

## CHAPTER 1

### WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: THE CONCEPT AND CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Jill Smart is a mother of two kids, ages 16 and 11, and professionally she is a chief human resource officer at a private company 'Accenture'. Her support system and her readiness to seek help form the key components of her successful career and family. She mentions- *"I have a great partner. I could not do what I do and be a good mom without my husband. It's not just because he helps me, but he gives me the latitude to be the working mom I want to be. He respects my choices and does not make me feel guilty rather he makes me feel better. I am not afraid to ask for help at work and at home. I know my weakness and that helps me be a better mom."*

*I outsource everything I can that's not related to my kids. My nanny does not do homework with my kids or take them to the doctor or bake them a cake- that's my job. I haven't vacuumed in 20 years and I am not afraid to sometimes say that I can't be on that call because I have to go to my child's school to work at the pizza lunch.*

*By informing the fellow employees that I would be with my kids gives them permission to do the same. As a senior leader in the company, I think it's my responsibility to let people know we are human, and we have to make the same choices as they do. A lot of women throw in the towel without trying. They don't try to be working moms because they think they can't do it."* (Greenberg & Avigdor, 2009)

Jill's story reflects multiple aspects of her life. She is a mother and wife and does all that is needed for her family. She is careful that her family roles and responsibilities do not affect her paid work. She prioritises her tasks depending upon the need and urgency to attend. She clearly mentions the ways she exercises her agency to deal with the various needs and demands. The secret to her success is the support from her husband and fellow colleagues at the workplace. She understands and expresses her concerns towards her fellow colleagues and acknowledges that she has no different needs and demands from them with reference to family life. Overall, her story narrates her approach to deal with the demands/ situations and the steps in the ladder to her success that mainly focus on the ways to manage between her workplace and her family.

Jill's story is an illustration of management of workplace and family to strike the right balance between the two. The current study is a means to understand the experiences of such working women and capture a variety of stories related to their work-family balance.

Articles in periodicals, newspaper headlines and anecdotal evidence reveal that work-family balance is a regular and an everyday element for the working population around the world and the spotlight is on the employed women and women entrepreneurs. These anecdotal evidences and research articles emphasize on work-family balance and consider this balance as an important element in women's life which is inseparable and essential. The following quotes stand as evidence:

*The Economic times*- "In spite being the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world, only 14% of Indian businesses are run by women. What are the obstacles?" (The Economic times Bureau, 2019).

"Can Working Women Achieve a Work-Life Balance?" (Hakobyan, 2017)

*The Sunshine coast daily*- "Flexible working arrangements make all the difference." (Marshall, 2014)

An anecdote by counsellor Dr Prabha Chandra- *Women seek more professional help than men for their issues related to work-family balance. Nearly 20 women visited per month for the counselling.* She adds "*that it is the cultural expectation from women to be efficient and excel in every sphere of life.*" (Balram, 2018)

We shall first understand the concept of work-family balance and then take a look at the demographics of employed women and the changing approach to research; this will enable us to understand the need for the present study in context explaining the academic and personal motivations for this research.

### **Understanding The Concept of Work-Family Balance**

"Work and family are two very important domains of an individual's life and assume priority over other facets. Defining work-family balance appears to be a simple deed until the depth of the term is understood. At a simple level, a balanced life is when people have a satisfying experience in all areas of life, and use resources such as personal energy, time and commitment to be well distributed in both areas, work and family/life. It is also a state when

individuals have satisfaction and are able to work both at home and in the workplace with minimal role conflict.” (Prasetya & Wacana, 2016)

“Work-family balance is defined as the measure of control over work and family within the given/available time frame with the initiative to fulfil the commitments of work and family for which sparing equal time for work and family can be less important compared to the sense of achievement and enjoyment in work, family and self. Individual’s perceptions and priorities influence their work-family balance and therefore it becomes important to develop tolerance towards an individual’s life at work and outside work. This juggle may not always be stressful but does affect the productivity at work, may lead to health issues and absenteeism at work.” (Swift, 2002 as cited in Lockwood 2003; Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

Frone (2003) in a review paper on work-family balance explained work-family balance as a multidimensional construct and is defined from two facets, first- the direction of the influence between work and family (that is work to family versus family to work) and second- the type of effect (conflict vs facilitation) i.e work to family conflict/enhancement, family to work conflict/enhancement. Work-family balance does not always mean to reduce the work-family conflict but also to enhance and elevate work-family facilitation. The use of integrated, multivariate models of balance between work and non-work roles give a comprehensive picture of work-family balance. It also states the importance of measuring the relevant directions or dimensions of balance because the direction and the effect also influence the individual's health and well being. Such an approach is even more important in the present context considering the demographics of women's employment, especially in the middle class.

### **The Demographics of Women’s Employment**

The recent report by ILO, *India Labour Market Update, July 2017* (August 8, 2017) and World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017* (2017) as cited in *Catalyst*, (2018) states that though India has progressed in education, the labour force participation rate for women in 2017 was 28.5% compared to 82% for men. Globally, the percentage of women participating in the labour force is declining which is 48.5% in 2018 as compared to 51.4% in 1990. Women account for 40% or more of the total labour force in many countries. Women’s labour force participation across several countries is displayed in table 1.1. It shows that Indian

women's participation in the workforce still lags behind, compared to that of the other countries. In another report by International Labour Organization, India ranks in the bottom 20 of a list of 131 countries in female labour force participation with just 3% in legislative, management, and senior official positions. Senior level female employees in India are just 5 per cent compared to the global average of 20 per cent. Forty-eight percent women drop out of the workforce before they reach the middle of their careers (Malhotra, 2016). India has the lowest national female labour force and the worst progression for junior to middle-level position women (Gender Diversity Benchmark, 2011 as cited in Catalyst, 2018).

Table 1.1

*Women's Labor Force Participation Across Countries*

<b>Country</b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b>Labour force participation rate (%)</b>
Australia	2018	60.5
Canada	2017	61.5
European Union (EU-28)	2017	47.7
India	2017	27.2
Japan	2017	51.1
United States		57

Source: (Catalyst, 2018)

However, it has been observed that Indian women's exposure to educational opportunities now is substantially high, especially in the urban setting which leads to new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth.

With improved education and employment opportunities today, most middle-class homes now comprise of two employed parents. Most studies in India on employed married women report economic need as the primary reason to work for which they opt for full-time careers with family roles and are committed to it just like the men (Dubey, 2010). The employment of women supports the family and raises their standard of living, enables them to provide good educational facilities to children, a better diet for the family members and save for future economic security. For some women, it is a way to provide an additional income for the better functioning of the family and for some other women it gives a meaning to their lives (Ahmed, Nirmala, Reddy, Siddaramu, & Vranda, 2010; Lyonette & Crompton, 2006; Orbuch & Custer, 1995). With the increased competitiveness in the global market demands, working for a fixed number of hours is no more relevant as 'long hours culture' and

‘24/7 lifestyle’ has come to dominate the lives of highly educated and skilled professionals and managerial personnel both men and women. Employees have to put in efforts more than the employer’s expectations in order to keep their jobs secure (Jhunjhunwala, 2012).

### **Trends in Work-Family Research in India**

A gradual shift has been observed in the number of women employed, their working patterns and the nature of their work. Hence, I attempt to provide a glimpse of the areas studied so far and those overlooked with respect to women, work and family as a basis to conceptualise the current study, and then delve into elaborating the theories and research related to the concept of work-family balance in the next chapter.

Rajadhyaksha & Smita (2004) in their paper ‘*Tracing A Timeline For Work and Family Research in India*’ reviewed the researches on work and family in the Indian context beginning from the period after independence up to mid-2000. The review revealed that women continue to bear the household responsibilities and other family responsibilities but their unpaid work is still underlooked and gains no recognition in the national income. The involvement of women in paid work showed a steady increase, however, the proportion between the increased number of working women and the facilities or provisions for women by the government and workplace was still a concern.

Looking in the past, the decade 1970-80 was marked by intense researches on women and work explaining the conditions of work for women, the work-family relationships and related issues. Women continued to have a dual role burden irrespective of their socio-economic status and education. However, the research in this period lacked the perspectives of men on work-life balance and the research was surrounded around women, work and family. During 1980-90 the era was marked by studies on working couples as the number of dual-earner couples increased within the middle class. Researches focused on work-family conflicts such as the lack of availability of time to fulfil the increasing dual role expectations. It also highlighted that for women, being an economic contributor to the family did not guarantee equitable relationships in the family. The period overcame the pitfall of researches of the previous decade by including the perspectives of both men and women. The era 1990 was marked by liberalisation which led to evident changes in the labour force participation of women. The self-employed women (including entrepreneurs) were looked at with a changed perspective. The roles of men were also in transition, as some of them began to assume/enact

roles that differed from the traditional prescriptions. Employers too started offering family-friendly benefits. However, since these were not in tandem with the needs of the employees, the provision did not benefit them. They note that despite the increased numbers of research on the needs of working women, scarcity of provisions of family-friendly benefits prevails. Legislation (though available since the year 2000) does not guarantee family-friendly benefits to the female employees, and there is no evidence of legal action for non compliance. Therefore, they highlight that providing family-friendly benefits is an essential aspect because it could facilitate the process of balance for women employees.

1995-2000 was marked by the outset of IT services and different work forms. India saw the information technology enabled services (ITES) example- Call centre and software sector boom. Many organisations in this sector adopted new work styles and organisational practices in tandem with developed countries in the west. Workers were expected to work 24/7 x 365 days of the year. To prevent such a work style from affecting worker health and productivity, workplaces offered services traditionally associated with the family and non-work domain within their premises such as gymnasiums, day-care facilities, laundry facilities, canteen facilities, even futons to sleep on if employees felt like taking a nap. These sectors were thought of to benefit women but it provided very little family time for women and hence posed the difficulty to manage work and family.

The integration of work and family was evident in the 2000s to understand work-family balance. The theme assumed importance in the field of management studies, where HR professionals studied how various aspects of workplace impact personal and professional lives of employees. The researches looked at the directionality of interaction between work and family i.e. work to family as well as family to work from the positive side to it i.e. work-family balance. The other aspect that got introduced was looking at the ways work and family facilitate, enrich each other because for a long period of time it was looked at from the perspective of conflicts. Largely in this era, women were exposed to challenging occupations and changing living conditions, but in response to it, women have developed competency and mechanisms to deal with it successfully. What did not change much is the expectations from women that remain consistent with tradition where they are expected to fulfil their caregiving and domestic responsibilities where men are beginning to play a role but still in the periphery. The success in dealing with the challenges has resulted into women entering challenging jobs demands and even becoming entrepreneurs. Thus, it necessitates understanding work-family

balance from women's perspective in an era where dilemmas for women related to their roles and responsibilities still prevail.

### **Why Study Work-family Balance Among Employed Women?**

The topic of work-family balance is gaining popularity and visibility as a research theme. The social norms even today to some extent attribute unpaid family and care-giving duties primarily as the women's domain (Levtov, Vander Gaag, Greene, Kaufman, & Barker, 2015). But this situation is changing gradually in the context of urban middle class, where employment of women is now more a norm than exception. Therefore, the focus is rightly on how women attain balance, between their paid work and unpaid family roles. Success stories of women entrepreneurs and working women are available. However, as the 'superwoman' syndrome is on the upswing, it becomes important to understand their navigation through the process of balance, their ups and downs, the kind of resources and support in family and workplace, women's agency and self-efficacy and its resultant outcome. Researchers have analysed that in the abundantly available literature, most studies on work-family balance are quantitative in nature and mostly inform us about the significant relationship between work and family and several personal variables in quantitative terms. The explanation as to how and why of the relationship seems to be a miss. Most researches highlight the challenges for women at workplace, factors in workplace that interfere with family and those that distress women, satisfaction of employees at workplace and much more. For example -

Shah's research (2017) highlights the importance of work-family balance and the need to study the topic at research and policy level in the 21st century where the demands have increased and have added pressure and stress to an individual's life to such an extent that the health and well being of the employees is at risk. The study considered the presence of programs that support work-life balance of the employees to ensure the longevity of employee, recruitment of better talent and retaining the best. Employers play an important role in enhancing the work-family balance of their employees. This proves that work-family balance is a topic of concern today at the national and international level and has received much research attention.

Similarly, Manfredi & Holliday (2004) mentioned about the importance of work-family balance for both the employer as well as the employee. Approximately 84% of the respondents in the study supported the fact that work-family balance influences their lives. It is important for the employers to understand the benefits that they can derive in their business and the ways their business can be enhanced by providing benefits like flexible working

arrangements, job sharing, flexible working hours and compressed hours to their employees. This could, in turn, help their employees achieve a better balance between the demands of paid employment and those arising from their family life. So, the explanation that work and family are complementary elements than competitors holds true when both the domains facilitate each other when needed.

The researches that focus on the aspects in family that influence workplace are fewer. Additionally, the instruments to assess the impact of home and family factors on workplace are also minimal and therefore provide only a limited view on the ways or aspects of family that influence the workplace for employed women. We also need to see work-family balance from the lens of Human development. Measure of America of Social Science Research Council (2019) defines human development as a process that contributes to people's wellbeing by way of providing them with the freedom and opportunities to take their life decisions on their own. The component central to human development is the capability of an individual to decide on the things that matter to their lives. The capabilities of an individual are strengthened or constrained by their own efforts as well as by the notions of society. People with well-developed capabilities are able to make the best use of the opportunity but it becomes a challenge for those with under-developed capabilities. Work-family balance is a phenomenon that women deal with on a daily basis within their own capacities and limitations, and therefore it forms an important component of their lives. The extent to which the women use their capabilities (available resources, agency and self-efficacy) for their work-family balance is still left unexplored. Thus, this study aims to understand the work-family balance-achieved by women from their experiences, explore about their capabilities to navigate between the demands of work and family in circumstances where these capabilities can be augmented or constrained.

Many studies also define work-family balance as phenomena where the needs and demands of work and family are to be looked after and fulfilled. However, the inability of women to meet the needs and demands of work and family leads to the requirement of management. The management of these needs and demands merit study through the positive perspective that is work-family enrichment, rather than focussing only on the negative side (work-family conflict). Therefore, the current study aims to study work-family balance in detail by capturing the nuances of the phenomena from the perspectives of employed women.

Thus, the broad aim is to understand the enabling factors and the hindering factors in the process of achieving work-family balance, and how women navigate through the negative



spillover of the demands of work and family and the ways positive spillover of resources and support at work and family that optimize their work-family balance. Based on the research shift from work-family conflict to work-family balance; the shift from the negative to the positive side of work-family balance; the positively evolving profiles of women and the role of work-family balance in their success motivates us to know more about the experiences of women residing in Vadodara city about their work-family balance. The current study integrates both workplace and family together rather than looking at each domain separately to elaborate on the experiences of employed women about their work-family balance. The study is an addition to the literature on work-family balance from the human development perspective, as it explains a phenomenon that matters to women and their wellbeing. It also exhibits women's control over the decisions for their personal benefit such as their work-family balance.

On a personal note, the daily conversations with women colleagues, friends and family members indirectly or directly point to the ways in which they manage their daily lives i.e. their family and workplace and their 'ME' time. The conversations mostly revolve around childcare issues, the struggle to fulfil their in-law's expectations, inability to spare time for husband and family and their never-ending workload. This further made me reflect on the fact that there would be women working at different levels of occupation and they may also be involved in a similar process trying to create a balance between the two spheres. Successful women act as role models and their experiences of achieving their goals serve their fellow struggling women as an example. It compelled me to think and reflect on my own experience, and I realized that even I am trying to balance between workplace, family and juggling for 'ME' time. Work-family balance is very important beyond doubt, but we know very little about the ways it can be achieved. On the same note, what if the balance is not achieved. What are its repercussions? This thought and curiosity drove me to know how working women balance between their workplace and family. By studying the phenomenon of work-family balance from women's perspective does not mean to deny that men are void of the issue of work-family balance. However, this current study is limited to women's perspective.

The thesis is presented in five chapters for clarity and structural elaboration. The following chapter summarizes the studies on work-family balance in both western and Indian context and the explanation of the theoretical frameworks that guide this study. This research used a mixed methods sequential explanatory design and the third chapter on methodology

explains the research paradigm, procedures for sampling, tools and procedures for data collection and generation, and analysis of data. In the fourth chapter, results and discussion details out the findings of the study according to the research objectives supported with narratives and case illustrations and the relevance (supportive or contradictory) of the findings of the current study is explained in accordance to the past researches. Chapter five summarizes the study focusing on the major conclusions and the emerging conceptual framework ending with further directions.

### Clarification of Concepts Used in This Study

<b>Terminologies</b>	<b>Dictionary Meaning</b> (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2019)	<b>Customized Meaning</b>
Work-family Balance	The division of one's time and focus between working and family or leisure activities.	A process to manage the demands of workplace and family in the given time frame such that the demands and expectations are met within one's own ability and capacity
Conflicts	A state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs	The disagreements, clashes and controversies emerging either due to the scarcity of resources, the difference in attitudes of self with others in workplace and family or the increased demands and expectations.
Enhancers/Facilitators	A person or thing that makes an action or process easy or easier.	The aspects in family and workplace that enhance, enrich facilitate, and integrate the two spheres leading to balance
Intruders/Hindrances	A thing that provides resistance, delay, or obstruction to something or someone.	The aspects in family and work that increase segmentation of the two spheres leading to obstructions and conflicts in the process of balance.
Cope (Coping)	Deal effectively with something difficult.	The ways of dealing with the conflicts arising in daily life in family and work and women's self.
Women's Agency-Self-Efficacy	A channel/instrument for exercising one's capabilities	The ability of women to exercise their powers or exhibit control over decisions to produce a desired or intended result.