

Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

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ABSTRACT

Perceived stress integrates feelings of loss of control and irregularity in one's life, how often one has to make a pact with frustrations and hassles of daily life routine, the perceived anxiety from changes happening in one's life and confidence in one's ability to deal with different situations. The work-life balance is dependent on how well an individual can deal with the same. The premise in this research study was that perceived stress can be a major precursor in changing the work life balance. The aim of the research was to compare and explore the effect of perceived stress on work-life balance among married and unmarried working women. The tools used for assessment were Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Pareek & Purohit's Work-Life Balance Scale (WLB). The study was conducted on 60 working women in which 30 were married and 30 were unmarried. The inferential statistics utilized to analyse the data was an Independent Sample t-test, to compare the difference between the sample groups and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation with Simple Regression to explore the influence. The study reveals that a significant relationship exists between perceived stress and work-life balance wherein, perceived stress contributes significantly as a predictor of work life balance. Secondly, there were differences observed between the Work-life Balance and Perceived Stress among married and unmarried working women.

Keywords: *Married Working Women, Unmarried Working Women, Perceived Stress, Work-Life Balance, Working Women*

Women plays a vibrant role in the economy and social development of nations all over the world. Working women have to deal with different levels of issues and a whole set of roles involving both family and professional lives. They have to play the role of a daughter, wife, a mother and an employee; managing their career while maintaining traditional roles. Work-life balance includes a balance between work and personal life that both bring satisfaction to the individual (Bataineh, 2019). It contains three components, namely a balanced time, a balance of work and family involvement and fair satisfaction (Wong et al,2017). Nathani and Jha (2009) have grouped factors influencing work and family life spheres into three, namely, family and personal life related factors; work related factors; and others. Balancing work and life demands is a vital factor for life

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Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

satisfaction. The origins of research on work-life balance can be essentially traced back to studies on women having multiple roles. Work life balance was initially termed as work family conflict (Kahn et al, 2014). The most widely accepted definition of work-life balance is the lack of conflict between the work and family roles (Frone, 2003). It is a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Jones, 2013). It is a satisfaction and good functioning at home and work with a minimum role conflict (Clark, 2000). Poor work-life balance is due to high levels of work-family conflicts on work satisfaction and psychological health (Gautam et al, 2018). It affects the performance of the employees (Wolor, 2020).

In the competitive era, organizations are under competitive pressure to achieve high productivity and require employees with healthy work-life balance as an employee with good work-life balance will be in a position to contribute more towards the organizational growth and success (Naithani, 2010). Both women and men prefer working in organisations that support work-life balance (Burke, 2002). Women draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the other (Burke, 2002). Work-life balance and marital status are significantly related (Malik, 2015). One of the essential factors in successfully managing work-life balance is the ability to reduce and control actual and perceived stress (Martino, 2009). Role conflict, lack of recognition, organizational politics, gender discrimination, elderly and child care issues, quality in health, problems in time management and lack of proper social support are the major factors influencing the work life balance of women professionals (Mani, 2013). Latha (2015) carried out a study and found statistically significant differences on the basis of Organizational Role Stress between married and unmarried groups. The research of Delina and Prabhakara (2013) indicates that the work-life balance of individuals affects their quality of life. They also added that married working women find it very hard to balance their work and personal life irrespective of the sector they are into, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's profession. Workload and role conflict have positive correlation with work life balance (Yusof & Ismail, 2014). Chandrashekar et al (2013) explained about the factors of work demand that interferes with the personal life which leads to an imbalance state.

Perceived stress means how an individual feel about the general stressfulness of their life and their ability to handle such stress. (Phillips, 2013). It reflects the interaction between an individual and their environment which they appraise as threatening and overwhelm their resources in a way which will affect their well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Mukambika and Kotian (2016) found that shifting the role structure of women, role conflicts, family distortions, and children are the victims of maternal stress. A research conducted by Bernard & Misigo (2015) showed that females have higher stress levels than males and also they have a strong belief that flexible working hours will enhance the work life balance (Doble & Supriya, 2015). Dhanabakyam and Malarvizhi (2014) stated that the women in professional job positions with high job demand were more prone to experience work family conflict and work stress. Occupational stress and work-life balance are strongly related (Zaheer & Asma, 2016). Work-life balance and stress is not just a problem to be solved, it is a constant issue to be managed (Yadav et al, 2014). Stress can be relieved from balancing work and family, from institutional support, by spending time with the family and performing physical exercises (Bhuvaneshwari, 2013).

This research attempts to explore the effect of perceived stress and marital status on work life balance among working women. Marriage imposes certain responsibilities on women, having a significant impact on her decision to work. The problem of unmarried women is

Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

different from that of married women. The way in which they approach the problem and perception also differ.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the effect of level of perceived stress on work-life balance among married and unmarried Working women.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To study the level of work life balance among married and unmarried working women belonging to the young adult age group.
- 2) To study the level of perceived stress among married and unmarried working women.
- 3) To study the effect of perceived stress on work life balance among married and unmarried working women.

Hypothesis

H₀1- There is no significant difference between the level of work-life balance among married and unmarried women.

H₀2- There is no significance difference between the level of perceived stress among married and unmarried working women.

H₀3- There is no significant relationship between the level of perceived stress and work-life balance among married and unmarried working women.

Variables

Independent Variable. Perceived Stress and Marital status

Dependent Variable. Work-life balance

Sample

In the present study the respondents were working professionals, female within the age group of 18- 40. The level of work experience of the respondents taken were above 1 year.

The sample size of the study is 30 married and 30 unmarried working women. Sampling method used was non-random purposive sampling.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

- **Life Balance scale (Udai Pareek & Surabhi Purohit, 2010):** The scale measures work-life balance in the six areas of personal needs, social needs, time management, team work, compensation and work itself. These six areas or determinants of work-life balance are measured through 6 items each in the 36 items scale. The participants have to rate each of the 36 statements in a five-point scale to indicate how much true it was in their experience.
- **Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon Cohen, 1983):** The questions in this scale ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and should treat each one as a separate question. There are 10 items for the scale.

Procedure

For the purpose of the data collection the working women from the private and public sector were selected. It was ascertained to collect an equal number of married and unmarried working women, that is 30 each. Data was collected through Google forms from the people

Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

who belong to the sample group. The approximate time taken for the completion of the questionnaires was around 20 minutes. The responses obtained were scored based on the scoring criteria provided for each questionnaire in the manual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Analysis of Socio demographic details of the respondents

The data collected included 30 married working women and 30 unmarried working women. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Showing the Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Perceived Stress	30	17.53	4.678	-0.53	-0.62
Work-Life Balance	30	84.58	11.662	0.47	0.116

In table 1, descriptive statistics of Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance are shown. For the total number of respondents, (N=60) a group of samples with enough representation of married (30) and unmarried (30) working women were selected. The mean score of Perceived Stress is 17.53 ± 4.678 . Skewness (-0.62) and kurtosis (-0.53) value of Perceived Stress are identified between the range of -1.96 to +1.96, hence the distribution is normal. The mean score of Work-Life Balance is 84.58 ± 11.662 . Skewness (0.116) and kurtosis (0.47) value of Work-Life Balance are identified between the range of -1.96 to +1.96, hence the distribution is normal.

Results of Statistical Analysis and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

The first objective of the research was to study the level of work life balance among married and unmarried working women. The corresponding hypothesis states that, there is no significant difference between the level of work-life balance among married and unmarried women. And the hypothesis was tested using the Independent Sample T-test. Table 2.1 shows the Independent Sample T-Test for married and unmarried working women on the level of Work-Life balance.

Table 2 Independent Sample T-test

Table 2.1 Showing the Independent Sample T-test of married and unmarried working women on the level of Work-Life Balance

Dependent Variable	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	T	Df	Significance
Work-Life Balance	Married	30	81.47	9.11	2.13	58	.037
	Unmarried	30	87.70	13.17			

For this research sample ($n = 60$), the group of Married samples ($M = 81.47$, $SD = 9.11$, $n = 30$) has lower Work-Life balance than the group of Unmarried samples ($M = 87.70$, $SD = 13.17$, $n = 30$), $df = 58$, $t = 2.13$, $p = 0.037$ and is significant at 0.05 level.

Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

The above results indicate that $p < 0.05$, hence the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. **Therefore, there is a significant difference between the level of Work-Life Balance among married and unmarried working women.**

Hypothesis 2

The second objective of the research was to study the level of Perceived Stress among married and unmarried working women. The corresponding hypothesis states that, There is no significant difference between the level of Perceived Stress among married and unmarried women.

The hypothesis was tested using Independent Sample T-test.

Table 2.2 Showing the Independent Sample T-test of married and unmarried working women on the level of Perceived Stress

Dependent Variable	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	T	Df	Significance
Perceived Stress	Married	30	19.70	4.26	-4.02	58	0.00
	Unmarried	30	15.37	4.08			

For this research sample ($n = 60$), the group of Married sample ($M = 19.70$, $SD = 4.26$, $n = 30$) has higher level of Perceived Stress than the group of Unmarried sample ($M = 15.37$, $SD = 4.08$, $n = 30$), $df = 58$, $t = -4.02$, $p = 0.00$ and is significant at 0.05 level.

Since, $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected and an alternate hypothesis is accepted. **Hence the results indicate that, for the data collected, there is a significant difference in the level of perceived stress among married and unmarried working women.**

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis of the research states that, there is no significant relationship between the level of perceived stress and work-life balance among married and unmarried working women. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to find the relationship between two variables. Table 3.1 shows the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test for Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance.

Table 3 Pearson's product Moment Correlation and Simple Regression

Table 3.1 Showing Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test- Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance

Variables	Mean	Std.Deviation	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig.(2-tailed)
Perceived Stress	17.53	4.67	60	-.294*	.023
Work-Life Balance	84.58	11.66			

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

For this research sample ($n = 60$), the Perceived Stress ($M = 17.53$, $SD = 4.67$) and Work-Life Balance ($M = 84.58$, $SD = 11.66$) of the married and Unmarried working women is negatively correlated and correlation strength is weak, $r = -0.294$, $p = 0.023$ and is significant at 0.05 level.

Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. **Hence the results indicate that, for the data collected, there is significant relationship between Perceived Stress score and Work-Life Balance among the Married and Unmarried working Women.**

Table 3.2 Showing Simple Linear Regression Test

Predictor Variable	R	R Square	Df	f	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	Sig
Perceived Stress	.294	0.087	1,59	5.49	-.294	0.023

Dependent Variable: Work-Life Balance

For this research sample ($n = 60$), the Perceived Stress is a significant predictor for Work-Life Balance for the married and unmarried working women sample, $F(1, 59) = 5.49$, $p = 0.023$. Predictor variable Perceived Stress contributes 8% of variance in criterion variable Work-Life Balance ($R^2 = 0.087$). This means that the Perceived Stress is able to significantly predict Work-Life Balance ($\beta = -0.294$, $p = 0.023$) of the sample implying that the extent to which a woman perceives stress in her life, has an influence on her ability to balance work and life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Implications of The Study

The results of this study clearly imply that the Perceived Stress is one of the main components which influence the level of Work-Life Balance among both married and unmarried working women. Marital counsellors, Corporate counsellors, etc. can take the results of this study into consideration while addressing the clients having work-life conflicts and stress and also, they can encourage or help them to adopt strategies to balance Work-Life and reduce Perceived stress. In organizations, the managers can give more attention to the women employees and make some strategies that make them more productive at organization and help in manage their homes as well. Work-Life Balance strategies with regards to matter such as time-based flexibility leave benefits, and interpersonal relationships have the potential to reduce or increase stress on women employees with life responsibilities. The provision of Work-Life Balance strategies can provide a positive and direct impact on women employee decision to remain in an organization. Working women with better Work-Life Balance will contribute more meaningfully towards the organizational growth and success. Thus, it can be implied that adoption of a wide range of Work-Life Balance strategies to deal with a variety of women employee needs and demands will have the potential for significant positive outcomes for the organization. The imbalance in work-life can cause less dedication in the work environment and can also lead to aggressive behavior with their co-workers and to their job. This sort of behaviors can be avoided by conducting work life balance programs and they can provide conducting of yoga or meditation course for those employees. And for the growth of the faculties, they can conduct faculty enrichment programs by the institutions. Management can form better policies for women, such that it would reduce or eliminate levels of work-life conflict and stress and thereby enhance employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Limitations of The Study

The present study lacks generalizability as the results obtained in the study cannot be generalized as they may have been subject to sampling error due to an incomplete representation of the sample. The present study was limited to the geographical area of mainly Southern part of India and hence it was difficult to obtain a variation in number of the sample size. The study is also limited in its scope because of the limited sample size. The study did not give any scope for exploring the dimensions of Work-Life balance which could enlighten us further on specific areas that require attention with respect to the working women.

Scope for Further Research

The researcher endeavored to explore all possible critical factors, however, like any other study, this study too has several limitations. For the future work, the following point may be considered, widening of geographical area chosen for study so as to build a comparative analysis among women employees across different cultures.

Exploring the dimensions of Work Life Balance can give a wider view of specific factors that may specifically influence Perceived stress. The research also gives a scope to readapt the study as a comparative study between married and unmarried working women and men.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides new information with regard to the relationship between Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance. Apart from the theoretical implications, these findings have practical relevance not only for employees, but also for employers. Becoming aware of this issues, people especially married women will be able to recognize the factors which increase their level of perceived stress inherent in their work place and can learn to develop the preventive methods for mitigation of these stressors this in turn would help to arrest the decline in job performance, burnout and family related problems. To achieve Work-Life Balance, every woman should set the goal and excel both in career and family. Some of the strategies and skills at work such as planning, organizing and setting limits can be used at home and work place for accomplishing a satisfying and fulfilling well balanced life both professionally and personally. Women employee should care the family both physically and financially to satisfy the family needs. Also work for the accomplishment of organizational objectives and individual upliftment to satisfy the career needs. Organizations need to adopt human resource strategies and policies to overcome the issues of the work life balance of women in the current business environment.

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Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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