

## WOMEN'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE STRATEGIES: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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**ABSTRACT:** Traditional roles for women in the workforce have evolved alongside modern economies and society. Therefore, there is a lot of pressure on working women to be as successful as men in their careers while also having a satisfying personal life. Due to the rising demands of their employment, many women are finding that they have less time for their personal life. Despite the fact that it is simpler than ever to juggle work and personal life thanks to innovations like smartphones, notepads, etc., modern life is increasingly demanding on both fronts. Negative effects on health, mood, and social life are seen. If professional women want to experience true fulfillment, they may need to find a way to juggle their professional and personal lives. This research seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by married women while attempting to achieve a work-life balance. The different facets of work-life balance for married working women are explored in this study.

**Keywords:** *Work-Life Balance, Quality of Life, Female Employees, Personal Life, Professional Life.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Former SNL cast member and current social critic Tina Fey has written an autobiography in which she describes her life as a working mother. One of the most demeaning questions a male can ask a woman is, "How do you juggle it all?" (Fey, 2011). (p. 255). She demonstrates how one seemingly innocent inquiry may make a woman feel scrutinized and guilty. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance might be difficult, but not impossible. Fey states, "I have the same struggles as any working parent" (p.255) to demonstrate that men also have this issue but are not as frequently questioned about it as women do. In the United States, the gap between the percentages of men and women with bachelor's degrees or above has shrunk in recent years. In addition to being the major caregivers for their families, women make up more than half of the population of college-educated and working-age individuals. Maria Shriver's 2009 book was released by the Center for American Progress. The Shriver Report: How Electing a Woman as President Will Change America. The report predicts that by 2050, women will make up about three-quarters of the American

labor force. Currently, women make up more than half of the workforce in the United States. Geile (2008) claims that it is the usual for both spouses to contribute financially to the household. This phenomenological study looks at the lives of working women who are also taking care of their children and other relatives. Women who want to have children and advance in their careers now confront different obstacles than they did in the past. Many women are told they must choose between the two instead than being encouraged to do both.

Researchers have hardly touched the surface of the topic of women's multitasking abilities, despite the fact that this is a prominent area of inquiry. This study will look into the strategies employed by successful women in the real world. Storm (2009) summarizes the difficulties that, in her opinion, working mothers face. She notes that a lot of moms have the feeling that they could be better role models. They regret that work keeps them from spending more time with their families. They can't unwind at home because they can't stop thinking about the office. If you ask Storm, "it

seems like our family suffers because of our job and our job suffers because of our family."

Most productive leaders and workers are those who are "confident in managing responsibilities in all spheres of life" (Wirth, 2001, p. 116). According to Hewlett (2002), a woman's level of satisfaction with life increases when she finds a healthy equilibrium between her personal and professional spheres. Among the many upsides of engaging in "professional activity" are gains in "mental stimulation, financial resources, self-confidence, and adult friendship" (Hewlett, 2002, p. ). Women who work outside the house for pay have lower rates of sadness and more life satisfaction. Molloy (2004) suggested that "integrating work and life adds value to our daily lives." Greater joy and more robust connections are the outward signs of this value.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- The following are some of the aims of the study.
- The primary goal of this study is to learn how common problems with work-life balance are among academic and healthcare women.
- This research attempts to provide insight into the work-life balance issues faced by married working women by analyzing the effects of characteristics such work hours, workplace involvement, and family duties.
- Factors including age, family size, and the husband's career are taken into account as the authors investigate the challenges married working women experience in striking a work-life balance.
- The impact of work-life balance on women's perceptions of their own careers

## **2. BACKGROUND WORK**

The term "glass ceiling" was used by the Wall Street Journal in 1986 to describe the invisible barrier that kept women from advancing in their professions. They "felt like they were on the cusp of the executive suite" (Klenke, 2011), but they could not break past the glass ceiling. This (original quotation marks) is typical of the

mindset of women who fail to achieve leadership roles. This word refers to the subtle biases and prejudices that keep women from holding positions of power (Wirth, 2001).

Through the Labyrinth, Eagly and Carli (2007) explain the three separate eras in which American women were prevented from advancing to leadership positions in the workplace. Historically, women faced a "concrete wall" that halted their professional advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The ensuing era, in which few female employees rose to managerial levels, was known as the "glass ceiling" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The fragility of glass was chosen to symbolize how challenging it can be to acknowledge the challenges that modern women face.

Women face sexism and unjust treatment in the job, and the "glass ceiling" is the most common metaphor used to describe this phenomenon. Eagly and Carli (2007) contend that the "labyrinth" of today's culture does not present women with insurmountable hurdles. Some women have "successfully negotiated the labyrinth that impedes most women's progress on the path toward these 6 positions" (p. 27) to reach the very top of their fields. Women's growth is hindered by bias and sexism, but it doesn't stop them from succeeding. Career opportunities for women may be hampered by racism, sexism in the workplace, and the unequal division of housework. An article titled "Through the Glass Ceiling" was published in the Wall Street Journal in 2007 and featured profiles of fifty women who had worked their way to executive positions in various industries. According to this account, women are increasingly gaining success in fields that have historically been controlled by men. Though breaking through the glass ceiling is no longer an impassable obstacle, women continue to encounter substantial challenges in their pursuit of leadership roles (at work and at home), challenges that are more accurately represented by a labyrinth.

Women have made incredible progress in virtually every field since the turn of the

millennium. Women have overtaken men as the majority in the labor force and in higher education. Although there are increasingly more women in the workforce, they are not succeeding in higher positions. Harlan and Berheide (1994) argue that this tendency creates a "sticky floor" that discourages women from advancing in their careers. To put it clearly, women will never break the glass ceiling if they are unable to rise above the managerial level.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study of working women use qualitative techniques based on a life path perspective. Inspired by Geile's (2008) use of the life narrative technique to find shared experiences across interviewees, this investigation does the same by focusing on early adulthood, childhood and adolescence, the present, and the future. The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the proactive and reactive steps people take to achieve a positive work-life balance.

The research topics and methods utilized to address them will be restated and outlined in this paper's methodology section. We will define the analytical unit and explain how we decided which data to include in our analysis. Insight into the validity and reliability of the instrument used to collect the data will also be provided to the reader. We'll go over every step of the data-gathering and analyzing process. The final section of this chapter explains how to get approval from an IRB to make sure research participants are safe.

#### **Research Questions**

The Giele framework provides a basis for early research questions by exploring topics of self, relationships, motivation, and adaptability. In addition to these four sections, a new section was included to give context for how work-life balance is achieved. The supplemental research questions were motivated by the section on women's life course strategies.

How do women's identities, connections, motivations, and adaption experiences shape the

decisions they make about how to juggle work and family life?

How do successful women manage both their professional and personal lives?

How are women coping with the pressure of having to do it all?

#### **Research Methodology**

This qualitative research builds on Weber (2011)'s interview database from the Digital Women's Project. About an hour was spent in total on these in-depth, semi-structured interviews, all of which were recorded for posterity's sake. This research also took a life story approach, like Giele's (2002).

To quote Giele (2009): "Life histories reveal patterns that surveys cannot, because surveys take a fragmented approach that examines the effects of variables on given outcomes in the populations" (p. 238). In life cycle research, case studies are frequently used to gather information. The life narrative method centers on making connections between one's internal experiences and their external context. Timeliness of existence can likewise be established using this evidence (Elder & Giele, 2009). Giele (Elder & Giele, 2009) argues that life stories are effective because they are comprehensive (covering both one's social and personal life), subjective (offering insight into the subject's perspective), and narrative (considering the subject's growth over time).

The Giele study spanned four time periods in search of commonalities in the lives of the women who participated. 67 The first section inquired about your time spent in higher education as well as your plans for the future, both professionally and personally. Understanding the context requires hearing a woman's recollections of her early adulthood. The second group of questions dug deeper into the woman's background and the values she and her family held in regards to her education, the parallels between her and her siblings, the family's financial situation, and her aspirations for the future. This highlights the person's childhood therapy. Adults in the thick of things were asked questions on the rewards and frustrations of job and family life, as well as any

problems or successes they'd encountered. We take a look at how things stand in the present. The last series of questions urged people to consider what they wanted out of life in the long run. Women's concerns and fears about the future are also addressed. Consistent factors in an individual's environment are always considered in life course studies. "family background, social pressure, individual traits, and economic conditions all play a part" (p. 245) in the framework of life course methodology (Elder & Giele, 2009). The goal is to identify the factors that played the most significant role in producing the desired outcome.

The four main factors that shape a person's behavioral system are (a) their background and upbringing, (b) their network of relationships, (c) their internal drives, and (d) their timing and reaction to significant life events (Elder & Giele, 2009). To crack the "identity" code and learn about someone's past and culture, researchers need to take a close look at their immediate surroundings. How an individual encodes their "relational style" for their social relationships aspect is affected by their own values and their social circle. The terms "motivation" and "work achievement and successes" describe the content of the section on internal drives. The "adaptive style" section analyzes adaptability in terms of both forethought and responsiveness to unfamiliar conditions. According to Elder and Giele (2009), the conceptual framework for analyzing differences in life outcomes involves an individual's value system, social network, motivation, and adaptable style.

We will then use inductive strategies to find common threads throughout the reports and deductive methods to isolate relevant differences and similarities. The purpose of this activity is to identify the driving forces behind the emergence of a particular outcome. Picking identify the main patterns that go across a person's upbringing and experiences in life demands some understanding (Elder & Giele, 2009).

### **Selection of Data Sources**

Professionals and doctoral students have been interviewed for the Digital Women's Project (Weber, 2011) to create a database of qualitative interviews to identify key women leaders in the area. Using a snowball sampling method, we were able to obtain interviews from more than 150 different women for our database. "Snowballing" refers to a method of recruiting new study participants by having existing participants invite their own social networks to join. As word of mouth spreads, so does the number of willing interviewees.

The goal of this sort of sampling is to provide a diverse set of opinions and answers. (Stone, 2007). Weber's (2011) study kicked off with a survey of female students enrolled in Pepperdine University's doctoral program in education and psychology. The study on work-life balance invited all female Ph.D. candidates to participate by email. The women who took part were then asked to recommend other women who might be willing to join the study.

Weber '69 decided to expand their study outside Pepperdine University in order to include more working women. The first domino fell when Orange County Metro Magazine published a story on 40 successful women. The study's female participants were invited to recruit an additional 40 women from their social networks and workplaces. This interview was the first to be included in a database of successful American women. Women of all ages, races, nationalities, occupations, marital and parenting situations, and geographical locations have been questioned. Due to the intricacy of the dataset, this research will focus on a representative sample of women. Women who are able to successfully balance their careers and parenting responsibilities will be given preference.

Each participant completed a consent form that explained the study and asked how they felt about the findings being used and shared. They were free to end the interview at any time or avoid answering any particular question. Participants were offered the option of submitting their



responses to in-depth demographic surveys in sealed, anonymous envelopes to be transcribed by a neutral party.

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

The purpose of this quantitative phenomenological study is to better understand the influences of family and career on the lives of high-achieving businesswomen. Some women are discouraged from entering the workforce because they believe they cannot achieve a work-life balance they find satisfactory, despite the fact that women have made great strides in the workplace over the previous half century. The study investigates the methods used by successful women to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This research not only adds to the current literature on the topic, but it also provides a useful resource for future leaders in search of practical examples and advice.

Weber's (2011) The Digital Women's Project interviewed women using a life-story framework created by Giele (2008) to learn more about their identities, interpersonal dynamics, driving forces, and coping mechanisms. There were well over 150 applicants, but only 22 were chosen for an in-person meeting. Although each of these successful women has her own distinct approach to balancing work and personal life, commonalities do emerge. In Chapter 4, we get a rundown of these interviews and a description of the 84 themes that emerged in terms of how to achieve a healthy work-life balance. We looked into whether or not categorizing the methods as proactive or reactive made a difference.

##### **Data Collection Procedures**

After conducting in-depth interviews with women in academia and the workforce, the Digital Women's Project's leaders were selected. Thanks to the snowball sampling method, we have already interviewed over 150 women. To increase our sample size, we took advantage of the "snowball effect" by having respondents invite their own social networks to take part. As more people start contributing, there will be an explosion in the

volume of data. A sample that is truly representative of the population will have many different points of view. A diverse range of ages, incomes, educational levels, races/ethnicities, professions, locales, marital situations, and family sizes are reflected among the women.

##### **Selection Criteria**

Purposeful sampling allowed us to select useful data from the huge pool of interviewees. According to Tongco (2007), "purposeful sampling" is a research technique used to investigate a "cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within" (p. 147). Women who said they were working full-time while also caring for children were initially chosen for interviews because their stories best exemplified the difficulties and rewards of striking a work-life balance. 98 women were left after we eliminated those who didn't identify as mothers. The 102 women we interviewed were screened out because they did not all claim to have full-time jobs. This criterion assumes that working mothers and other women have the most first-hand knowledge of the difficulties of juggling work and home responsibilities. Biographies and case studies are frequently written on famous people and successful businesses because their successes are held up as examples for others to emulate. We settled on the following standards to identify exceptional women in positions of leadership. Most people, if given the chance, would want to pattern their life after famously successful persons. It is normal practice to study the methods of successful companies and people in the hopes of emulating their achievements. Collins, a prolific writer who has explored the factors that push companies from excellent to outstanding in his books *Built to Last* (1994) and *Excellent to Exceptional* (2001). The best-selling book on Amazon.com in 2011 was Walter Isaacson's biography of Steve Jobs, Apple Inc. co-founder and Pixar Animation Studios co-founder. These books are popular because people want to learn from the best.

### **Data Analysis**

Weber (2011) conducted an interview study and transcribed the responses word-for-word. The interviews were recorded in full and the transcripts were imported into Nvivo9 for coding. Interpreting and analyzing data, as Patton (1990, p. 347) puts it, "involves making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what is said by different people." Categories, often called themes or codes, have been developed for the data (Creswell, 2003, 2007). A string of phrases is used to convey the ideas. When a term, sentence, or concept is used more than once, the researcher must note each occurrence (Kvale, 2007).

Nvivo9 refers to each individual data subject as a "node." All 22 interviews were painstakingly coded by hand to create the node list. Each time a respondent provided suggestions for juggling work and personal life, a new node emerged in the network. To make sure nothing was missed, the researcher read through all of the interviews again. This generated enough information to resolve the study's primary inquiry. 92 The researcher must study the collected list of nodes (strategies) and categorize them as proactive or reactive in order to address the second and third problems. Some individuals from each group shared strategies that were mutually beneficial. The methods offered to enhance the off-hours are comprehensive and wide. In order to give our readers the widest possible range of choices, we've included all of the approaches that were discussed, regardless of how frequently they were discussed.

### **Findings**

The underlying topic this research seeks to address is this: How do women's identities, relationships, motives, and ability to adjust to new conditions influence the work-life balance decisions they make for themselves and their families? The women's responses to the questions in these four areas provided a vivid portrait of their pursuit of work-life harmony. Narratives

focusing on inner motivation and adaptability, the individual, and interpersonal relationships all made use of distinct narrative tactics. The most helpful recommendations for enhancing work-life harmony were provided in response to the sixth set of questions, which inquired about effective strategies for balancing multiple vocations.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The relevance of investigating the factors that contribute to marital discord and the difficulties of juggling work and family life has grown in tandem with the rise in the number of two-income households. More research into the pros and cons of juggling work and family obligations is undoubtedly needed. elements such as the number of hours worked per week and job-related stress were shown to be particularly relevant in this study's quantification of the elements that affect workers' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Age, stage of life, and caregiving responsibilities of workers were all considered. Freedom to strike a good work-life balance is more important than ever in today's fast-paced culture. Taking advantage of workplace health programs could help women better balance their work and personal lives. However, they can't do much to correct the imbalance problems by themselves. Given the complexity of women's challenges, more study is certainly needed before we can help working women achieve a better balance between their professional and personal lives.

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