FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

An overview of the personal characteristics of the respondents has been presented and discussed in detail in order to get a clearer picture and better understanding of their personal and professional lives. These factors include age, marital status, educational level, profession, monthly income, number of children, type of family, work sector, length of service etc. Research suggests that these factors can contribute to stress, which in turn creates imbalance in the work and family domains of the individuals.

AGE

Research has shown that the age group of the respondents is one of the important factor in determining their level of work-family balance. An observation has been made which indicates a change in lifestyle preferences between different generations. It was reported that individuals who were born after 1969 usually preferred a lifestyle in which more importance is given to leisure time, better arrangements of work-family balance policies by the employers irrespective of other responsibilities. Research also further mentioned that older adults experienced better work-family balance with greater success (Tausiq & Fenwick, 2001). Another research indicated that individuals were unable to tolerate work-family conflict when they reached a certain point in their later lives due to the increasing age. Thus, putting in extra efforts at their workplace did not seem worthwhile (Bardwick, 1986).
Working women belonging to the age group of 25 to 55 years have been selected as a sample for this present study. Women above 55 years of age have not been included in the sample with the presumption that their children would have grown up by that time and thus would not require intensive monitoring or caring unlike in their early years. In addition, the family demands would also be lessened when women reach a higher age group, resulting in lesser role conflict as compared to women belonging to a younger age group. The following table shows the age structure of the respondents for the present study.

**TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELOW 25 YEARS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 25-35 YEARS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 35-45 YEARS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 50-55 YEARS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*

The above results shows that 19% of the respondents belong to the category of below 25 years; 30% of the respondents belong to the category of 25 to 35 years; 33% of the respondents belong to the category of 35 to 45 years and the remaining 18% of the respondents belong to the category of above 50 years. The results indicated that the
majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 35 to 45 years while a smaller number of the respondents belonged to the age group of above 50 years.

**MARITAL STATUS**

Marital status is considered as another important factor in determining the work-family balance of the individuals. Previous research suggests that married individuals tend to give more priority to their personal lives as compared to unmarried individuals (Martins et al, 2002). An explanation suggests that respondents with families often face difficulties in separating work and family which in turn can affect both work and family life negatively. Another research also reported similar findings where it was mentioned that married individuals were more likely to experience work-family conflict, as compared to unmarried individuals (Sidin et al, 2008). Thus, for the purpose of this study only married women, with or without children, have been selected as a sample, with the presumption that marriage implies a range of responsibilities and individuals may face various conflicts in both work and family domains while trying to fulfil those responsibilities. The following table shows the marital status of the respondents for the present study.
The above table 2 shows the summary of the marital status of the respondents for the present study. The figures indicate that the majority of the respondents were married and living with their spouse and children. Other respondents were separated from their husband either by death or marital conflict but were not separated legally, while a minority of the respondents were divorced and were also single parents, and the responsibility of the family and upbringing of their children were entirely on their shoulders. These results suggest that the majority of the respondents were married, which indicated that the number of dual-earner couples are increasing as a result of which the issue of balancing work and family domain have become an important concern not just for the employers but for the whole society at large. Moreover, research has shown that conflicts arising due to the demands of work and family are likely to affect marital happiness as well as the satisfaction in one’s career (Butler et al, 2005).
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Another significant factor in determining the work-family balance among the respondents is their educational qualification. Research has shown that individuals are likely to have more self-confidence and self-efficacy with higher educational attainment and more work experience (Chong & Ma, 2010). Another research also indicated similar findings where work-family balance is greater among those individuals with a higher educational level whereas work-family balance was lower among those individuals who had a lower educational degree or qualification. In addition, a study suggested that individuals without education found it difficult to balance their work and family domain (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). The following table shows the educational qualification of the respondents of this study.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELOW CLASS X</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPTO CLASS XII</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-GRADUATE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Primary Data
The above results show that 13% of the respondents had their educational qualification as below Class X (i.e. have not completed school), 17% of the respondents had studied unto Class XII. Respondents who were working in lower level jobs (i.e. casual workers) and who were residing within the rural areas of Sikkim belonged to these two categories. On the other hand, 35% of the respondents were graduates mainly from science and arts background and only two respondents were graduates from commerce stream. 24% of the respondents had completed their post-graduation in various subjects, while the remaining 11% of the respondents had acquired higher degree or educational qualification such as M.Phil or PhD degrees. The last category comprised respondents who were occupying higher status posts or managerial levels such as doctors, lecturers, bureaucrats due to their educational attainment.

**PROFESSION**

Profession is another important factor that determines work-family balance. Research shows that the levels of responsibility, decision-making authority and formal reporting relations are determined by the profession of the individuals (Chong & Ma, 2010). In addition, research reported that individuals are likely to experience greater work-family balance issues who are working in professions that require substantial interaction with others, additional work roles and professional responsibility (Innstrantd et al, 2010). There is also an indication that individuals working in higher managerial levels or higher status jobs tend to report greater levels of stress and conflict between their work and personal domain (Innstrantd et al, 2010).
TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR PROFESSION/OCCUPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUREAUCRATS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAWYERS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCTORS/NURSES</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLICE PERSONNEL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LECTURERS/TEACHERS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFICE CLERKS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASUAL WORKERS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Primary Data

The above table shows the different professions of the respondents where respondents who were working as bureaucrats were selected from different government offices such as Home Department, Human Resource Development Department, Power Department, Land Revenue Department, Urban Development & Housing Development Department and Information and Public Relations Department and they were designated as Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Joint Secretary. Similarly, Doctors and Nurses were chosen from both private and government hospitals of Gangtok and Namchi which included both general physician and specialists. Respondents who were working as Lawyers were selected from the High Court of Sikkim, District court of Gangtok and Namchi, and two of them were practising independently in their own chambers. Police
Personnel were chosen from the Police Headquarters of Gangtok, Vigilance Department and Police stations of Gangtok and Namchi, and were Sub-Inspectors, Police Inspectors and Deputy Superintendent of Police. Likewise, Lecturers and Teachers were selected from different private and government colleges and schools located in and around Namchi and Gangtok such as Government College Tadong, Namchi Government College, Burtuk Law College, Manipal University, TNHS School, Namchi Public School, Kyi-de-khang School, Sikkim University, Deorali Girls School. Respondents who were working as Office Clerks included Upper Division Clerk, Lower Division Clerk, Head Assistant, Office Supervisor and were chosen from various government departments in Gangtok and Namchi. Respondents working as casual workers were chosen from different factories and industries located near Gangtok such as juice factory, handicrafts and handlooms industry, beer factory and food processing factory.

**INCOME LEVEL**

Another crucial factor that helped in understanding work-family balance among the respondents is their level of income. In fact, one of the primary reason for women working as casual workers or office clerks opting for paid employment is to provide consistent income to their family which will aid in reducing the financial burden as well as in running the household smoothly. Research shows that individuals with higher income level were able to manage work and family issues more efficiently because their income allowed them to provide child-care facilities and opt for house-cleaning services (Callister, 2001). Similarly, a report prepared by the Household Labour Force showed
that individuals having a lower-income level tend to work for extra hours or work in
multiple places in order to make their ends meet (Department of Indian Labour, 2005).

**TABLE 5 : DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR INCOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTHLY INCOME (in Rupees)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELOW 10,000</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-20,000</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000-40,000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 40,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*

The above results indicated that majority of the respondents received a monthly income
of Rs. 20,000-30,000/- per month and the minority of the respondents received a
monthly income of above Rs 40,000/- per month. The results suggested that the monthly
income of the respondents is somehow related to the type of profession they belong to
i.e. the higher the designation, the greater the monthly income and lower the
designation, lesser the monthly income.
NUMBER AND AGE GROUP OF CHILDREN

Research have indicated a significant difference in the degree of balance that individuals tends to experience with the presence or absence of children in the family (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). The age group of children is also an important factor in determining the conflict experienced by the respondents. Research have highlighted the fact that individuals without children reported greater levels of work-family balance while individuals with children especially younger age group children reported lower levels of work-family balance and higher levels of conflict in their lives (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001).

TABLE 6 : DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF CHILDREN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Primary Data
The above results showed that 10% of the respondents did not have any child; 30% of the respondents had one child; 40% of the respondents had two children, 15% of the respondents had three children and the remaining 5% of the respondents had more than three children. The data revealed that majority of the respondents had two children while the minority of the respondents had more than three children. The norm of small family type have been adopted by majority of the respondents and their reason behind limiting the size of the family was the difficulty and hardships they encountered in meeting the demands of work and family life.

**TABLE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE AGE OF CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELOW 5 YEARS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 6-10 YEARS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 11-15 YEARS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 16-20 YEARS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 21 YEARS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO CHILDREN</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*
The above results showed that 24% of the respondents have small children who are below 5 years of age; 30% of the respondents have children between the age group of 6 to 10 years; 17% of the respondents have children between 11 to 15 years of age; 11% of the respondents have children between the age group of 16 to 20 years; 8% of the respondents have children who are above 21 years of age and the remaining 10% of the respondents had no children. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents have children between the age group of 6 to 10 years while the minority of the respondents have children who are above 21 years. The results indicated that majority of the respondents are likely to spend more time in child-care activities as their children belonged to the age group of 6 to 10 years which demands utmost care and nurturing which in turn can create a source of conflict between work and family domain. A research also suggested similar findings which stated that having smaller children at home can become a potential source of conflict since family demands is likely to increase with younger children at home (Pleck, 1977).

**TYPE OF FAMILY**

Different forms of family is yet another crucial factor in explaining the work-family balance of the respondents. The extent to which domestic duties are carried out by working women as well as the level of support which they receive from their family members is determined by the type of family in which they reside (Thomas, 2007). The support from family members aids individuals in creating a buffering effect which in turn helps them in dealing with issues of work-family balance. In fact, research have
shown that support received from family has proved to become an important coping mechanism or essential resource which helps in reducing the conflict arising from work and family domain. In addition, it is considered as a informal social network which provides individuals with practical assistance, expressions of emotional concern or empathy and informational appraisal. There is also an indication that individual’s overall health and well-being is likely to improve with an increase in social support (Sidin et al, 2008).

**TABLE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF FAMILY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF FAMILY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUCLEAR FAMILY</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENDED FAMILY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOINT FAMILY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*

The above table shows the distribution of respondents according to the type of family which comprised of nuclear, extended and joint families. The nuclear family also known as elementary family consists of a group of individuals who are united by ties of kinship and parenthood. In other words, it comprises of a pair of adults with their socially recognised children who are either biological or adopted offspring. Extended family on the other hand is an expansion of the nuclear family and it includes grandparents and
other relatives such as uncles, aunts and cousins who reside nearby or in a single household. Similarly, joint family system is a large undivided family where more than one generation live together in a common house, holding common property and are related to one another by mutual rights and obligations. The results indicated that majority of the respondents had nuclear families which consisted of husband, wife and their children. The nuclear family type was predominant in urban areas of Sikkim while the joint family system prevailed mostly in the rural areas of Sikkim where the respondents lived with their spouse, children, in-laws and spouse’s relatives. Respondents who were living in joint family system received help and support from family members in performing the household chores as well as in looking after the children when they were away at work. However, they were also burdened financially since they had to bear the expenses of all the family members who were dependent on them. On the contrary, respondents living in nuclear families did not receive any support or helping hand in doing household duties including child-care. Thus, majority of them relied on maids and in absence of maids, they left their children at the neighbour’s or friend’s place when they were away from home. In several instances, respondents took their children along with them at their workplace and they had to juggle their work and child-care which often resulted in stress and conflict among the respondents.
WORK SECTOR

Analysing the work sector of the respondents is another important milestone in determining their level of work-family balance. Research have shown that work-family balance is not only about working for certain number of hours but it is rather multi-faceted which includes how many hours individuals work (flexibility in the number of hours worked), when individuals work (flexibility in the arrangements of hours), where individuals work (flexibility in the place of work) so that they are able to strike a balance between their work and family domain. There is also an indication in the literature that as a form of employment incentive, organisations have been offering enhanced autonomy with regard to work schedules which will give them the flexibility in determining as to when will they work (Porter & Ayman, 2010). Research reported that individuals experienced higher levels of work-family balance when they received adequate flexibility as to how, when and where they can complete the task given to them at their workplace (Porter & Ayman, 2010). In order to understand the impact of dual roles on the respondents, their working life have been discussed which includes variables like work sector, work schedule and years of service.
TABLE 9: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO WORK SECTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK SECTOR</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIVATE</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*

The above table shows the distribution of respondents according to their work sector. The results showed that 55% of the respondents were working in various government organisations; 35% of the respondents were working in different private firms and the remaining 10% of the respondents were working in public sector. The data indicated that majority of the respondents were concentrated in government sector which includes various government departments, government schools and colleges as well as government hospitals. The demand of getting government job is high in Sikkim due to the various benefits and privileges associated with it such as greater number of government holidays, pay hike in terms of dearness allowances and annual increments, medical reimbursements, pension benefits after retirement as well as lesser workload. On the contrary, the job demands in private sector is relatively difficult with greater workload, lesser renumeration as well as lesser number of holidays and leaves as compared to government jobs.
TABLE 10: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO WORK SCHEDULE- WORKING HOURS PER DAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOURS OF WORK</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPTO 6 HOURS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 6 TO 8 HOURS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 8 HOURS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s Primary Data*

The above table shows the distribution of respondents according to their work schedule i.e. number of working hours per day. The results showed that 20% of the respondents worked for nearly six hours per day; 50% of the respondents worked for six to eight hours per day and the remaining 30% of the respondents worked for more than eight hours per day. The data indicated that majority of the respondents worked for six to eight hours on a daily basis while minority of the respondents worked for less than six hours per day. Respondents who worked for six to eight hours comprised of government employees whose usual office timings is 9 to 5 with one hour lunch break in between. Respondents who worked for less than six hours per day consisted of teachers and lecturers whose working hours varied from four to six hours according to their institutions. On the other hand, respondents who worked for more than eight hours per day consisted of women working in private firms and institutions who were expected to work for extra hours due to excess workload and shortage of staff members. Lastly, the work schedule of the respondents is considered to be significant for this study since it determines whether respondents are available for performing household chores and child-care activities or not. The family life of the respondents is likely to be adversely
affected by longer working hours which in turn can create imbalance for them in both work and family domain.

**TABLE 11: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS OF SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS OF SERVICE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LESS THAN 5 YEARS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 5 TO 10 YEARS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 11 TO 15 YEARS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW 16 TO 20 YEARS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 20 YEARS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary Data*

The above table shows the distribution of respondents according to the length of the service they have rendered in their chosen profession. The results shows that 12% of the respondents have been working for less than five years; 26% of the respondents have been working for 5 to 10 years; 33% of the respondents have been working for 11 to 15 years; 13% of the respondents have been working for 16 to 20 years and the remaining 16% of the respondents have been working for more than 20 years. The results indicated that majority of the respondents have been working for 11 to 15 years while the minority of the respondents have been working for less than 5 years. The data also indicated that there is a close association between the age of the respondents and the number of years they have rendered their service in different professions because the more respondents advances in their age, the more the length of the service will also be increased.
This study aimed at understanding the issues which women working in urban and rural areas of Sikkim encountered while balancing their personal and professional lives. The manner in which respondents of this study perceived work-family balance depended on their feelings on how they manage the different responsibilities of work and family domain. Several respondents of this study who were working in various lower-level jobs such as casual workers and office clerks did not prioritise balancing their work and family life. In fact, they were unable to articulate whether they were out of balance or not despite their concern at their lack of time for other activities. Almost every respondent experienced difficulties in coordinating different facets of their lives. However, a younger respondent working as an Librarian in a government school of South Sikkim was an exceptional case. She mentioned that due to less commitment, no children and traditional working hours, she did not face any difficulty in managing her job and personal life. While other respondents working in higher level jobs such as bureaucrats, doctors and lawyers faced several issues while combining roles such as that of a wife, employee, mother, friend, daughter-in-law etc. Therefore, they used metaphors such as juggling, multi-tasking and balance in order to express their difficulties and barriers in managing both the domains. Literature too suggested that work-family balance must be viewed as a personal issue which is supposed to be handled using individual strategies rather than considering it as a structured issue caused due to lack of flexibility in the workplace as well as due to child-care and elderly
care. Thus, it was observed that balance is not a goal that can be achieved as it is build on individualistic achievement oriented model which assumed that people gave choices and control over their lives (Caproni, 2004).

There was a realisation among the respondents working as casual workers residing in the rural areas wherein they mentioned about not being able to pay attention to work-family issues until they were interviewed for this research study. Respondents working as casual workers in different factories near Gangtok stated that prior to the interview, they did not consider integrating their job with personal life. In fact, they were so engrossed in their day-to-day activities due to which they were unable to figure out the real cause of their conflict which they were experiencing in their lives. Literature too indicated that individuals are likely to achieve work-life balance only when they have a clear idea of what is required in order to achieve balance. In addition, an understanding of person’s notion of balance is considered to be a critical factor in achieving work-family balance (Allen, 2009). However, the concept of work-family balance is not static. Work-family balance comprises of several components such as reports of balance and imbalance, flexibility at workplace, coping strategies etc. There was a variation in the responses given by respondents from both rural and urban areas of Sikkim when asked about their perception of work-family balance. One respondent working as a lecturer in a private college of Pakyong described it as a balance between personal life, work and leisure activities. Another respondent working as a casual worker in a juice factory near Singtam stated that she has to balance between her work and personal time. In several instances, respondents who had younger children at home particularly from
the urban region mentioned that paid work was responsible for being the shortage of time on other spheres of life. Thus, as per these statements, respondents from both the rural and urban region described instances of work-family imbalance for which paid work was the main reason. Many studies of work-family balance have also focussed mainly on imbalance faced by employees in their day-to-day activities (Eby et al, 2005; Guest, 2002).

Respondents working in different occupations such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, police officers, office clerks as well as casual workers described the meaning of work-family balance by using several key words or concepts such as ability, general state of balance, collaborate, possibility, to feel good in both worlds, availability, good relationship etc. These key words described the ability of respondents to combine work and family life which in turn was based on their own judgement and freedom to decide the time they dedicated to each domain. It also referred to getting support from one domain when the other domain was affected i.e. getting support for work-related issues from family members or being able to narrate issues related to family at their workplace. However, there seemed to be a variation in the scope of work-family balance. For some respondents who were working as teachers in different schools and lecturers in government as well as private colleges, it strictly meant managing work and family domain while for other respondents working in different government offices in the administrative section and casual workers from rural region, it also meant having time for oneself irrespective of whether they had a family or not. Some respondents such as nurses and office clerks relied on the reduced definition of work-family balance
considering the fact that it is a combination of work and family life and not merely personal life as such. Some respondents who worked in higher levels jobs such as doctors and bureaucrats described their notion of balance broadly by viewing it as the ability to be in balance with life itself, with their neighbours and also with one’s environment. In addition, work-family balance was also viewed as the possibility to devote more time to oneself and leisure activities which they enjoyed by respondents who were getting a higher income and who had a comfortable standard of living as compared to respondents who were working in lower level jobs such as office clerks and casual workers.

Respondents working as bureaucrats in various government offices in Gangtok and Namchi highlighted the importance of minimal interference between the various parts of one’s life specifically the negative mood and strain spillover between the two domains was valued in the sense that the mood in which the individual came home or the stress they were facing did not hamper the relationship with the family members. Moreover, respondents working as lawyers in private firms and under High Court of Sikkim revealed that work-life balance refers to the absence of sacrifices that would damage either work or family domain. Some definitions given by respondents who were working as teachers in various government and private schools suggested techniques for balancing work and family domain. On one hand, it implied separating the two spheres i.e. the less they were connected, the better it was. While on the other hand, it meant reducing hours at work or getting external help in order to complete household tasks or hiring babysitters for the purpose of child-care. Separation of work and family domain
is not an easy task but something worth aspiring and in case of respondents of this study, it was an appreciated skill which they had yet not mastered. Respondents who were working as police officers and doctors along with nurses narrated that they had very little time for their family due to their long working hours and hectic schedule.

Even though the broad vision of work-family balance was seen among respondents from both urban and rural regions, the definition in general focussed on work-family sphere and coping techniques for balancing and peaceful existence of two domains whether it meant separating or integrating the two spheres. The manner in which respondents determined their work-family balance appeared to be complex.

Respondents belonging to younger age group (i.e 25-35 years) and who had minimal years of work experience (i.e. below five years) narrated that they perceived lack of balance when they lost control in setting their priorities irrespective of what they considered to be important in their lives be it family, work or community. In addition, the factors which limited their opportunity for work-family balance was also responsible for reducing their discretion when making choices in terms of allocating their time either for family obligations or work responsibilities.

Another issue related to work-family balance is the consideration of multiplicity of roles that one performs and the ways of allocating preferences to those roles. Moreover, individuals usually tend to view their role priorities differently. Some individuals prefer spending longer hours at work and they derive greater satisfaction in doing so while others get happiness when they are able to devote more time towards their family. Several respondents of this study who belonged to the higher age group (i.e. 45-55
years) and who had more work experience (i.e. above 20 years) described their current situation as balanced in contrast to a situation when their children were younger. A respondent working as a Joint Secretary in Land Revenue Department stated that she focused her attention more towards family roles when her child was younger. However, as her child grew older, she concentrated more time on herself as well as on the activities she enjoyed. The issue of getting time to focus on themselves were discussed by respondents working in both private and government services. Being balanced with regard to time-related issues such as minimal commuting time and not being expected to work beyond the assigned working hours were described by respondents working in the government sector. On the other hand, few respondents working in private companies described the manner in which their working hours enabled them to complete other tasks as well. For example, one respondent working as a clerk in a private firm was able to have time for herself in the afternoons because she started working early in the mornings before her usual scheduled time. Similarly, another respondent who was working as a lecturer in a private college in Gangtok was able to devote more time in taking care of her sick mother due to her fixed number of hours at work.

For a handful of respondents residing in the rural areas of Sikkim, sharing or taking the responsibility of doing the household chores by family members who stayed with them helped in achieving balance between their work and family domain. On the other hand, respondents living in the urban areas experienced imbalance due to lack of support and help from family members since they were away in their native place which in turn resulted in stress, strain, fatigue and lack of time to socialise with their friends and
neighbours. One respondent working as an Accountant in Power Department with two younger children at home narrated the impact of spending her daytime in paid work which was followed by doing domestic chores in the evenings as paid help was not available in her vicinity. Thus, she felt the inevitability in doing this routinely. A study also reported that married individuals are likely to experience more work-family balance issues as compared to single individuals (Malbidin et al, 2008). Further, studies explained that there is a significant difference in the manner in which individuals experience work-family balance due to the presence and absence of children in the family (Tausis & Fenwick, 2001).

Each of the respondent of this study from both urban and rural region discussed and narrated their perception and experiences of work-family balance and specifically addressed what it meant to them. Respondents belonging to the younger age group (i.e. between 25-35 years) mentioned how their families especially their children hold a very important place in their lives. One of the respondent aged 28 years working as a dentist in Namchi highlighted the importance of arranging things before she left for work in order to focus all her attention towards her family and children when she reached home. Another respondent working as a Primary teacher in Gangtok also tried her best to make each of her role proportionate in order to balance her work and family life. She thought that she could not give equal importance to every role however she tried her best to do justice to every role she was performing be it that of an employee, wife or a mother.

There were respondents who belonged to the younger age group (i.e. below 25 years) and who had recently started working in various professions such as teachers,
bureaucrats as well as casual workers tried to manage everything perfectly but in reality found several difficulty in accomplishing it. Thus, they ended up doing whatever best they could in each domain be it home or office. Almost every respondent strived to achieve balance in both domains and thus they believed that they will succeed in achieving it. One respondent who was working as a Police Officer in Namchi aged 37 years was convinced that in order to achieve balance in both the domains, she should be able to set her boundaries and priorities and also learn to say no without apologising to people or things which act as a barrier on her way of achieving balance. Other respondent working as a lecturer in Law College, Gangtok stated that she learnt the virtue of patience and became organised in order to bring balance in both the domains. Similarly, another respondent working as a bureaucrat in Human Resource Development Department in Gangtok felt that every women should take a break every once in a while as it becomes difficult for them to look after everyone and everything. Respondents belonging to the middle class families, and who were working as office clerks and casual workers, complained that there was a lot of expectations from the family and society in general and as a result they rarely got free time for themselves in the process of fulfilling those expectations.

Respondents from both the urban and rural areas of Gangtok and Namchi also discussed the various challenges which they encountered when trying to balance their work and family domain. For majority of the respondents belonging to the younger age group, the biggest challenge arose from the difficulty they had in allocating time to complete their tasks. They also mentioned that their children tend to suffer when they do not get
enough time to compete their tasks. These respondents also mentioned that their work commitments deprived them from participating in their children’s school activities or meetings and as a result they feel guilty due to the fact that they cannot be present in places or situations simultaneously when the need arises. For few respondents working as Associate Professors in different government colleges, bureaucrats holding higher ranks in different government offices and senior police officials possessing more work experience, their challenge came from being able to devote time to themselves and their personal needs as they regarded their family as their first priority, their job as their second priority and whatever time was remaining after fulfilling all the roles, they dedicated it to themselves. There is also an indication in the literature that the relationship between work and family is two-fold. One one hand, it is assumed that work and family are two separate spheres in which employers are more concerned about employees completing their work assignments with less concern towards the personal lives of employees. An expectation was made from the employees wherein they would leave their family-related issues at home and completely focus on their work issues at their workplace. This view of work-family balance which was bureaucratic in nature is mostly dominant in the 20th century society (Kirchmeyer, 2000). Contrary to this, another school of thought assumed that work and family activities are inter-related where work activities are likely to affect family activities and vice-versa (Anderson et al, 2000). Similarly, previous research too suggested that work and family life should be related because several people regarded work as a central and dominant aspect of their life in terms of both emotional and time-involvement.
Research also suggested that work-family imbalance is likely to increase due to the limited amount of resources, time and energy which is distributed among various roles. As a result, it could lead to stress, strain, conflict or decreased performance in different roles. Research also showed that married employees tend to experience more work-family imbalance as compared to employees who were unmarried. In addition, it was speculated that employees with children might experience more imbalance in both the domains as compared to employees without children. Moreover, research highlighted the fact that employees having younger children at home tend to experience more imbalance and stress in their lives than those employees who had relatively older children in their homes. It was also indicated that employees living in larger families experience more imbalance in both work and family domain as compared to employees living in smaller families (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Research suggested that feelings of being out of balance can be attributed to a common denominator which is known as the second shift by some scholars (Vlasnik, 2011). The process by which women after completing her full day at work comes back home and continues her work by looking after the needs of her family is known as second shift. Thus, taking account of this second shift, research indicates that women’s physical and emotional well-being is likely to get affected due to the long working hours and work overload in comparison to their male counterparts. Research also highlighted the fact that home is usually viewed as a relaxation place for men while women may experience a stressful environment at home due to the burden of household chores and child-care. There is an indication in the literature about three components of work-family balance.
which includes time, involvement and satisfaction. The equal time being allocated to both work and family roles is known as time balance. The equal levels of psychological involvement in both work and family roles is considered as involvement balance and lastly equal levels of satisfaction in both work and family roles is referred to as satisfaction balance. Thus, all these three components should be taken into consideration in order to achieve a work-family balance (Greenhaus et al, 2003).

One respondent described her notion of work-family balance as the equilibrium between the amount of time and effort which she devoted to work and the time and effort she dedicated to other aspects of her personal lives. Other respondents mentioned that if their personal life is taken care of properly then they would be able to concentrate better on the job front which in turn creates balance in their lives. Another respondent stated that work-family balance is the smooth functioning of both work and home without any conflict in either domain. Respondents also narrated that work-family balance can be achieved when they were able to fulfil their needs in respect of family and work. Literature also suggested that work-family balance is usually associated with equilibrium or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life (Clark et al, 2004). Other research explained work-family balance as a practice which provides scope for employees to balance their job with their family responsibilities by enabling them to reconcile the competing claims of work and home in order to meet their own needs and their employers’ needs.

Respondents who were working in higher level jobs were able to manage work and family demands more efficiently due to the greater access to resources. On the other
hand, respondents working in lower-level jobs had difficulty in managing both the domains wherein they struggled to make the ends meet. When respondents were asked as to what work-family balance means to them, most of them replied that they are trying to strike a balance between their home and work life. One respondent spoke about the manner in which the job skills she acquired from her workplace proved to be beneficial in handling her family issues at home. Literature on work-family balance highlighted various definitions attached with work-family interface. Some of these included “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum role conflict” (Clark, 2000: 751). It is also defined as “the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his/her work and family role” (Greenhaus et al, 2003: 513). Others defined it as a “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and their role-related partners in the work and family domain” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007: 458). Yet, it is also explained as “the global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains (Voydanoff, 2005; p.825). Likewise, it is also referred to as “low-levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation” (Frone, 2003; p.145). Some others defined it as “equilibrium or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life” (Clark et al, 2004; p.121). Thus, it can be seen that all the above mentioned definitions of work-family balance showed that there is an impact of work and family roles on each other. Scholars have highlighted balance in the sense of being involved in both work and family roles equally.
Some researchers viewed balance as subjective for each individual wherein they stated that what constitutes balance for one person may constitutes something different for another person in their work and family life (Saungweme, 2010; Chan, 2008). Literature suggested the viewpoint that balance can be attained when individuals become comfortable in the manner they have allocated their time and energy as well as integrated and separated their responsibilities both at work and at home (Clark, 2000). In sum, work-family balance is understood as a complex phenomenon that does not have a fixed definition and is agreeable to all (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Previous research suggested that work-family balance is experienced differently by different individuals (Saungweme, 2010). While other research claims that instead of being static, work family balance changes over the period of time and is depended on the situation that individuals face in their day-to-day lives (Veiga, 2009). Therefore, work-family balance is considered as an important social phenomenon which is an ongoing concern for employers, employees and as well as for the development of human resources policies and practices (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

For the respondents of this study, work family balance involves spending quality time with their spouse and children, having equilibrium between work and family life, being able to segregate family and work-related issues as well as having better understanding of both the domains. These findings are somehow related to the previous research results conducted by different scholars who also talked about work-family balance in the similar fashion (Clark, 2000; Clarke et al, 2004; Greenhaus et al, 2003; Voydanoff, 2005). When questioned about work-family balance, respondents spoke about both
balance and imbalance. They associated balance with peace and harmony while they associated imbalance with issues that were chaotic and unmanageable. In addition, respondents stated that imbalance resulted from work commitment which consumed their time with family members. This finding is related to the previous research which cited that work was the main reason behind imbalance in their lives (Gurney, 2010).

Respondents also mentioned that they made changes in both their personal and professional lives in order to create and modify the concept of balance in their lives. In this regard, they continuously adopted and adjusted themselves according to the financial needs, changing work environment and natural transition within the family domain.

Previous research also suggested similar findings wherein an individual is likely to experience work-family balance (such as starting a career or family planning) which makes the process of balance dynamic instead of static. Respondents also spoke about performing additional roles such as taking care of elderly parents which affected the process of balancing their work and family domain. They stated that having additional roles resulted in time consumption due to which they were unable to devote enough time to their spouse and children which in turn affected their family relationship and caused stress among the respondents. This finding is consistent with the previous research which suggested that individuals find it difficult to manage additional roles and the demands from these roles can lead to overload and distress among the individuals (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).
Respondents also mentioned about sharing the task of doing household chores and child-care activities with their spouse in order to achieve work-family balance. Respondents stated that their spouses helped in doing household activities like cleaning, washing utensils, buying groceries and fixing things. In addition, they also helped in picking and dropping their children from school, guiding them in completing their home-work and sometimes feeding and playing games with them. Several recent studies also demonstrate similar findings wherein family responsibilities and child-care are shared by their husbands which is considered to be an important milestone in achieving balance in both work and family domain (Veiga, 2009). Respondents also spoke about the importance of taking decisions jointly with their spouses with regard to family and work related issues. They stated that they decided jointly on issues such as their children’s schooling, purchasing household items, planning for the future and saving for the times of emergency. The literature suggested that when each individual consulted their spouses before making a final decision on a particular issue, it was considered as an egalitarian decision-making process. Respondents who had grown up children mentioned that they received help from them in doing household chores and in also looking after their younger siblings.

Research suggested that first-born child were given more responsibilities by parents as compared to second or third born child in terms of doing household tasks or baby sitting younger siblings (Blakemore et al, 2009). It is also suggested by previous research findings that allowing children to perform age-appropriate household duties will benefit them in later lives which in turn will give them a sense of freedom, responsibility and
competence. Previous research also considered this method as one of the parenting strategy through which they could achieve balance in both the domains (Haddock et al, 2002). Apart from getting help from grown-up children, respondents also received help from their extended family members with regard to household activities and child-care responsibilities. In addition, they considered their family members to be more reliable and trusted them with the safety of their children as compared to trusting the outsiders. This finding is consistent with the previous research which suggested that dual-earner families relied heavily on the support rendered by their extended family members in terms of doing household tasks and child-care issues. In fact, previous research suggested that the experiences of working parents on work-family balance becomes instrumental when they received support from extended family members for child-care activities (Veiga, 2009; Kalliath et al, 2011). However, a handful of respondents had to rely on domestic helpers with regard to child-care and doing household chores in the absence of extended family members. These respondents usually resided in nuclear family systems.

Respondents felt that they were able to spend more time in doing other activities due to the paid help which was available rather than spending time in completing the household chores. Research suggested that women living in dual-earner families were able to afford paid help for child-care and domestic chores due to the extra income which they received from working outside in paid employment (Tengimfene, 2009). Previous research also supported the fact that dual-earner families opted the paid services of domestic workers and baby-sitters in order to meet their family demands.
(Veiga, 2009; Tengimfene, 2009). However, getting a paid help was not an easy task rather a struggle in itself. Respondents narrated that they had a tough time searching for maids especially with regard to finding someone to take care of their younger children when they were away at work. Even those respondents who managed to find some persons who agreed to come and work in their homes demanded a higher wage and some of them showed several tantrums and left their job halfway. Other respondents also stated that maids did not perform their work whole-heartedly and were always in a hurry to leave for their homes who were working on a part-time basis and who weren't staying with the respondents.

Literature suggested that work-family balance holds different meanings for different people. However, it possesses three distinct characteristics which is common and applicable to every individual. Firstly, it is known to create an opportunity which control the timings of an individual. In other words, work-family balance refers to timings i.e. the time spent at work versus time spent at home. Secondly, work-family balance is considered as an opportunity to spend time in doing non-work activities at the workplace. Lastly, it gives equal importance to every role which an individual performs whether it is the role of a spouse, parent, employee or colleague. Several respondents of this study considered work-family balance as an serious issue while for other respondents it was not much of a concern. Respondents who thought that work-family balance was a serious issue mentioned that there were times when balancing the two domains became problematic even though they were able to cope reasonably well at other times. During some stages of their life-cycle, respondents faced major problems in
dealing with work and family issues but nonetheless they made conscious effort to overcome those problems and control its intensity.

Several respondents whose parents lived with them mentioned about their contribution in performing household chores as a result of which they were able to relax after coming back from work. Other respondents too had some form of assistance in doing household work but they did not mention it explicitly during the interview. Respondents without children commented on how not having children enabled them to live freely and therefore achieve more balance in both the domains. Commuting time from work to home and vice-versa was also considered as a source of imbalance by some respondents. They felt that the length of time which was spent on travelling intruded into their personal lives. In several instances, it was the extra time which was consumed while travelling as well as the frustration and stress caused by driving and traffic congestion which resulted in imbalance. One respondent mentioned that the stress of travelling back and forth added to the already existing stress in other areas of life. In contrast, there were few respondents who viewed commuting time as a space for switching on and off between work and home as well as the time they could devote to themselves.

One respondent working in the finance department stated that she suffered from stress and anxiety for which she took medical help in the form of counselling after which she was able to manage it more efficiently and she felt much more relaxed and contented. Several respondents felt that their roles were overloaded in their workplace. They described their work as making several demands on them simultaneously as a result of
which they were unable to strike a balance between their work and family life. This was especially true for respondents with younger children who had difficulty in managing their work-family and social life along with meeting the demands of child-rearing activities. Respondents were also unable to divert their attention from work due to some unresolved issues which kept bothering them when they came back home. This in turn affected them at home as they felt strained and exhausted at the end of the day. However, one respondent with an optimistic attitude stated that she was able to balance her work and family domain due to the fact that when she was at work, she completely focussed on completing the task which was assigned to her and when she returned home, her entire attention shifted towards her family and children. But for majority of the respondents, their familial role held an important place in their lives and as a matter of fact they ended up neglecting their work roles. Previous research also supported the above mentioned statement by stating that women are likely to pay more attention towards the needs of the family as compared to their career. A pivotal factor which hinders their progress at work and diverts their focus away from work is the need to take care of their children when they are away from home. Some of the factors held responsible for not being able to devote much time to child-care issues were lack of support from family members, travel to different cities for official tours, absence of spousal support due to dislocation of spouse in different place for work-related issues, constant work pressure to perform well in order to climb the ladder as well as lack of cooperation from staff or colleagues during times of emergency (Santhi & Sundar, 2012).
With regard to imbalance, several health issues were raised by respondents. Tiredness was a predominant factor in the lives of women who were trying to balance their work and family domain. Respondents viewed tiredness as normal and inevitable even though it was acknowledged as annoyance and inconvenience in several cases. In previous research too, women spoke about experiencing tiredness due to conflict. In addition, they indicated a level of inevitability regarding the situation (Cunningham-Burley et al, 2006). Respondents also discussed about diet and exercise with regard to imbalance and health. Two respondents having night shifts mentioned about this issue specifically since their working hours disrupted their sleeping and eating patterns which in turn leads to imbalance in their lives. Respondents experienced stress in their lives from different sources. The main cause of stress in work-family issues was found to be increased demands on time (Illies et al, 2007). Each respondent stated that the root cause of stress lied in their personal lives which ranged from child-care, caring for sick or aged parents or a spouse demanding extra time or social obligations. Studies reported that the main source of stress arose from responsibilities such as time demands at home and work, family responsibilities, household income, spousal support etc (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Child-care and their overall well-being is included in the family responsibilities and parents tend to sacrifice many things for their children. Respondents in this study complained of insufficient time for their family or leisure activities. One study stated that individual report higher levels of stress when they faced several responsibilities simultaneously which is consistent with the findings of this study (Innstrand et al, 2008). In contrast, another study reported that increased levels of stress results from lower levels of responsibilities and autonomy (Bond & Bounce, 2001).
In this study, respondents described the need to achieve balance in work and family domain as elusive since they found it difficult to define and achieve balance. Some respondents stated that they achieved balance when they felt satisfied with their participation in both the domains. Other respondents mentioned that they attained work-life balance when they were able to devote more time toward family needs rather than towards work commitments. Among all the respondents the common theme which emerged with regard to work-family balance was struggling with the feeling of guilt on a daily basis in trying to balance work and family wherein they experienced a sense of balance in some days while they had serious issue managing both the domains at other times. Moreover, respondents experienced physical, emotional and psychological pressure when dealing and managing the demands of work and family on a day-to-day basis. In addition, some respondents found the process of juggling home and work issues to be troublesome due to the various health issues attached with it such as anxiety, depression, fatigue and burn-out.

For some respondents, the idea of work-family balance does not necessarily meant an equal balance of two roles. Further, many respondents were found to be more comfortable with the fact that they were spending quality time in performing both the roles, rather than putting equal number of hours to each domain. Some respondents reiterated the fact that their family comes first irrespective of whether they were able to strike a balance between both the roles or not. However, they somehow ended up working for longer hours due to the excess workload and demands imposed on them in their work front. Respondents also mentioned the need for having time for themselves.
in order to achieve work-family balance. Respondents narrated that they prefer spending time in pursuing their hobbies like reading, listening to music and watching movies etc. Respondents also mentioned that advancement in technology helped them in balancing their work and family domain more effectively wherein personal computers and cellular phones made their lives much more easier and they were able to communicate with their family members and children constantly as well as become available during the time of emergency at their workplace. Respondents also stated that facilities like car-pooling, public transport and day-care centres for the children helped them in better management of work and family domain. However, few respondents did not rely much on public transport for commuting to their workplace. Some respondents also mentioned about having difficulty in sending their children to day-care centres due to the long distance between their workplace and day-care centres which was available in their vicinity. Thus, they ended up leaving their children either with their neighbours or relatives.

However, respondents preferred to spend quality time with their children and they made themselves available for their children either in person or being accessible over the telephone. They gave importance to building good relationship with their children irrespective of their busy schedule. Respondents also confessed that prioritising work over family matters made them guilty which in turn caused them remorse. In one instance, respondent saw her personal relationship suffering due to work overload and frequent official tours to different places. Respondents who worked as medical doctors or nurses were unable to devote much time to their children due to their night shifts and they held themselves responsible for being away from their children most of the time.
Interestingly, not a single respondent felt guilty when they gave more importance to their family needs over their job requirements.

One of the respondent who experienced greater difficulty in handling the stress that arose from work-family demands resulted in displaying her anger and frustration towards her family members. She also admitted that after returning from her work, she shouted at her children when they misbehaved or created noise in their house during certain days. She also became absent-minded at times wherein she forgot where a particular item in the house was placed since she was torn between the demands of work and family life. Despite the magnitude of the stress experienced by each respondent, they somehow managed to run their family and office efficiently with a hope that things will get better with each passing day and they were also banking on future advancement in technology which would make the household chores easier and their lives simpler. Studies also confirmed the fact that working mothers spent more time in care-giving activities which included doing household chores regardless of their busy schedule. Research have indicated the different kinds of cultural and social pressures which women undergo in their daily lives in order to live unto the expectations of the society which expects them to be a supermom despite working outside the home. This idealisation of role expects the women to excel in both the domains without compromising on either roles particularly for full-time working women. Since research showed that women who worked on part-time basis reported more satisfaction and happiness in both their work and family life as compared to women who were working on a full-time basis (Buehler & O.Brein, 2011). In this study, respondents described the
need to achieve balance in work and family domain as elusive since they found it both
difficult to define and achieve balance. Some respondents stated that they achieved
balance when they felt satisfied with their participation in both the domains. Other
respondents mentioned that they attained work-family balance when they were able to
devote time towards work commitments. Among all the respondents, the common
theme which emerged with regard to work-family balance was struggling with the
feeling of guilt on a daily basis in trying to balance work and family wherein they
experienced a sense of balance in some days while they had serious issue managing
both the domains at other times.

**ISSUES RELATED TO FAMILY LIFE**

Irrespective of the age group they belong to, the number of children they have, the
sector they are working or their spouse’s profession, majority of respondents faced
difficulties in managing their work and family domain. Women working in private
sectors found it difficult to devote time for their hobbies and leisure activities as well as
in maintaining friendships or extended relationships. Respondents working as doctors
and police officials complained of having insufficient time for their family or leisure
activities due to the hectic schedule in managing their work and family domain. They
also mentioned that they were stressed due to their responsibilities at work and at home
and they found it difficult to cope with the pressures from both the domains. One study
stated that individual reported higher levels of stress when they faced several
responsibilities simultaneously which is consistent with the findings of this study
(Innstrand et al, 2008). Respondents from the urban areas mentioned that advancement in technology helped them in managing their work and family domain more effectively in which personal computers and cellular phones made their lives much more easier and they were able to communicate with their family members and children constantly as well as become available during the time of emergency at their workplace. Respondents living in the urban areas stated that facilities like car-pooling, public transport and day-care centres for the children helped them in better management of work and family domain but these facilities were available only in the urban region and respondents residing in the rural areas had to rely on their family members and relatives to look after their children when they were away at work. However, despite these facilities being available to respondents living in urban areas, there were few respondents who did not rely much on public transport for commuting to their workplace due to the irregularity of taxi drivers to reach and pick them up on time so they preferred going to work by walking which they mentioned was good for their health in general. Some respondents working in far-flung areas mentioned about having difficulty in sending their children to day-care centres due to the long distance between their workplace and day-care centres. In addition, the availability of day care centres is also minimal and the cost involved is high due to shortage of staff and few number of day care centres available in general. However, there is a provision where people residing in the urban areas can hire baby sitters at home during the daytime and they can be paid on a monthly basis. This type of arrangement could be done through agencies or through known personal contacts.
Respondents working as teachers felt that it was necessary to have some form of control or supervision over their children in order to bring discipline in their lives. Thus, they adopted different methods or techniques by which they were able to execute control on a daily basis. However, the methods adopted by respondents varied from family to family where some respondents working in higher positions chose to send their children to day-care centres after their school while others working in lower level jobs like office clerks and casual workers preferred to leave their children with their neighbours or relatives whichever was available and convenient to them. Few respondents such as lawyers did not have a choice but to take their children at their place of work after their school hours and the child remained in the workplace till the evening as a result of which respondents faced some difficulty in doing her duty as well as monitoring her child simultaneously. Respondents working in government organizations mentioned that their colleagues were helpful and some of them who were relatively free played with the children so that respondents could focus and complete the assigned tasks at their workplace. However, there were some effects on the children due to the controlling mechanisms adopted by the respondents. In one instance, a child was reluctant to go and visit her grandmother after school as she complained to her mother that her grandmother kept nagging her every now and then due to some family issues. In another instance, the respondent working as a medical doctor discovered that her son preferred watching television or playing games over the computer most of the time in her absence. Thus, she had to hire a private tutor who gave him coaching after returning from school so that his habit of watching television or playing games could be curbed to some extent. One respondent working as a lecturer in government college believed that by exercising
strictness, her children could make progress in their studies. Thus, she showed stern behaviour towards her children and as a result, she mentioned that her children did extremely well academically and secured good grades in their examinations. Studies have also revealed that when parents are more disciplined or authoritative in nature and they get involved more in the activities of their children, they tend to excel and perform better in their schools and colleges (Food & Wright, 1998).

Respondents working in urban areas in higher level jobs preferred to spend quality time with their children and they made themselves available for their children either in person or being accessible over the telephone. They also made extra effort to spend more time with their children by curtailing their outings with their friends or colleagues and taking leave from work if the need arose. They gave importance to building good relationship with their children irrespective of their busy schedule. Respondents also confessed that prioritising work over family matters made them guilty which in turn caused them remorse. In one instance, respondent working as a bureaucrat in a Government organisation saw her personal relationship suffering due to work overload and frequent official tours to different places as a result of which she remained away from her family most of the time. Respondents who worked as medical doctors or nurses were unable to devote much time to their children due to their night shifts and they held themselves responsible for being away from their children in several occasions. However, they stated that their spouses, and in some cases, their family members helped in looking after the children who took care of their needs when respondents were assigned night shifts which gave them a sense of relief and they were
able to concentrate and focus more on their work. Interestingly, not a single respondent felt guilty when they gave more importance to their family needs over their job requirements which was true for respondents living in urban and rural areas. Previous studies have confirmed that the everyday experiences is responsible for shaping the growth and development of children which includes their day-to-day activities, their interaction with people, the kind of places they visit, the manner in which they are being looked after (Hayes & Kamerman, 1983).

Respondents working in private institutions admitted that they were unable to devote more time to their family and children due to time constraint caused by the demands at their workplace. However, despite having a busy schedule, they somehow managed to take out some time for their children as they prioritised their family needs over their job requirements. They also voluntarily took leave from their work when their children fell sick or when their children had examinations so that they could concentrate solely on their children’s health or for their academic progress. They also took out time to take their children to the nearby clinic or hospital depending on the situation. Thus, the caring attitude of the respondents helped in the positive progress of their children. Reports of earlier studies also revealed that differences in the structure and organisation of family resulted in personal experiences which is unique to every child. The method in which the children expressed themselves showed whether they had a close interaction with their parents or there was less interaction between them. Paid employment and hectic schedule of the parents resulted in lesser interaction with the children (Hoghugh, 2004).
The findings of this study showed that respondents working in higher positions such as bureaucrats, doctors and lecturers had lower levels of psychological well-being as they were affected by work-family issues. Respondents who tend to be more stressed out or anxious in their lives experienced less general well-being and they were not able to spend quality time or enjoy with their family and friends. This statement is supported by other studies whose findings revealed that women generally tend to have lower psychological well-being as compared to men (Carlson et al, 1996). Literature also indicated that individual’s sense of overall well-being may be affected by work-family balance issues in both general and specific manner. (Khumalo & Wissing, 2012).

Previous studies have established a connection between work-family issues and psychological well-being which includes aspects such as stress, anxiety and burnout. Moreover, women are likely to get more affected with work-family issues since historically they were considered as primary care-givers. Thus, there is a tendency among women to excel both at work and at home which in turn takes a toll in their overall well-being (Frone, 2000).

Respondents belonging to middle class families and who were working in lower level jobs were expected to perform well both at home and in the workplace by their employers as well as family members as a result of which their health suffered and they complained of several ailments such as high blood pressure, back ache for continuously sitting in one place and working for a longer period of time, gastric and stomach related problems for not consuming their meal on time as well as other health related issues. Respondents working in different occupations like bureaucrats, doctors and lawyers
experienced physical, emotional and psychological pressure when dealing and managing the demands of work and family on a day-to-day basis. In addition, respondents belonging to the higher age group found the process of juggling work and home issues to be troublesome due to the various health issues attached with it such as anxiety, depression, fatigue and burn-out. For respondents belonging to the younger age group, the idea of work-family balance does not necessarily meant an equal balance of two roles. Further, many respondents belonging to the higher age group were found to be more comfortable with the fact that they were spending quality time in performing both the roles rather than putting equal number of hours in both the domains. Some respondents working in lower level jobs like office clerks and casual workers reiterated that their family comes first irrespective of whether they are able to strike a balance between the two roles or not. However, they somehow ended up working for longer hours due to excess workload and demands impose on them in their work front. Previous research has also shown a negative impact on certain aspects of psychological well-being due to absence of work-life balance (Higgins et al, 2010; Frone, 2000). A correlation is said to exist between working overtime and higher levels of anxiety and depression as well as lack of work-life balance. On the other hand, positive correlation was found between work flexibility and work-life balance which in turn is related to positive well-being (Jane, 2009). Similarly, a study highlighted the correlation between work-life balance and quality of life when respondents focused more time towards family commitments as compared to work commitments (Greenhaus et al, 2003). Previous research also indicated the fact that subjective well-being of individuals was predicted with the help of perceived work-family balance and satisfaction in both the
domains was used as a tool to measure the well-being of the respondents even though it demonstrated only one aspect of psychological well-being rather than focussing on the comprehensive whole (Gropel & Kuhl, 2009).

Respondents who had acquired higher educational qualification and who working in higher position jobs focussed on the academic growth and development of their children despite having a busy schedule at work. They constantly monitored and checked their children’s time-table and assured that their children completed their assignments within the stipulated time. Previous studies have also shown that parents possessing a higher degree of education tend to get more involved in the education of their children by constantly monitoring their progress in academics (Peil, 1995). Respondents with higher income hired private tutors at home to ensure that their children faired well in their schools. In some cases, respondents belonging to middle or lower income group sought the help from the older siblings or relatives to look into the assignments or check the examination preparation of their children. They also managed time from their busy schedule and attended periodical parents’ meetings in their children’s school. Respondents belonging to urban areas also curtailed or reduced their social life in order to spend more time with their children. They rarely went out with their colleagues or friends for get-togethers or outings. They rather preferred taking their children to play in nearby parks or watch animated movies or television shows during their free time. Respondents belonging to younger age group admitted that combining work and family roles resulted in stressful and exhausting situations. The only advantage of paid employment mentioned by respondents belonging to middle and lower class families
was monetary gain which in turn helped them and their spouses in running the household smoothly. Thus, respondents felt that they were deprived from spending quality time with their children due to long working hours and excessive workload which proved to be tedious as well as time-consuming. This process can also be termed as time-based conflict as suggested by Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) wherein conflict arises when the time pressure associated with one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. One of the respondent working as an Accountant who experienced greater difficulty in handling the stress that arose from work-family demands resulted in displaying her anger and frustration towards her family members. She also admitted that after returning from her work, she shouted at her children when they misbehaved or created noise in their house during certain days. She also became absent-minded at times as a result of which she forgot where a particular item in the house was placed since she was torn between the demands of work and family life. Despite the magnitude of the stress experienced by respondent in government sector, they somehow managed to run their family and office efficiently with a hope that things will get better with each passing day and they were also banking on future advancement in technology which would make the household chores easier and their lives simpler. Studies also confirmed the fact that working mothers spent more time in care-giving activities which included doing household chores regardless of their busy schedule (Bryant & Zick, 1996).

The findings of this study suggested that when respondents experienced more work-family conflict, they were less satisfied with their family lives. The reason behind this conflict is based on the assumption that participation in one role makes it difficult to
participate in another role. As a result, higher work demands deprived the respondents working in private and government sector from spending quality time with their family members which in turn lead to lower satisfaction among respondents with their family lives. This finding proved the statement that any work-related activities which interferes with family-related activities is likely to create conflict between these two spheres. Work-family conflict have been described as a form of inter-role conflict wherein the general demands of, time devoted to and strain caused by the job interferes while performing family-related issues (Netemeyer et al, 1996). Findings of this study are consistent with the results of the previous research conducted by several scholars where they reported that a correlation between work-family conflict and family satisfaction tends to be negative in nature (Clark, 2000).

**ISSUES RELATED TO WORK LIFE**

The impact of paid work on the lives of working women were also discussed by the respondents. Respondents narrated how they were concerned about work tasks while they were at home and they also mentioned about how work demands made them exhausted while performing other household tasks at home. As a result, there was a negative influence on their health. Respondents working in urban areas occasionally took sick leaves due to the stress caused by demands at their workplace. Nonetheless, paid work was also explained in positive terms. Respondents working as lecturers mentioned that when they faced issues in their personal life, their workplace proved to be a place a refuge for them. Statements like work was therapeutic or work prevented
them from getting into psychological problems suggested that paid work helped in relieving stress from other areas of life. Respondents mentioned that their socio-economic condition influenced the way in which they managed their work and family domain. Women belonging to middle class families described how busy their schedule were and expressed their desire to have more time for themselves. In addition, women belonging to upper-middle class families had the privilege to reduce their working hours in order to enhance their work-family balance. However, this option was not available to women with limited source of resources particularly belonging to middle and lower class families.

Majority of the respondents chose to participate actively in the paid workforce and they cited various reasons for their participation. The most important reason for choosing paid employment was financial in nature. Respondents working as clerks and casual workers felt that they had no choice but to work outside their home due to the pressure of contributing towards the household expenditures by their spouses. Respondents working as bureaucrats, doctors and lecturers were satisfied with their job as it gave them the opportunity for advancement or progress in their careers which in turn resulted in better pay scales and promotions. Respondents with younger children at home had difficulty in achieving job satisfaction as they were constantly juggling between the demands of work and child-care issues. Respondents belonging to the older age group with more work experiences tended to have lesser conflict in their workplace as well as in their homes. Factors such as maturity and experience allowed them to avoid problematic issues in both the domains. While few respondents of higher age group
reported lesser satisfaction in their work front due to the limited career advancement as well as promotions being granted to their younger colleagues. However, respondents belonging to the younger age group struggled to manage work and family domain due to lesser experience and lack of maturity. An overwhelming factor stated by the respondents working in private sector was tiredness due to which they found it difficult to manage both the domains. Respondents working in government organizations stated different reasons due to which they were unable to manage their work and family responsibilities which included pressures from work, the commuting time and traffic on their way, politics prevailing in their workplace, financial burden and personality or ego clashes with some colleagues. However, majority of the respondents reported that their colleagues were very accommodating to their family needs due to which they were able to breathe a sigh of relief to some extent.

Respondents working in the urban areas were concentrated in occupations such as teaching and clerical jobs which are considered as traditional female occupations. Literature too supported the findings of this study by stating that women are confined to a limited number of conventional careers which are lower in terms of status and pay. These jobs include administrative posts mostly clerical in nature, teaching in primary and high schools, nursing, social work etc (Watson et al, 2002). Several factors were responsible for respondents being confined to traditional occupations which included family and societal pressure, lack of awareness, restricted entry into male-dominated occupations, discrimination during recruitment process, high turn over rates and limited promotions in their chosen professions. The concentration of women in these
occupations revealed the persistent attitude of the society with regard to stereotypical roles for men and women (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al, 2002). The findings of this study indicated that respondents working in clerical jobs experienced more physical pain and discomfort while sitting in one place for a long period of time. They also experienced other physical problems like fatigue, headache, backache, neck pain and eye strain. All these factors were responsible for affecting their performance at a work thereby making it difficult to strike a balance between work and family life. Previous studies also indicated that factors responsible for work-family imbalance were stress and burnout, poor health conditions and lower work performance (Gunavathy & Suganya, 2007).

Respondents working in higher positions such as bureaucrats explained that they kept their work on top priority in order to achieve balance in their work and family domain. They also mentioned about formal expectations as well as unspoken expectations at their workplace along with their own expectations. Their levels of stress increased due to their own personal standards which they have set for themselves. Respondents working as office clerks mentioned that their workload was more in comparison to the time they had in order to complete it. As a result, respondents had to take their work to their homes or they worked overtime. It also resulted in negative psychological outcome such as decreased morals, feeling of incompetence or decreased job satisfaction. Previous studies have highlighted workload as one of the job stressor which reflected the demands placed upon the employees in their jobs (Illies et al, 2007). Workload in turn can be a significant contributor to stress which is mentioned in the literature. High
levels of workload can lead to fatigue, anxiety and various negative psycho-
physiological consequences which in turn can influence the ability of an individual to
achieve work-family balance.

The findings of this study also indicated that respondents working as casual workers
were less satisfied with their jobs when they faced more conflict in both the domains.
This indicated that there is negative impact on respondent’s job satisfaction,
commitment and the type of work they undertake due to the stress and strain produced
by demands at their workplace. Respondents of this study experienced conflict due to
the work pressures which is consistent with the argument that work-related activities
competing with family-related activities resulted in time-based conflict as well as strain-
based conflict (Edward & Rothbard, 2000). The findings of this study is similar to the
findings of the previous research which stated that there is a negative relationship
between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (Hill, 2005; Netemeyer et al, 1996).
Moreover, studies also confirmed that lower levels of commitment towards their
workplace was evident when employees experienced higher levels of work-family
conflict which in turn resulted in lesser job satisfaction as well (Frye & Breaugh, 2004).
The results of this study indicated that the main cause of work-family conflict among
the respondents working in lower level jobs was excessive workload which was
accompanied by longer working hours, insufficient staffs to complete the duties
allocated to them at their workplace. Respondents stated that due to excessive workload,
they felt that the work is never-ending and they will not get sufficient time for breaks in
between which was essential for their good health and overall well-being. Respondents
working in urban areas also felt that there was lack of adequate programmes or policies which will cater to their needs at their workplace. An absence of work-family policies resulted in dissatisfaction among the respondents. This finding can be related to the report which indicated that a strong relationship between excessive workload and work-family conflict (Allen et al, 2007). The findings of the study also indicated that when respondents experienced more conflict in their work and family domain, it also resulted in psychological distress which included sleep disturbance, lack of concentration, higher levels of stress, discontentment and lack of self-confidence in their lives. Several scholars have investigated and found a relationship between work-family conflict and psychological issues such as anxiety and distress (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Allen et al, 2000; Hill, 2005; Frone et al, 1997).

The influence of work in an individual’s life has been highlighted by this study. A significant relationship has been observed between work and psychological well-being. Respondents belonging to younger age group experienced lower levels of psychological well-being when work demands interfered with their family life or when they were unable to meet demands from personal life due to work demands. Thus, psychological well-being could be negatively affected when work imposes demands on family duties or obligations. However, being extra dedicated and over-whelmed at workplace might also result in negative impact on psychological well-being of an individual. Thus, job satisfaction has ben proved to be a significant predictor of well-being. An individual is likely to experience less anxiety and fatigue and they will be more contented along with better health, if he/she is satisfied with their jobs. Previous studies also showed an
indication that positive well-being is linked to the extra efforts put by the employees at their workplace (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Possessing a sense of job satisfaction and support from one’s employer is considered to be significant as it is directly related to balancing work and personal lives. Previous studies also asserted that investing in the well-being of the employees is not only an economic advantage for companies but it is also an ethical obligation. Different ways through which well-being of the employees can be assured have been stated such as drawing boundaries between job and personal life, developing healthy and positive relationships at workplace as well as by prioritising work and family duties (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Respondents working as doctors and police officials expressed their concern towards their family and regretted for not being able to devote much time towards their family and children due to their work commitments. In addition, respondents working in private companies experienced stress due to their prevailing working conditions at their workplace. These conditions included lesser control over the work which have been assigned by their superiors, role ambiguity and role-conflict, unfriendly relationships with some of their colleagues and superiors, excessive work demands and job insecurity. As a result, respondents experienced stress in their day-to-day lives due to their inability to balance both the domains. They usually experienced stress at their workplace due to the fact that despite being physically present, their focus and attention was inclined more towards their family especially their children. There is also an indication in previous research that lesser work-family conflict have been reported by employees working in a family-friendly environment (Ahmed & Omar, 2010). Moreover, research
stated that women are likely to suffer from stress-related illness as compared to men (Abdullah et al, 2008). The generalised, patterned and unconscious mobilisation of the body’s natural ability is referred to as stress which indeed is a growing concern for all employees especially women.

Respondents working in government organizations mentioned that their job appeared to be monotonous as they were expected to repeat doing same things over and over again which became boring as well as repetitive. Studies indicated that work-related stress experienced by employees can lead to several other illness and disorders which included depression, burnout, musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular diseases (Abdullah et al, 2008). In addition, the findings of this study bears resemblance to the earlier research which indicated that lives of working mothers are subjected to various stressors due to different reasons. Firstly, they deal with work-family issues including stress on a daily basis. There are various factors for imbalance which included rigorous household activities like child-care, looking after the sick and the elderly and additional household chores. As a result, women themselves are likely to suffer from additional health issues (Younkin, 2010).

Respondents belonging to middle and lower income group revealed that due to constant struggle between work and family lives, they felt like quitting their jobs and focussing only on their family and children. But in reality, they were unable to take such steps due to the rising cost of living and increasing expenditures. They were also highly concerned about their children’s education and upbringing and they wanted to give the best of everything to them. As a result of which they continued to work which fetched
them with constant income that helped in running the household smoothly. Respondents who were single mothers and who were responsible for running the household solely had greater difficulty in managing work and family domain due to single income and additional responsibilities of their children and elderly at home. They hardly got time to look after themselves and their personal requirements. There is an indication by several scholars regarding the negative influence of work-family issues on the mentality and physiology go the employees. Women reported higher level of stress, gender barriers and difficulties in career advancement as compared to their male counterparts (Nezhad et al, 2010). Results of previous research also showed that women experienced less stress and conflict who received support and care from their spouses and family members (Ugwu, 2010). Respondents belonging to the higher age group and with more work experience mentioned that it was difficult to segregate work feelings from family life with the amount of importance attached to work roles. However, research also indicated that there are certain group of employees who preferred slight separation and distance between work and family activities since they were highly attached to their career goals. An alternative was also suggested by another research which opined that employees’ attitudes and behaviour at work are by-products of their family and community experiences in addition to the work environment. Yet another research supported the argument that work and family domain are not separate entities because of the fact that employees tend to experience anxiety at their workplace due to some issues which they experience in their family domain (Kirchmeyer, 2000).
COPING TECHNIQUES OR STRATEGIES

In this study, the responses of the respondents residing in the urban areas reflected the usage of different coping strategies by combining them which included outsourcing of household chores to maids and baby-sitters and external duties to drivers and gardeners. Respondents belonging to middle and higher income group chose outsourcing mainly to avoid any kind of conflict with their spouses with regard to performing household chores or child-care activities. Even though there was cost involved while outsourcing the household activities, it allowed the respondents to have time for themselves which they barely received when they had to manage all by themselves. However, using outsourcing as a coping strategy to achieve work-family balance was a privilege denied to many respondents who had limited amount of resources and who were undergoing financial constraints. Thus, the strategies used by these respondents belonging to rural regions and who were working as casual workers were management of time, planning, prioritising, goal-setting etc. Previous research too suggested similar techniques or strategies being employed for balancing work and family domain which included problem-solving, planning, implementing support system, working part-time (Pacock, 2005).

Respondents working in government sector mentioned that they had set certain time limit in order to reach home early and spend time with their family rather than spending longer hours at the workplace. Other respondents who were working in private companies tried organising their schedule in such a manner so that they do not have to work overtime or during the weekends. A handful of respondents working as
bureaucrats in various government offices in Gangtok and Namchi solely focused on prioritising what was really important to them and thus they worked towards making it a reality even though it meant making a few sacrifices either at home or in their work front. Several respondents belonging to the younger age group and who were working as office clerks in Gangtok and Namchi also focused on setting certain goals for themselves which they wished to achieve within a particular time frame which in turn helped them in managing their work and family domain effectively. Moreover, respondents residing in rural areas and who were working as casual workers in different factories near Gangtok relied heavily on the support of family members, relatives and in several instances on friends and neighbours for coping with the burden of household duties especially with child-care activities as they could not afford getting paid help due to their financial constraint. Getting support from others is considered as an effective coping strategy by previous research (Wallace, 2004). Research also suggested that working women are able to manage work-family conflict better when they received support from extended family members as compared to working women with lack of support or unavailability of extended family members (Quick et al, 2004).

In addition, research also emphasised the need to communicate effectively in order to facilitate support from spouse or other family members (Quick et al, 2004). Respondents of this study living in and around Gangtok and who belonged to the younger age group stated that when they were able to communicate clearly as to what they expected from their spouse and family members with regard to sharing the burden of doing the household chores including child-care, it was easier as well as quicker to
get things done without any hassle or misinterpretation. Respondents working as teachers in private and government schools around Gangtok and Namchi also mentioned about focusing their attention to what they considered important in their lives. They stated that depending on the magnitude of pressure in either domain, they diverted their attention accordingly. However, research suggested that irrespective of significance attached to work and family domain, most individuals tend to give importance to their family needs when family pressure becomes stronger than work pressure. On the other hand, the resulting activity is influenced by role salience when the work pressure appears to be greater (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003).

The findings of this study revealed issues where most of the respondents with higher education preferred to choose their career over marriage. Many respondents working as doctors and lecturers in different government and private institutions in Gangtok and Namchi opted for late marriage as they were keen on getting their jobs first which will aid them in becoming financially independent before getting into any kind of personal commitment. They encountered many issues in this regard with their parents getting concerned about the delay in their daughter’s marriage. Their relatives and neighbours also commented on their choice of focusing on their work and career rather than settling down and starting a family. Literature also indicated that working women prefer to delay their marriage and parenting roles rather than relying on organisational support with regard to family demands (Blair-Loy, 2001). On the other hand, respondents belonging to rural region and who were working as casual workers chose to get married and enter parenthood opted the help of their spouse and their family members in coping
with the demands of work and family life. Previous research also suggested that working women are known to increase their resources in family domain by depending on their spouse and family members for support and help (Brett & Stroh, 2003).

However, a handful of respondents working as teachers in Government and private schools also saw the positive side of balancing their work and family lives. They mentioned that having multiple roles in their lives made them feel important as well as independent. They also experienced a healthier lifestyle since they were multi-tasking and performing different roles in their everyday lives. Respondents working as police personnel in Namchi and Gangtok mentioned that when they worked hard and gave their efforts in completing the tasks on the stipulated time, it became easier for them to balance both the domains. They believed in the notion that when they prepared themselves to face the challenges which work and family life threw on them, they were likely to encounter different opportunities which will enable them in fulfilling their responsibilities duly. These respondents were not convinced over the stereotypical notion of women having to choose either between their family or career. They strongly urged that women can have both career as well as family with the required amount of dedication, devotion and effort. They also believed in the notion that parenting is an equal responsibility of both the parents irrespective of whether the woman is a homemaker or working on paid employment outside the home. Literature also suggested that individuals are able to focus and redesign their roles and relationships, manipulate resources and demands in order to balance work and family life by using coping strategies (Vodyanoff, 2005). There is also an indication that working women
develop social networks, enter mentoring relationship and seek promotion opportunities in their work domain which will help them to progress in their career (Eby et al, 2008; Brett & Stroh, 2003).

When asked about the strategies used by respondents at home to deal with the issues of balance, most of them working as doctors and nurses in both private and government hospitals in Gangtok and Namchi gave full credit to their spouses as some of them managed their work from home and thus could handle child-care activities along with household chores like cooking, cleaning and washing in the absence of the respondents. However, respondents admitted that once they reached home after a tiring day at work, their husbands would feel at ease since they expected the respondents to take charge of everything including child-care activities such as feeding them, helping them with their assignments along with dinner preparation, washing dishes, cleaning the house as well as prepare things beforehand in advance for next day before they went off to sleep. Moreover, respondents were usually the first person to wake up in the morning and always the last person to fell asleep whether it was a holiday or a regular working day. Respondents also stated the fact that in several instances their sleep was deprived due to their children falling sick and they had no choice but to remain awake the whole night and look after them even if that meant putting their own health at stake. In addition, respondents also admitted that they themselves became unwell in the process of taking care of the child who was sick which made the situation even worse which in turn led to conflict in both their work and family lives. The performance of the respondents in their
workplace was also affected due to the illness as they availed sick leave which resulted in extra workload when they resumed office after their recovery.

Literature on coping mechanisms mentioned about the transitional model which is considered to be a practice used by individuals in order to cope with the demands of work and family life (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to this model, coping occurs in two different stages. In the initial or primary stage, the situation is assessed by the individuals in order to identify whether it is threatening or not. However, in the later or secondary stage, the ability to deal with the stressor adequately is evaluated by the individuals through the process of selecting a relevant coping strategy. In the literature of work-life balance, coping strategies have received a limited amount of attention. In fact, it is speculated that only 1% of studies on work-family conflicts represents coping strategies adopted by individuals at different stages of their lives (Eby et al, 2005). Nonetheless, the focus remained more on the different forms of social support. Different scholars have revised specific types of coping strategies (Poelman et al, 2007) wherein positive effects on work-life conflict was shown in direct action coping strategies, negative effects on work-life conflict was due to venting and lastly, there was no effect on work-life conflict because of positive thinking. Moreover, avoidance coping was examined by a handful of study which yielded mixed findings. Some scholars thought it to be detrimental even though others considered it as beneficial (Innstrand et al, 2008). Mixed reactions on the outcomes of avoidance coping was observed because it contains two underlying components-one which dealt with stressors by cognitively distancing from the situation which is known as cognitive avoidance and the other one is
concerned with the distorted view of reality involving escapist type fanciful thinking which is referred to as escape avoidance (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Moreover, in consistent with this reasoning, the first component i.e. cognitive avoidance is likely to be facilitative while the second component i.e. escape avoidance is considered to perform maladaptive role

Literature suggested that individuals face everyday challenges, cope with existing situation and think about their lives generally through different methods or ways which are known as coping strategies (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Existing literature identified three levels of coping strategies or techniques which can be used to balance work and family domains. These include organisational, governmental and individual level techniques or strategies. The strategies suggested at the organizational level was training and educating supervisors and managers in order to ensure a better utilisation and transfer of policies and practices related to work-life balance. At the governmental level, family-friendly policies were established by the help of legislative powers of the Government with the ulterior motive of reconciling conflicts occurring in both the domains. For instance by funding and supporting child-care centres (Burgess et al, 2007). Lastly, three categories were identified under individual level coping strategies which includes compensation, accommodation and segmentation (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). A strict division of work and family domains through active thinking is known as segmentation. Similarly, a greater dedication of individuals for one domain in order to cover up for the dissatisfaction in another domain is known as compensation. Lastly, constraining psychological and behavioural involvement in one domain in order to
satisfy the needs of another domain is known as accommodation (Jennings & Dougald, 2007).

An overview of strategies used by respondents in order to achieve a better work-life balance have been discussed in this study. However, it is questionable as to whether the strategies used by respondents were long-term goals or simply temporary arrangements in order to achieve work-family balance. In fact, it is possible to distinguish between strategies which individuals chose to handle urgent situations and those techniques which they employed as long-term plans (Anderson et al, 1994). In addition, coping strategies used for handling stress is often described with regard to the function they perform, whether they were problem focused strategies i.e. an attempt to deal with issues or problems after their occurrence or emotion based strategies i.e. an attempt to deal with emotional disturbances resulting from multiple demands (Cooper et al, 2001). However, in reality, it is very difficult to make a distinction between short-term or long-term coping strategies. Also, there is no clear-cut distinction between strategies focused on problem and strategies focused on emotions since individuals may prefer using both the techniques and different functions tend to get served by similar behaviour (Cohen, 1987). Thus, the term strategy has been used for this study due to the complexity involved behind the concept.

Majority of the respondents having caring responsibilities in addition to paid employment and who were dealing with health issues employed one form of coping strategy or the other in order to achieve work-family balance. Respondents also went to the extent of creating their own strategies in order to balance their work and family
domain. For instance, they chose to work from home in order to save commuting time. Some respondents who worked in private sector also changed their workplace as they did not get the flexibility for work-family balance in their previous jobs. They changed their jobs as it did not cater to the child-care issues. This, in turn, resulted in applying for another job which allowed them to work on part-time basis so that they could look after their children. A small portion of respondents with child-care concern mentioned about undertaking certain tasks by which they could utilise their time efficiently and achieve better work-family balance. For example, one respondent stated that she chose to work near to her child’s school so that it becomes easier to drop her child to the school or rush to the school during the time of emergency. Another respondent mentioned that waking up early in order to complete the household chores. In fact, one respondent mentioned about alternating child-care duties with her husband during weekends so that one parent could sleep a little longer while the other parent was awake. Thus, all these respondents adopted some form of strategy or the other to cope with the pressure or demands which they faced from work or family domains which in turn helped them to minimise conflict in both their homes and their workplaces.

Coping techniques or strategies used by respondents to cope with the pressures from work and family domain plays a vital role in achieving balance in these two domains. Studies also confirmed that the manner in which individual manages stressful events in their daily lives by using different coping tools helps them in overcoming issues related to work-family balance (Bakker et al, 2010). As a strategy for coping with the demands of work and family life, respondents stated that they made conscious effort to keep their
work and family life separate by not carrying tasks assigned to them at their workplace when they travelled back home and also by deliberately choosing not to work during weekends but rather spend quality time with their family and particularly with their children. Respondents also ensured that they focused completely on their assignments when they were at work and avoided carrying the stress and anxiety which they faced in their work life when they went back home. The role of technology in coping with the demands of work and family lives was also discussed by the respondents. Previous research too supported the opinion that autonomy of the individuals and proper functioning at workplace is likely to be increased with the use of technology which will result in successful integration of different roles performed by the individuals (Jackson, 2002).

Respondents having better access to technological innovations stated that it was easier as well as convenient for them to purchase goods and commodities through online transactions which saved quite a large amount of their time as the items which they bought online were delivered right at their doorstep without them having to step out of their homes. The shopping whether it is buying groceries, household times or personal belongings is considered as a tedious and time-consuming process was made easier with the technological advancement and respondents could breathe a sigh of relief since they were able to avoid the hassle of going to the market and purchasing it themselves. Thus, the respondents felt that their lives became more comfortable with the help of technology and the time which was saved could be utilised for relaxation purpose. Respondents residing in the urban locality also made proper use of social networking
sites in order to connect with their friends or relatives and browsed the internet to keep themselves updated.

Respondents also talked about leisure as one of the coping strategy which they used in order to deal with the issue of work-family balance which included activities like watching television, exercising, engaging themselves in outdoor activities, going for vacations or picnics with friends and family. Existing literature also supported the statement that leisure can be considered as an effective coping technique which helps in maintaining the health and overall well-being of the employees. Studies reported that the significance of having leisure in everyday activity for a successful integration of work and family life (Joudrey & Wallace, 2009). Respondents also narrated the fact that their quality of life also began to improve substantially when they got involved themselves in leisure activities which helped them in performing better in both the work and family domain. They mentioned that they were able to relax and they also saw a drastic reduction in the stress and anxiety which they encountered due to work and family issues. Previous research also suggested that various opportunities for recovery, resilience and rejuvenation in coping with work-family issues can be provided with the help of leisure activities (Iwasaki, 2006). Studies have also confirmed that satisfied employees and better working environment can be achieved when organizations initiates and encourages their workers to undertake leisure activities on a regular basis (Joudrey & Wallace, 2009).

Flexibility was another strategy adopted by respondents in order to cope with the demands of work and family lives. However, using flexibility as a coping strategy was a
possible option which was not applicable to all the respondents since majority of them had fixed number of working hours in their workplace and moreover they could not make flexible arrangements in their homes due to unavailability of manpower or paid help. The importance of flexibility as a factor which helped in attaining work-family balance was acknowledged by several earlier research conducted by different scholars (Clark, 2001; Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Hill et al, 2008). Respondents who utilised flexibility as a coping mechanism stated that they were able to devote their time to other activities. Thus, as a result, their task of managing work and family domain became easier. Previous research also suggested that promoting work-family balance is possible through implementation of multi-varied interventions which involves creating co-ordinated activities that support each other at both individual and organisational level. This can be achieved by introducing time-management practices at individual level and by implementing flexible work arrangements at the organizational level. Individuals and organizations are likely to get benefited by this approach only when they realise the fact that achieving work-family balance is a combined effort of both the employer and the employees (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).