STRESS, WELL-BEING AND WORK/LIFE BALANCE AMONG FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME WORKING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

In the face of globalisation, deregulation, and increased competitive pressures, the continuing proliferation of part-time work which offers the ‘best of both worlds’ i.e., work and family has sparked concern about the advantages and disadvantages of full-time work status among contemporary working women. In this regard, this paper makes a contribution by examining the stress, psychological well-being, and work/life balance of full-time and part-time working women that illustrate the similarities and differences between them. For this purpose, female managers from the public sector banks and teachers from government schools were compared on their level of stress, psychological well-being and work/life balance, and the significant differences among them were explored. Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen and Williamson (1988), Psychological Well-being scale by Ryff (1995) and Work/life balance questionnaire by Zeiger (2007) were carried out to assess the stress, well-being, and work/life balance among working women.

A sample of 90 working women i.e., 45 middle-line managers from public sector banks and 45 teachers from senior secondary government schools, in the age group of 30-40 years, were randomly selected from the tri-city of Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali. The results revealed significant differences between full-time and part-time working women on stress (t = 5.71, p < 0.001), and work/life balance (t = 3.04, p < 0.001). These findings indicated that full-time working women were found to be high on stress, and low on work/life balance than the part-time working women. However, no significant differences were found between full-time and part-time working women on their psychological well-being. This research necessitates to careful planning, personal effort, and training in the skills and competencies of family time management of the working women who usually get caught in the work/life balance trap. It will assist them in dealing with the role overload and family-to-work interference leading to a change towards more adaptive attitudes and the augmentation of more positive perceptions of one’s work-life balance.

Keywords: Stress, well-being, work/life balance, working women

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INTRODUCTION

In the face of globalisation, deregulation, and increased competitive pressures, the continuing proliferation of part-time work which offers the ‘best of both worlds’ i.e., enabling women to pursue career interests while still affording time to spend with their families has sparked concern about the advantages and disadvantages of full-time work status among contemporary working women. In fact, between 1991 and 2001, female employment in India on the whole, has increased by 3.6 percent per annum. With improved education and employment opportunities today, most homes are ones in which both parents work because of necessity and the desire to augment incomes. Today’s career women are continually challenged by the demands of full-time work and when the day is done at the office, they carry more of the responsibilities and commitments to home. In the Indian society, working women have to perform multiple roles in the family and workplace; as a result, they experience sustained psychological stress to cope in both the conditions. As a result, their mental well-being gets affected. There are many personal, organisational, and external factors that influence the daily perceptions of working women in the organisations.

There is now mounting evidence linking work-life imbalance to reduced health and well-being among full-time working women and their families. Pressures created by their multiple roles, work status, long working hours, work-to-family interference, overwork, gender discrimination, domestic problems, and challenges in the work environments characterised by heightened competition, lack of time, lack of space, conflicting demands from organisational stakeholders, combine to account for women’s poor mental health. There is a positive relationship between the frequency and severity of such social factors and the frequency and severity of mental health problems in women. Lack of WLB i.e., work/life balance practices may be a reason for overwork and increased stress. The majority of women are working 40-45 hours per week and 53 percent are struggling to achieve work/life balance. Full-time working women reported that their lives were a juggling act that included multiple responsibilities at work, heavy meeting schedules, business trips, on top of managing the daily responsibilities of life and home.

Stress is a feeling experienced when a person thinks that “the demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize” (Lazarus, 1993). Psychological well-being refers to the degree of personal fulfilment experienced by an individual. Ryan and Deci (2000) asserted that psychological well-being is optimised if an individual’s needs for competence, belongingness, and autonomy are satisfied. It is manifested when people attempt to feel good about themselves even while aware of their own limitations (self-acceptance), when they seek to develop and maintain warm and trusting relationships (positive relation with others), and to shape their emotions so as to meet personal needs and desires (environmental mastery). Work–life balance is the proper prioritising between ‘work’ (career and ambition) on one hand and ‘life’ (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Meaning, each individual’s needs, experiences and goals define the balance and what work-life balance does not mean is an equal balance in units of time between work and life. Work-family balance, as a perceptual phenomenon, is characterized by a sense of having achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of work and family domains (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).
Over the past two decades, women have consistently represented 70 percent of part-time workers (McRae & Kohler, 1995; Statistics Canada, 1995; Tilly, 1996). Work by Brown and Bifulco (1990) indicates that part-time employment is associated with a lower rate of depression among working class women, when contrasted with either full-time employees or full-time homemakers. Barker (1993) found that women who worked part-time reported greater well-being and happiness at home and greater satisfaction with their children than women who worked full-time. Lero & Johnson (1994) identified a significantly lower rate of conflict among women working part-time as compared to full-timers and reported that mothers who worked part-time were twice as likely as their full-time counterparts to claim that they were very satisfied with the balance between their work and family lives. Fast and Frederick (1996), in an analysis of Canadian General Social Survey data, found that women working part-time were half as likely as those working full-time to report high time stress. Research on professional women reveals that women report more work-interfering-with-family (WIF) conflict than family interfering-with-work (FIW) conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kinnumen & Mauno, 1998). A study by (Noor, 2004) reported that in terms of each conflict’s impact on well-being in full-time working professional women, FIW conflict is more significant than WIF conflict.

Review of literature highlights the fact that psychological well-being and work/life balance are vital in balancing family and work commitments among contemporary working women. However, little empirical research has been undertaken to support the proposed fact that part-time working women have high levels of psychological well-being, work/life balance, and low stress as compared to full-time working women. Thus it is imperative to explore the possible differences between full-time and part-time working women with regard to stress, psychological well-being, and work/life balance.

**Aim**

The aim of the present research is to compare the full-time working women *i.e.*, female managers from the public sector banks and part-time working women *i.e.*, the teachers from senior secondary government schools on their level of stress, psychological well-being and work/life balance.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the present research are as follows:

1. To identify the significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on their level of stress.
2. To identify the significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on their level of psychological well-being.
3. To identify the significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on their level of work/life balance.

**Hypotheses of the Research Study**

The hypotheses of the present research are as follows:

1. There would be significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on stress.
2. There would be significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on psychological well-being.
3. There would be significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on work/life balance.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Sample**

The sample for the present research comprised of 90 working women *i.e.*, 45 middle-line managers from public sector banks and 45 teachers from senior secondary government schools randomly selected from the tri-city of Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali. The working women were homogenous with respect to age (30-40 years), marital status (married), socio-economic status (upper-middle class), and working sector (public).

**Tests and Tools**

*Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)* by Cohen and Williamson (1988) was used to examine the stress levels among working women. It measures the degree to which situations in one’s life are stressful, and how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. This is a 14-item scale which is rated on a 5-point likert type scale. The scale possesses good reliability and validity. *Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB)* by Ryff (1995) was used to assess psychological well-being of working women. PWB scale has three sub-scale and each sub-scale has three items measuring each of the six dimensions viz. autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal relations with others and personal growth.

Individuals rate themselves on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 6 with labelled as ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Scale inter-correlations are modest ranging from 0.13 to 0.46. Estimates of internal consistency coefficients are low to modest ranging from 0.33 to 0.56. *Work/life balance questionnaire (WLB)* by Zeiger (2007) was used to assess the work/life balance of working women. It consists of 9 questions to be answered in Yes/No that measure the ability of the respondent to balance the demands of work and their own personal and family life. Items include, ‘Do you spend more hours than you like at work’?, ‘Do you spend most of your time doing what is important to you’, and ‘Are you living an ideal life’. The scale has good internal consistency.

**Statistical Analysis**

Keeping in view the hypotheses of the study, descriptive statistics consisting of mean, standard deviation was calculated. Differential analyses consisting of t-test was computed to identify the significant differences among full-time and part-time working women on stress, well-being, and work/life balance. SPSS system was used for data analyses.

As indicated in Table-1, t-test results revealed significant differences between full-time and part-time working women on their stress levels (*t = 5.71, p < 0.01*), which implies that full-time working women *i.e.*, female managers from the public sector banks were higher on their stress levels as compared to part-time working women *i.e.*, teachers from the senior secondary government schools. Results also indicated significant differences between full-time and part-
time working women on their work/life balance ($t = 3.04, p < 0.01$), which implies that part-time working women *i.e.*, teachers from the senior secondary government schools had better work/life balance than the full-time working women *i.e.*, female managers from the public sector banks. It may be noted here that according to work/life balance questionnaire by Zeiger (2007), higher scores indicate lower work/life balance. However, no significant differences ($t = 0.76, p > 0.01$) were found between full-time and part-time working women on their psychological well-being, but the results depicted that part-time working women were slightly higher on psychological well-being ($M = 30.5$, $S.D = 3.8$) than the full-time working women ($M = 31.6$, $S.D = 3.7$).

Table 1: Significant Differences between Full-time and Part-time Working Women on Stress, Well-being, and Work/life Balance (N=90).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Full-time (n=45)</th>
<th>Part-time (n=45)</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life Balance**</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<0.01$, ** Low scores on Work/life balance indicates better Work/life balance

These findings can be attributed to the fact that part-time work offers the ‘best of both worlds’, which enables women to pursue career interests while still affording time to spend with their families with less interference from work to family, thereby enhancing work-family balance (Duffy, Mandell, & Pupo, 1989; Kahne, 1992; Hall & Gordon, 1973). The probable cause for high levels of stress and low work-life imbalance among full-time working women is linked to the associated factors of their work status, long working hours, WIF, and the pressures created by their multiple roles.

The above results are in line with various researches and studies. Work by Brown and Bifulco (1990) indicates that part-time employment is associated with a lower rate of depression among working class women, when contrasted with either full-time employees or full-time homemakers. Barker (1993) found that women who worked part-time reported greater well-being and happiness at home, and greater satisfaction with their children than women who worked full-time. Lero & Johnson (1994) identified a significantly lower rate of conflict among women working part-time as compared to full-timers and reported that mothers who worked part-time, were twice as likely as their full-time counterparts to claim that they were very satisfied with the balance between their work and family lives. Fast and Frederick (1996), in an analysis of Canadian General Social Survey data, found that women working part-time were half as likely as those working full-time to report high time stress. Research on professional women reveals that women report more WIF conflict than FIW conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). A study by Noor (2004) reported that in terms of each conflict’s impact on well-being in full-time working professional women, FIW conflict is more significant than WIF conflict. Gash et al. (2010) in their study on the impact of changes in working-hours
on life satisfaction in two countries (UK and Germany) reported that decreases in working-hours bring about positive and significant improvement on well-being for women.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results (Table-1) revealed that the full-time working women reported higher levels of stress (\(M = 20.64, \text{S.D} = 3.8\)) than the part-time working women (\(M = 15.04, \text{S.D} = 2.8\)). It is also evident from the results that part-time working women reported slightly higher levels of psychological well-being (\(M = 30.5, \text{S.D} = 3.8\)) than full-time working women (\(M = 31.6, \text{S.D} = 3.7\)). The results also indicated that part-time working women reported higher levels of work/life balance (\(M = 5.5, \text{S.D} = 0.5\)) than full-time working women (\(M = 7.4, \text{S.D} = 0.5\)). According to Work/life balance questionnaire by Zeiger (2007), higher scores in WLB indicate lower WLB.

**CONCLUSION**

All the facts discussed so far provide evidence of the key role that work status has not really helped in facilitating work-life balance among working women, thereby contributing significant data towards accepting the hypothesis which postulates that part-time working women have better psychological well-being, work/life balance, and low stress than the full-time working women. This research necessitates careful planning, personal effort, and training in the skills and competencies of family time management of the full-time working women who usually get caught in the work/life balance trap, which will assist them in dealing with the role overload and FIW leading to a change towards more adaptive attitudes, and the augmentation of more positive perceptions of one’s work-life balance.

**REFERENCES**


