

ABSTRACT

Many middle-class educated women in the present scenario are employed, and also married and are responsible for taking care of their families. They have to balance their work and family and therefore women's "work-family balance" assumes importance as a theme of study. The current study focuses on the experiences of employed women which highlights the ways positive spillover of resources and support at work and family optimize their work-family balance. Further, the enabling and hindering factors in the process of work-family balance for these women and their navigation through the negative spillover of the demands of work and family to achieve a satisfactory level of balance.

It is a sequential explanatory mixed method research design where data has been obtained in 2 phases. The sample was drawn from a population of women employed in government sector, private sectors and those self-employed in Vadodara city, Gujarat (India). The level of work-family balance was assessed, where 201 women completed the work-family balance scale developed by Rincy & Panchanatham, 2010. This data was analysed to understand the level of work-family balance of women. A part of this group of women (122) also completed a scale to measure women's agency-self efficacy within work and family. In the second phase, the researcher generated data from a subgroup of 28 women who were carefully chosen to represent their level of work-family balance, level of positive and negative spillovers, type of family, age of children, sector of employment and level of agency-self efficacy. Such qualitative data to understand the processes involved in achieving work-family balance was obtained through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data. Both sets of data were integrated to interpret the findings of the study as it is a sequential explanatory mixed method.

The findings of the study revealed that more than 50% women reported that they could balance between work and family to a high extent, 44% to a moderate extent and 5% to a low extent. Almost 3/4th of the women reported high agency-self efficacy, 18% moderate and 7% reported holding a low agency-self efficacy. Sixty percent women reported high and 31% of women reported moderate work to family enhancement. Seventy-one percent women reported high family to work enhancement. From the total, 47% of women reported moderate and 43% low work to family conflicts. Fifty six percent of women reported low and 35% of women reported moderate family to work conflicts. This data suggests that women's agency-self efficacy and work-family balance have a positive

statistically significant linear relationship. The level of work-life balance was not influenced directly by family type, years of work experience or sector of employment, as there was no statistically significant difference between groups, and also no three-way interaction between work experience, sector of employment and family type.

However, the analysis of processes involved in achieving work-family balance shows that supportive family members and positive attitudes towards women's work leads to more family to work enhancement than work to family enhancement. A work environment that does not have opportunities, benefits and supportive environment leads to higher work to family conflicts than family to work conflicts. Women who carry a positive proactive attitude, combined with high agency and high reliance on problem focused coping style (93% times) were able to achieve high work-family balance and reported a low level of work to family and family to work conflicts. Women with moderate work-family balance report both work to family and family to work conflict with increased family demands and lack of support from work. They deal with these, using problem focused coping style 79% times and 17% times by using emotion focused coping styles, but were able to achieve only moderate work-family balance. Six percent women who had low work-family balance reported lack of support, excessive demands both from work and family, and feelings of overload leading to conflicts. Their inability to deal with conflicts despite the use of problem focused coping style (73% times) and their low agency and self-efficacy led to avoidant coping, and also resulted in a situation where they 'let things be' due to exhaustion.

Work-family balance is a dynamic process influenced by women's temperaments, work and family factors. Largely women are able to create a balance between work and family, but family holds a prime position for almost all working women. Almost all women had compromised once in their work front, like to forego promotions, transfers, take a job with less working hours and aim to strike a balance between work and family, especially to fulfil the demands and expectations of their family members. The support of the husband both as a partner and father is a very important factor to employed women for boosting their morale and confidence to face all the odds within the family and share their work tensions and it becomes a step towards creating a platform for equal status for employed men and women.