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WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT:

This study was conducted to investigate, and understand issues related to work-life balance for Saudi working- women in Jeddah. This work was done based on quantitative method. Survey questionnaire was used for data collection. The survey results showed that transportation and work location are the main serious problem faced by the Saudi women. An alarming proportion 97% of respondents considered work location as an important factor when looking for a job. Indeed, this problem is enforced by the transportation methods Saudi women use to reach their work destinations. Flexible working hours and reduced work pressure where also found to have an important role for Saudi women overcoming work-life imbalance. In addition, 98% of the women's agreed that marriage was not a barrier for working women. Result showed that mixed working environment resistance has gradually lessened among the Saudi working woman. Thus, transportation remains as the main problem faced in work-life balance.

INTRODUCTION:

Expanded interest of ladies in the work proletariat is faced by various difficulties. Among different difficulties, overseeing work and family obligations is a standout amid the most critical difficulties that women face [1]. With an end goal to expand work-life balance, ladies have begun going into independent work to acquire adaptability and authority over their work and individual lives. Adjusting work and family is regularly more troublesome for ladies than for men due to the lopsided weight of the family obligations [2].

Ladies face uneven circulation of childcare and other residential obligation that becomes real hindrances in the progress of their vocation [3]. Supervising work and family for career women turns out to be very troublesome in a man-centered culture where women are relied on to share the vast duty of family care [4]. There is additionally an idea on work and family care are generally formed by cliché gender orientation jobs because of the customarily held conviction of men as "providers and ladies as "house creators" [4]. In this manner, the social development of gender makes women's parenthood less debatable when contrasted with men's parenthood. Notwithstanding family and individual difficulties faced by profession ladies, societal standards and convictions further uncover more prominent weight on ladies in both developed and upcoming nations alike. Individuals in the public arena connect certain qualities and desires depending on the gender orientation explicit jobs. These qualities and desires regularly influence the vocation selections of ladies. Furthermore, societal convictions see ladies as essential parental figures [5].

The idea of work-life balance is never again a western marvel any longer. In spite of the fact that most of research here is centered around western settings, it is likewise spreading toward the eastern culture because of globalization which has significantly impact the authoritative settings around the world [6].

Numerous studies have been reported regarding work-life balance of women's. Karkoulia et al. [7] investigated diverse impacting factors on ladies' work and family balance, and found that vital arranging, sorting out and assigning are the best techniques ladies use to adapt to contending jobs of work and family. Hawker [9] investigated the difficulties of work-life balance for female doctors and found that for every person, the designation and collaboration of various assets, for example, time, cash, extent of basic leadership, and physical, passionate, and social assets, were fundamental to keep up the individual work– life balance. Gherardi [10] examined the work-life balance issues faced by business women and found that job over-burden, subordinate consideration issues, nature of wellbeing, time management issues and absence of legitimate social help are the central point affecting the work-life balance. Agarwal and Lenka [11] evaluated the work-life equalization of female entrepreneurs and found that growing family obligations just as their potential jobs produce the issue of job struggle among the women. Thriveni and Rama [12] inspected the connection between the statistic factors such as place of origin and work life parity, and found that there is noteworthy connection between statistic factors and work life balance. Lyness et al. [12] explored gender contrasts in multisource appraisals of work–life balance for managers and found that directors' view of representatives' work– life balance varied by gender orientation and nation setting, with vital ramifications for work–life hypothesis and viable ramifications for worldwide businesses. Priya [13] scrutinized the work-life parity of ladies educators and found that there is a noteworthy contrast among work-life offset of ladies instructors with respect to age and years of service. In Saudi Arabia it's relatively different, the socio-cultural and religions have greater impact on the decision on women employment. Saudi women put their family at the beginning of their list. Thus, if they have to choose between family and work then defiantly they will choose family.

According to Bahkali [14] culture and religion, health insurance and transportation are the most problematic issues for Saudi women to take into consideration when they are looking for job. Whereas, children, working hours and home help are considered as a common issues faced by most Saudi working women. However, all these issues could create imbalance life for Saudi working women. Thus, this topic is still under study in Saudi Arabia and there is no appropriate and satisfied understanding as well as solutions for Saudi women's difficulties to balance their work-life. Hence, this work was conducted to investigate, and understand issues related to work-life balance for Saudi working- women in Jeddah. This work has aimed to take a further step in attempting to analyze the factors affecting Saudi working women to balance between their work and life and to provide solutions for their encountered problem.

METHODOLOGY

This work is subjective in its nature as it focuses on better understanding factors affecting work life balance for women in Jeddah. The research question of this work was; how can Saudi working women in Jeddah find the balance between their work and family life to become more effective in their work and life. The objective was to investigate the work life balance pattern for women in Jeddah, understand the difficulties that women face to balance between life and work, and providing solution for them. Thus, work was conducted based on quantitative approach. Due to the nature of this work and the population targeted from this survey, a self-administrated questionnaire was distributed for data collection. In addition, original data were obtained by the survey questionnaire, and secondary data were collected from a variety of reading materials. In interviewer-administered questionnaires, the responses of participants are recorded by the interviewer. The survey was carried out with 92 female respondents. The delivery and collection of the questionnaire was done by e-mails the data were reviewed to ensure that they were accurate and completed. The review included looking for incomplete surveys or skipped questions. It was detected that 2 participants avoided answering the last two questions. Thus, these surveys were eliminated since the whole idea of this survey is to find problems and solutions for the issues encountered. For some questions, the author reduced the scale for simplicity as well as to give clearer picture for the issues considered. The results were analyzed in terms of basic statistic and were presented accordingly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Location of workplace

Starting with the most significant result obtained from the conducted survey questionnaire in this research, the majority of population insisted on the importance of work location. Furthermore, only 5% showed no importance for this factor, as shown in Figure 1. Based on Figure 1, it is observed that women seek working near to their home to balance between their work and family life. In other words, they look to save time to spend it with their families as well as

to reduce the transport time and cost as Saudi kingdom does not allow women to drive. Thus, this is a significant issue faced by the Saudi working women's.

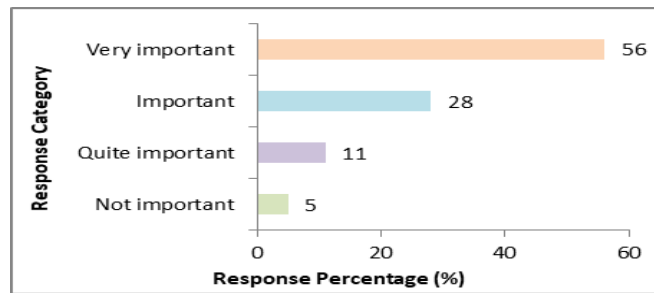


Figure 1: Importance of work place location

Leading position, training and career development

For this survey participants showed a great interest for leading positions, which can be further explained by looking their responses to the statements related to the importance of training and career development (interest in specific position, training opportunities, and career development prospect) as shown in Figure 2. Based on the results in Figure 2, it is observed that Saudi women seek to enhance their skills, and knowledge to enable them taking more responsibilities over their shoulders for leading positions. They seem to have the tendency to occupy more leading positions, to prove their existence in Saudi workforce, to gain better income and standard of living. However, based on Figure 3, the survey result showed that only 9% of Saudi working women of the participants are occupying either leading positions, or senior positions. About 54% are occupying the middle position.

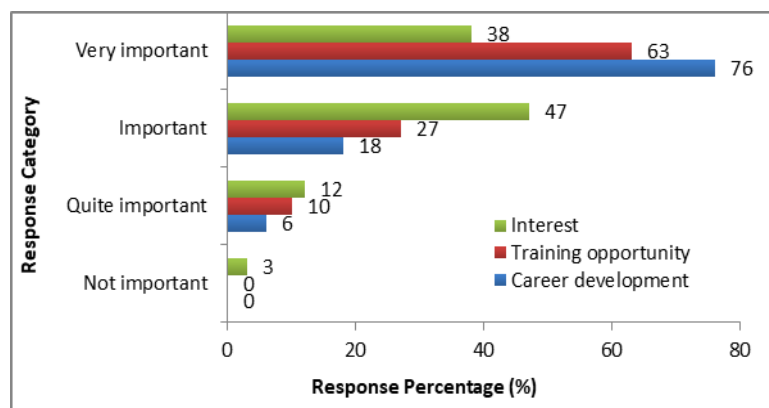


Figure 2: Importance of career development, training, and interest in specific position

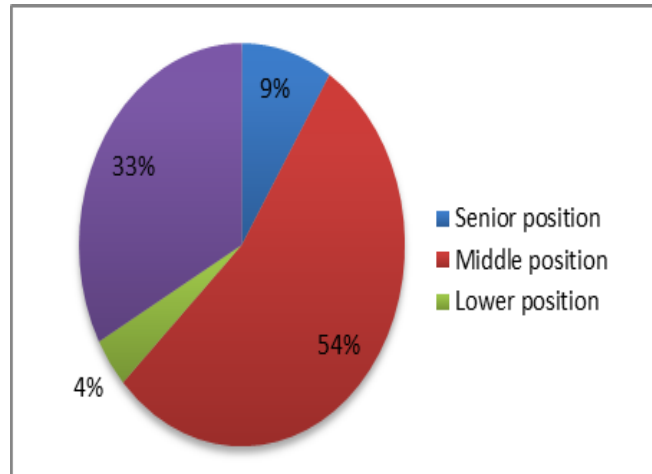


Figure 3: Current positions

Working hours and work pressure

For the statement related to flexibility in working hours, based on Figure 4, great portion 78% of participants referred to it as an important factor when looking for a job. It appears to be an issue for most participants as only 4% said it is unimportant.

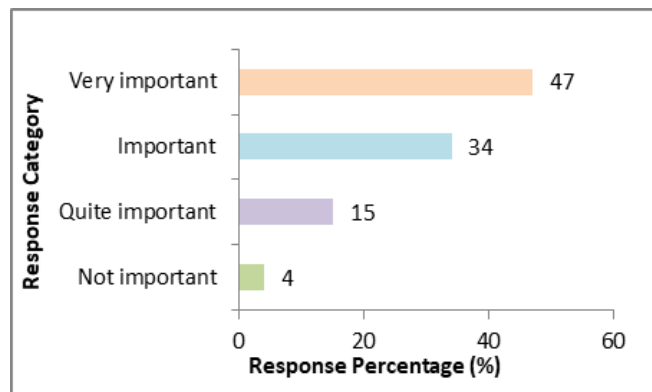


Figure 4: Flexible working hours

The outcome for work pressure is shown in Figure 5. Result showed that 92% of participants looked at work pressure as a significant factor, which should be considered for married, and singles as well as employees from different positions

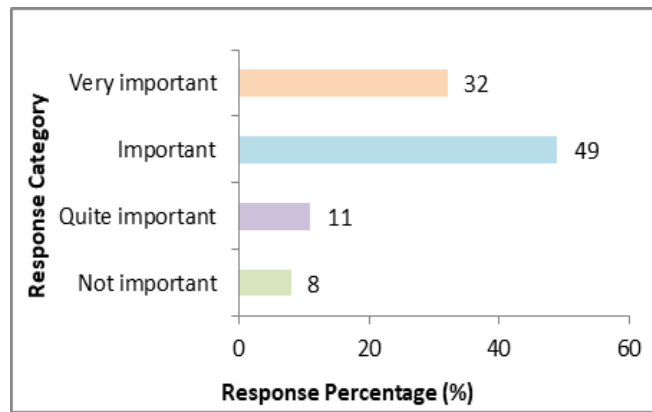


Figure 5: work pressure

Emergency leave

Based on Figure 6, emergency leaves tend to be a great matter for Saudi working-women as a total of 79% of the participants emphasized its importance while searching for a job. This indicates that Saudi women have other essential obligations towards their families, and kids. Many of the participants especially married women with children encounter the problem of one-month annual leave calming that it is not enough for them, which gives the author the impression that Saudi working women are not spending enough time with their families as they wish, which might lead to work-family conflicts.

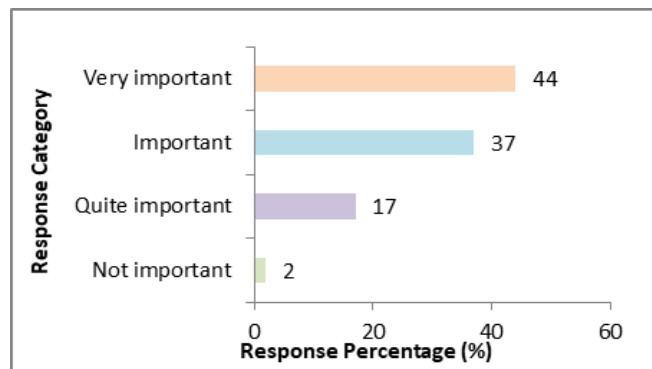


Figure 6: Emergency leaves

Working in mixed environment

For the statement regarding working in mixed environment, many women still pay great attention to this matter and prefer to work in an environment where there is less or no interference with the opposite gender. By reducing the scale to important and not important it was found that, 80% of the participants expressed their willingness to work in an isolated environment from other gender whereas about 20% showed no problem working in such environment as shown in Figure 7.

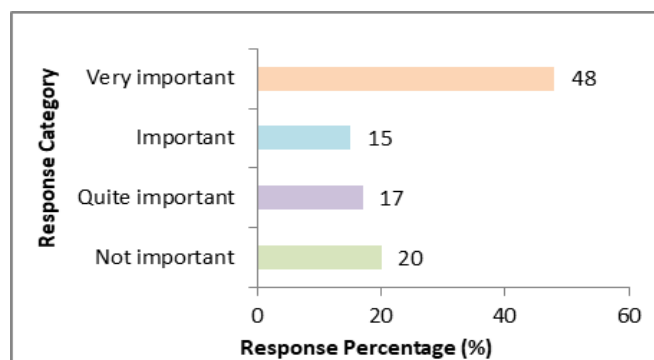


Figure 7: Working in mixed environment

Marriage as barrier for work

One of the unexpected findings of this survey is the fact that women do not preview marriage as an obstacle for work. Only 2 out of 92 participants considered marriage as barrier as shown in Figure 8. Thus, based on Figure 8, it is observed that marriage was not a barrier for woman to pursue the career and work.

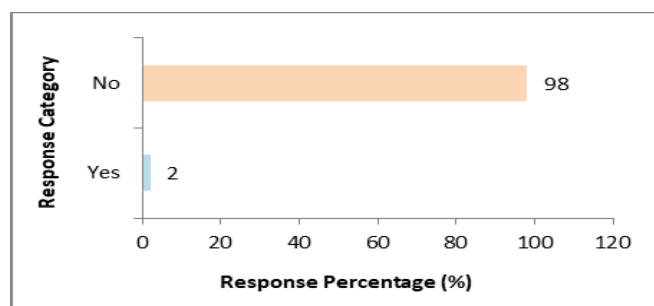


Figure 8: Marriage as a barrier for work

Overall discussion

This work was done to analyze the issues related to work- life balance for Saudi working-women in Jeddah. Based on the findings, it was stated that work location is crucial for Saudi working- women, while looking for a job. This is because they seek to save time to spend with their families as well as to reduce the time and cost of transportation. This is in line with the work done by Gherardi [9] where it was reported that work place location is a factor for life balance of working woman. In addition, women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive, as reported by Shmuluvitz [15]. Hence, they have no other choice rather than depending on their husbands, sons, private drivers, or public transportation means such as taxis to reach their work destinations. Thus, transportation was identified as influential issue faced by the women of Saudi Arabia and it affects the work-life balance. Next, the findings showed that although marriage effects work- life balance as reported by Agarwal and Lenka [10] where it was identified that marriage life plays a significant role in women, and working women tend to face some difficulty in managing between work and family life. However, the outcome of this work showed that it is not considered as a barrier by Saudi working-women. Instead, they

seemed to be familiar with good work-life balance strategies such as planning, organizing and setting limits at home and at work. The next finding of this work showed that for Saudi working-women, inflexible working hours results in work-life imbalance development. This is in line with the work done by Priya [13] where working hours and its flexibility has a key connection in work-life balance among career woman. Furthermore, the survey found that Saudi women are exposed to enormous life responsibilities, especially mothers. Also, Saudi women are interested in training and career development to boost their career level. This is agreed by Agarwal and Lenka [10], where career woman tends to look into opportunity to develop their skills and enhance their career just like the male counter parts as are equally capable in accomplishing work task. Next, the finding of this work showed that emergency leave or unpaid leaves is one of the aspects that women consider while looking for a job. This is due to the nature of their responsibility where at times it is needed to take leave for family reasons. This is agreed by the work of Karkoulian et al. [7] where career woman has to juggle between work and family commitment. In addition, the findings of this work also showed that the resistance of working in mixed environment by Saudi women could be said to have declined. This is also supported by the work of Lyness and Judiesch [12] and Powell [17] where working woman are currently engulfed in a mixed working environment and thus, the resistance has gradually subsided. Next, the findings of this work has shown that kindergartens availability, and cost is important for Saudi women work-life balance and this is in line with the work reported by Speirs et al. [18] where it was stated that working personal needs to choose the childcare facilities to fit the work requirements. Thus based on the overall findings, the main issue faced by Saudi working woman is with transportation. It is rather work-life balance and transportation problem. Apart from the common work-life balance issues, this work has not reviled on any uncommon life issues faced by working women.

CONCLUSION

This work was done to analyze the work life balance pattern for women in Jeddah. The analysis was done based on questionnaire survey. The key findings of this work showed that transportation and work location was the major issue faced by Saudi working women. Transportation is seems to be one of the essential elements of Saudi women work-life balance. In addition, the findings also showed that kindergartens facilities, flexible working hours, and emergency leaves are also important factors in the work-life balance. Furthermore, majority of the women stated that they do not consider marriage to be a barrier for work. On the other hand, although the labor work office introduced policies for women working in mixed environment, it still seems to be unaccepted by some Saudi working-women. However, this resistance was said to have declined. Thus, the authors would like to recommend of introducing polices that govern Saudi working- women transportation, such as forcing companies to provide suitable transportation means for their women employees, or increasing transportation allowance for women. This will offer the opportunity for women to contribute and participate more for the nation.

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