues is difficult ($M=3.25$); and wanting to reduce work hours but have no control over it ($M=2.90$).

Moreover, the average weighted mean of the responses in the ten statements is 3.13 which is interpreted as “uncertain”. This may indicate that working career mothers were experiencing conflicts with family and work demands but are able to balance them. In support to this, the research of Thein, Currie and Austen [4] and the article of Ong [21] about Singaporeans, reported that despite of the distress at work, women decide to pursue their career to provide financial needs for their family and as a means of achieving a sense of identity. They can face the conflict of balancing their role of being a mother, a wife and a career woman. In addition, the thousands of stories of women-leaders who are successfully balancing home and work responsibilities were the attestations of this.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA; see Table 2) revealed a significant difference among the groups of respondents in terms of their nature of work or work setting ($F=3.438$, $p<0.05$).

Furthermore, the post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD indicated a significant difference between academic professionals and teachers, and healthcare and social welfare workers with a mean difference of 0.524 ($p<0.05$); and between insurance and marketing agents, and healthcare and social welfare workers with a mean difference of 0.456 ($p<0.05$). The mean of the responses in the difficulties on WLB among academic professional and teachers ($M=3.19$) is lower compared

to that of the healthcare and social welfare workers ($M=3.22$).

Table 2. One-way Analysis of Variance

Descriptive	Nature of work	Mean	F	Sig.
Work-Life Balance	Office workers in the government, corporate executives, managers, and supervisors	3.18	3.438	.010
	Academic professionals and teachers	3.19		
	Insurance and marketing agents	3.25		
	Healthcare and social welfare workers	3.22		
	IT Professionals	2.78		

This is consistent with the report of Schultz and Schultz [18] that the teaching profession is the least stressful job, most especially those in the universities and colleges. Meanwhile, compared with the healthcare and social welfare workers, the difficulties faced by insurance and marketing agents ($M=3.25$) is significantly higher. This could be attributed to the commonly quota-based salary arrangements of insurance and marketing professionals which is burdensome and stressful. In the same way, the study of Thriveni and Rama [22] on 340 women employees engaged in information technology, business process outsourcing (BPO), marketing, insurance, banking and education has revealed significant relationships between demographic variables and WLB. On the contrary, the work of Delina and Raya [2], found out that IT professionals were found to have more difficulties in balancing work and family followed by academic sector working women and then health sector working women.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Married career women and working mothers are confronted with many issues. At the forefront of these issues is the work-home interface. As revealed in this study, their difficulties circle around having lesser time to do their hobbies, socialize, and engage to leisure activities to relax. They also felt that their relationship with their partners and their families were already at the expense of missing their inputs.

Also, the level and extent of difficulties on WLB may vary among working women depending on the nature of their work; be it in academe, healthcare services or insurance and marketing. Moreover, insurance and marketing agents were more prone to higher and more difficulties on WLB.

With these, it is recommended that working women should raise more awareness in the concepts and importance of work-life balance; they should engage in WLB-related activities such as time management. Furthermore, Human Resource Management practitioners and Industrial or Organizational psychologists may develop and implement programs and mechanisms that promote quality and efficient WLB in institutions and agencies where the working women or mothers are affiliated. This might include child-care facilities in offices and compressed workweek or workload. Also, on the part of the government particularly policy makers, there must be an additional regulation expanding maternity and other women-related benefits and privileges to enhance the WLB of career women.

Further, with the design and limitations of this study, it is recommended to conduct a similar study (1) using qualitative or mixed methods of research; (2) use standardized test to assess WLB; (3) include other variables which might be related to WLB; (4) involve other group and population of respondents to further probe the multi-dimensional problems with WLB.

Other foreseeable limitations of the study include the use of self-reports and subjective evaluations to measure WLB. There is the possibility of socially desirable responses and favorable self-presentation which may result to a potential bias. Also, the impressions of the career women related to their difficulties on WLB are not always relative and consistent. Thus, it may change over time and their WLB may only be episodic.

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