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ACHIEVING WORK FAMILY BALANCE (WFB) AMONG PROFESSIONAL WORKING WOMEN IN MAURITIUS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The role of women in Mauritius is changing rapidly mainly due to industrialisation where a major influx of women were been absorbed by the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) sector during the 1980's. Although Mauritian women were primarily recruited for cheap labour, their employment gave them a certain degree of professional and social freedom. These women are now more present in the professional world due to their high qualifications and performance at work. However, while they are spending longer hours outside the home, their domestic responsibilities have not lessened. In Mauritius, given the nature of its patriarchal society, it is widely accepted that women should play an active role in the professional world while still handling family matters without jeopardising the family equilibrium. This qualitative study aims at understanding how women juggle, to face both professional and personal lives. Fifteen in-depth semi-interviews were conducted among women academics in different tertiary institutions around Mauritius and the data was analysed thematically. Findings showed that the most

common challenges faced by working women are stress and fatigue, low support systems, time management issues, childcare issue, and their work schedule. Professional women feel burdened by coincident demands of their career aspirations and the traditional way of life. The study can help in reducing Work Family Balance (WFB) among women professionals.

Keywords

Women Academics, Work Family Balance (WFB), Patriarchal Society, Career Aspirations

1. Introduction

Mauritius has seen huge changes during the past few decades in the socio-economic environment and in recent decades, there has been an increasing number of women entering the labour market. The modern trend has led to the effect of work-alcoholism. As dual-earner couples spend much time at work, children today receive little parental attention and less support in their development.

The last twenty years have been etched by salient changes in the world of work and family nature (Bhowon, 2013). The setting up of the EPZ in the 1970's, has led to changes in the structures and roles of the family with women raising from housewives to nation builders (Bhowon *et al.*, 2008). Nowadays, the dual-earner family has replaced the traditional family. Working single mothers have also emerged (Paulin and Lee, 2002). For millions of employees across the globe, juggling the two spheres is part of their daily life (Karimi *et al.*, 2012). In male-dominated societies like Mauritius, working mothers have to struggle to find a balance between their career and their family roles. This study focuses on women academics and their work family balance/conflict.

The academic profession in particular, is very demanding and inflicts lot of pressures. Being a woman academic raises multiple challenges in the work and family domains. They have to work long hours at the expense of their family life. They often lack social support at the workplace and within the family. Similarly, multiple consequences may occur such as stress, burnout, mood disorder, sleep disorder, and depression. Some women even get indulged into substance abuse like coffee, tobacco and sleeping pills, which may negatively affect their health and wellbeing.

Moreover, the extended family type has decreased while the cost of a nursery is expensive. Most of the universities in Mauritius still lack adequate childcare facilities and suitable Flexible-Work Arrangements (FWAs) to support working mothers, in such a way, they often have difficulties to climb the organisational hierarchy. The lack of support in balancing work and family, affects the female academics' workforce and leads to high absenteeism, labour turnover, low performance, job satisfaction and motivation. These may consequently impede their career progression and the institutions as well.

The Mauritian government is probing to improve the lives of Mauritian families where men and women are finding themselves fighting new challenges to reconcile work and family accountabilities, with globalisation being the major related-factor. In many circumstances, people have to choose between career and family. A press conference was held in October 2016 in order to recall about the emergence of work-family balance (Republic of Mauritius, 2016). They have decreed that a 'Balancing work and family life programme' will be launched to help male and female employees in both public and private sectors in their efforts to achieve WFB. Adherence to the WFB programme will encourage public and private organisations to foster a family-friendly work environment for their employees. Ramguttty-Wong added that the programme will also be beneficial to organisations in producing healthier human resources. According to Ramguttty-Wong *et al.* (2013), many employees are not aware of the existence of WLB which is still considered unclear to them.

The main ground for this study is to examine the balance between work and family among professional working mothers in Mauritius. It mainly aims at studying the challenges women academics experience and the coping strategies they adopt with reference to work-family balance. The specific objectives are

- To understand the awareness of WFB among women academics in Mauritius
- To look into the challenges women academics face in balancing work and family roles
- To examine the coping strategies adopted by women academics to manage work and family roles.

Fifteen in-depth semi-interviews were conducted among women academics in different tertiary institutions around Mauritius and the data was analysed thematically. Findings showed

that the most common challenges faced by working women are stress and fatigue, low support systems, time management issues, childcare issue, and their work schedule.

1.1 Tertiary Education Sector in Mauritius

The tertiary education in Mauritius has seen major changes since its independence in 1968, when only the University of Mauritius existed. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) is responsible to regulate, plan, and foster the development of both private and public tertiary education and to guarantee quality education. The number of institutions in this sector went up from 70 in 2011 to 77 in 2012 (TEC, 2014) where private institutions climbed from 59 to 67. Moreover, public institutions are funded by the state whereas private ones are affiliated with international bodies. They offer different types of programmes ranging from sub-degree to postgraduate in various disciplines. Mauritius' student population has increased from 17000 in 2000 to over 50000 in 2014 (Reisz, 2016).

2. Overview of Women in the Academic Profession

Women academics is chosen in this study because they work in a highly competitive male-dominated society. The academic profession is very demanding and inflict lot of pressures. Being a woman academic raises multiple challenges in the work and family domains and they have to work long hours at the expense of their family life.

Akinsanya (2012, p.137) defines an academic as 'someone who does teaching or carry research at a college or university'. Women have a high workforce in education sector, mostly in nursery, primary and secondary. Thanacoody *et al.* (2006) revealed that there is no public comparative statistics which are available across all of the Mauritian universities. Women lecturers are numerous in many disciplines and departments in several faculties, however, they are underrepresented at the highest level all over the world. She noted that women Deans and Professors are few and women Vice-Chancellors are seldom. In UK, Australia and USA, there is a smaller number of women academics as senior lecturers and professors than as lecturers. Only 3.5% of women in 1999 were senior lecturers and above. In studies carried out by Nasir (2001) and Yolonfoun (2003), women lecturers as compared to their male counterparts are normally considered as less knowledgeable and by the same time have to work harder to achieve a position of authority. Nonetheless, women in academia face the challenge of career progression as they have to combine work and family responsibilities (Ismail *et al.*, 2004).

Work-family balance originated in America in 1986 (Yadav and Rani, 2015) because employees chose to ‘work hard don’t play’ at the expense of their personal, social and family lives. To Pronk (2005), work-family balance is a ‘subset of work-life balance’ (p.34). However, there is no exact definition of WFB. Clark (2000) defines WFB as ‘the satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict’ (p.15). To Hill *et al.* (2001), WFB is the degree to which an individual can simultaneously balance temporal, emotional, and behavioural demands of both work and family duties. From the standpoint of Osoian *et al.* (2011), ‘balance’ does not mean allotting an equal amount of time and energy to the two domains, but rather a satisfactory level of involvement in them. WFB is one of the essential issues that matter to human resource development as the two domains are interdependent and strongly influence each other.

Moreover, Greenhaus *et al.* (2003) noted that there are three components of WFB: time balance, psychological involvement balance, satisfaction balance. Time balance refers to equal time being given to both work and family roles; psychological involvement balance refers to equal psychological efforts in both domains; whereas satisfaction balance refers to equal satisfaction level in both roles. Work-family balance matters remain a core issue, because the absence of a balance can result in work-family conflict (Noor, 2002). To be able to understand WFB, work-family conflict is a prerequisite.

Halpern’s (2005) and Greenhaus *et al.*’s (2003) research has underlined that WFB enhances employee’s well-being and is a cornerstone to keep a society functional and healthy. To Shiva (2013), it is crucial for working women to have a WFB. Barnett and Hyde (2001) stated that being involved in several roles prohibit the effects of negative experiences on individuals’ work or family life. Arif and Farooqi (2014) describe job satisfaction as the extent to which an individual is satisfied with his/her job. Encouraging employees towards a WFB increases their work satisfaction. Also, a satisfied workforce extends the security of organisations through job performance. Work Family Balance is associated to happier life, happy marriage and family satisfaction, where employees enjoy superior relation with their spouse and children. However, when there is low involvement or little satisfaction in their combined roles, relationship between WFB and quality of life diminishes.

3. Challenges Encountered by Women Academics

3.1 Time Management Issue

St Amour *et al.* (2007) resonate that time management is made more difficult when demands are imposed from both family and work domains, therefore resulting in time conflict. Ogbogu (2013) supports that the time divided by women academics between the two roles, contributes to incompatibility. The academic profession requires huge amount of time and energy injections. Verlander (2004) highlights that because professional women are still responsible for domestic works and childcare, it is hard for them to devote considerable quantity time at work for promotion or tenure. Being over-pressured in a masculinist environment, they have to undertake a heavy workload with their family responsibilities, making it difficult to dedicate themselves to their female colleagues, and are often considered as uncaring about their work environment issues. Enders (2000) argued that coordinating work at university with family errands is difficult for women academics.

3.2 Stress and Fatigue

Working mothers advanced that in their effort to balance work and family roles, physical stress arises (Rendon, 2016). In Rendon's study (2016), findings revealed that working mothers were often tired and had little or no times for themselves if they are able to complete all of their responsibilities. It is coined that work stress can interfere with home life. Adeoye (1992) and Durosaro (1995) found that the twin role of women academics, as homemaker and professional, is a source of stress. The fact that they have to attend childcare and house chores after work, results into fatigue (Akinsanya, 2012). Expectations such as meeting deadlines and a pile of script markings together with homework pressures are hectic to female academics. Furthermore, Jonathan and Stone (1989) expressed that female lecturers working under pressure, face continuous stress, fatigue and exhaustion. The outcomes have serious consequences on their personal, mental, physical and psychological health, which may make them seem unbearable to their surroundings at work or within the family.

3.3 Lack of Support Systems

The lack of supportive networks is also another challenge for women academics with regards to WFB. The lack of social support can drive to WFC experiences. There is no longer a solid support among the family since numbers of women are now working. Hattar-Pollara *et al.*

(2003) acknowledge that working women need to count on themselves to manage their manifold responsibilities. Moreover, Evertsson and Neramo (2004) accentuate that working women in their effort to support their family financially, do not get same support from their spouses in performing domestic works. Bond *et al.* (1998) reported that time spent on house chores and childcare continues to differ between men and women. Levitan and Belous (1981) advanced that work-sharing received from extended family members has become very rare. In fact, women in paid work still undertake the bulk of role of caregiver as well as the family management. Similarly, Verlander (2004) added that there is rare availability of onsite day care and that job-sharing or creative scheduling has become hardly common.

3.4 Inflexibility in Work Schedule

Work schedule is a major challenge for working women (Rendon, 2016). Akinsanya (2012) pointed out that teaching in the university itself is a job holding a very high-pressure, such as, the ‘publish-or-perish’ syndrome, teaching and research work load, participating in conferences, seminars and workshops. Such pressures render the life of women academics more difficult in balancing their home life. Ogbogu (2013) noted that faculty members work an average of 50 hours per week. They are required to work intensively and under unusual work schedules (Burke and El-Kot, 2009). Hogan and Hogan (2015) posited that women academics often engage in long hours of work due to increasing number of students pursuing further studies. Research suggests that the working hours of women academics may clash with their family duties (Hogan and Hogan, 2015) and may interrupt their family life (Rendon, 2016). In Ogbogu’s study (2013), 42% of women academics revealed that an overcharged work schedule leads to WFC.

3.5 Dependent Care Issues

Another issue faced by new mothers is whether, and how, to continue breastfeeding when they return to work (Verlander, 2004). Childcare still impedes more on women’s careers (Gokulsing and Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2014). The academic mother needs to face new challenges after going back to work after maternity and carry great pressures on her to pursue her career (Delina and Raya, 2013). Seeking for consistent and competent childcare for its quality and trustworthiness, is one of the most crucial jobs in preparing the mother’s return to work (Verlander, 2004). Unexpected sickness of children is a calamity that can be difficult to handle

and there often requires to use and avail for unpaid leave and unexpected absences from work (Poduval and Poduval, 2009). It can necessitate her to take more than available leave options, and job security can be at risk. This is especially true in cases where the child is one with special needs (Thyen *et al.*, 1999). One of the numerous family demands that most struggle with be after school time parental duties (Poduval and Poduval, 2009). This also covers that working women have to take care of their elderly parents, especially when they are sick and need attention (Barnett and Gareis, 2006).

3.6 The Negative Impact of Work Demand on Family Life

Ramguttu-Wong *et al.* (2013) highlighted that there is a pressing need to move our attention beyond the impact that family demands could have on work-life, to the impact of work demands on family life. Mothers' increasing labour market participation is seen as having far-reaching effects on family relationships (Reynolds *et al.*, 2003). Life at work seems so difficult for working women (Delina and Raya, 2013) due to long working hours in paid jobs that reduce the amount of time available for family activities and to maintain family relationships (Voydanoff, 2004). Too often, the changing work patterns of women are confused with causing deterioration of family life (Levitan and Belous, 1981). In Rendon's (2016) study of work-family balance, it was observed that working mothers reported having a hard time getting out of their mode of work once they were home, and this concluded having a negative impact on the interaction with their children.

More so, and as argued by Loder (2005), women's efforts to perform multiple roles of professionals, mothers, wives, and caretakers are always very conflicting. Women who resume work after a few months are torn between career ambitions and natural childrearing instincts that even in households where grandparents, relatives or babysitters attend to the child, a working mother still feels ridden with guilt (Poduval and Poduval, 2009). The presence of women in the work force initially raised concerns about, among other things, the impact of the non-attendance of mothers on children's development (St Amour *et al.*, 2007). It gives rise to a sense of failure of responsibility that arises when they lack control over the demands made on them from different spheres of life (Kumari, 2014).

Mothers had some problems switching off 'bad' work feelings and husbands felt their partner lacked time for being a couple and paying attention to their children (Reynolds *et al.*,

2009). A high degree of tension between family life and professional responsibilities decreases marital harmony (St Amour *et al.*, 2007). Others, in contrast, react to family-work/work-family conflict by becoming depressed and channel angry behaviour toward their partner (McEwen and Barling, 1994). People in difficult work situations are more hostile toward their spouse, show less warmth toward the latter and are less able to offer them support (Matthews *et al.*, 1996).

3.7 Coping Strategies Adopted by Women Academics

Coping strategies are defined by Taylor (1998) as the specific efforts people use in order to manage, tolerate or reduce stressful events. Lo *et al.* (2003) classified coping strategies into three types, based on Hall's (1972) typology, namely: Structural role redefinition, personal role redefinition and reactive role behaviour.

3.7.1 Structural Role Redefinition (Type 1)

Structural role redefinition is changing the structure of one's imposed expectations (Lo *et al.*, 2003). Mutual agreement will be made by communicating with the role senders and by negotiating a new set of expectations. Lo *et al.* (2003) acknowledged in their study that working women used type 1 coping strategy. Trying to reduce the amount of work brought at home so that they can communicate with their children is one example (Aziz *et al.*, 2016). However, not meeting all work demands may reduce their career expectation. Moreover, Type 1 coping strategy includes job changes, for example, arranging one's working hours by leaving regularly at 5:30 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. to save time for the family. Adjusting role tasks, such as, asking husbands to wash dishes, also apply to this concept (Lo *et al.*, 2003). Subsequently, to Aziz *et al.* (2016), domestic role-relation stress can be managed through cognitive negotiation which can resolve conflict.

3.7.2 Personal Role Redefinition (Type 2)

Personal role redefinition involves changing one's role expectation rather than changing the expectations themselves (Lo *et al.*, 2003). The women try to change the perceived role by seeing their own behaviour or the external expectation in a different way (Ahmad, 1995). Lo *et al.* (2003) stated in her research that most women adopted type 2 strategy to cope with conflict between work and family by employing a domestic helper. Due to time and energy constraints, a domestic helper can help eliminate a lot of the household and childcare pressures on them (Aziz *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, satisfaction with child-care arrangements has an important influence on

career satisfaction of working women (Rosin and Korabik, 1990). Relatives and tutors are other sources of help (Lo *et al.*, 2003). Some hire tutors to help children with homework. Sometimes, women have to put lower expectation on children to help them cope. Research has shown that support from others is an effective coping strategy (Wallace, 2004). Lo *et al.* (2003) reported that getting support from the husband and discussing work-family problems moderate parental demands on the wife, such as, his willingness to offer time and energy in childcare and homecare responsibilities.

3.7.3 Reactive Role Behaviour (Type 3)

In this strategy, one's role demands are inflexible and is required to find ways to meet those demands (Lo *et al.*, 2003). Type 3 coping strategy attempts to meet all role demands equally through better planning and working harder (Raskin, 2006). The behaviour by this group of women always demands more of themselves, such as giving up their sleeping hours, leisure time, personal time and social life (Boyles and Shibata, 2009). Type 3 copers tend to try 'to do it all' themselves and often considered as 'superwomen' by others. Haddon and Hede (2009) reported that individuals engage in time management, prioritising, and goal-setting to achieve work-life balance. In contrast, Haworth and Lewis (2005) stated that leisure can be an effective coping strategy to maintain employees' health and wellness. Leisure can be passive or active. Passive activities can be watching movie, whereas active activities can be exercising or taking time out (Joudrey and Wallace, 2009). Boundary management can also help employees manage boundary between work and home (Rothbard *et al.*, 2005). However, Senior (1983) reported that type 3 is less adaptive than the other two strategies.

4. Methodology

The research design was exploratory as it was found best suited to examine the work and family experiences of participants. The qualitative method was used to collect data for this study since the information obtained through this research technique are more elaborated or in full details which is very helpful to gather concrete information. The qualitative method is very helpful as a research tool as it helps to understand more of the social behaviour and it encourages more social interaction while conducting the research. Semi-structured interview was the most suitable approach to collect data for this study. The purpose of using semi-structured interview

was to obtain more in-depth information. A list of interview questions consisting of mainly open-ended questions were prepared which served as a guided questionnaire to facilitate the task of the interviewer.

A pilot study was conducted to review the interview questions to evaluate their effectiveness. The participant for the pilot study consisted of an academic who works at the University of Mauritius. The data is not part of the work reported here.

The sample of 15 semi-structured interviews varied in length and were about two to three hours long. The criterion for this study was that their participants had to be an academic women preferably a mother, working in either a public or private university in Mauritius.

Five universities were selected namely Charles Telfair Institute (CTI), Middlesex University University of Mauritius (UOM), University of Technology (UTM) and the Open University of Mauritius (OUM) for the purpose of the study due to availability of their staff.

All the interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the respondents. The interviews were conducted in a private room where only the participant and the researcher were present. The respondents signed the informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. The collected data was analysed thematically.

5. Findings

Results have shown that participants have no exact but different notions of Work Family Balance.

It has been found in the results that female academics considered WFB as important as their career and family responsibilities. However, participants viewed WFB on a personal point of view without giving any responsiveness to how this could benefit their workplace, their workmates, and family life.

5.1 Time Management Issue

The study revealed that time management issue is one of the challenges which is faced by working women in the academic profession due to time conflicts between their work and family duties. Work schedule, workload, unexpected events, childcare and family constraints are responsible for time management issue among working women. Research has proven that time management issue is the result of irregular planning. Evidence shows that married working

women remain responsible for more than half of the domestic tasks than their husbands and they have less time to invest in their children.

Respondent Tina stated that sometimes it is difficult for her to have a good time management between her work and her family life, therefore she stated:

“As far as possible, I try to reach the office on time but this is not always possible, especially if my child gets up before I leave the house.”

Another Respondent agreed that planning does not always work properly. She stated that when she arrives at home, she does not spend time with her child as she is very tired after having carried out domestic tasks.

5.2 Stress and Fatigue

The study showed that stress and fatigue is a major challenge almost all women academic faced in their achievement to devote equal time to their paid work and family duties. Stress and fatigue is a real challenge for these professionals as they have to sacrifice themselves at their own expense, which is consistent with a study conducted by Rendon (2016).

One respondent Anna stated,

“Sometimes, it is stressful. Sometimes, I get sick easily. I feel tired and I have to take medicines to be able to reconcile work with home. I am always nervous when I have to go to work.”

Sheena declared:

“I’m constantly tired, I feel unable to achieve some goals set at work and home.”

5.3 Lack of Support Systems

Analysis revealed that women academics from the five universities agreed that they have difficulty in balancing their professional and family demands due to the lack of support system which limits them to their own struggle. The study highlighted that lack of social support exists within the family unit and at the workplace. The lack of family support such as insufficient support from husbands, parents or relatives, in terms of childcare and domestic work, have clearly demonstrated to be a challenge for married working women. Moreover, results showed that there is very little support that universities offer to their female employees with children.

Flexible Work Arrangements are limited in some universities as the participants complained. The researcher has also found that there is no child care support for working mothers at their workplace, except at CTI.

“I do not receive much help at home but I would expect more support in terms of equality in sharing household tasks as well as emotional support”.

Moreover, Dina stressed: *‘little help do I receive in terms of childcare support since the child is left alone mainly during school holidays’.*

‘I wish I had flexibility in where and when I work, as long as I deliver my work according to deadlines and quality standards. My children are grown, but still, they have to fend for themselves when I am at work’.

5.4 Work Schedule

The study exposed that work schedule is very challenging for women academics as they endure work intensity and long working hours at work. This is supported by Burke and El-Kot (2009) who stated that working women are required to work intensively and under non-typical work schedules.

Excessive work time has long been seen as the major culprit affecting work-family balance (Pleck *et al.*, 1980).

At my place of work there is no flexibility, so there are many long working hours to get everything done’.

Paula added: *‘In the evening I try to leave the office before 17:00, but depending on my workload, I cannot always leave on time’.* She also mentioned that she resumed work immediately after her maternity leave, she found it difficult to complete all tasks in time as she had to leave on time.

5.5 Dependent Care Issues

The study showed that women academics face difficulty in combining their work and family roles due to childcare and elderly care responsibilities that are considered their primary duties. Evidence showed that in Mauritius, women are typically responsible for childcare and assume more family responsibilities than men.

Results showed that women academics have huge work commitments that they do not have enough time and energy to spend with their children and their education due to fatigue and burnout after work. It was also confirmed that working mothers feel guilty when they commit more time to their work than to their children.

'No time together to play and going out with my daughter. The child feels sad as she misses her parents. My daughter doesn't see me all day long as I work long hours.'

'Unexpected circumstances occur in the morning before coming to the university such as elderly parents getting sick and have to take them to hospital/clinic. I am usually the one to take care of my mother as she is sick and have often to absent from work.'

5.6 Negative Impacts of Work Demand on Family Life

The current study reported that 68% of the working women found that their work demand negatively affects their family life due to stress and burnout as the two major stimuli to family conflict. They reflected that their work is too demanding and eats up their time because of long hours of work, work intensity and on top of that, they have to bring incomplete work at home.

Firoza mentioned: *'I'm generally physically worn out, and sometimes I want to be alone. I don't want to play with my children. Sometimes I place anger upon my children and husband, and I know how bad it is. Being physically unfit also results in health issue. I need to go on medical treatment and this places a burden on my family relationship.'*

They also reported not having enough time to spend on their children's education which, however, might be detrimental to children's development, such as P12 asserted: *'The impact on my family life is that I do not have enough time to spend with family and not enough time to guide children properly in their education'*, giving rise to a sense of irresponsibility towards their family role.

5.7 Coping Strategies adopted by Women Academics

The current study revealed that there are three types of coping strategies namely structural role redefinition, personal role redefinition and reactive role behaviour that were used by women academics in their pursuit towards work-family balance.

Results showed that 'structural role redefinition' coping strategy is helpful to working women in which changing the role on their work, helps them to adjust their time on their professional life and to avoid work interference with family life.

'Once at work, I follow my schedule so that I can complete my work and have less to bring home in order to spend time with my family.'

'I make my best to finish my work duties as soon as possible so that I can save time to spend on housework and family-for ex: play with my kid, have religious meeting.'

'If there is a family emergency, I am free to go. They understand things like PTA meetings, parents having to collect results of their children and open days at schools etc. There is a sharing culture at work where people know family circumstances of almost everyone and this helps promote flexibility.'

Moreover, the study also showed that 'personal role redefinition' is the second type of coping strategy and the second most recurrently adopted strategy by the women academics in their quest to balance their multiple roles.

Results showed that hiring a domestic helper such as a 'maid' benefits the working women as this reduces the domestic burden and extra fatigue associated to their paid work. Thus, it enables them to save more time and energy on time on their priorities.

The reactive role behaviour is another coping strategy adopted by women academics. It was proclaimed that this coping strategy helps working women to encounter their work and family errands equally in which all role expectations should be met. One form of this coping strategy is behavioural strategies. Results stated that women engaged in better planning, scheduling, and organising to balance their role activities. In addition, evidence showed that leisure activities be it active or passive, are crucial to the wellbeing of mothers at work. These help them to stay fit so that they can achieve satisfaction both at professional and family levels.

5.8 Reactive Role Behaviour

Moreover, results have displayed that women academics also used reactive role behaviour, which is also called relative role redefinition as a coping strategy to find ways to meet their work and family demands equally; the demands of being a worker, a wife and a mother.

The respondents revealed that they attempt to meet their role demands through better planning, such as, P14 shared: *'I rely on my own planning, time management and rely on husband to meet demands at work and home.'* P17 also expressed: *'A planning helps to manage my time between professional life and family life. My work schedule serves me as a good guide to meet deadlines.'*

6. Conclusion

This study has exposed valuable evidence regarding the work-family policies in Mauritius and an overview of women academics in the Mauritian education sector. Results have shown that the professionals have different understandings of WFB. The study revealed that the

most common challenges faced by working women are stress and fatigue, low support systems, time management issues, childcare issue, and their work schedule. Professional women feel burdened by coincident demands of their career aspirations and the traditional way of life. Therefore, the study approached the importance of Work-Family Balance to working parents in helping to maintain a healthy lifestyle as well as job and family satisfactions. It also partakes the social life of working individuals.

In addition for the working women to avoid conflicts between work and family spheres, and more importantly to be able to balance these two roles, they adopted three types of coping strategies, which Hall (1972) called structural role redefinition, personal role redefinition and reactive role behaviour respectively. It is important to notice that childcare and household chores still rest on the primary responsibilities of working women and that their career are considered as their secondary role though they are financially contributing in the household. Results reported that the working women spend more time on house chores than their husbands, and harder it is for the single mothers. However, some participants claimed that they receive support from their spouses in the home. This can therefore, accept the fact the gender perception of men have changed in Mauritius although we are still living in a patriarchal society.

6.1 Recommendations

Following the constraints found in the study with regards to work-family balance among working women, it would be mostly recommended to open NGOs that treat matters about Work-family conflicts and that encourage WFB.

In addition, it was reported that there is a lack of FWAs in universities in Mauritius, therefore employers should take steps to implement more FWAs to support women academics in achieving success both in their professional life and family life. One option is to create an on-site crèche and pre-school facility at a reduced rate for staff as well as day care beneficial during school holidays. In consequence, children will not be left alone during holidays.

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