

## Conceptual Review of Work Life Balance among Women Employees

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### ABSTRACT

Work life balance is maintaining optimum balance between personal and professional life. In this modern world of technologies, the border between work and personal life is narrow. Person with disability are one of the most marginalized groups in our society. Scarcity of resources especially professional human resources is one of limitation in providing quality disability rehabilitation. Researches on disability rehabilitation especially on human resources perspective of disability rehabilitation were very limited. From the literature review a gap in research on work life balance of the female disability rehabilitation professionals was identified. The objective of this study was to identify and analyze various factors of work life balance among female disability rehabilitation professionals. Sample of this study was thirteen female disability rehabilitation professionals. Semi structured interview method was used for collection of data after going through intensive literature review. Three elements of work life balance were analyzed. The first element analyzed was on how work is influenced by life, second was on how life events influence work and finally how work life enhancement which include positive effects of one's work on personal and professional life or vice versa. Subthemes were identified and analyzed under each theme. Explored subthemes provided valuable insight on various factors influencing women disability rehabilitation professionals. This study identified and analysed how various factors of social and cultural aspects influenced gender identity of an individual. This study suggests essential elements necessary for enhancement of work life balance effectively among female employees.

**Keywords:** *Work life balance, Disability, Rehabilitation, Qualitative research, Women employees*

**W**ork life balance is the balance between work and personal life. The state of equilibrium where a person gives equal weight to the needs of their personal life and their career is known as work-life balance. Achieving and preserving a healthy balance between your personal and professional lives is crucial. It's difficult to maintain a work-life balance in these uncertain times in this world. Sustaining healthy work-life balance is one of the biggest challenges of an employee.

Work-life balance, according to Hudson (2005), is the ability to satisfactorily integrate or fit one's many responsibilities into one's life. Maintaining a work-life balance involves setting

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aside time for both work-related activities and extracurricular pursuits that can lead to personal conflict or serve as a source of personal motivation. Disability rehabilitation is one of the underrepresented sectors in India. Disability rehabilitation sector is facing various challenges due to limited resources and a lack of qualified staff. Study on work life balance of the disability rehabilitation professionals is important stepping stone towards ensuring sustainable professional and personal life.

The Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992) enacted Indian Rehabilitation Council which was aimed for monitoring and training of rehabilitation specialists. Academic courses and institutions providing education for disability rehabilitation are also monitored by Rehabilitation Council of India. Professionals in disability rehabilitation area provide a wide range of training to children with disabilities. The training is provided based on the individual needs of every child. The domains of training include learning how to move around, read, write, eat, drink, and use the restroom etc. Professionals in the field of disability rehabilitation, such as audiologists, psychologists, physiotherapists etc provide services for children with disabilities.

Work life balance of women disability rehabilitation professionals was explored in this study. Major factors of work life balance effecting female disability rehabilitation professionals were identified and studied. This study identified social and cultural constructs that influence women disability rehabilitation professionals an Indian context.

### ***Research Questions***

What are the various factors of work life balance effecting female disability rehabilitation professionals?

### ***Objectives***

To identify and analyze various factors of work life balance among female disability rehabilitation professionals.

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This study was a qualitative study. Sample of this study was thirteen female disability rehabilitation professionals from Kerala. Semi structured interview was used as data collection method. Phenomenology approach was used in this study. The researcher was well experienced and academically qualified for conducting this study. This enabled researcher extensively to understand the depth of description provided by the participants. Ethical issues were also considered during the course of research.

### ***Participant recruitment***

This study was conducted among thirteen female disability rehabilitation professionals. These disability rehabilitation professionals were recognized under Rehabilitation Council of India. Disability rehabilitation professionals include Special educators, Physiotherapist, Occupational therapist, Psychologist etc. Samples were recruited from two districts of Kerala. Samples were selected from Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad districts of Kerala state using purposive sampling. Disability rehabilitation professionals including Special Educators, Psychologists, Physiotherapist, Occupational therapist etc. were included in the study for data collection. The supporting staffs like accountants, administrators, trustees were excluded from this study.

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### *Data Collection*

Face to face interviews were conducted with thirteen participants. After thirteen interviews data collection reached a level of saturation. Purposive sampling method was used to have maximum variation. Interviews were conducted at work places and at homes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for all thirteen participants. To safeguard the data's confidentiality and privacy, measures were taken. Pilot study was conducted among five participants and necessary changes were made. Before the interview, participants were given a brief explanation about the study and asked for their verbal consent. The interviews of the participants were utilized to capture different form of diversity in the data. Interviews were held for 40 to 120 minutes with an average interview time of 90 min. Interview was conducted in Malayalam, which is the native language of Kerala. Interview questionnaire had semi-structured questions, alone with unstructured questions added as per requirement. Predetermined themes served as the basis for creating the questionnaire. There were three themes specifically for work-life balance. Work interfering with personal life, personal life interfering with work, and eventually work/personal life enhancement were the themes for work-life balance.

### *Data Analysis*

In this qualitative study phenomenology method was used for data analysis. Phenomenology method is the most appropriate approach for this study. Phenomenology “capture the meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell 2007). In this study the phenomenon under study was work life balance of disability rehabilitation professionals.

Transcriptions of thirteen interviews were prepared. Data collected was adequate to fulfil the objectives of the study. On the basis of predetermined themes units were prepared. Subthemes emerged for each predetermined theme. Subthemes are formed as the result of data analysed from the interviews. The perspective of the researcher was constrained using bracketing while gathering and interpreting data. Bracketing limits researcher's attitudes and interest to influence study.

### *Methodological Integrity*

Methodological integrity identifies the method-based evaluations that support trustworthiness. Methodological integrity emphasized the rationale for selecting and adjusting methods rather than specific processes. The investigation acquired a diverse range of data. The adequacy of the data was prioritized during the data collection process. The researcher made a concerted effort to include a wide range of data. Quotes, excerpts, or descriptions of researchers were utilized to demonstrate the basis of the findings. During this study the data encompasses diversity of data. In this study the emerged subthemes were discussed with some of participants and given opportunity to comment on the findings. Peer debriefing was done to enhance the accuracy of data. In this process a peer debrifer reviewed questions used in this study. This enabled researcher to get broad perspective.

## **FINDING**

### *Themes on Work life balance*

In this study three predetermined themes of work life balance were used. Interviews were conducted using semi structured questions. On the basis of data collected and analysed, subthemes were emerged under each theme. Themes and subthemes emerged are mentioned below.

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### ***Theme - 1: Work Interference with personal life***

Work interference with personal life reflects the work related factors influencing employee's personal life. This theme included dimensions of work environment that influence personal life of an individual. Subthemes are emerged as per the interviews conducted. The subthemes emerged are mentioned below.

**Role Conflict.** Disability rehabilitation is a team work. All the duties and tasks are not specifically assigned to each employee. Responsibilities of girls with disability were handled by women disability rehabilitation professionals due to gender and cultural sensitivities. Work conflict mostly affects women disability rehabilitation professionals. During leave of subordinates and also while preparing for a new events or programme, female staffs take responsibility of girls with disability. These results in role conflict between women disability rehabilitation professionals. Limited numbers of the staffs were also a problem in this issue. Work overlap due to limited number of employees is another issue that elevate role conflict. Role conflict generates lot of stress to the employees. Personal lives of female employees were influenced by this issue.

**Flexibility.** Flexibility is another subtheme that influenced work interference with personal life. Both married and unmarried women shared that they have responsibility of completing household work before leaving house in morning. Household work includes cooking, preparing children for school, looking elders in family etc. So, it is naturally expected that all work will not be completed as per planned every day. Flexibility in working time at office is considered as a very important factor. Women disability rehabilitation professionals need more flexibility in work timing. They need this flexibility without reducing the working hours.

**Role of management.** Participant shared that the attitude towards work life balance needs to be changed in a positive way. The management need to understand gender based issues faced by women. And also need to frame policies protecting work life balance. Initiation need to be taken by management to train supervisors to sensitize towards the work life balance issues of women employees. And also train them to handle the situation in a better way.

### ***Themes - 2: Personal life Interference with work***

Under this theme, factors of personal life that affect work were analyzed. Subthemes were emerged as result of data collection and analysis using semi-structured interview method. Major subthemes emerged during study was provided below.

**Health issues.** One of the most important concerns expressed by women employees was regarding health issues. Personal health issues were affecting the work performance. Diseases caused by using unhygienic toilets were shared by participants. During their field work the availability of hygiene toilets were rare. This causes diseases including urinal infection and other health concerns. Menstruation related health issues was another factor affecting women employees. Female employees need to face both physical and psychological health issues during their work. Psychological issues were sometimes even not recognized by the individual. Some of the female employees were well aware about the changes that happen during menstruation period. They share behavioural issues like mood swings during this period which leads to frustration, fatigue, feeling low, low confidence level etc. Female employees also shared physical issues like pain in various parts of body including abdomen due to infections from work place.

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**Child care.** Child rearing is another pivotal aspect that affects career of women employees significantly. An important aspect noticed while interacting with women employees during this section was that most of the women consider child care starts on the date when they came to know that they were pregnant. Pregnancy period experiences were also shared by the women employees. Female employees shared about the leaves and permissions taken from work place during that period. Some of the participants shared that due to pregnancy and child care process they lost their job seniority. And also need to work under supervision of male colleagues who were their junior during college time. Leaves taken by women in workplace are highly depending on the health of the child. Health issues of child are directly influencing leave of mother. So, subtheme of childcare has come as one of most important personal aspects which influence work.

**Marital Issues.** In Indian tradition women need to live in her husband's home. This needs an enormous level of skills and knowledge. Participants considered the role of husband and his family as a pivotal influence in work. Support of both husband and the other members in family is essential for building successive carrier. Life partner need to understand the need of job and also need to be able to accommodation himself as per the need. If life partners are not ready to adjust with wife's job demands then it is going to affect the work. Marital issues were another subtheme emerged under personal life interference with life.

### ***Themes - 3: Work/ Personal life enhancement***

Work /personal life enhancement is the positive life factors that derived from job or due to personal life. Positive work life balance of a person will provide an enhancement to the life of the participants. The subthemes emerged during this research are provided below.

**Social Status.** Various jobs in the society provide social status of different levels. Women disability rehabilitation professionals shared that their job provides high social status. Even though financially they are not very rightly rewarded by this job; they are getting respect and recognition in society. Participant expressed the reason for this recognition is due to the perception of society towards them as an independent person who positively contributes towards their family and society. Another aspect is due to rehabilitation sector which is considered as a valued job by society. Social respect and recognition is high for the person working for the betterment of persons with disability. The positive social status enables to enhance personal life in a positive way.

**Job Satisfaction.** Most of the participants informed that the selection of disability sector for the career was done voluntary by participants. So, the job itself motivates them to work. The biggest satisfaction for the disability professionals are the positive changes they bring in to the life of children with disabilities. The progress which incurred after providing services enable children with disabilities to achieve a level of independence by developing their life skills like eating, drinking, toileting, dressing etc. This positive change in the child with disability changes the attitude of family towards child and they will provide more efforts in the rehabilitation process. Some of the participants share their personal relationships with their students with disability and with their families are also contributing factor in the disability rehabilitation. This aspect influences the personal life of women disability rehabilitation professionals in a positive manner.

**Self Esteem.** Self – Esteem is how a person feels about oneself. The women employees were explaining that they were having very high self- esteem due to working. And especially they were happier to be in this filed. Workings in disability rehabilitation sector do not bring

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financial abundance to the family. Salary only allows having a respectful life but the factors like social status, a job satisfaction and internal joy provide high self esteem. This influences their life in a positive way. And give them strength to face challenge in life. Families having children with disability need to face lot of challenge including economical, social etc. Providing services to families with disability provide support to these families. These all aspects of work enhance self esteem.

### DISCUSSION

This study enables to identify and analysis various factors contributing to work life balance. Three dimensions of work life balance was analysed in this study. Each dimension enables to understand about work life balance from a different perspective. In this study under work inference with personal life theme three subthemes emerges. Role conflict, flexibility and role of management were the subthemes emerged. Personal life interference with work was the second theme and under this theme three subthemes emerged which included health issues, child care and marital issues. Under the final theme of personal life enhancement, subthemes emerged like social status, job satisfaction and self-esteem.

Phenomenological method was used for data collection and analysis to get a better understanding about the concept of work life balance. Phenomenological study helps to get the essence of the topic which we are studying. Study enabled us to get an in depth knowledge about work life balance. The findings of this study have direct implication in the educational and rehabilitation sector. The subthemes emerged during this study can be used for generalisation.

This study has a wide dimension of implications. This includes support of management in the formulation and implementation of work life balance policy. Training needs to be provided for the employees to understand various challenges of work life balance. The recruitment of the employees needs to be in line with the organizational values and ethics. Flexibility needs to be encouraged for the implementation of work life balance.

#### *Enhancing Work life Balance*

This research on work life balance on women employees had provided insight on various factors that can enhance work life balance. The most important factors that can enhance work life balance are provided below.

1. Providing flexibility in work.
2. Develop organizational culture which support work life balance
3. Policies promoting work life balance need to be implemented
4. Accepting individual as whole
5. Necessary training needs to be provided for addressing work life balance

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes by identifying and analysing various factors of work life balance of disability rehabilitation professionals. Under this study three themes of the work life balance was analysed. Three subthemes were generated under the dimension of work interference with personal life. Emerging subthemes as the result of this study has provided a great insight on understanding the concept of work life balance and enabled to provide suggestions for enhancing work life balance.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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