

An Empirical Study of Factors Affecting the Work Life Balance Among Women Teachers Working in Government Girls Higher Secondary Schools: The Case of Peshawar City, KP

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.829>

Abstract

The present study aims to examine the problems related to work-life imbalance of female teachers of Government Girls Higher Secondary schools and home in Peshawar city. Women are into almost every sector now a days. Women play multiple roles at home and their work place and are more burdened than men at home. It is true that home and work are two different worlds for the working women. The imbalance between the role expectations at both places and actual contribution at home and at work place leads to disturb the balance. The schools who have in effective employment policies for teachers, poor working conditions, longer working hours, lower income, pressurized working environment, abstention of child care facilities/services and behavioral issues of principals/heads lead to the imbalance between professional and personal life of female teachers in higher secondary schools. A qualitative study was carried out in which in-depth interviews of twenty-nine teachers were carried out. Later on, Themes were developed using qualitative analysis software.

Keywords: Female Teachers, Problems of teachers. Government Schools of Peshawar, government girls higher secondary schools, Peshawar, KP.

Introduction

One of the major challenges in Pakistan is to enter the women in different sectors. Women have been playing a vital role in the family not only by raising children and doing household chores since the dawn of the human civilization. Women of the early times were mostly confined to their households or kitchens and those who were employed mostly worked in factories, farms and shops. Very few women had the access to higher education and they were forced to be at the mercy of their fathers' or husbands' attitudes towards women education and work. The fact is that the role of women is such a significant that it cannot be dismissed from family and society. If one tries to do so the society cannot be progressed and healthy in a balanced and meaningful way.

The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals also include good health and wellbeing, quality education and decent work and economic growth as goal number third, fourth and eighth in their agenda. It put emphasis on the imparting quality education to the public. It also focuses on the good health and well-being of all individuals. The decent work indicates the work should not over burden the employees and working conditions should be in favor of work force. The work should also produce economic growth for the workers. Therefore, this study is important from the aspect of female workers to attain good health and well-being and to impart the quality education to the future generation. The female workers should have decent workplace and it also provide them chances of economic development in their lives.

Women workers can reap benefit from the application of International Labor Organization Convention on Equal Remuneration, 1951 (No. 100), ratified by Pakistan in 2001. But the practicality of which is doubtful in private sector of education. In public sector the application is appreciable because it is done by government itself.

There are contradictory expectations from women at work and home. Work-life balance has always been a matter of concern for those who are interested in the quality of working life and its relation to the broader quality of a women life. The balance between work and life score provides an organization with productive and innovative employees, whereas low work life balance tends to develop depressed and dissatisfied staff. With globalization and dynamic work environment, there is increasing demands and pressures of work-life, conflicts between work and personal roles seem to be increasing day by day.

Changing demographics of the work-force have been the primary basic force for the increased focus on the important family-work issues. Organizations where in there is sound work-life balance practices and policies for their workforce always experience better financial outcomes. These benefits include: lower rates of absenteeism, increased productivity of employees; improved customer care; improved recruitment and retention of staff; reduced overheads; increased motivated, satisfied and equitable workforce in the organization. Thus, there is a need to study work-life balance problems regarding teachers.

Moreover, teachers are not only involved in teaching but they also need to focus on soft skills and life skills for the students so that they can produce good professionals and also develop good citizens for the country. Now-a-days teachers are found to be pressurized and overburdened due to their academic work load and career growth issues. A lot of studies were conducted on teachers' work-life balance issues where it has been found that teaching is one of the stressful professions. All this adds to the stress among the female teachers leading to imbalanced work-life situation.

The other most important reason for studying teachers on the aspect of work-life balance is that, it is the profession that has the most amount of female majority working than in any other profession of the world. The teaching profession has different dimensions such as pattern of work, authority, identification and career, etc, and most important thing is that all these aspects differ with in different institutes and subjects that is why this field is most preferred for issues of work and family conflict. The aim is also to present specifically the fact that the work-life is out of balance and in need of utmost attention for most working women, especially in the teaching sector of schools. This research has been important for assessing the growing need for work-life balance practices and policies for the working female teachers. The fact is that the work-life is out of balance and need immediate attention for most working women in the teaching sector. This study has been essential for assessing the growing need for work-life balance policies and practices adaptation by institutions for the working female teachers in the present scenario.

Work-life balance for a female teaching professional has become one of the greatest challenges in today's world because of dynamic working conditions. Teachers work load not only demand their extra time in the institution, but also they extend to work at their home to get prepared for the deliverance of lectures for the next day. From maintaining student records they have to do various institution related operations also. Teachers have to spend extra time every day to be effective and productive in their field. The objective of this study is to examine whether there is any significant difference among work-life balance of women teachers in Government Girls Higher Secondary schools in Peshawar.

Literature Review

(Madipelli, S. Sarma, V., & Chinnappaiah, Y). Those organizations that have ineffective employment policies, poor working conditions, long working hours, lower income, pressurized work environment etc lead to stress towards work. Ronald J. et.al (2010) also discussed the relationship between the organizational practices to support women's career growth and their work attitudes and satisfaction

and their psychological well-being as important variables. Wentling, R.M (2003) investigated the double role of female can cause conflict and tension due to the social structure of the society. Female teaching professionals in schools face a lot of different problems. These issues also arise from within their families and relatives. Whenever they have to go out for jobs they require permission from male family members.

Increased responsibilities at work place affect females greatly where in gender discrimination adds up more complexity to the situation (McLaren et al. 2020). In India, it is also responsibility of females to perform various roles and duties at the same time. it include the children's care, their education, and household chores, maintaining work and home equally etc. (Aryee et al., 2005; Ravindran and Baral, 2014) Agapiou, A. (2002). Biroli et al. (2020) found gender inequalities in the responsibility of sharing household responsibilities between men and women. Carlson et al.(2020) found that working parents felt increase in the childcare pressure (from 50%-60%) and in household tasks (38% to 53%).

Due to the phenomenon of globalization and recent covid-19 pandemic, the sudden shift to the "online teaching and online-portal" imposed more stress, burden and workload on the teachers and IT-staff members who try to maintain a work-life balance, in addition to the responsibilities of teaching, research, and service obligations (Rapanta et al., 2020; Houlden and Veletsianos, 2020). Around the world, teachers had been reported to have increased level of stress and anxiety due to the shift of teaching activities to the online mode (ibid. 2020).

Organizations had increased level of expectations from the working professionals including women workers who work really hard to prove themselves competent in the challenging work place so as they can fit in the social sphere. Teachers also agreed that they express their anxiety and anger on their family members. Straus et al (1998) confirmed that parents show their physically and psychologically aggressive attitude and behavior towards their children.

Brooks et al. (2015) found that increased workload and long working hours when the resources are limited, it leaves negative psychological impact on workers. Biroli et al. (2020) reported that if there are no childcare facilities, it put a lot of pressure on the working mothers also when their responsibility is not shared by the fathers. It means some positive and progressive changes should be done in home and work culture which will try to create balance between work and life issues of women (Folbre, 2017; Grossbard-Schechtman and Grossbard-Shechtman, 2019).

All the female teachers reported negative and unpleasant feelings such as nervousness, confusion, anger, and irritation, resulting in the mismanagement of various issues. The main reasons might be due to social distancing during covid-19 pandemic (Ammerman et al., 2020) overwork pressure, management of extra home-related tasks given to them (Power 2020), use of latest technology (Rasheed et al., 2020), household, and job-related tensions were also reported very commonly (Biroli et al. 2020).

Methodology

The methodology includes all these features:

The research method used while conducting research is inductive. Data was collected by interviewing the female teachers of government girls' higher secondary schools in Peshawar. The codes were identified and then some common themes were developed. Data was collected from government girl's high schools in Peshawar. Twenty-nine female teachers gave response and codes were identified through this process. Purposive sampling technique was used for this research study. Semi- structured interviews were conducted from female teachers of government girls' high schools. In-depth interviews were conducted to analyze the details of issues faced by female teachers of government school teachers.

Analysis

Aged female teachers

Some of issues that are identified in old age teachers were discovered. They include the behavioral issues of the colleagues, head and other class four staff.

Behavioral Issues

One of the old age respondent said that “Work would be easier if the behavior of head is cooperative with us.” The behavior of the upper level staff is not cooperative enough to accommodate the problems of teachers accordingly. If the behavior is more soft rather than autocratic it would be easy for teachers to corporate and do work in such friendly working environment.

Physical Issues

Medical and health care problems are important problems that are faced by teachers. Old age teachers have cardiac issues including hyper tension etc. diabetes and backache issues are also reported by older female teachers. Even young married female teachers who go through the delivery process have some health issues and they got no specific accommodation for such health issues. One of the old age teacher said during interview that “the head do not understand the health condition that we are facing making job more robotic and lacking human factor.”

Women retirement age

Due to some health issues and lower physical capabilities of female teachers, one respondent said that “it might be better to make retirement age of females to 55 rather than 60 years of age.” This is also an important observation that in later ages females have lower adaptability towards dynamic working environment and demand to equip themselves according to the new technological skills. Some of the factors that affect the teacher’s resistance to accepting change include teacher’s stress, fatigue due to over work, mental exhaustion which affects the performance and satisfaction level (Margolis and Nagel, 2006).

Young Teachers

Young teachers face many issues which include the long working hours as compared to old female teachers as they have to do much clerical work. Data required by department for record keeping is to be processed by young teachers as they are equipped with new workplace skills. These skills include having knowledge of Microsoft word, excel and power point. These all clerical and administrative work is done by teachers.

Operational Issues

Young female teachers also reported that they have to do much clerical and administrative work along with delivering lectures and paper checking etc. one of the young married female teacher responded that “it might be better if we do not have to do clerical work and the pressure of sending records of student stipend at the end of every month etc. as it also affect teaching process which should be our main focus instead of this.” These are the operational issues which are identified by young age staff in public schools. Most of the schools lack IT- teachers so the whole data processing is done by the class teachers along with the help of other staff members.

Due to shift in online teaching techniques and online communication with pupil, it also increased work load of young female teachers as they are more effective in using the technology. The sudden shift to the “online learning and online portal”, teachers has to maintain contact with students online all the time due to the corona pandemic. This situation put more stress and workload on the teachers and staff members who are always trying to maintain the work-life balance in addition to the role of teaching, research, and fulfilling their service obligations (Rapanta et al., 2020; Houlden and Veletsianos, 2020).

Arts Teachers

As one of the respondents said that “we teach arts subjects and get no allowance irrespective of the fact that if we have hundred students in a classroom almost eighty opt for studying arts and we are so overburdened with workload.” The strength of students can go up to hundred or more in a classroom sometimes. Most of the strength of students opt arts as subject in higher secondary level so the burden on the arts teaching staff members is immense. These female teachers have to check

more than eighty papers after exam of a single class as more students do not want to study science further at higher level. Science subjects also get the science allowance but female staff teaching arts subjects get no reward irrespective of the fact that they share major chunk of burden of students in public schools.

No Day Care Facilities

As young married female teachers have children who are infants and are breast feeding sometimes so they face a lot of pressure from heads to leave them at home. There are no day-care facilities for these children. Some heads also allow the personal care taking staff that came with teachers to take care of children during working hours so it is a better option. Most of the time the schools are dominated by female staff for teaching purpose in Pakistan so some basic policy formulation should be done for this purpose in Pakistan as it is very important to achieve the workforce diversity in the economy of Pakistan. Professional mothers have certainly more responsibilities towards their childcare as compared to the men (Fox et al., 2011). Biroli et al. (2020) also found out that most of the couples fight over the distribution of household work and child care responsibilities which have great impact on their mental health and well-being. Changes in the child care work division are also negatively related to the life satisfaction of parents. Women in general are more tensed than most of the man in managing their house holds tasks.

Social Issues

Many of the respondents reported that we are pressurized by the in-laws or other family members for not attending social gatherings that you are not the only one working.” One of the young married teacher stated that I heard one of family member saying that “you are not doing this job for us but for yourself.” The society has to be more open and cooperative for females as they have to do more work than men. Females have to manage work and home side by side.

Psychological wellbeing of an individual refers to the extent to which individuals feel positive emotions in life which are affected due to relationships towards personal growth and objectives in life, and social pressures, etc. situational factors include stress full events of traumatic experiences in the life of an individual which cause mood and anxiety disorders (Gladstone et al.,2012). Working most of the time on virtual platforms also negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of the workers (Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011).

Content Analysis

Content analysis was done to understand the problems of teachers effectively and properly.

Discussions

The female teachers who gave response mentioned the behavioral issues that they are facing from upper management as a problem. Uncooperative behavior of heads leads to more discomfort and lack of coordination at the workplace. The old women working in the high secondary level have physical and health problems what are affecting their on the job performance. Heads also do not tend to accommodate them if they need any relaxation. Teachers are over-burdened in schools due to higher strength of students in each class which goes up to hundred in a classroom. Kumar & Purushothama (2018) described in their research study that the changes over the years in education sector make it more challenging profession. It has bad effect on the health and wellbeing of teachers’ lives.

Women also face societal pressures from the in-laws, relatives and may be spouse sometimes. This can affect her job performance and psychological and physical health immensely. Javaid,Q.,Khan,Z., &Saddiq.U.(2020). Within Pakistan, women face a lot of problems that include the lack of facilities and unavailability of transport facility, low level of benefits, their independence to use their own salaries and low job satisfaction. The research mainly focus on working women in Rawalpindi also described that these female workers face a lot of same issues as mentioned above (Farhat, 2010; Maqsood, Ch, Zia & Cheema, 2005).

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above discussion that there are several job related issues which can affect the work-life balance of women teachers working in higher secondary schools. They are over burden due to high number of student enrollment in each class. The behavioral problems of heads also make them uncomfortable during job performance. Favoritism is also present which creates anxiety and frustration among female teachers. The long working hours and inefficient division of work among teachers also burdensome staff members and left other free. Some strategies should be devised to improve this situation by the respective department.

After conducting the detailed literature review, in-depth interviews and analysis and group discussion with the female teachers of girls' higher secondary schools, it is concluded that the female teachers in this sector are over-burdened. Work-life balance and social support is also important for their mental and physical health. The health is at risk due to over burden of work at the work place. Social support directly affects the healthy professional life and also maintains the marital satisfaction at home. More support will increase the socio-economic status of females in the society. It is also linked to the good job performance and develop healthy job environment.

Recommendations:

There are some recommendations which can help in overcoming the problems that are faced by female teachers working in the government girls' higher secondary schools in Peshawar. And the recommendations are

- i. As parents' attitude is supportive, they can clearly communicate the transparency in the teaching field to the spouse to build trust. Also the other relatives should support working women in their family as teaching is a very committed job.
- ii. The promotion system which is based on time scale and favoritism so it should be eliminated and a system of promotion should be fully based on performance. So the teachers whose students show good performance should get the promotions, rewards and appreciation from the Elementary and Secondary Education Department.
- iii. As teachers wakeup early in the morning to be on job so the working hours should be reduced accordingly because they are already burdened due to students over load as in public schools the strength of students in a class may be seen more than hundred often.
- iv. The data maintenance and providence to the department should be done by clerical or administrative staff so a special sear should be created of Human Resource officer who in every public school should manage the Management Information System on computer and when ever asked by department can provide the required data immediately. It will save a lot of teacher's time and they can focus just on teaching.

Limitations

Even though this effort is taken the study has some limitations. This study is conducted with female teachers in few Higher Secondary Schools in Peshawar and can be expanded to all the schools in future. Time constraint was also present while conducting the study.

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