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Exploring the Impact of Virtual Work on Work-Life Balance and Stress amongst Female Employees in IT Sector: A Study from Karnataka State

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Abstract

Empirical research was conducted to analyse the impact of virtual working on Work life balance and stress amongst female employees in IT industry. The article highlights the impact of between virtual working on work life balance and the stress. Further, the paper suggests strategies to manage work life as well as personal life. Virtual working initially which gave greater flexibility, started blurring the boundaries between private and working spheres and hence has become a widely considered topic. In this modern era, work life balance and stress management have become a corner point of discussion . In this study, hundred female respondents were interviewed through convenience and the results of the study revealed that there is no significant association between the pressures of virtual working, work life balance. However, it was found that there a significant relationship between Virtual Working and Stress among the Female workers in IT Sector

Key Words: Work life balance, Stress, Virtual work, Flexibility, Strategy

1. Introduction:

The boundaries between personal and professional life have been obscured as a result of technological advancements and globalisation, which have allowed individuals to collaborate virtually. Establishing a safe link between professional and private duties is critical for attaining work-life balance, that is required to prevent conflict between official and personal life. A person's usefulness and status in society are determined by their work. It also affects one's sense of well-being and identity. Work-life equilibrium is achieved if personal and professional responsibilities are equivalent. Excessive pressure can result in tension when an event

in life is threatening and difficult to manage. Virtual labour involves the utilisation of

contemporary technology to accomplish tasks from the comfort of one's home or office. A virtual workplace is not situated in a single physical location. It is typically a technologically interconnected network of multiple workplaces that are not restricted by geographic boundaries. The concept of a virtual workplace has grown in the 2000s and post-Covid-19 as a consequence of technical improvements and the pandemic's effect.

2. Conceptual Framework:

Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which a person prioritizes personal as well as professional obligations equally. Stress, prolonged work hours, and increasing obligations at work and home are among the most common causes of poor work-life balance. India is a developing nation with a burgeoning economy, which is why the majority of women are employed. Consequently, the intent of this investigation is to investigate the influence of virtual work in the stress levels and work-life balance of women within the IT sector. Working from home given female workers at the outset of the lockdown was a godsend and suitable for the circumstances, but domestic labour gradually shifted towards women. This increased effort is in addition to their working life. Virtual working initially which gave greater flexibility, started blurring the boundaries between private and working spheres .

In order to attain work-life balance, it is essential that the job as well as family life are compatible.

However, the current service-intensive globalising economy, the trend towards extended work hours for some, and insufficient family income have proven to be more problematic. Additionally, the number of mothers employed has increased. Both work and personal lives are experiencing tension as a result of the increasing number of irregular working hours. Our relationship with work is being essentially altered by digital technological advancements, such as email, social networking, and smartphones. Digital technologies allow us to remain perpetually connected.

The present study aims to investigate the impact of virtual work on the work-life balance or stress levels of female IT professionals. The primary objective of this investigation is to provide an understanding

of the coexistence of virtual workplaces, constant deadlines, increased work pressure, and time constraints.

3. Literature Review:

Karckay Arzu Tasdelen and Bakalim Orkide (2017) assessed work-life balance, work-family conflict, and life satisfaction. According to the study, family-work conflict and life happiness are indirectly impacted by work-life balance.

In their 2008 study, Malik and Khan Khalid demonstrated that women are more likely to require a reduction in their working hours than males. The female is more likely to require a greater contribution to family socialisation, infant care, elder care, and nurturance. The investigation also demonstrated that married women are more circumspect regarding work hour deductions. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Greenhaus et al. (1989) examined family-work conflict sources, whereas Goodstein, Ingram, and Simons (1995) examined corporations' institutional responses to work-family conflicts. Family commitments also influenced women's work dedication and performance, according to Campbell and Kennard (1994).

Mohan and Ashok (2011) said stress happens when a person is assigned a large job without authority and power. Organisational variations between the role senders and focus persons, communication frequency, relative authority, group cohesiveness, and functional dependency may also contribute to stress.

Cunningham, Aziz (2008) No matter gender, workaholism causes workplace stress and work-life imbalance. Support from supervisors and work-family culture affect job satisfaction and emotional commitment.

Kasper (2005) There are robust correlations between job satisfaction, tension, and workplace dimensions. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of theory that can offer a conceptual understanding of these relationships.

Greenhaus Group (2002) Although work and family life are two distinct realms that are unrelated to one another, it is now acknowledged that organizational identities and obligations often affect home life and that domestic identities and responsibilities sometimes affect the workplace.

Reynolds (2005). Workers' opinions regarding work hours and work-life imbalances are mostly about working hours and time pressure, not the hours they work.

4. Statement of the Problem:

Digitalization virtual platforms and post Covid-19 situations has forced the companies to adopt flexible working hours and working place. This virtual platform allows individuals to work from home, thereby improving the mental well-being of employees by harmonising their work responsibilities, reducing tension, and increasing efficiency. Thus, it is crucial to assess how virtual working platforms affect IT women's work-life balance and stress.

5. Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To study the relationship between virtual work and work-life balance
- ❖ To study the impact of virtual working on work life balance amongst female employees of IT sector.
- ❖ To study the relationship between work-life balance and stress amongst married and unmarried female IT employees

- ❖ To study the association between absenteeism and work-life balance amongst female employees

HYPOTHESIS-1

H₀: There is a significant association between Virtual Working and Work Life Balance among the Female workers in IT Sector.

H₁: There exists no significant association between Virtual Working and Work Life Balance among the Female workers in IT Sector

HYPOTHESIS-2

H₀: There is a significant association between Virtual Working and Stress among the Female workers in IT Sector.

H₁: There exists no significant association between Virtual Working and Stress among the Female workers in IT Sector

6. Research design

The research design is descriptive. The variables' properties are determined using descriptive study. The sampling procedure employed in the investigation is nonprobability convenience sampling, with a sample size of 100. The Interview Schedule method is employed to acquire the Primary Data using Google Forms. The secondary data comes from academic papers and books. Statistical instruments, including the ANOVA test and the Percentage Method, are employed to analyze the data.

7. Limitations of the study

The data collected by respondents depends upon their own mental outlook, knowledge, perception and awareness; there was a limitation for accurate responses. Not all

respondents have given relevant and complete information.

8. Data analysis and interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents :

| Profile | Particulars | No of Respondents | Percent |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Age | Below 26 years | 20 | 20 |
| | 26-30 years | 15 | 15 |
| | 31-35 years | 22 | 22 |
| | 36-40 years | 13 | 13 |
| | Above 40 years | 30 | 30 |
| Marital Status | Married | 50 | 50 |
| | Unmarried | 50 | 50 |
| No.of Dependants | 1 | 50 | 50 |
| | 2 | 25 | 25 |
| | 3 | 17 | 17 |
| | <4 | 4 | 4 |
| | >6 | 4 | 4 |
| Education | Graduate | 73 | 73 |
| | Post-graduate | 27 | 27 |
| Designation | Senior Software Engineer | 15 | 15 |
| | Analyst | 30 | 30 |
| | Team Lead | 15 | 15 |
| | Any other | 40 | 40 |

Work-life balance

| Particulars | SD | D | N | A | SA | TOTAL |
|-------------|----|---|---|---|----|-------|
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|---|-----|
| I generally work long hours since my job requires it. | 4 | 16 | 36 | 42 | 2 | 100 |
| There is a lack of leisure to socialize, unwind with my companion, or visit my family during the week. | 0 | 28 | 48 | 24 | 0 | 100 |
| The majority of the evenings, I am required to bring work home. | 2 | 64 | 26 | 6 | 2 | 100 |
| In order to complete documentation without interruptions I frequently labor on weekends or after hours. | 16 | 36 | 36 | 10 | 2 | 100 |
| It is difficult to unwind and disregard work-related concerns. | 2 | 27 | 48 | 23 | 0 | 100 |
| I worry about work stress and health. | 2 | 20 | 56 | 20 | 2 | 100 |
| My family is not receiving my input because I am either too exhausted or do not see them frequently. | | 31 | 36 | 25 | 2 | 100 |
| Making time for hobbies, recreational activities, or maintaining friendships & extended family connections is tough. | 2 | 34 | 50 | 14 | 0 | 100 |
| I want to work less and worry less, yet I have little control over the circumstance. | 0 | 24 | 64 | 12 | 0 | 100 |

The aforementioned table indicates that 42% of the respondents concur with the assertion that they are required to work extended hours due to the nature of their work. In the week, 48% of the respondents did not concur or dispute that they had insufficient time to socialise, unwind with their spouse, or visit family. 36% of respondents disagree, while 36% are neutral. This indicates that they frequently work overtime or on weekends to address paperwork. 27% of respondents disagree that it is challenging to unwind and

not be preoccupied with work-related concerns. The majority of respondents are neutral regarding the impact of tension on their work. 31% disagree that inadequate time or weariness robs their family of their presence. 50% of respondents did not concur or disagree that it is challenging to maintain alliances, extended family connections, and appreciate hobbies and leisure activities. While 64% of respondents are ambivalent about the possibility of reducing their working hours and stress, they also feel

impotent. Most respondents are unsure whether their present working hours are suitable.

Stress and Virtual Working

| Particulars | SD | D | N | A | SA | TOTAL |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Time pressure in work creates stress | 18 | 18 | 20 | 19 | 25 | 100 |
| There will be negative changes in behavior patterns when I am under stress | 15 | 18 | 15 | 22 | 30 | 100 |
| Stress affect my performance. | 14 | 20 | 18 | 20 | 23 | 100 |
| Training and development programs assist me adapt to new technologies, reducing stress. | 14 | 25 | 18 | 20 | 23 | 100 |
| Improving working types or conditions reduces the stress. | 19 | 21 | 22 | 20 | 18 | 100 |
| It feels lonely working virtually | 10 | 12 | 12 | 29 | 37 | 100 |
| Due to Virtual working there is absence in personal connections | 7 | 4 | 22 | 32 | 35 | 100 |
| Level of distraction is more in virtual working | 15 | 20 | 15 | 28 | 22 | 100 |

The table above indicates that 25% of the respondents concur with the assertion that tension is induced by time constraints. 30% of respondents agree that there will be negative changes in the behavior due to stress. And also 20% respondents agree that stress leads to decline in performance. 23% of respondents firmly concur that education and growth are instrumental in adapting to

the advancements in new technology, which in turn alleviates tension. Majority of 37% of people strongly agree that virtual work increases the feeling of loneliness. 35% people are of the opinion that Virtual work leads to absence of personal connections in the family. 28% agree that Virtual work leads to distraction in the work.

9. Hypothesis testing

HYPOTHESIS-1

1. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There exists no significant association between Virtual Working and Work-Life Balance among female workers in the IT sector.
2. H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant association between Virtual Working and Work-Life Balance among female workers in the IT sector.

Table-1 One Way Anova (Single factor Anova)

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
| Between Groups | 2.42 | 1 | 2.42 | 2.729323 | 0.100106 | 3.888853 |
| Within Groups | 175.56 | 198 | 0.886667 | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | 177.98 | 199 | | | | |

The hypothesis is examined using one-way ANOVA. The test results, which have a standard alpha value of 0.05, suggest that there is no significant correlation between work satisfaction and absenteeism among the respondents. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected, as the observed value surpasses the conventional alpha value of 0.05. As a result, it seems that there is no significant correlation between work-life balance and virtual employment among female IT professionals.

HYPOTHESIS-2

1. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There exists **no significant association** between Virtual Working and Stress among female workers in the IT sector.
2. H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a **significant association** between Virtual Working and Stress among female workers in the IT sector.

Table -2 Indicating One Way Anova (Single factor Anova)

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
| Between Groups | 19.22 | 1 | 19.22 | 25.67854 | 9.22E-07 | 3.888853 |
| Within Groups | 148.2 | 198 | 0.748485 | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | 167.42 | 199 | | | | |

The hypothesis is tested using a one-way ANOVA. The test findings, with a standard alpha value of 0.05, show a significant link between absenteeism and work-life balance among responders. Since the result is less than 0.05, the hypothesis of no significance is discarded and the alternative hypothesis adopted. These data indicate that virtual work and strain among female IT workers are linked.

10. Research Findings

1.Virtual works Benefits:

*Improved flexibility and accessibility

***Reduced** commuting time enabling more availability for domestic responsibilities.

2. Work-Life Balance:

*No significant association was found between virtual work and WLB. However, virtual work created time management challenges and reduced the ability to maintain hobbies or social connections

3.Stress Factors:

Significant association identified between virtual work and stress.

Stress mainly stemmed from time pressure , lack of personal connections, and distractions in the virtual environment.

4.Training and Development :

*It was indicated that training programs on new technologies alleviated stress to some extent.

11. Suggestions

An analysis of absenteeism, job satisfaction and work-life balance reveals that it is a challenge for both organization as well as employee to cope up with the difficulties in managing worklife balance, to enhance job satisfaction and to reduce absenteeism the following are suggestions made:

Suggestions for the organization

1. Enhanced Support Systems: To create structured programs to promote mental well-being and reduce stress, such as mindfulness workshops or employee assistance programs. It is essential for the organization to introduce stress management initiatives such as health fair, education program, onsite Yoga classes, health coaching, onsite relaxation room etc
2. Role Clarity and Flexibility: Organisations should clearly define roles and flexible work hours can help employee's manage professional and personal demands.
3. Social Interaction: Regular virtual team building activities to combat loneliness and encourage collaboration. The HR department may focus on developing a family friendly organization culture in a strategic way to enhance the intrinsic satisfaction of the employees .
4. Training programs : Organisations may arrange training program to enhance technical skill and also in the core managerial areas of coaching, counselling, career guidance, communication etc

Suggestions for professionals at individual level:

1. Self -Management Training: Provide resources on emotional intelligence and self-management to help employees manage their stress levels. Self management and emotional intelligence may facilitate to recognize and understand one's and other's emotions
2. Time management: Inclusive of planning the activities and prioritizing the tasks which can help to manage the time properly

3. Enhancing the competencies : It will help in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of performance .
4. Work-Life Prioritization: Educate employees on the importance of setting boundaries between work and home life

12. Conclusion

This study was conducted to evaluate the association between strain, work-life balance, and virtual employment among female virtually IT professionals in Karnataka. Structured questionnaires were implemented to accumulate data from one hundred respondents within the survey methodology. The data that was collected underwent statistical analysis. Between female employees in the IT sector, the investigation determined that there was no substantial association between virtual employment and work-life balance. Virtual labour and tension levels, however, exhibited a substantial correlation. In order to alleviate the obstacles presented by remote work environments, it is imperative that organisations and employees implement customised interventions.

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