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Work -Life balance among Married Anganwadi workers in Assam

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ABSTRACT

Work–life balance has evolved into a matter of significant concern among the women workers either in public or private life in patriarchal Indian society. Both men and women strive to achieve a steady professional and personal life. In reality, women especially the married Anganwadi workers are more prone to experiencing such challenges. This paper is an attempt to understand work-life balance among married Anganwadi workers in Assam. The patriarchal society of Assam is always emerged as women-dominant society. This paper focused on the impact of job satisfaction, work overburden, workplace support, community support and cooperation, family support and cooperation, and dependent care on the work-life balance of married Anganwadi workers. For the purpose of the study, a field based observation and interview was taken with the respondents and statistical techniques were used for the study. The results indicated that workplace support, community support and cooperation and family support had a positive impact on the work–life balance among Anganwadi workers. The findings also suggested that work overburden and dependent care had a negative impact on work-life balance. The results also contradicted that job satisfaction was not a significant factor that impacted the work-life balance among married Anganwadi workers.

I.

Introduction:

The emergence of modern society has revealed the changing roles and positions of women in different countries of the world. This modern society has brought change in many ramifications of human life. In the traditional society of Assam, as well as in other parts of the country, women engaged in many economic activities whether in private or public domain. They were activities that could be accommodated it to the domestic roles of women, since their primary role were perceived to lie in the home. Until recently, sex division of labour has been an

integral aspect of life in the family of Assam. Men were the main bread winners, while women were saddled with domestic responsibilities; an important component of the domestic responsibilities of women is caring for family members. They maintained that men as bread winners could work away from home, if women would work at all; they were engaged in activities that could be carried out within or around the home. Women were encouraged to concentrate on household chores and the socialization and monitoring of young children. Traditionally they were saddled with the duty of inculcating values and norms into children. Different studies on status of women reveals that various changes have taken place in different parameter of roles and status of women in both public and private sectors.

This division of labour in the family in terms of gender roles has virtually disappeared in the present day society. Women educational attainment has soared over the years; consequently gender inequality in formal employment has drastically declined in the modern society. The economic hardship prevailing in the country is gradually making it a norm for women to make substantial contribution to household budget in order to cater adequately for family needs. Thus women are increasingly taking up roles which were traditionally the domain of men. Nevertheless, female dominated responsibilities in the family such as household chores, socialization of children and childbearing are rarely shared by men. In other words, while women are taking up formally male roles, it is likely that men find it derogatory to share roles that were traditionally recognized as female domain (Munguti et al,(2002). By extension, it is expected of women to play multiple roles in the society. Obviously, since women are the significant agent of household chores, socialization and childbearing and have to still carry out their economic roles as formal employees, it becomes difficult and over bearing in most cases. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the economic status of the family, reasons for women engagement in formal employment and the effects on the family.

The Anganwadi workers are the women workers and they are the main workers in implementing the ICDS services, who focus their care to the child and the mothers, the most vulnerable population of the world. The Anganwadi workers come from different family situations. They have to perform several roles in the work place and in the family. Work and family are central components in people's lives; A working women much time is spent in managing multiple responsibilities. As such a form of friction emerges on role pressures from work-family domains in some respects. People experienced between their work roles and other life roles.

However, gender differences in work and family conflict have been a consistently important theme. Beside gender, some family domain pressures like the effect of presence of young children, time management in work place and family, work domain pressures like number of hours worked per week are associated with work family conflict. Hence, the present study is stated as the 'Work -Life balance among married Anganwadi workers in Assam.' For this study, the key word '*Anganwadi workers*' encompasses the *Anganwadi workers(AWW)* and *Anganwadi helpers(AWH)* whom are engaged for running the Anganwadi centers as well as the employee of the ICDS project.

The aim of this paper is "*to investigate the relationship between the married Anganwadi workers perception of work family balance practices and work family conflicts*"

Review of Literature:

Work/family balance is an issue that has become an area of interest because as a women, the married Anganwadi workers are pursuing jobs and careers while having families. It is need of time to explore the literature related to how women balance their lives with the responsibilities from both work and family. Balancing job demands and household tasks, including household and childcare demands, has been documented as a huge barrier that prevents married Anganwadi women from achieving work-life balance. Both personal and professional lives are important and women employees struggle to do justice for both the roles and in the process if they spend more time pursuing one role as opposed to the other can lead to negative outcomes (Nair, 2010). According to Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker and Schaufeli, (2005)¹³, job demands and family demands are often irreconcilable creating an imbalance between the two. Now, the role and position of women is different and their presence is seen everywhere in different positions in the workplace. These transformations in work culture have brought in more additional duties and responsibilities for women employees towards their family, work place and society as well (Mathew & Panchanatham, 2009)⁸. Therefore, it is very much required to explore issues and implications of work-life balance. Super¹ identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures.² However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's both mentally and physically.

Work–life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work–family conflict (WFC).³ These conflicts are intensified by the “cultural contradictions of motherhood”, as women are increasingly encouraged to seek self-fulfillment in demanding careers, they also face intensified pressures to sacrifice themselves for their children by providing “intensive parenting”, highly involved child rearing and development.⁴ Additional problems faced by employed women are those associated with finding adequate, affordable access to child and elderly care.^{5/6} WFC has been defined as a type of inter-role conflict wherein some responsibilities from the work and family domains are not compatible and have a negative influence on an employee's work situation.⁷ These roles tend to drain them and cause stress or inter-role conflict.

¹ Super DE. A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *J Vocat Behav.* 1980;16:282–9.

² Kopp RG, Ruzicka FM. Women's multiple roles and psychological well-being. *Psychol Rep.* 1993;72:1351–4

³ Coser LA. New York: The Free Press; 1974. Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment.

⁴ Hays S. New York: Yale University Press; 1996. The cultural contradictions of motherhood.

⁵ Reskin B, Ross CE. Jobs, authority, and earnings among managers: The continuing significance of sex. *Work Occup.* 1992;19:342–65.

⁶ Reskin B, Padavic I. Thousand Oaks: Pine Gorge Press; 1994. Women and Men at Work.

⁷ Greenhaus JH, Beutell NJ. Sources conflict between work and family roles. *Acad Manage Rev.* 1985;10:76–88.

Family–work conflict (FWC) is also a type of inter-role conflict in which family and work responsibilities are not compatible. However, FWC is related to attitudes about the job or workplace.⁸ Both WFC and FWC basically result from an individual trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which women are operating. Most of these studies revolved are in western context; there is a scarcity of research in this area in the Indian context. Hence, the researchers made an attempt to study various factors which could lead to WFC and FWC among married Anganwadi workers as women employees.

II

Field of the Study:

The proposed study is ‘Work -Life balance among married Anganwadi workers in Assam.’ The domain of this study is concerned with the married Anganwadi workers of ICDS programmes under Social Welfare Department of Sivasagar district of Assam. There are 10 ICDS (Projects) blocks in Sivasagar district of Assam and 1768 AWC have been actively functioning. During the field based study, there are 3583 Anganwadi workers were smoothly rendering their services. Out of these, 351 married respondents were selected by purposive sampling techniques for the present study.

III

Methodological Application:

An exploratory research design has adopted for the study. The information regarding the study was collected from two sources Primary source and Secondary. Secondary data were collected from available books, publications, research studies, articles and websites. A closed-ended interview-schedule was designed to collect primary data.

Both observation and Interview schedule were adopted for data collection. The main tool for collection of data was questionnaire cum interview schedule.

IV

Results and Discussion:

The present research work is of exploratory in nature and based on primary data. A survey was conducted among 351 married Anganwadi workers response across located mainly in Sivasagar district of Assam. This study explores issues pertaining to role conflicts between the dual-couples related to stress, childcare, domestic work and job roles and work, i.e work family conflict(WFC) and family work conflict(FWC) among the respondents. This study also discusses questions related to conflict with colleagues working hours, time spent with family after working hours, family responsibilities, domestic workload, factors responsible for higher level of strain, and how the working couples manage strain and stressful situations, conflicts between multiple roles.

The study reveals that out of the total 351 respondents, 89(25.4%) were found in high level of stress, 109 (31.1%) in moderate level and the 153(43.6%) were in low level of stress. So, the AWH employees are in a better mental status than the other categories of respondents in the projects. (Table -1,)

Table: 1 Level of Stress of the respondents

⁸ Netemeyer RG, Boles JS, McMurrian R. Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *J Appl Psychol.* 1996;81:400–10.

Category of respondents	Level of stress						Total
	Low		Moderate		High		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
AWH	104	60.1	51	29.5	18	10.4	173
AWW	49	27.5	58	32.6	71	39.9	178
Total	153	43.6	109	31.1	89	25.4	351

Source: Field Survey

Table-2 shows that the main reason for stress of the respondents was excessive workload, Time management, forwarding excessive information, family responsibilities and conflict with spouse. For 104 (52.7%) of the respondents stress was caused due to excessive work load and for 60 (31.2%) it was for giving excessive information to the authority. The respondents reported that they have to supply information oftenly about different data to the authority. For 94(49.6%) of the respondents stress was due to time management. The respondents reported reason of stress was due to family responsibility and conflict with spouse was 95 (51.0%). Only 27(15.6%) of the respondents stated that they have no stress.

Table : 2 Reasons for Stress of Respondents

Category of Respondents	Reasons for stress										Total
	excessive workload		Time management		Excessive information supply		Family responsibility & conflict with spouse		Not applicable (no stress)		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
AWW	68	38.2	45	25.3	35	19.7	30	16.9	-	-	178
AWH	25	14.5	42	24.3	20	11.6	59	34.1	27	15.6	173
Total	104	52.7	94	49.6	60	31.2	95	51.0	27	15.6	351

Source: Field survey

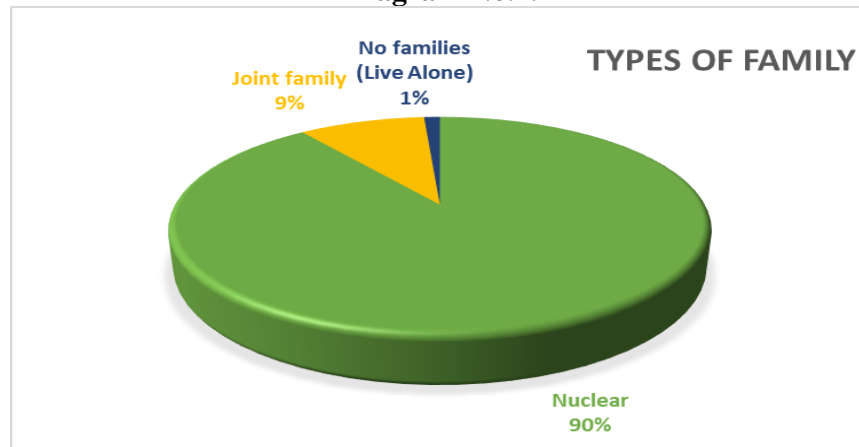
In the study, it has seen that AWW 68(38.2 %) have more stress due to excessive work load than the AWH 25 (14.5%). They reported that they have to maintain a large number of registrars and also field survey, keep communication with the community, awareness on different social facts besides their normal duties. They have to manage a limited time for managing the family. On the other hand AWHs 59(34.1%) were more stress due to family responsibilities and conflict with spouse. This stress is related to gendered base. Neither they are being able to take economic support, i.e. a least amount of honorarium they have been paid, nor family responsibilities. As such their spouses are being unwilling to support their household works.

The study focuses on identifying sources of tension and conflicts as well as of 'support in the respondents both in the family and colleagues in service place. It is also tried to focus the respondents' efforts for management to combine their dual roles. Underlying the observations is that conflicts and tensions are inevitable both, 'because of the uncertainty in allocating priorities to competing demands of the two

roles, and because of the sheer physical pressures involved upon the AWW. Sometimes, the AWW have to spend daylong in outside of home for collecting data or information from beneficiaries. The data suggest that housework, child care and the absence of active support, encouragement and help from 'significant others' in the family are sources of tension in the respondents' role as home-makers and the pressures of commuting and of coping with the spillover of office work are the sources of tension in their role as earners.

On the domain of domestic works, it was observed that as many as 315(89.7%) out of the 351 respondents live in 'nuclear' families consisting of parents and unmarried children and only 32(9.1%) live in Joint family. 4(1.1%) respondents live alone i.e. outside of their family or aboard of her family for their job.(Diagram No.1) It could be pointed out that the burden of household responsibilities on women is likely to be greater in the nuclear family, than it is in the joint family - where the work is shared - and it could be argued that consequently, women from nuclear families are more likely to work but the household works of the whole family burden have to manage ownselves with the minors. A least percent of spouses' help them in their household works and it is emerges due to gendered related conflict.

Diagram No.1.



Source: Field survey data.

The respondents were questioned as to which of the tasks they perform themselves and how often they do so. They were also asked whether any one assist them (partially/ entirely) in the performance of these tasks. Married respondents were specifically requested to describe the manner in which their husbands share in performing these tasks. It was observed (Table -4) that above 63% respondents perform almost all the tasks enlisted except shopping and repairing of household works and made pay bill without any assistance. A larger percentage of the respondents are involved with tasks generally seen as 'feminine' viz. cooking (69.8%), tidying up (68.4%) decorating the house (76.6%), etc. However, a sizeable number of the respondents are involved in the performance of tasks, which are usually not believed to be feminine, e.g. getting the repairs done, paying the bills and doing the banking work 108(30.8%). Regarding Shopping items, respondents prefer to do in shared basis with the spouse.

Table -4: Respondent's performance on Household Tasks

Task	Types of resp.	Never done		Shared done		Entirely done by resp.		Total freq
		freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	
Cooking	AWW	8	4.5	41	23	129	72.5	178
	AWH	5	2.9	52	30.1	116	67.1	173
	Total	13	3.7	93	26.5	245	69.8	351
Washing clothes	AWW	1	0.6	51	28.7	126	70.8	178
	AWH	0	0	68	39.3	105	60.7	173
	Total	1	0.3	119	33.9	231	65.8	351
Washing utensils	AWW	1	0.6	41	23	136	76.4	178
	AWH	6	0	65	37.6	102	59.0	173
	Total	7	2.0	106	30.2	238	67.8	351
Sweeping and cleaning	AWW	2	1.1	35	19.7	141	79.2	178
	AWH	1	0.6	52	30.1	120	69.4	173
	Total	3	0.9	87	24.8	261	74.4	351
Tidying up house	AWW	0	0	54	30.3	124	69.7	178
	AWH	0	0	57	32.9	116	67.1	173
	Total	0	0.0	111	31.6	240	68.4	351
Decorating house	AWW	2	1.1	43	24.2	133	74.7	178
	AWH	6	3.5	31	17.9	136	78.6	173
	Total	8	2.3	74	21.1	269	76.6	351
Shopping for essentials	AWW	17	9.6	73	41.0	88	49.4	178
	AWH	19	11.0	83	48.0	71	41.04	173
	Total	36	10.3	156	44.4	159	45.3	351
Shopping for special items	AWW	18	10.1	88	49.4	72	40.4	178
	AWH	11	6.4	73	42.2	89	51.4	173
	Total	29	8.3	161	45.9	161	45.9	351
household repairs/ bill pay in office	AWW	65	36.5	47	26.4	66	37.1	178
	AWH	78	45.1	53	30.6	42	24.3	173
	Total	143	40.7	100	28.5	108	30.8	351

Source: Field survey.

Variations by marital status and by class of service are interesting. Out of 351 respondents 320 (93.9%) married, 32(8.2%) was widowed and 5(1.3%) married but lived separated. A larger percentage of married women and widowed, who were home-makers, wives and most often mothers, seem to be taking on most of the housework.

Respondents in AWW and AWH seem to take upon themselves, a larger proportion of household tasks, whose economic condition is not good but able to afford adequate paid help to get housework done. Besides, as compared to AWH,

AWW are likely to have to carry more work at office and home. This may leave them little time to take on the responsibility of day-to-day housework. Even more important possibility is that they placed as they are not in high status, and powerful positions, see themselves more as home-makers, and also inclined to take on a heavy burden of household tasks and continue to be pre-occupied with domestic functions. Table -4, shows the household works that the respondents have to engage besides the official works.

The respondents have to maintain the family works as well as the office works. To take care of their children is an utmost duty and obligation. out of 351 respondents, majority of the respondent 140(39.9%) was unable to give sufficient time for their children, 81 (23.1%) respondents had less time for taking care of their children because of their professional work and found problem in the outing time to school of their minor children in absence of her in the family. Only 30 (8.5%) respondents had not to face any role bearing adjustment related to child care. (Table -5)

Table : 5 Role of Respondent towards child care

Category of Respondents	Role related to child care:										Total
	<i>Unable to give sufficient time for children</i>		<i>Less time for care of children's education</i>		<i>Problems of children outing time to school</i>		<i>Stay more time outside of home</i>		No role related to child care		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
AWH	66	38.2	36	20.8	47	27.2	6	3.5	18	10.4	173
AWW	74	41.6	45	25.3	34	19.1	13	7.3	12	6.7	178
Total	140	39.9	81	23.1	81	23.1	19	5.4	30	8.5	351

Source: field survey

Respondents reported that 140 (39.9%) respondents have less time to spend for care of their children. This was more among AWW 74 (41.6%), 66 (38.2%) for AWHs. For 45(25.3%) and 36(20.8%) AWW and AWH respectively had been facing role bearing problem for giving less time for care of their children. Because they have to be engaged more time on office related works. Some of the respondents informed that even sometimes their children were not permitted or forbidden them to do official works at home.

As an employed worker they have to spend more time outside of home and unable to maintain dual role both household work and office work. This has been faced by 13(7.3%) AWW and 6(3.5%) AWH.

In the course of this description, the focus is on Identifying sources of tension and conflicts as well as of 'support in the respondents efforts to combine their dual roles. Underlying the observations is that conflicts and tensions are inevitable both, 'because of the uncertainty in allocating priorities to competing demands of the two roles, and because of the sheer physical pressures involved. king women. The findings of the study support that women with pre-school children experience different types of conflicts and concluded that self-role congruence in women leads to better mental health. It has found that parental overload which included number of children; family demand in predicting WFC. It has also found

that family involvement and family expectations were related to conflict in the family, but not related to WFC. High levels of family responsibility cause increased time requirements and strain on the family, thereby interfering with the employee's work roles. As children and elderly family members require additional care, the obligation to meet their needs can influence family roles, which can create inter-role conflict and impact family roles which is producing FWC. FWC basically result from the married women workers (AWW), who trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which women are operating. It has also observed that the number of hours worked per week, the amount and frequency of overtime required, an inflexible work schedule, unsupportive supervisor, and an inhospitable work culture increase the likelihood that women employees will experience conflict between their work and family role.

V

Conclusion:

These are different types of sources of conflict among the married Anganwadi workers regarding work and family situation. Among these : (1) conflicts between demands of multiple roles to accomplish with official works and household works , (2) conflict between role expectations of self and spouse relating with household responsibilities and work responsibilities and (3) lack of congruence between expectation and reality of roles with work and family. It has felt that self-role congruence in married Anganwadi workers leads to better mental health. In the present study, it has also observed that the majority of the respondents (75.5%) working due to financial needs. They argued that they took up job on compulsion for economic gain and only a few respondents (24.5%) had taken up employment for status. Hence, the problems arises as their needs. AS such the workers must have to be careful not to bring home her frustration and unhappiness, which can affect family relationships.

It can be concluded that the traditional gender roles such as child care, housekeeping and kitchen works of women (AWW) have been significantly changing in dual career families. Women face a dual role all over the world. This dual role leads to work family conflicts. There are several expectations from her both in the family as well as in her profession. The two expectations demand two different women in a single woman. For pursuing her roles successfully, she has to work with a strict routine having greater physical and mental ability to deal with critical situations in time. It often arises in conflicts between job and family, the role of family dominates over the role of job. However there are some AWW, who give priority to their jobs to maintain their strong commitments to job and to maintain their economic conditions as well as the welfare of the children and the society.

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