BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF SIKKIM

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ABSTRACT

Balancing work and family domain has become a growing concern for every individual over the years particularly for working mothers. Thus, this study aimed at exploring the various issues encountered by women working in paid employment within the rural and urban areas of Sikkim while managing their work and family lives. The study attempted to understand the perceptions and experiences of balancing their work and family domain by working women. It also tried to highlight the conflicting and facilitating factors responsible for affecting their lives. The study also analysed the various work and family related issues with which the working women dealt on a daily basis. In addition, various coping strategies and techniques employed by these women to deal with the pressures of work and family domain has been discussed. A qualitative research approach has been adopted in order to gather empirical evidence as well as insights into the lives of women. The main method of collecting data for this study was personally administered questionnaires, an in-depth interview along with observation of the respondent’s behaviour and the circumstances surrounding the interview by the researcher. The area of this study was two districts namely Gangtok (East) and Namchi (South) of Sikkim. The sample size was 100 working women from both rural and urban areas of Sikkim. Respondents were chosen from various occupations like doctors, lawyers, bureaucrats, lecturers, teachers, nurses, office clerks and casual workers from different Government and private institutions located in Sikkim. The data revealed that gender in interwoven in the management of work and family roles. However, there were variations in the responses given by respondents with regard to balance. Most explanations given by them highlighted the coping strategies used for managing both the domains whether it meant separating or integrating the two spheres.
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INTRODUCTION

Concern over work and family issues has increased on account of the changes in which work has been defined and modified by processes of modernisation and industrialisation as well as the entry of women into the world of paid work. As a result, research on work-family balance has become a well-defined area of research in its own right. Work and family balance relates to the amount of time devoted to one’s life at work relative to the time spent outside work. The goal is not to achieve equal amounts of time at home and at work, but the amount that is appropriate for a particular individual or family. Getting a perfect balance is rarely achievable but when these two spheres are not in harmony with each other, individual and family well-being suffers. While work-family balance is an increasingly popular term, there is no clear consensus on what it means, although most definitions have included the concept of juggling, sustainability and flexibility. The concept of work-family balance has been used to explain the equilibrium between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside work. Having a balance in work and family domain implies that this equilibrium is in a required proportion for the concerned individual. Balancing work and family differs from person to person. Some prefer spending more time in paid work and less time at home, while others ensure that their job does not interfere with their family life. In sum, work and family balance may be defined as having sufficient control and autonomy over work and family domain. Clark (2001) & Voydanoff (2005) argued that work and family are the two most important domains in people’s lives and as a result, work and family can cause conflict.
if they compete with each other. Work and family, however are synergistic and can complement each other. In fact, the positive side of work and family can enhance the well-being of the family unit. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) stated that the experiences in one role may improve people’s sense of well-being in other roles and their quality of life. Today, scholars and organizations recognise the benefit of integrating work and family because work and family are both an integral part of people’s everyday lives. Some scholars have argued that effectively balancing work and family is an important concern in present day society (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

**ORIGIN OF WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH**

Work-family balance metaphor is a social construct located within a particular period of time and originating in the Western world as a response to dilemmas regarding the management of work and family life. Research in this domain emerged at a time when the number of women entering the labor market grew and resulted in a focus on working mothers and dual-earner families. It is also known as work-family interaction, work-family fit, work-life balance and work-family integration. Initial research on the family in Western countries emerged during World War II when women were encouraged to join the paid workforce in the U.S. and the U.K. However, in order to provide jobs to troops returning from the War, women were soon asked to resume their family roles. Therefore, an interest arose among scholars on the intersection of work and family roles, because of the flux in gender roles as a consequences of these social dynamics (MacDermid, 2004). The early period after World War II was considered as a
period of the idealisation of the American family, with the husband as the main
breadwinner, and the wife as housewife and mother, by the timeline study of work-
family research conducted in the U.S. In order to secure the rights of working women in
the lower middle class and of business and professional women in the upper class, a
movement was started during that period. On the other hand, a strong feminist
movement emerged during the period 1960’s and 1970’s, which resulted in a critical
evaluation of traditional gender roles in the economy. The number of dual earner
couples began to rise as a result of the oil crisis and the resultant rise in the cost of
living during that period. However, in the 1980’s, it became clear that women were
taking up the burden of dual roles instead of being liberated from traditional gender
roles, which led to some disillusionment with the increasing role of women in the
workforce. In addition, family-friendly policies were also introduced in the workplace
during that period. During the 1990’s, the focus was based on the expansion of work-
family research to previously less studied populations in the U.S such as single-parent
families and poor working families, as well as on the organization’s role to reduce
pressures of work and family faced by the employees (Pruitt & Rapoport, 2002). As
opposed to advocating government response in the form of public policy on matters
pertaining to child-care, the U.S. government adopted a different approach to manage
work-life issues of their employees by motivating organizations to look after the needs
of their employees by making them important stakeholders in the process. Thus, in
comparison to other developed countries such as Australia and Canada, which focused
on more governmental interventions to manage work-family pressures, the U.S
followed the policy of short unpaid family leave (Kelly et al, 2008).
In the United Kingdom, research on work-life issues received a boost after World War II. The option of part-time jobs was introduced by the U.K. government since a majority of the women who were employed were finding it difficult to balance their work and family responsibilities. However, this measure undertaken by the U.K. government did not bring dramatic changes in the traditional gendering of dual roles but it was helpful in reducing conflict to a degree (Crompton et al, 2010). In India, research on work and family issues started during the mid 1970’s, when research on working women increased, with the exploration of socio-economic impact of women’s work on family, power relationships within the family, family marital quality and children were included. However, work and family research in India have undertaken two separate and disconnected paths. One is the path chosen by women’s studies centres through which they looked at the structures of patriarchy within the country, and how these contributed to the subordination of women at work and at home. They mainly focused on underprivileged and rural women. The other path was psychosocial research which examined work and family relations within urban settings from a role theory perspective. There has been little cross-pollination between these two streams which is also marked by a lack of cross-preferences in published studies. Most studies conducted on Indian women were preoccupied with concerns of status and perceptions towards working women, including working women’s views about about non-working women and vice-versa, general societal views about working women, and working women’s views about their husband’s home role participation. They also covered the broad theme of stresses and strains of balancing work and home roles and their impact on the
psychological well-being of a women. Other studies examined the changing roles, values and expectations in urban middle class families. Research on work and family during this decade indicated that working status was not a guarantee of equitable relationships within the family. Research on Indian society differentiated between career women and working women and also hinted at the possibility of men’s roles being in transition in the midst of largely traditional division of work and family roles in society. Even though Indian organizations provided family friendly measures, they eventually proved to be an imitation of western practices rather than a genuine concern for the better handling of work and family responsibilities (Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004).

### DEFINING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

There is still debate about the definition of work-family balance but it implies that there is a balance between the demands of work and family (Guest, 2001). Work is an important aspect of human life and it has many benefits for people. Firstly, it helps people to establish their identity. Secondly, it provides the opportunity for social interaction that goes beyond work-related activities. It also promotes relationships, encourages engagement, provides purpose and meaning to people’s lives as well as provides an opportunity for status and income. According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000), work is an activity that provides people with the resources needed to live. Ryan and Deci (2001) expanded the concept of work to include feelings of belongingness, social contribution and personal growth, which they thought was essential for a sense of well-being. Family, on the other hand, is an important part of everyday life and it
consists of group of people bound together by cultural ties. Home life is where family members find solace in an atmosphere of belonging and the family unit influences people’s sense of well-being.

Work-family balance has been a catch phrase during the 1980’s as a result of increased demands from work and family (Frone, 1992). Some researchers (Clark, Japlin, Schaffer, Francesco & Lau, 2003) prefer to use an overarching concept of equilibrium, balance and harmony while other researchers use the concept of fit and incorporate the demands of the role and environment and the availability of personal resources. In addition, some researchers (Clark 2001) have defined work-family balance as an absence of work-family conflict, or increasing levels of work-family enrichment. Others defined work-family balance as an effective juggling act between paid work and such other activities that are important to people. Some researchers (Kalliath & Brough 2008; Clark 2001) have focused on the compatibility of both roles and their promotion of growth satisfaction between multiple roles, perceived control between multiple roles and the relationship between conflict and facilitation.

In the work-family literature, however, there are four main definitions of work-family balance. Greenhaus et al (2003) defined work-family balance as the amount of time and degree of satisfaction with the work and family role. Clark (2001) argued that work-family balance occurs when there is a sense of satisfaction with work and family roles.
Frone (2003) stated that balance is a four-fold taxonomy between the dimensions of direction of influence (i.e. work to family and family to work) and the type of effect (i.e. conflict and facilitation). Grzywacz & Marks (2000) addressed limitations in the definitions of work-life balance and suggested that people have balance when they believe they can facilitate work and family commitments and effectively negotiate with significant others in their different life domains. Guest (2001) offered a subjective definition about work-family balance. He argued that balance is determined by person’s subjective feelings and emotions. That is, they feel they are living a balanced life. He suggested that people assess the balance in their life using subjective evaluations based on their beliefs and feelings. Kalliath & Brough (2008) defined work-family balance as the individual’s perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual current life priorities.

Work-family balance is an art of managing both the work and family domains effectively. The work-family balance topic suggests that work should not interfere with other things that are important in people’s lives such as quality time with family, leisure time or recreational activities, personal development etc. Balancing these two roles equally will not result in work-life balance, nor will setting aside an equal number of hours for each role lead to work-family balance. The balance which seems appropriate today may seem inappropriate tomorrow. The ideal balance in a person’s life may vary across the different phases of one’s life i.e. before marriage, after marriage, with children, when starting a career or after retirement. In sum, there is no one-size fits all
or picture-perfect work-family balance. Moreover, in recent decades, work pressure has been intensifying for both men and women. Different factors associated with work have resulted in excessive stress and strain among workers. These factors are; scheduled deadlines, advancement in information technology, and high quality customer services. As a result, there is the domination of family life created by work demands which in turn results in work-family imbalance. In order to be successful in both the roles, women try to organise and balance their work and family domain, for which a great deal of adjustment and accommodation is required. For the last two decades, work-family issues have become a growing concern among researchers due to significant changes in workforce such as the entry of increasing number of women into the labor market, as well as the existence of dual-earner and single-parent families (Aryee et al, 2005; Barnett, 1998; Edward & Rothbard, 2000). These changes in the workplace imply that workers, especially women, are trying to combine work and family roles.

Scholars from various disciplines such as psychology, occupational health, sociology and organisational behaviour have conducted research on work-family interface (Barnett, 1998). Scholars from psychology generally discussed individual-level behaviour, and outcomes such as mental health report, marital quality and work-family conflicts. Occupational health researchers emphasised work-related physical health stress and outcomes for workers and their families. A broader view was adopted by sociologists, where they considered the effects of workplace conditions on families as well as on individuals while organisational scholars focused on outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism and turnover (Frone, 2003). There are several studies
conducted in work-family issues but most of these studies have been conducted in Western countries, particularly in the United States. This is because Western countries experienced diversification in the workforce earlier as compared to other countries (Cohen & Kirchmeyer, 2005; Peolman et al, 2003). However, the findings from the studies conducted in Western countries cannot immediately be generalised to other countries because both work and family operate within a wider context such as social, economic and political sphere including cultural norms and values that differ across different countries (Westman, 2005; Lewis & Ayudhya, 2006). Work-family experience is likely to be partially culture-specific rather than being a universal experience as is evident in the literature.

Work-family balance expression has been used in policy documents as well as among academics. However, it lacks a standard definition despite its frequent usage. Risk factors for the onset of work-family imbalance are typically assume to include long, unsocial or unpredictable work hours, high work pressure and the absence of supportive work balance policies while the feared consequences include adverse effects on individual’s psychological and physical health, lowered productivity at work, a deterioration of relationship quality at home and restrained fertility (Schnitter, 2007). Yet, this objectivist view of work-family integration fails to acknowledge the complex psychological processes by which people make sense of their time and manage multiple domains. Acknowledging that work-family balance is a highly subjective, perpetual phenomenon, it can be defined as a situation that is achieved when an individual
perceives his or her major life domains and the different roles they play in them to be compatible with each other. As has been stressed by a number of scholars, the aim of achieving a satisfactory work-family balance is more than a zero-sum time allocation exercise (Wharton, 2005). How individuals evaluate their own particular mode of work-family integration will, apart from more objective role demands, depend on their specific needs and expectations. Factors such as long working hours and a high workload are likely to be important factors in determining the degree to which an individual is able to balance the demands of work and family responsibilities. However, people’s sense of the degree to which they achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of their work and family roles will be moulded by the broader meaning they attach to different life domains and their participation in the work-family system. Work-family balance can be seen as a meta-level concept referring to a combination of processes of positive and negative spill-over between work and family—also referred in the literature as work-family enrichment and work-family conflict respectively.

Work and family poses competing demands for time and energy on working women to discharge the traditional roles of a home-maker and that of a gainfully employed worker in the market. The work life of women cannot be separated from their family life as both run simultaneously in their daily routine. Therefore work life of women cannot be studied independent of their family life, household responsibilities, social relations and economic situations. It has been observed that both work and family have changed drastically in the past several years. Feminist scholarship has argued that women have to
shoulder both the work and family pressures for generations. Home and work are two different worlds for working women and are often in conflict. Women assuming multiple roles results in work-family imbalance because time and energy are shared, clubbed and even extended across the two spheres of activity. (Moore, 2004) When a women enters into gainful employment outside the home she not only finds a change in her role and status within the family and outside it but she also finds herself under increasing pressure to reconcile the dual burden of two roles at her home and her workplace because each is a full-time job. Coping up with the situation requires not only additional physical strength, personal ability and intelligence on the part of a working woman but also requires the members of her role-set to simultaneously make necessary modifications in their expectations. When imbalance between the two life domains occurs the consequences are reflected in both job and domestic life. For the employers, such role conflict means disillusionment, dissatisfaction and strained relations with women employees, their lower standard of work performance and disregard of organizational goals. Even society is not separate from organizations; the negative impact of role-conflict will have its effect on the society in general in the form of lower standards of performance, lower quality of goods and services and a growing feeling of inter-personal conflict being the obvious results. There is therefore a growing recognition by policy-makers of the importance of supporting women in juggling work and family.
INTRODUCTION TO SIKKIM

The total population of Sikkim is 607688 (Census 2011) out of which the female composition is 47%. There are three ethnic communities in Sikkim i.e. Lepchas (19%), Bhutias (16%) and Nepalese (56%) who are in majority. There are several other communities in addition to the ethnic groups who have settled in various parts of Sikkim. These communities comprises of Marwaris, Punjabis, Biharis, Bengalis and South Indians who are engaged in business activities and others are working in different government and private organizations across the state. With regard to religious practices, the population of Sikkim comprises of Hindus (68%), Buddhists (27%), Christians (3%) and Muslims (2%) respectively. After merging with India in the year 1975, Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union after which Sikkim witnessed significant gains. The position of women in Sikkim is relatively better as compared to women in other parts of Sikkim. Women in Sikkim are also engaged in various trading activities due to which they have decision-making powers which is denied to women residing in other parts of India. As against the national average of 20%, women in Sikkim participated in the paid workforce which comprises of 38.75% (Census, 2001). Gender differentials along with several indicators of human development is absent in Sikkim. Women in Sikkim working in government sector outnumbered the men despite unfavourable sex ratio in the population as a whole. Women in Sikkim are working in public and private sector, however they face inequality on several aspects which is similar to other states of India. In terms of education, marriage and health, women are under-privileged in Sikkim. Several factors are responsible for the slow spread of education among girls in Sikkim which includes poverty, poor accessibility to schools in
rural regions and in some instances, negative parental attitudes towards their girl child. There is also a direct impact of low level of education on the social chances and future prospects for girl child in Sikkim which in turn is reflected by the prevalence of early marriages among the ethnic communities of Sikkim residing in both rural and urban areas of Sikkim. The system of socially sanctioned elopement is also prevalent due to inter-caste marriages among the different ethnic communities in Sikkim (Lama, 2001). A serious impact on the health of these women has been observed due to the prevalence of early marriage and early motherhood. Like most parts of India, Sikkim also witnessed a gendered division of labor in maintaining household and work responsibilities with women being subjected and expected to perform all the household chores irrespective of working in paid employment and supplementing the family income (Lama, 2001).
 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A CROSS-CULTURAL REVIEW OF WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

Work-family issues differ across various countries as they are influenced by factors at the micro and macro level, which vary across countries. The macro level variations include differences in the social, economic, legislative and technological systems. These factors provide certain implications for employees who attempt to juggle their work and family domains (Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco & Lau, 2003; Poelman, 2003). Different working options and family-friendly work policies are features prominent in developed countries rather than in developing countries (Lewis & Ayudhya, 2006). Similarly, with the help of technological advancement, working from home is a possibility in Western countries. However, this may not be applicable to all countries (Joplin et al, 2003). But in developing countries, where even everyday survival is often difficult, working for longer hours becomes essential. Thus, in such a situation, people are bound to endure any kind of conflict or imbalance. Every society possesses certain social elements that can influence the manner in which people experience work-family balance. For instance, the family organisation in Western countries tend to be nuclear and distant but in other Asian countries, joint or extended families were common, where people lived in close proximity (Spector et al, 2004). Thus, demands in the family domain as well as support availability varies in different family structures (Joplin et al, 2003). In terms of community resources and infrastructure, there are variations across countries which helps in managing work and family life effectively. For instance, the government in some countries take the initiative for providing child-care and elder-care assistance to their employees, but this may not be applicable to other countries (Shafiro & Hammer,
2004). Apart from these macro level variations, differences at the micro level also exist across regions (Poelman, 2003). The micro-level differences refer to the variations in the individual variable which include the levels of role demands assumed by individuals. In both Western and non-Western countries, the pressure which induces work-family conflict tends to be similar, but people’s responses to these pressures differ and tend to be governed by their cultures (Lewis & Ayudhya, 2006). Variations in work and family life are observed across different countries due to these macro and micro differences.

**WORK RELATED ISSUES**

In order to achieve top positions in executive jobs, women across the globe have to face obstacles and barriers. According to the International Labor Organization’s Report, 2001, titled “Breaking Through The Glass Ceiling: Women in Management”, women in United States had made more progress as compared to women in other countries, despite the fact that they held only a small percent of executive positions. The changing roles of women in business and government in more than 70 countries, steps to improve opportunities for women by highlighting the obstacles faced by them in their career development, and promoting gender equality, were some of the issues that were examined in the report. The report concluded that women in these countries were experiencing glass walls in addition to glass ceiling, where women were denied training and mid-level positions which could have helped them to reach top-level jobs. The predominance of male values and gender roles was considered as another factor that
prevented women from reaching top level jobs. The main hindrance faced by women in recruitment and promotion to management position was the dominance of male values followed by family obligations, according to the report of a survey conducted on bank managers in the European Union during the year 1999.

A study conducted on lawyers (Wallace, 1999) revealed that various work-related factors contributed to time-based and strain-based work to non-work conflict among married female and male lawyers. Work involvement, work-role stressors and work context were considered as three major factors for this study, out of which the single factor responsible for work-non work conflict for both male and female lawyers was work overload. Factors which contributed to work-non work conflict varied between male and female lawyers. Moreover, female lawyers preferred working in firms that had a significant proportion of female lawyers. Since the strain-based conflict of female lawyers was reduced by additional family roles, variables of domestic status such as the working status of the partners, having pre-school children did not have much effect on females’ work-non work conflict (Wallace, 1999). In a study (Martin, 2012) conducted among women who were employed as Professional Counsellors, women counsellors were observed to be at a higher risk of developing fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress due to the emotionally demanding nature of their work. This study tried to examine whether a relationship between factors such as multiple role balance, number of dependents, age, experience, professional quality of life and well-being among women counsellors existed or not. The study revealed that women with a higher score on Multiple role balance were capable of balancing multiple roles in their lives,
whereas women scoring moderate scores were interpreted in several ways. It was assumed that these women simply accepted their roles without having a positive feeling towards those roles. Another assumption was that these women might feel that it is their sole responsibility towards the role. Moreover, there was an emphasis on giving importance to both the professional and personal life when the overall holistic wellness are analysed and evaluated (Martin, 2012).

There are several problems that a woman encounters when she decides to undertake a job in Indian society. The root cause of the problem is the patriarchal structure of the society where women are expected to give the highest priority to the needs of the family, irrespective of whether they work outside the house or not. Their primary role is considered to be looking after the home and children, and their employment outside the home is still regarded as secondary (Arora, 2003). Women’s pregnancy and maternity leave might result in a delay of their promotions as compared to their male counterparts. They also faced sexual harassment and exploitation in their work-place (Shukla, 2003). When working women try to manage both home and job along with the demands of child-care, they are bound to experience role conflict. One of the greatest drawbacks resulting from being focused on their career is the high chance of disharmony in their family life, where modern educated husbands too expect their wives to serve them and the household despite the women working outside the homes. Studies also revealed that the discrimination which a woman faced at the workplace was related to the lower job commitment which was acquired through the socialisation process. When women consider work as an additional role and do not set career goals, they are likely to face
problems at work. A low representation of women in the higher posts has been considered as a reflection of discrimination in recruitment policies or prejudices as well as the lack of orientation and commitment of women towards their career. In addition, there are also studies that focused on the changes taking place in women’s lives as a result of their employment. Women were able to create bigger space for themselves by emerging out of the traditional role (Abraham, 2002; Mahajan, 1996).

For Malaysian women, the task of managing work and family roles became even more difficult due to the limited work arrangement available to them. The majority of women employees worked for longer hours along with their male counterparts, since the number of working hours is fixed as being from nine to five by the labor laws under the Malaysian Federal Government. Other employment modes which were non-conventional in nature are either very new or not applicable in Malaysia. For instance, flexible working hours had been considered only recently by the Government with a view to motivate women to join the workforce, which in turn will help them in balancing work and family life (Aziz, 2011). Earlier, the different types of family friendly policies provided to the employees were various leave entitlements like unpaid leave, emergency leave, maternity/paternity leave and annual leave. However, there is still the absence of work arrangements such as part-time employment, job sharing or tele-working (Subramanian & Selvaratnam, 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that combining work and family roles for Malaysian employed women is challenging due to limited work arrangements and the prevalence of traditional gender roles in the society.
Thus, employed mothers in Malaysia were likely to experience conflict and work overload in the process of managing work and family domains (Noor, 1999).

In China, women constituted 38% of the full-time workforce. The rate of participation in paid work was high throughout their working lives due to the intervention of the communist state in the past six decades in China (Cooke, 2007). Since part-time work was not an option, the majority of women in China were full-time workers. The concept of job sharing, flexitime and term-time working did not exist in Chinese society. Working mothers drew support from commercial domestic services, family networks and nurseries for the purpose of household chores and child-care. Earlier studies on Chinese women’s working pattern revealed that in order to accommodate their family commitments, Chinese women preferred work which was less demanding (Yi & Chien, 2002). Moreover, many working couples depended on their parents for child-care support as a result of the one-child policy and the early retirement age i.e. 55 years for men and 50 years for women. In Japan, the amount of time spent at work is highest in comparison to other developed countries. The working hours for Japanese male employees is 46.6 hours per week and for female employees 40.4 hours per week on an average. Thus, it can be seen that their personal time is limited as a result of more working hours, which in turn may lead to the feeling of imbalance and unhappiness. Moreover, working for long hours resulted in less time for family life. Thus, Japanese women most often quit their jobs after child-birth, and if they later decided to return to work they worked only on a part-time basis. In addition, women employees also felt uncomfortable in taking maternity leave as they considered their maternity leave to be a
burden on the company. They were also unsure whether they can balance child-care and job after they returned from their maternity leave. They also feared that they may fall behind in technical knowledge when they joined work after availing maternity leave. Due to poor social security provisions for unemployment and absence of family based state welfare benefits, both men and women in China were forced to undertake full-time continuous employment. However, in Bangladesh, the majority of women are actively participating in the workforce as well despite the traditional structure of family roles being prominent in which men are considered as the sole breadwinners. The two important reasons for women opting for paid work are a change in mindset and the rising cost of living. Thus, dual-career families have replaced the traditional family system by bringing about socio-demographic changes in Bangladesh. A study (Uddin et al, 2013) conducted on female teachers of Bangladesh revealed that there was interference of work in the family life of female teachers as well as interference of family in their work life. As a result, they faced difficulties in balancing both the domains. The study suggested that ensuring better facilities to the female employees in terms of flexible working hours, transport facility, child-care centres, reduced workload etc would help them in achieving work and family balance in their lives. Several studies have been conducted on IT professionals of India in recent years. One such study showed that there is a direct proportional relationship between work-life balance and working hours. The findings revealed that women who worked for longer hours were bound to experience more conflict as compared to those female employees who worked for relatively lesser number of hours. There was a wide gap of work-life conflict between women who worked for eight hours and women who worked for ten hours per
day (Aishwarya & Ramasundaram, 2011). A study conducted from a Narrative Life Story Framework found that women who had a strong belief in faith connected the element of work with their faith. They believed that their purpose of life is work which is created by God. Hence, they considered their work as being significantly meaningful. For them, values are an inseparable part of coping strategies and their personal and professional lives are highly valued by them. The study also revealed that hardships and experiences encountered by women were affected by their cultural identity and cultural background. These women were able to understand their work and personal life in a much better way through the help of faith. Women also admitted that there was a positive affect of having multiple roles in both their work and family life. One of the most important factor for achieving a healthy work-life balance was flexibility, which is also supported by several studies in work-life balance. In order to achieve flexibility, women have a longing for their own business as they thought that in order to achieve a better work-life balance, flexible schedule at work was necessary. A sense of being self-dependent in all areas of work was another factor which gave them a feeling of elation. Thus, it was concluded that the most important factor in achieving work life balance or choosing a career field was faith which in turn also played a very important role in relationships for women. Faith was also a factor that helped them in deciding where they would prefer spending their time and moreover the adaptive style (i.e. how they coped with change) was also affected by faith (Krymis, 2011).
FAMILY RELATED ISSUES

Despite being equally well-educated as their husbands, Chinese women gave more priority to family responsibilities over their own career, either voluntarily or involuntarily, as a result of traditional Chinese cultural influence. The traditional norm of a family was that the husband would deal with external matters such as earning a livelihood, while the wife was expected to look after the household chores even though she was working outside the home (Cooke, 2007). The main source of work-family conflict for Chinese employees was the long working hours and limited or no leisure time. The worst offenders of work-life balance were government organisations because they did not have any formal work-life balance policy. Moreover, the government employees were expected to come to office even during non-working hours to attend urgent meetings or for other tasks assigned by their superiors. Another important reason for the work-family conflict was the heavy workload where employees had no choice but to work overtime in order to complete their tasks. Moreover, there was pressure to give high performance due to the competition in the market. In addition, frequent trips for business purposes also led to disruptions in family life. However, individuals adopted different strategies to cope with the pressures of work and family. In order to remain fit and healthy and socialise with like-minded people, individuals took the initiative and joined sports clubs. Some married women chose to focus on their career by postponing motherhood. The most commonly used coping mechanism by mothers to alleviate the work family conflict was by relying on their family members for support, or through outsourcing their housework. In addition, a small percentage of male
employees requested their spouse to quit their jobs and become full-time housewives. While for others, the only preferred option to avoid work-family conflict was withdrawal from family and social life (Xian & Cooke, 2012).

In Bangladesh, the identity of an individual is linked to the identity of the extended family. Women in Bangladesh are still entirely and solely responsible for performing household chores, child-care and other aspects of family responsibilities. On the other hand, in Japan, the two life domains that played an important role are balancing work and family, and balancing work and leisure. The spouses of these women employees were also unable to devote time to family and child-care as a result of work overload or job transfers. Thus, spending time with their husbands, family members and educating their children were limited. Another important aspect in balancing work and family is the care for the elderly which is considered as women’s primary responsibility, but nowadays full-time working women are facing difficulties in fulfilling the role of primary caregivers to the elderly due to the ageing population. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is lack of time and flexibility in Japan in terms of balancing work and family (Bienek, 2014). Similarly, another study conducted on female medical practitioners revealed that the important stressors which affected their entire family were work overload and reduced interest in family activities. In addition, the lack of support, time pressure, amount of official work and on-duty calls were identified as other stressors. The family lives of these women were affected by different factors such as bringing official work to their homes, getting telephone calls from work during family events, and spending time at official meetings away from home. Role conflict
was another important stressor for female practitioners as identified by the study (Rout, 1995).

Studies have also emphasised the consequences of social conditioning right from childhood days, which is responsible for the secondary status of women in Indian society, as a result of which it becomes difficult for them to break the norms of traditional roles despite being educated or earning substantially. Secondly, the prevalence of male attitudes, known as male chauvinism, is also responsible for the secondary status being accorded to women. In addition, patrifocal family which gave importance to men’s interests was also regarded as deeply affecting women’s access to achievements in education and employment. Studies have examined the modifications in marriage systems, inheritance and succession practices which were due to changes in the structure and functions of the family in India. Gender discrimination and occupational segregation are still prominent in Indian society. Women’s achievements are comparatively low and they are seen in the lower rank of the job hierarchy despite making recognisable advances to education and careers. In addition, women are often paid less for the same jobs. These factors indicates the prevalence of gender differentiated family roles, which eventually perpetuates the sexual division of labor (Thomas, 2007).

Another study (Seshadri & Kar, 2012) conducted in India collected viewpoints of women in dual-earner families on work-life balance variables and the type of support that they required from their employers. The study revealed that policies formulated by organisations that promoted flexible work arrangements had positive relationships with