INTRODUCTION

Concern over work and family issues has increased on account of the changes in which work has been defined and modified by processes of modernisation and industrialisation as well as the entry of women into the world of paid work. As a result, research on work-family balance has become a well-defined area of research in its own right. Work and family balance relates to the amount of time devoted to one’s life at work relative to the time spent outside work. The goal is not to achieve equal amounts of time at home and at work, but the amount that is appropriate for a particular individual or family. Getting a perfect balance is rarely achievable but when these two spheres are not in harmony with each other, individual and family well-being suffers. While work-family balance is an increasingly popular term, there is no clear consensus on what it means, although most definitions have included the concept of juggling, sustainability and flexibility. The concept of work-family balance has been used to explain the equilibrium between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside work. Having a balance in work and family domain implies that this equilibrium is in a required proportion for the concerned individual. Balancing work and family differs from person to person. Some prefer spending more time in paid work and less time at home, while others ensure that their job does not interfere with their family life. In sum, work and family balance may be defined as having sufficient control and autonomy over work and family domain. Clark (2001) & Voydanoff (2005) argued that work and family are the two most important domains in people’s lives and as a result, work and family can cause conflict.
if they compete with each other. Work and family, however are synergistic and can complement each other. In fact, the positive side of work and family can enhance the well-being of the family unit. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) stated that the experiences in one role may improve people’s sense of well-being in other roles and their quality of life. Today, scholars and organizations recognise the benefit of integrating work and family because work and family are both an integral part of people’s everyday lives. Some scholars have argued that effectively balancing work and family is an important concern in present day society (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

**ORIGIN OF WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH**

Work-family balance metaphor is a social construct located within a particular period of time and originating in the Western world as a response to dilemmas regarding the management of work and family life. Research in this domain emerged at a time when the number of women entering the labor market grew and resulted in a focus on working mothers and dual-earner families. It is also known as work-family interaction, work-family fit, work-life balance and work-family integration. Initial research on the family in Western countries emerged during World War II when women were encouraged to join the paid workforce in the U.S. and the U.K. However, in order to provide jobs to troops returning from the War, women were soon asked to resume their family roles. Therefore, an interest arose among scholars on the intersection of work and family roles, because of the flux in gender roles as a consequences of these social dynamics (MacDermid, 2004). The early period after World War II was considered as a
period of the idealisation of the American family, with the husband as the main breadwinner, and the wife as housewife and mother, by the timeline study of work-family research conducted in the U.S. In order to secure the rights of working women in the lower middle class and of business and professional women in the upper class, a movement was started during that period. On the other hand, a strong feminist movement emerged during the period 1960’s and 1970’s, which resulted in a critical evaluation of traditional gender roles in the economy. The number of dual earner couples began to rise as a result of the oil crisis and the resultant rise in the cost of living during that period. However, in the 1980’s, it became clear that women were taking up the burden of dual roles instead of being liberated from traditional gender roles, which led to some disillusionment with the increasing role of women in the workforce. In addition, family-friendly policies were also introduced in the workplace during that period. During the 1990’s, the focus was based on the expansion of work-family research to previously less studied populations in the U.S such as single-parent families and poor working families, as well as on the organization’s role to reduce pressures of work and family faced by the employees (Pruitt & Rapoport, 2002). As opposed to advocating government response in the form of public policy on matters pertaining to child-care, the U.S. government adopted a different approach to manage work-life issues of their employees by motivating organizations to look after the needs of their employees by making them important stakeholders in the process. Thus, in comparison to other developed countries such as Australia and Canada, which focused on more governmental interventions to manage work-family pressures, the U.S followed the policy of short unpaid family leave (Kelly et al, 2008).
In the United Kingdom, research on work-life issues received a boost after World War II. The option of part-time jobs was introduced by the U.K. government since a majority of the women who were employed were finding it difficult to balance their work and family responsibilities. However, this measure undertaken by the U.K. government did not bring dramatic changes in the traditional gendering of dual roles but it was helpful in reducing conflict to a degree (Crompton et al, 2010). In India, research on work and family issues started during the mid 1970’s, when research on working women increased, with the exploration of socio-economic impact of women’s work on family, power relationships within the family, family marital quality and children were included. However, work and family research in India have undertaken two separate and disconnected paths. One is the path chosen by women’s studies centres through which they looked at the structures of patriarchy within the country, and how these contributed to the subordination of women at work and at home. They mainly focused on underprivileged and rural women. The other path was psychosocial research which examined work and family relations within urban settings from a role theory perspective. There has been little cross-pollination between these two streams which is also marked by a lack of cross-pREFERENCES in published studies. Most studies conducted on Indian women were preoccupied with concerns of status and perceptions towards working women, including working women’s views about about non-working women and vice-versa, general societal views about working women, and working women’s views about their husband’s home role participation. They also covered the broad theme of stresses and strains of balancing work and home roles and their impact on the
psychological well-being of a women. Other studies examined the changing roles, values and expectations in urban middle class families. Research on work and family during this decade indicated that working status was not a guarantee of equitable relationships within the family. Research on Indian society differentiated between career women and working women and also hinted at the possibility of men’s roles being in transition in the midst of largely traditional division of work and family roles in society. Even though Indian organizations provided family friendly measures, they eventually proved to be an imitation of western practices rather than a genuine concern for the better handling of work and family responsibilities (Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004).

**DEFINING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE**

There is still debate about the definition of work-family balance but it implies that there is a balance between the demands of work and family (Guest, 2001). Work is an important aspect of human life and it has many benefits for people. Firstly, it helps people to establish their identity. Secondly, it provides the opportunity for social interaction that goes beyond work-related activities. It also promotes relationships, encourages engagement, provides purpose and meaning to people’s lives as well as provides an opportunity for status and income. According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000), work is an activity that provides people with the resources needed to live. Ryan and Deci (2001) expanded the concept of work to include feelings of belongingness, social contribution and personal growth, which they thought was essential for a sense of well-being. Family, on the other hand, is an important part of everyday life and it
consists of group of people bound together by cultural ties. Home life is where family members find solace in an atmosphere of belonging and the family unit influences people’s sense of well-being.

Work-family balance has been a catch phrase during the 1980’s as a result of increased demands from work and family (Frone, 1992). Some researchers (Clark, Japlin, Schaffer, Francesco & Lau, 2003) prefer to use an overarching concept of equilibrium, balance and harmony while other researchers use the concept of fit and incorporate the demands of the role and environment and the availability of personal resources. In addition, some researchers (Clark 2001) have defined work-family balance as an absence of work-family conflict, or increasing levels of work-family enrichment. Others defined work-family balance as an effective juggling act between paid work and such other activities that are important to people. Some researchers (Kalliath & Brough 2008; Clark 2001) have focused on the compatibility of both roles and their promotion of growth satisfaction between multiple roles, perceived control between multiple roles and the relationship between conflict and facilitation.

In the work-family literature, however, there are four main definitions of work-family balance. Greenhaus et al (2003) defined work-family balance as the amount of time and degree of satisfaction with the work and family role. Clark (2001) argued that work-family balance occurs when there is a sense of satisfaction with work and family roles.
Frone (2003) stated that balance is a four-fold taxonomy between the dimensions of direction of influence (i.e. work to family and family to work) and the type of effect (i.e. conflict and facilitation). Grzywacz & Marks (2000) addressed limitations in the definitions of work-life balance and suggested that people have balance when they believe they can facilitate work and family commitments and effectively negotiate with significant others in their different life domains. Guest (2001) offered a subjective definition about work-family balance. He argued that balance is determined by person’s subjective feelings and emotions. That is, they feel they are living a balanced life. He suggested that people assess the balance in their life using subjective evaluations based on their beliefs and feelings. Kalliath & Brough (2008) defined work-family balance as the individual’s perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual current life priorities.

Work-family balance is an art of managing both the work and family domains effectively. The work-family balance topic suggests that work should not interfere with other things that are important in people’s lives such as quality time with family, leisure time or recreational activities, personal development etc. Balancing these two roles equally will not result in work-life balance, nor will setting aside an equal number of hours for each role lead to work-family balance. The balance which seems appropriate today may seem inappropriate tomorrow. The ideal balance in a person’s life may vary across the different phases of one’s life i.e. before marriage, after marriage, with children, when starting a career or after retirement. In sum, there is no one-size fits all
or picture-perfect work-family balance. Moreover, in recent decades, work pressure has been intensifying for both men and women. Different factors associated with work have resulted in excessive stress and strain among workers. These factors are; scheduled deadlines, advancement in information technology, and high quality customer services. As a result, there is the domination of family life created by work demands which in turn results in work-family imbalance. In order to be successful in both the roles, women try to organise and balance their work and family domain, for which a great deal of adjustment and accommodation is required. For the last two decades, work-family issues have become a growing concern among researchers due to significant changes in workforce such as the entry of increasing number of women into the labor market, as well as the existence of dual-earner and single-parent families (Aryee et al, 2005; Barnett, 1998; Edward & Rothbard, 2000). These changes in the workplace imply that workers, especially women, are trying to combine work and family roles.

Scholars from various disciplines such as psychology, occupational health, sociology and organisational behaviour have conducted research on work-family interface (Barnett, 1998). Scholars from psychology generally discussed individual-level behaviour, and outcomes such as mental health report, marital quality and work-family conflicts. Occupational health researchers emphasised work-related physical health stress and outcomes for workers and their families. A broader view was adopted by sociologists, where they considered the effects of workplace conditions on families as well as on individuals while organisational scholars focused on outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism and turnover (Frone, 2003). There are several studies
conducted in work-family issues but most of these studies have been conducted in Western countries, particularly in the United States. This is because Western countries experienced diversification in the workforce earlier as compared to other countries (Cohen & Kirchmeyer, 2005; Peolman et al, 2003). However, the findings from the studies conducted in Western countries cannot immediately be generalised to other countries because both work and family operate within a wider context such as social, economic and political sphere including cultural norms and values that differ across different countries (Westman, 2005; Lewis & Ayudhya, 2006). Work-family experience is likely to be partially culture-specific rather than being a universal experience as is evident in the literature.

Work-family balance expression has been used in policy documents as well as among academics. However, it lacks a standard definition despite its frequent usage. Risk factors for the onset of work-family imbalance are typically assume to include long, unsocial or unpredictable work hours, high work pressure and the absence of supportive work balance policies while the feared consequences include adverse effects on individual’s psychological and physical health, lowered productivity at work, a deterioration of relationship quality at home and restrained fertility (Schnitter, 2007). Yet, this objectivist view of work-family integration fails to acknowledge the complex psychological processes by which people make sense of their time and manage multiple domains. Acknowledging that work-family balance is a highly subjective, perpetual phenomenon, it can be defined as a situation that is achieved when an individual
perceives his or her major life domains and the different roles they play in them to be compatible with each other. As has been stressed by a number of scholars, the aim of achieving a satisfactory work-family balance is more than a zero-sum time allocation exercise (Wharton, 2005). How individuals evaluate their own particular mode of work-family integration will, apart from more objective role demands, depend on their specific needs and expectations. Factors such as long working hours and a high workload are likely to be important factors in determining the degree to which an individual is able to balance the demands of work and family responsibilities. However, people’s sense of the degree to which they achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of their work and family roles will be moulded by the broader meaning they attach to different life domains and their participation in the work-family system. Work-family balance can be seen as a meta-level concept referring to a combination of processes of positive and negative spill-over between work and family-also referred in the literature as work-family enrichment and work-family conflict respectively.

Work and family poses competing demands for time and energy on working women to discharge the traditional roles of a home-maker and that of a gainfully employed worker in the market. The work life of women cannot be separated from their family life as both run simultaneously in their daily routine. Therefore work life of women cannot be studied independent of their family life, household responsibilities, social relations and economic situations. It has been observed that both work and family have changed drastically in the past several years. Feminist scholarship has argued that women have to
shoulder both the work and family pressures for generations. Home and work are two different worlds for working women and are often in conflict. Women assuming multiple roles results in work-family imbalance because time and energy are shared, clubbed and even extended across the two spheres of activity. (Moore, 2004) When a women enters into gainful employment outside the home she not only finds a change in her role and status within the family and outside it but she also finds herself under increasing pressure to reconcile the dual burden of two roles at her home and her workplace because each is a full-time job. Coping up with the situation requires not only additional physical strength, personal ability and intelligence on the part of a working woman but also requires the members of her role-set to simultaneously make necessary modifications in their expectations. When imbalance between the two life domains occurs the consequences are reflected in both job and domestic life. For the employers, such role conflict means disillusionment, dissatisfaction and strained relations with women employees, their lower standard of work performance and disregard of organizational goals. Even society is not separate from organizations; the negative impact of role-conflict will have its effect on the society in general in the form of lower standards of performance, lower quality of goods and services and a growing feeling of inter-personal conflict being the obvious results. There is therefore a growing recognition by policy-makers of the importance of supporting women in juggling work and family.
INTRODUCTION TO SIKKIM

The total population of Sikkim is 607688 (Census 2011) out of which the female composition is 47%. There are three ethnic communities in Sikkim i.e. Lepchas (19%), Bhutias (16%) and Nepalese (56%) who are in majority. There are several other communities in addition to the ethnic groups who have settled in various parts of Sikkim. These communities comprises of Marwaris, Punjabis, Biharis, Bengalis and South Indians who are engaged in business activities and others are working in different government and private organizations across the state. With regard to religious practices, the population of Sikkim comprises of Hindus (68%), Buddhists (27%), Christians (3%) and Muslims (2%) respectively. After merging with India in the year 1975, Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union after which Sikkim witnessed significant gains. The position of women in Sikkim is relatively better as compared to women in other parts of Sikkim. Women in Sikkim are also engaged in various trading activities due to which they have decision-making powers which is denied to women residing in other parts of India. As against the national average of 20%, women in Sikkim participated in the paid workforce which comprises of 38.75% (Census, 2001). Gender differentials along with several indicators of human development is absent in Sikkim. Women in Sikkim working in government sector outnumbered the men despite unfavourable sex ratio in the population as a whole. Women in Sikkim are working in public and private sector, however they face inequality on several aspects which is similar to other states of India. In terms of education, marriage and health, women are under-privileged in Sikkim. Several factors are responsible for the slow spread of education among girls in Sikkim which includes poverty, poor accessibility to schools in
rural regions and in some instances, negative parental attitudes towards their girl child. There is also a direct impact of low level of education on the social chances and future prospects for girl child in Sikkim which in turn is reflected by the prevalence of early marriages among the ethnic communities of Sikkim residing in both rural and urban areas of Sikkim. The system of socially sanctioned elopement is also prevalent due to inter-caste marriages among the different ethnic communities in Sikkim (Lama, 2001). A serious impact on the health of these women has been observed due to the prevalence of early marriage and early motherhood. Like most parts of India, Sikkim also witnessed a gendered division of labor in maintaining household and work responsibilities with women being subjected and expected to perform all the household chores irrespective of working in paid employment and supplementing the family income (Lama, 2001).