Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose
Increased participation of women in the labor force creates challenges for them to balance work and family obligations. The situation becomes more complicated in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan due to women's stereotypical domestic roles, religious prescriptions as well as cultural norms and values. This study aims to explore different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment.

Design/methodology/approach
Based on the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA), this study explores different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment. The methodology helped to analyse data about challenges faced by women entrepreneurs to achieve work-life balance as well as to have an insight about some of the techniques and effective strategies they use to balance work and family obligation.

Findings
The results show that among other motivational drivers to start their own businesses, achieving work-life balance is one of the most significant ones. Their own businesses give them flexibility, control and freedom to juggle with their family and social responsibilities. Lack of sufficient time, gender bias, social and cultural norms as well as family responsibilities are the most significant challenges women face to achieve balance in a patriarchal Islamic society. Strategic planning, organising and delegating are the most effective strategies women use to cope with competing roles of work and family.

Originality/value
This ground-breaking work in Pakistan on women entrepreneurs' work-life balance may also inspire other women who want to start their entrepreneurial career.

Keywords
Gender, Women entrepreneurs, Social values, Cultural norms, Work-life balance, Islamic society, Pakistan

Citation

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This study is based on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Objectives of the Study. To find out the underlying factors responsible for gender-based discriminatory problems faced by working females. Gender and work-life balance: A phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 19(2), 209-228. Ross, E. (2008), Employment relations. Study on work-life balance of women entrepreneurs – review and research agenda. Sucheta Agarwal and Usha Lenka. Downloaded by Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee At 22:49 02 October 2015 (PT). Sucheta Agarwal is Research Abstract. women in entrepreneurial activities, maintained the balance between work and family. This paper reviews extant literature on women entrepreneurship to exhibit how women have contributed to their entrepreneurial success by maintaining work-life balance. Review on work-life balance of women entrepreneurs. Need for maintaining work-life balance has been widely acknowledged by both employees and managers as it affects their performance (Bird, 2006). Since 1970s, women have entered in workforce. Our study finds that women entrepreneurs employ a number of flexible work practices, such as choosing where to work, when to work and with whom to work as well as managing their roles within the family. This study concludes that entrepreneurship may not be a panacea for achieving work–family balance. We offer some suggestions for how entrepreneurs may better achieve work–family balance. Arulappan, M (2003) When it's work…and not life: Work–life balance: A critique. http://www.employersforworklifebalance.org.uk/debate/international.htm. Accessed 25 March 2006.