Chapter-1

Introduction

Families and employing organizations throughout the industrialized world are changing fundamentally and rapidly, both in terms of structure and in terms of expectations. However, employment policies, family policies, practices within systems and wider societies, and the values and assumptions which support them are changing more slowly. The failure to reflect and build upon rapid social change poses threats to occupational health and has far reaching implications for human resource management.

Further, organizations are becoming more diverse. The future human resource will include an increased number of women employees, more minorities, variety of ethnic backgrounds, more ageing workers, disabled, and people with different lifestyles. The extent to which these shifts are effectively and efficiently managed will have an impingement on the competitive and economic operation of the business organizations (Kundu, 2003).

Therefore, workforce-employing pattern is changing as both women and men are entering into the organizations. This makes the concept of working couples, i.e. the couples in which both husband and wife possess a professional, managerial or administrative job. When wife and husband both are earning, it may be possible that they are in same as well as in different profession(s) or organizations or doing the business collectively or by separately. Both spouses have to dedicate most of the time in their careers so as to carry out the office assignments. But with the same time, they too have to maintain personal home life.

There are many professional stressors like heavy work load as well as family life and societal stresses that are arising pressure among the working couples. So, in order to reduce such stresses and conflicts one has to maintain balance between work and family life.

1.1 HRM and Diversity

Throughout the world women usually have fewer rights and a lower social status than men. The traditional role of a married woman and mother dominates and
most women’s lives revolve about their homes. Hence, women the world over, are still demanding for equality and justice because of the widespread discrimination they face in all walkways of life (Dagar, 1998). These demands are closely studied because the future of the company in terms of its management and pace is dependent on this query. Consequently, many policies and programs are being outlined with some consciousness of their marginalized status (Dagar, 1998). Today, gender analyst must pay extra attention to the wide-ranging frameworks regarding the perspective, approach and strategies advocated at different forums for understanding and combating women’s unfavorable placement in the society if we have to obtain rid of gender discrimination (Dagar, 1998).

In late years there has been a rising stake in the combination of work and family, or more broadly, the integration of work and household life. One of the primary causes for this growing interest is the increased participation of adult females in professional employment, a vogue which has radically altered traditional family structures and gender functions. Greater access to and participation in education and improved career opportunities for women has run to a more diversified working population and the ascent of the dual-worker family (Smith, 1992). The dual-career couples refers to a specific case of dual-worker family in which both members pursue a professional career and simultaneously keep a family life together (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). The dual-career phenomenon has received notable research attention since the pioneering studies by Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) and since then, various surveys have demonstrated that the postures and conduct of dual-career employees deviate considerably from established societal norms in family, matrimonial, career and gender roles (Cherpas, 1985; Elloy and Smith, 2003; Green and Zenisek, 1983; Falkenberg and Monachello, 1990; Harvey, 1995; Lee, 1980). Most of these works, nevertheless, have focused on the folk side of dual-career couples’ lives, and in those studies where problems and solutions were examined, they usually centered around adjustments that the match, instead than the constitution, may need to make (Pierce and Delahaye, 1996). These days, everyone is going to emphasize the importance of appropriate employer responses to dual-career issues (Gorissen, 2009).

It is remarked that women have been in the labor market in most developed and developing nations for more than 20 years, while the estimate of women in senior management, for instance, in the UK, remains at 5 per cent (Burke and Nelson, 2002),
and in Malaysia (2006) it is at 5.4 per cent. Women employees today constitute a major part of the work force. In India alone, over 400 million are engaged in various streams due to a compounding of factors like:

- Women’s emancipation
- Growing economic needs
- Greater equality of sexes
- Increased literacy rate
- Suitability for certain soft jobs (public relations, telephone operations, reception counter, HR managers, etc.) (Rao, 2008).

Albertsen et.al. (2010) found that the globalization of economic exchanges has created a 24-hour economy that has significantly impacted on the way work is organized and regulated (Major and Germano, 2006). Indeed, during the last century, Denmark, as well as many other industrialized countries, has undergone several large transitions of working life (Näswall et.al., 2008). These transitions have involved a high level of organizational changes, reorganizations, downsizing, and changes in ownership (Olsen et.al., 2008). Moreover, production organizations have switched out from manufacturing jobs toward more service-oriented businesses and tasks involving the interchange of knowledge (Burr et.al., 2003; Major and Germano, 2006). As an overall concept referring to this “new” working life, the concept of boundaryless work has been introduced (Allvin, 2008).

1.2 Diversity and Work-Life Related Issues

Recent decades have witnessed unprecedented changes both in the world economy and in the composition of workforces internationally, resulting in women’s economic activity rates increasing dramatically since the 1970s. Agreeing to a recent story from the International Labor Organization (ILO), more women today play role outside the family than ever earlier. In 2003, 1.1 billion of the world’s 2.8 billion workers, or 40 percent, were women, standing for a worldwide growth of about 200 million women in employment in the past 10 years (ILO, 2004). In the USA women now stand for about half of the working population (Cooper and Jackson, 1997), while in the UK women constitute just over 50 per cent of the entire workforce (Davidson and Cooper, 1983). Despite this rapid increase in female participation in the paid labor power, considerable evidence has been gathered that documented
dearth of women in executive level positions globally. Women’s increased involvement in the task force, nevertheless, is not paralleled within the management levels of systems (Davidson and Cooper, 1983).

In dual-life history, relationships, traditional household functions, specifying stereotype role behaviours are challenged in a rudimentary way (Elloy and Smith, 2003). In the traditional family model, the male is seen as the principal ‘breadwinner’ and assures that the household owns a sufficient quantity of financial means to survive. His breadwinner role, limits his aptitude to engage in family responsibilities and hence, the female manages the home, performs all domestic tasks, takes attention of the minors and provides emotional support to the husband. Despite the substantial historical value, the number of households that fit this traditional mould of the male as the sole wage earner and female as the primary housekeeper and caregiver is coming down drastically (Elloy and Smith, 2003). Elements such as equal opportunity legislation, economic necessity, growth in white-collar employment and the impact of the female emancipation/ the women’s movement (Smith, 1992) have contributed to an increment in the number of non-traditional (i.e. Dual-worker and dual-career) families. These factors, amongst others, have caused women to hold up employment in the marketplace and pursued professional careers analogous to those pursued by their male counterparts. Dual-career couples are thus likely to suit a more prevalent phenomenon in the near future. Authors like Crompton (1999) pointed out that the question of work-life-balance was relatively unproblematic until the concluding decades of the twentieth century because of two commonly accepted assumptions: (a) the standard worker was full-time and most of the times always a male, and (b) women were assigned to unpaid labour of caring and domestic projects. Consequently, finding the proper equilibrium between work and family was comparatively easy in this era, due to the domestication of women matched with their exclusion from professional employment (Gorissen, 2009).

1.3 High Performance Work Practices

The impact of human resource management (HRM) on the employee as well as organization’s performance has emerged as the dominant research issue in the personnel/HRM field, and some of the initial solutions have been promising as well (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Dyer and Reeves, 1995; Guest, 1997, Fey et.al., 2010). With this opportunity in mind, we can study the effects of certain human resource
management practices associated with assorted models of ‘high-performance’ or ‘high-commitment’ management (e.g. Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995; Wood and de Menezes, 1998; Appelbaum et al., 2000) on work-family conflict of dual career couples. Equally, there is a lack of consensus about this terminology, in this study we adopt the convention of citing to these practices as high-performance work practices (HPWPs). Furthermore, there is evidence (e.g. Appelbaum et al., 2000; Appelbaum and Berg, 2001) which indicates that these practices of human resource management/work organization commonly serve to obtain greater discretionary effort from employees.

Although different HRM authors have emphasized slightly different features and management practices in describing high performance work systems (HPWSs), the essential characteristics are the seven key dimensions identified by Jeffrey Pfeffer in “The Human Equation” (Pfeffer, 1998). These are: (1) employment security (2) selective hiring of new personnel (3) self-managed teams and decentralization of decision making as the basic principles of organizational design (4) comparatively high compensation contingent on organizational performance (5) extensive training (6) reduced status distinctions and barriers, including dress, language, office arrangements, and wage differences across levels (7) extensive sharing of financial and performance information throughout the organization. According to Boselie et al. (2005), HPWSs are bundles of well-integrated HPWPs. The five key HPWPs that are used to build an HPWS from an analysis of 104 prominent journal articles in strategic HRM are: (1) selective recruitment and selection (2) compensation and performance related pay (3) appraisal and performance management (4) training and development and (5) employee involvement. Basically good HRM is all about selecting the right person at right time, developing them to do their job well, evaluating them on a regular basis for the achievement of organizational goals, rewarding them for excellence, and involving them in decision making (Paauwe and Boselie, 2007). Many studies have focused on whole HR system in an effort to determine the firm performance and employee performances. Pfeffer (1994) has recommended 16 HR practices i.e. selective hiring, high pay, pay performance linkages, employee ownership, information sharing, empowerment, an emphasis on team structures and training, and promotions from within and among others that were if included in high performance HR system found to have an economically effect on firm level measures.

White et.al. (2003) have also studied the effects of selected high performance practices and working hours on work-life balance of British employees in 1992 and 2002. Chou and Cheung (2013) have found in their study that employers who are providing family-friendly employment programs in reaction to the fact that today participation of women and number of dual-earner couples are increasing than single parents in the workforce (Goodstein, 1994; Bond, et.al., 2002; Golden, 2006), and all these employees are using more of these programs to help them cope with family demands which helps to reduce work family conflict. On the other hand, White et.al. (2003) found a conflict between high performance work practices and work-life balance policies. White et.al. (2003) also found that fairness or unfairness of the supervisor was an importance influences on negative spill over. Working hours allotted to employees above the optimal level increased work-family conflict (Clarkberg and Meon, 2001; Hofacker and Konig, 2013).

1.4 Work-Life Conflict/ Work-Family Conflict and Balance

Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Research suggests that WFC is related to organizational commitment (Lyness and Thompson, 1997; Netemeyer et.al., 1996), job performance (Frone et.al., 1997), and turnover (Greenhaus et.al., 1997). WFC also relates to non-work outcomes such as life satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998), family involvement (Frone et.al., 1992a), and marital satisfaction (Coverman, 1989). Thus, WFC has implications for both organizations and employees. WFC can occur in two directions: work can interfere with family (WIF) and family can interfere with work (FIW). Research has shown that WIF, but not FIW, predicts job dissatisfaction and organizational commitment (Casper et al., 2007; Lyness and Thompson, 1997). WIF is also more prevalent than FIW (McElwain et.al., 2005; Frone et.al., 1992b). Finally, we focus on both WIF and FIW because it is appropriate for examining couple agreement for managing work and family. A spouse/partner has the opportunity to experience and observe when his or her partner’s work interferes with family, but may not have the opportunity to observe when family interferes with work (Streich et.al., 2008).
Carlson et.al. (2000) found that work–family conflict is a source of stress that many individuals experience. Research on work–family conflict has found that this variable influences a number of outcomes, including psychological distress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover, and life satisfaction (Frone et.al., 1992a; Higgins et.al., 1992). Thus, work–family conflict has become a much investigated topic in today’s organizational behaviour research.

Gorissen (2009) also studied that, although dual-careers provide couples with considerable psychological and financial benefits, a number of studies point out that multiple roles may lead to stress, which in turn generates strain and work discord (Cooke and Rosseau, 1984; Green and Zenisek, 1983; Lewis and Cooper, 1988), particularly when work and family demands interfere (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Sekaran, 1986). Equally it has been remarked by Falkenberg and Monachello (1990), dual-career couples face great difficulties in balancing the multiple requirements of work and family as a result of both partners exhibiting a firm loyalty to their life histories. Many authors furthermore point out that stress in the family or work domain is not induced by events in another, however results from interaction between both areas. This dynamic interplay between employment and family responsibilities complicates the achievement of a healthy work-life balance which may be essential for the effective performance of the employee. Kanter (1977) emphasized that work should not be considered as an isolated relationship between an actor and an activity. “Families operate as social organizations, with an interrelationship between work and non-work roles, so that stresses in one are inevitable transferred to the other” (Elloy and Smith, 2003). Furthermore, Elloy and Smith (2003) argue that disputes and stresses arising from multiple demands have a de-motivating effect on employees, increase the chances of absenteeism and represent a danger to the quality of organizations. Hence, the inherent difficulties of the dual-career lifestyle are expected to have important direct consequences for dual-career employees’ employing organizations. Therefore, the burgeoning literature on dual-career couples has more recently emphasized the importance of appropriate employer responses to dual-career issues and dual-careers have become a key area of interest for human resource managers (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, 1980; Sekaran, 1986; Nicholson and West, 1988; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Smith, 1994; Scandura and Lankau, 1997).
Lockwood (2003) cited that an employer’s commitment to exercise/life initiatives is influenced by the perception of whether or not such initiatives have a positive return on investment. In late years, employers increasingly realize that the character of an employee’s personal and family life impacts work quality and that there are concrete business reasons to promote employment and family integration. While some companies may view diversity and work/life balance as separate functions, the business case for managing diversity is, in large part, the same for work/life equilibrium (Lockwood, 2003). Both variety and workplace/life initiatives promote employee loyalty, improve productivity, lower turnover, result in fewer employee relations challenges, and lessen the likelihood of unethical business practices. Diversity and work/life initiatives can be found at the center of the new social contract being negotiated between employers and employees (Lockwood, 2003). “The basic scheme of the social contract, as it has come out during the past several years, calls for workers to give their best contributions and greatest energies to the job in return for interesting study, respectful treatment, developmental opportunities, and an environment that reacts to individual demands. Where those provisions conflict (e.g., the level of commitment and energy required by employers versus the flexibility needed by employees), the expertise of both diversity management and workplace/life professionals will be critical to find win-win solutions” (Lockwood, 2003).

“Juggling competing demands are tiring if not stressful and brings lower productivity, illness, and absenteeism, so work/life balance is an issue for all employees and all organizations.” (Swift, 2002).

1.5 Relevance of the Study

Human Resource Management is an emerging arena of work as it changes fast in changing environment under globalization. With the passing of time and due to the globalization of the occupation, including Human Resources, various contemporary issues in HR have come forth. One of such an issue, which has obtained large attention from researchers, is Workforce Diversity. With the independence of the women, their focal point towards their career leads them to the corporate world. With the entrance of women in a job, management of both male and female became more complex. While managing career, working couples found difficulty in managing family. This phenomenon caused work-family conflict among working couples.
Further, in a country like India where in traditional family model, the male is regarded as the principal ‘breadwinner’ and assures that the family has a sufficient amount of financial means to live. His breadwinner role, limits his aptitude to engage in household responsibilities and hence, the female manages the household, performs all domestic chores, takes care of the children and provides emotional support to the husband. Despite of these strong historical values, the number of families that fit this traditional mould of the male as sole wage earner and female as the primary housekeeper and care-giver is falling drastically and the concept of dual career couples/working couples is emerging (Elloy and Smith, 2003).

Moreover, granting to the norms of our traditional society, females are still bound with more feminine tasks and household duties and males are remaining as breadwinners for the folk. Further, increasing responsibilities and job tasks add to their stress and this ultimately leads to family and life disputes. This attracted an attention of both employees and organizations towards work-life balance. Work-family conflict has direct bearing on efficiency and productivity of both employees and organizations. Still large number of Indian organizations are not assessing such conflicts and also not implementing work-life balance strategies. It has become essential to study the Work-life conflicts among working couples and suggesting strategies to manage work-life conflicts. So, the present study is proposed.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to manage the work-life conflicts among working couples in India. To accomplish this objective, the following are set as sub objectives:

- To assess the problems and work-life conflict/ work-family conflict of the working couples working in the same and different organizations.
- To assess the problems and work-life conflict/ work-family conflict of the working couples working in Indian and Multinational Companies (MNCs).
- To assess the work-life conflict/ work-family conflict of the working couples working in Manufacturing and Service Companies.
- To assess the effect of High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) on work-life conflict /work-family conflict.
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- To examine the coping strategies adopted by organizations and working couples to resolve conflicts and to establish work-life balance/ work-family balance.

- To suggest policy recommendations for the corporate sector and general suggestions for working couples to achieve work-life balance/ work-family balance.*

*1) Working couples and dual career couples were used interchangeably in this study.

2) Work-life conflict/ balance and work-family conflict/ balance were used interchangeably in this study.