

LADY WITH THE SCALE: THE UNBALANCED CYCLE OF WOMEN LEGAL PROFESSIONALS OF KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

Being grappled with work-life challenges the growth of women lawyers within the legal profession often gets hindered. As women struggle with the dual problems of working for long hours and managing the family, they are often bound in a precarious situation which marginalizes them as revealed in literature. A survey conducted on 310 women lawyers working in various courts of Kolkata, India, revealed that variables like marital status, long working hours, field of practice, social support and structural support at workplace are crucial in determining the work-life balance for the women lawyers. The hindrances and support from the family and the workplace strains and soothes respectively the difficult task of maintaining work-life balance. Although these women lawyers make subsequent contribution to their profession, yet various factors from within their profession as well as from family pose serious challenges for them in maintaining work-life balance. This leads to the legal fraternity losing a part of the capable human resource.

Keywords: *Female Lawyers, Identity, Legal Profession, Work-Life Balance, Women Legal Professionals*

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1. Introduction

Work-life balance has become an important area of research since the increase in participation of women as a workforce. As women traverse the dual role, fulfilling family needs and managing career requirements become important challenge of their life. However, work-life issues consist of more than just family and work. Chawla and Sondhi (2011) refer work-life balance as the useful harmonization between remunerative work and various pursuits of the individual, being a part of the society. Although the roles and expectations of women have altered significantly, yet it cannot be denied that the work-life balance issues affect women the most as they are fully engaged with their family and their workplace. Valk and Srinivas (2011) are of the opinion that in India the role of women as ‘homemakers’ and ‘caretakers’ are deeply entrenched within the society, making work-life balance issues very challenging for them. Hence, it is important to explore this area to get an idea of how women from different professions handle these challenges. Work and family are two antagonistic areas which consume the time and energy of working women. The conflict between family and work is intensified with marriage and motherhood. Women on the one hand are encouraged to take up fulfilling career path and on the other hand, they are made to undergo the pressures of handling the demands of family (Balaji, 2014).

According to a report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India (2020), 22 percent of women in urban areas were engaged in different categories of paid employment in 2019. With paid work being dominated by men, the women are already marginalized and make maximum contribution towards unpaid work. The self-employed women in the legal profession whose representativeness is limited confront further disadvantages (Michelson, 2010). Women in this profession are yet to make a stronghold and for them creating a proper balance between their work-life and family-life is important as they need to make their presence in the profession. As the number of dual earner couples increases, maintaining the work-life balance becomes more important. Changing demands of the society and the workplace allows for further changes within the concept of work-life balance (Sundaresan, 2014). For legal profession, the various challenges associated with it make it difficult for women to maintain the balance between the work and family life. The demanding nature of work especially the longer working hours, creating and retaining a clientele, and after-work socialization keeps women at the bay (Bacik and Drew, 2006). Women in legal profession attend two full-time works, their home and their profession. The autonomy related to practicing under a senior in the court makes the profession all the more challenging as a lawyer’s reputation decides the number of cases that s/he gets in hand. Women become vulnerable as they ought to show their equal presence in the public sphere and the private life. According to Bacik and Drew, the legal profession puts restrictions

on women as they try to reach an acceptable level of work-life balance in the bid to make their legal careers worthwhile (2006). Maintaining a proper work-life balance within the premises of the legal profession is difficult. Women feel the double pressure which hinders their progress. This study attempts to understand the various hindrances that women face, which makes it difficult for them to maintain work-life balance. It also attempts to identify the supportive structures that the women lawyers have at their disposal which help them cope with the challenges and imbalances of the profession. The importance of self-identity in maintaining work-life balance and its relation to the hindrance and support factors have been explored in this paper.

2. Reviewing the Work-Life Balance of Women Lawyers in India

2.1 Legal profession in India

The availability of literature regarding the legal profession is limited in India. There is an observed shortage of survey conducted in this field. Early researches in the field, nevertheless, focus on the autonomy and challenges that the profession carries. Sethi's (1987) study on women legal professionals in India pointed out that the 1980s saw a surge in the number of women entering the legal profession. However, the professional achievements of the female lawyers were lower in comparison to that of male. The reasons were the domination of male lawyers in the profession viewed as the structural constraint and the primary attachment of domestic roles associated with women viewed as the cultural constraint (Sethi, 1987). According to a study, the globalization era saw an increase in the number of law firms-- women in these law firms may have been gaining in position and it seems a correct time for them to perform, though it cannot be said that they enjoy workplace autonomy (Ballakrishnen, 2013).

2.2 Work-life balance in various professions in India

For women in India maintaining work-life balance has always been a challenge, not only in the legal profession but in other professions also. According to a study conducted by Valk and Srinivasan (2011), the discussions have similar outcomes that stress the societal role expectation of women in India and the self-identities that the women themselves associate with their profession. These two diagonally opposite roles are dichotomous in nature. The Information Technology (IT) profession and the legal profession offer certain similarities. In both the professions time factor makes a huge impact on the work-life balance. From the studies of Valk and Srinivasan (2011) and Bacik and Drew (2006), it can be understood that the IT sector and the legal profession are more inclined towards the male professionals, due to the nature of work and the time factor. Qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted within the area of work-life balance. It is observed that women's choices related to their career

are dominated by the familial expectations. The realization of the role of family and work is important to retain women in IT profession (Valk and Srinivasan, 2011). A study shows that the work-life balance is an important issue when a person's professional life is concerned. The responsibility of the organization or workplace in realizing the multiple roles of its employee is important (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011). In a transitional society like India women are expected to be engaged with domestic labour putting their career at the back-foot. Sundaresan's (2014) study shows that excessive work, the burden to fulfill other's demands and not giving time to self are some of the factors that affect the work-life balance of many women professionals thereby creating anxiety and stress among them. The role analysis model explains the multiple roles that women play and the three-factor model points to the necessity of balancing the factors of knowledge, behaviour and skill in the family life as well as work life of the women professionals (Sundaresan, 2014).

2.3 Work-life balance and the legal profession

The legal profession is challenging due to its very nature. A study conducted by Bacik and Drew shows that, for women the challenges are higher due to the duality that they strive with. Problems are especially high for mothers. Motherhood and legal profession are suggested to be inversely proportional. The professional impact of being a parent is not similar for men and women. The family work and the legal work have to undergo changes to accommodate women (2006). According to Makhija and Raha's study, in India changes are required in both the workplace and the family. In the case of Law Firms, the leave taking policy needs change. Alterations are expected in the mentality prevailing against women in the workplace as well as in family (Makhija and Raha, 2012). Pham studied the lawyers in Vietnam and measured their work-life balance and job satisfaction levels. He finds the insightful impact of various factors and suggests guidelines for better management of the balance. He also suggests that the social importance of the lawyer needs to be increased (2020). In another study the lawyers' career satisfaction was measured and it was found that women lawyers were more susceptible to the time or hours of work-- their child-care responsibilities and other household chores have been responsible for making their work-life balance tighter (Stake, Schmidt and Mukhopadhaya, 2007).

2.4 Theoretical suggestions

The Border theory explains the work-life balance from the border crosser's perspective. Border crossers are those people who travel from the family domain to the work domain. The theory explains the various possibilities of maintaining work-life balance as well as the factors that hinder it. The relation between border crossers and border keepers in the family (the spouse and other

family members) and in the workplace (the supervisors and colleagues) as well as others in the domain remain important for a better work-life balance (Clark, 2000). The preference theory explains the unique position of women as a labour force. It explains the various demands of women and in accordance with that the contributions they make as a workforce (Hakim, 1998).

Women in the legal profession compete with men in order to secure their place. The struggle has not been easy till date. Over the years there may be a slow increase in the number of women who entered the profession, but on the whole, poor percentage of their representation remains a cause of worry. Women who enter the profession have other liabilities to attend and this produces maximum disputes. There are very few literatures regarding the work-life balance of women legal professionals in India. This study explores women legal professionals' work-life balance in order to understand the hindrance and support system that they avail. Specifically, time and people have been studied as important factors of hindrance and support.

3. Research Methods

The survey covered 310 women legal professionals (aged 25-54 years). The legal system in India, since its inception, has seen the presence of male lawyers only until the Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923. Before that, women were not allowed to practice as a lawyer (Mishra, 2015). The respondents were selected from the three courts (High Court, Alipore Court and Bankshall Court) of Kolkata, West Bengal (India). The earliest establishment of legal system in Kolkata shows that the practice of law has been woven within the metropolitan for a long period of time. The Calcutta High Court was established as the first high court in India. It was brought into existence by the Letters Patent on May 14, 1862 (Brief History of Calcutta High Court, 2020). The survey was conducted through questionnaire which included both open- and close-ended questions and was conducted within a period lasting from January 2019 to February 2020.

Literature review gave an idea of the various work-life measures of women professionals as well as women lawyers. Makhija and Raha's study on the women lawyers addresses the various challenges that the women lawyers, especially the mothers face in balancing their career and family (Makhija and Raha, 2012). Bacik and Drew's study talks about the various work-life balance measures that many women lawyers find difficult to achieve. They suggest longer working hours, meetings, and relation with colleagues and seniors as important factors in maintaining work-life balance. They also mention about the family support which is important for maintaining the work-life balance among lawyers (Bacik and Drew, 2006). This helped us in drawing upon six factors that could hinder the work-life balance of women lawyers. The variables include (i) Hindrance of long work hours (ii) Hindrance of overtime (iii) Hindrance of meetings after work (iv) Hindrance of negative attitude from colleagues (v) Hindrance

of negative attitude from seniors and (vi) Hindrance of negative attitude from family members. The frequency of facing these hindrances were measured by using 3-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= never, 2= sometimes, 3= always. The factors that can help in maintaining work-life balance were also measured. Three factors that were developed for this includes (i) Support of colleagues (ii) Support of family members (iii) Support of seniors. The frequency of finding these supports were also measured by using 3-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= never, 2= sometimes, 3= always.

For the hindrance and support factors PCA (Principle Component Analysis) was performed in order to compile the components. The measures of the suggested components after performing PCA were added and then the total scores were further marked on the Likert Scale. The hindrance and support variables were marked on 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1-3= never, 4-6= sometimes, 7-9= always. The data on the variables that hinder work-life balance became reliable at Chronbach's alpha 0.710. Whereas the data on the variables that support work-life balance became reliable at Chronbach's alpha 0.779. The chi-square test was conducted to understand the association between various variables. The work-life balance factors were tested by the chi-square test to establish the association between marital status and field of practice. All the tests were conducted using the statistical tool SPSS.

4. Analyzing Domesticity and Profession

The analysis is divided under two arguments. The first argument highlights the concept of time as a hindrance in maintaining work-life balance as well as the support received from it. The second arguments discuss about the hindrance and support that women lawyers receive from the people around them, which is majorly their family members, and their seniors and colleagues.

4.1 Time-generated hindrances and support

The first argument demonstrates the hindrance in maintaining work-life balance within the legal profession, especially related to the time factor. This argument is divided into three sub-parts. The first sub-part shows the hindrance related to the factor of time. The second sub-part is related to the self-time and the third part discusses the support related to time.

Work-life balance and the time-related hindrances

In this argument the hindrance caused by work-time has been elaborated. Time management is crucial for the women in legal profession to maintain their work and family balance. However, time, especially work-time itself, can be a factor that obstructs the clear path of maintaining a balance between public and private life. According to Sundaresan (2014), for working women the work hours are usually stretched and they spill over into the time that is to be given to

family and self. Unlike other professions the legal profession does not have a set operating time. Lawyers spend their time in the court and after the court hours come to an end, they also have their chamber time. Sometimes case discussions with seniors can be long; also, clients as well as seniors require time after the court hours. All these issues turn the work-time into a hindrance in maintaining their work-life balance. Table 1 shows the work hours of the women lawyers.

Table 1: Percentage analysis of work hours (N-310)

Variables	Percentage (%)
Standardized work hours*	17.7
Non-Standardized work hours#	82.3

Source: Self-reported data (January 2019-February 2020)

*According to ILO, a maximum of 8 hours of work is considered as standardized.

More than 8 hours of work is considered non-standardized.

The above table clearly depicts that 82.3 percent of the women lawyers are working for more than eight hours a day, which is maximum work for non-standardized work hours. Thus, a significant part of the day is spent in attending the profession. Handful of respondents maintained the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Standards on work hours per day. Since most women are utilizing more than eight hours in their profession, the time factor becomes important while understanding the work-life balance. The time for work includes the time spent in court and at their own or at seniors’ chamber. Time after the court hours is also spent in meetings and case discussions. The time spent in work takes most part of the individual’s day. Sundaesan in her study observes that longer hours spent at work also results in leaving very little to no time for their leisure and personal growth. Table 2 represents the opinions of the women lawyers regarding the intensity of the time-generated hindrance and its association with the field of practice in absolute numbers and percentages.

Table 2: Field of practice and work-time centric hindrance

Field of Practice	Work-time centric hindrance			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Every-time	
Civil	13 (30.2)	24 (55.8)	6 (14.0)	43 (13.9)
Civil and Criminal	34 (32.1)	49 (46.2)	23 (21.7)	106 (34.2)
Criminal	38 (23.6)	107 (66.5)	16 (9.9)	161 (51.9)
Total	85 (27.4)	180 (58.1)	45 (14.5)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 12.468; df- 4; p value: .01				

Source: Same as for Table 1

58.1 percent of the women lawyers said that they sometimes felt that the work hours hinder in maintaining the balance between their work life and family life. PCA has narrowed down the factors to one; this includes three variables which are: hindrance of long hours of work, hindrance of doing overtime, and hindrance of meetings after court hours. Table 2 also shows that the field of practice and the hindrance from work-time are related. Women lawyers have different experiences with their work-time based on the practice they choose. Most of the women lawyers occasionally felt the work-time to be a hindrance. In all the three fields women lawyers choose to practice maximum have the opinion that their working time is long which becomes a hindrance to managing their family and their profession. For women spending excess hours beyond court is difficult as it strains their time in the family. Gorp (2013), uses Hochschild's (1989) study on 'Second Shift' to show that even in the 21st century, the responsibility of the household chores and childcare duties are held as primary duties of working women, in-spite of their professional contributions. These duties take away the time of the working women, and make it difficult for them to spend more hours at work. Sundaresan (2014) mentions the importance of time-management, as this is one of the key aspects in maintaining work-life balance.

There is a significant association between the work-time hindrance and the work area of the respondents. 56.1 percent and 53.8 percent of the women lawyers working in the High Court and Alipore court respectively, felt that the work-time occasionally hinders their work-life balance (Table 3).

Table 3: Area of practice and work-time-centric hindrance in absolute numbers and percentages

Area of practice	Work-time-centric hindrance			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Every-time	
High Court	59 (38.1)	87 (56.1)	09 (5.8)	155 (50.0)
Alipore Court	31 (33.3)	50 (53.8)	12 (12.9)	93 (30.0)
Bankshall Court	30 (48.4)	20 (32.3)	12 (19.4)	62 (20.0)
Total	120 (38.7)	157 (50.6)	33 (10.6)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 15.721; df-4; p value:.003				

Source: Same as for Table 1

However, it is worth noticing that 48.4 percent of the women lawyers working in the Bankshall court did not feel that the work-time hinders their work-life balance. The border theory mentions about the level of control that the domain has on the individuals which has an impact on their work-life balance. High Court being the apex court of the state disposes numerous cases from all over the state. Alipore court is a district and sessions court and thus attends to various cases from such areas that are within its jurisdiction. These two courts have larger number of cases that are to be disposed. Thus, the work time related

pressure on these lawyers is greater. On the other hand, the Bankshall court is a sessions court and attends to lesser number of cases as compared to that of High Court and Alipore court.

Longer work hours: constricting the me-time

There seems to be a vicious circle in which women lawyers are stuck. Time spent in work and family leaves no time for the individuals, this in turn again hinders their work-life balance. Sundaresan (2014) has already pointed to the importance of nurturing oneself. There is an association between self-time and marital status (Table 4).

Table 4: Marital status and self-time in absolute numbers and percentages

Self-time per day	Ever-Married*	Never-married#	Total
Less than 1 hour	40 (22.5)	20 (15.2)	60 (19.4)
Around 2 hours	50 (28.1)	60 (45.5)	110 (35.5)
No separate time	88 (49.4)	52 (39.3)	140 (45.1)
Total	178 (57.4)	132 (42.6)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value- 10.232; df-2; p value: .005			

Source: Same as for Table 1*This includes both married and divorced respondents. # This includes the unmarried respondents.

Since their work schedules are long and they have to give time to family and children, most of the women lawyers do not get any separate free time for themselves. Women lawyers who are mothers hardly think of a separate time for their own leisure. 49.4 percent of the women lawyers under the ever-married category do not have the idea of separate time for nurturing self (Table 4). On the other hand, 45.5 percent of the respondents under the unmarried or never married category spend around two hours per day for self-nurturing. Marriage increases the burden of women thus cutting short their self-time. According to Sujata, a thirty-nine-year-old criminal lawyer,

“I have never thought of separate time for myself. The time I spend at work I believe is for my potential. Also, I like to spend time with my family, especially with my seven-year-old daughter, which I consider giving time to myself.”

Similar accounts were represented by Sundaresan (2014) in her survey, when she found that most working women did not have any separate time for themselves, and their busy schedule at work and even at home deprive them off any self-interest that they could have otherwise pursued. Extended work hours are the requirement of the legal profession, which includes more than the court hours to incorporate chamber time or meeting with seniors. Since the profession is vastly dependent on cognition, it entails a process of discussions, readings and referring. Maintaining this work schedule is difficult for women due to

their commitments at home. Thus, the work hours act as a hindrance for many. Sohini, a thirty-three-year-old civil lawyer, says,

“The profession demands that you spend long hours in work. In the beginning of my career, it was fine. But once I had my daughter things started changing, I have to pay attention to her, the elongated work hours hinder my responsibilities to her.”

Since the legal profession demands extra work hours, those who are able to strive with it are considered to be completely committed. But it becomes a problem for most women due to their care-giving role, thus putting them at a disadvantageous position.

Women who juggle between professional and personal life mostly do not find time for themselves. Self-time is required for every individual as this is the time of the day when s/he can unwind and contribute towards his/her liking, which is important for self-development and happiness. For the legal profession the time is important as it is not a particular set of hours spent in the court but also consists of chamber time. Along with that, family time also acts as an important factor for these women lawyers. So, not only the work and family time but the self-time and self-recreation are also important for women lawyers to unwind themselves and better handle their work-life issues.

Time as a source for support

Time is a hindrance in maintaining work-life balance. However, the same factor is found to be a support for maintaining the balance, when utilized in a correct manner. Time management is found to be crucial while keeping the balance. Women lawyers from various fields of practice have shown that they utilize the time to maintain a balance as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Field of practice and time-centric support in absolute numbers and percentages

Field of Practice	Time-centric support			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Everytime	
Civil	5 (11.6)	24 (55.8)	14 (32.6)	43 (13.9)
Civil and Criminal	23 (21.7)	39 (36.8)	44 (41.5)	106 (34.2)
Criminal	12 (7.5)	77 (47.8)	72 (44.7)	161 (51.9)
Total	40 (12.9)	140 (45.2)	130 (41.9)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 14.296; df-4; p value:.006				

Source: Same as for Table 1

It is observed that most of the respondents have used time as a support to balance their work and life domains. The women lawyers from all the three field's of

practice utilize the time factor to strike a balance between their work life, family life and social life. Sundaresan (2014) has discussed that women redesign the sources available for them in order to maintain a balance. One of these sources is time. In this regard, Maya, a thirty-five-year-old lawyer practicing civil and criminal law, says,

“Time is very crucial for those who are a part of the legal profession. Management of family and the profession is directly related to management of time. This helps to maintain a balance.”

It is not just the field of practice but also the marital status that has been found to be associated with time related support (Table 6).

Table 6: Marital status and time-centric support in absolute numbers and percentages

Marital Status	Time centric support			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Every-time	
Ever-married	12 (6.7)	52 (29.2) 114	114 (64.0) 52	178 (57.4)
Never-married	40 (30.3)	11 (8.3) 81	81 (61.4) 11	132 (42.6)
Total	52 (16.8)	63 (20.3) 195	195 (62.9) 63	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 41.430; df-2; p value:<.000				

Source: Same as for Table 1

There is a significant association between marital status and time-centric support while maintaining work-life balance. Most of the women lawyers in both the ever-married and never-married group apply time management as the method to maintain the work-life balance. Opinions of the respondents in this matter is very much important. Chitra, a forty-two-year-old criminal lawyer, says,

“I have been practicing for the past twenty-two years. I feel that at different stages I have applied different methods for maintaining a balance between my family and work. However, managing the time is very crucial, that is what I have learnt from my experience. When you have to handle the profession, family and children, time becomes the most important factor.”

Women lawyers maintain their work hours and look after the household chores also only by understanding the concept of time and managing it in a way so that their roles in both the domains are balanced. The work-time and the self-time both are required to maintain the right balance between work and family. Managing time is crucial for all professionals as shown through the study of Sundaresan (2014). It is more important for the women legal professionals as they are entrusted with the duty of the family and the profession, where long work-hours are required.

4.2 The work-life tie: people as hindrance and support

In this theme the role of people in hindering and helping women lawyers maintain the work-life balance is explored. By people it is meant those relations that matter at home and at work. Thus, family members, colleagues and seniors are placed under people that can hinder and help the women legal professionals. There are two sub-parts under which the following points are discussed. The first part takes into account the hindrance from people and the second part discusses the support from people.

People as the source of obstacle in maintaining balance

At times people who are around the women lawyers -- their colleagues, seniors and family members can be a hindrance in maintaining their work-life balance. Demands of the workplace and demands from the family do not go hand in hand. Marriage makes women to take up the extra burden of their family. Thus, it is important to notice the relation between marital status and people-centric hindrance. Table 7 represents this association.

Table 7: Marital status and people-centric hindrance in absolute numbers and percentages

Marital Status	People-centric hindrance			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Every time	
Ever married	41 (23.0)	92 (51.7)	45 (25.3)	178 (57.4)
Never married	50 (37.9)	72 (54.5)	10 (7.6)	132 (42.6)
Total	91 (29.4)	164 (52.9)	55 (17.7)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value:19.198; df-2 ; p value:<.001				

Source: Same as for Table 1

Among the professionals under ever-married group 51.7 percent occasionally find people to be a hindrance. Among them under never-married group 54.5 percent occasionally find people as a source of hindrance and 37.9 percent never find people to be a hindrance. It has to be kept in mind that the professionals under never-married group reside with their parents. On the other hand, the professionals under ever-married group reside with their in-laws or run a nuclear family. Thus, apart from the 51.7 percent of lawyers who occasionally find people to be a hindrance, an additional 25.3 percent of them every time find people to be a hindrance. There are numerous roles that women play. She is expected to manage family, childcare, elderly-care and household chores (Sundaresan, 2014). Women lawyers who are mothers face greater problems. Childcare along with the household chores and elderly-care becomes burdensome for the women. Under these circumstances family members as well as colleagues and seniors are important source for helping women maintain their work-life balance. However, the marital status clarifies the idea that married and divorced

respondents have a harder time handling the people around them. Sundaresan (2014) in her study has shown that at times the family members are unwilling to share the household work with the working women, thus putting more pressure on them. Both married and unmarried women lawyers face the problems of work-life balance. If for the married women childcare and family care at times turns out to be a hindrance, the unmarried lawyers too have elderly parents to take care. In this sense the understanding of the family type is crucial. There is an association between the family type and the people-centric hindrance as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Family type and people-centric hindrance in absolute numbers and percentages

People-centric hindrance	Family Type		Total
	Extended	Nuclear	
Not at all	32 (19.3)	49 (34.0)	81 (26.1)
Occasionally	89 (53.6)	65 (45.1)	154 (49.7)
Everytime	45 (27.1)	30 (20.8)	75 (24.2)
Total	166 (53.5)	144 (46.5)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 8.791; df-2; p value: .01			

Source: Same as for Table 1

From Table 8 we can understand that most respondents coming from both nuclear and extended family occasionally find the people around them to be a hindrance in maintaining work-life balance. It is also noted that 34 percent of the women lawyers coming from nuclear family do not find the people around them to be a hindrance. Family members especially the family members of those living in nuclear family can become a hindrance. Ronita, a thirty-nine-year-old criminal lawyer, had some important perspectives to share in this regard. According to her,

“I have always felt that the pressure within my job has always pushed me for the better. However, I feel that the pressure from the family has left me completely burdened. I have got support from my colleagues as well as my seniors, but when it comes to the family, I have always faced obstacles.”

The role of women, as decided by the society, which mainly centers on care-giving and nurturing, hinders their full concentration in the workplace. Demands of the family, focus on women’s conventional role in the family, lack of consideration among the family members at times add up the difficulty to balance home and workplace. The concept of gendered role creates a burden on female lawyers. Baishakhi, a thirty-five-year-old lawyer, practicing in both civil and criminal law, believes that,

“Most of the time women leave the profession after marriage. They are entrusted with the burden of the family. It takes time for one to be established in the profession, during this time one has to endure a lot of struggles. Added pressure from the family puts women at the edge of their professional life. In the workplace women are not thought to be built for the legal profession due to their attachment to the chores that are to be managed at home.. This creates a lot of difficulty in the profession.”

Sundaesan (2014) suggests that the role clarity and communication in the family is important for women professionals to maintain a proper work-life balance.

People being a source of maintaining work-life balance

There is also an association between people as support and marital status. According to many of the women legal professionals, family should be a support system. The reason for calling the family as a support system is due to the contribution they can make in maintaining work-life balance for the women legal professionals. Those lawyers who could overcome their problems suggested that they had supportive families. Anushuya, a forty-two-year-old civil lawyer agrees that to maintain the career she had to endure a lot but her family was always by her side. In her words,

“My family has supported me immensely and looked after my child during my absence. This helped me to make things fall in place. Without their incessant support it would have been difficult for me to continue with my family as well as and career.”

Thus, when people are supportive towards the women legal professionals, they have been able to balance their work and family. The association of the people-centric support with the marital status clarifies the contribution of family members in the life of the women legal professionals. Table 9 represents this association.

Table 9: People-centric support and marital status in absolute numbers and percentages

Marital Status	People centric support			Total
	Not at all	Occasionally	Every time	
Ever married	15 (8.4)	103 (57.9)	60 (33.7)	178 (57.4)
Never married	11 (8.3)	40 (30.3)	81 (61.4)	132 (42.6)
Total	26 (8.4)	143 (46.1)	141 (45.5)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value:25.228; df-2; p value:<.001				

Source: Same as for Table 1

Table 9 shows that among the ever-married category 57.9 percent respondents occasionally find the assistance from their family members to help them maintain work-life balance, and 33.7 percent every time find the support helpful. Among the never-married group it is seen that maximum respondents, that is, 61.4 percent, every time find their family members support to be of help in maintain work-life balance. Since the professionals under never-married group mostly stay within their own family of orientation (the family in which one is born) they get the required support from their family members. Those who are in the ever-married group and stay either with their in-laws or in nuclear families thus require more support from their partners, in-laws, and children. However, it is encouraging to see that the support they get has been of help in maintaining their work-life balance. Again, we can see from Table 10 that family type and the people-centric support are also associated.

Table 10: Family type and people-centric support in absolute numbers and percentages

People-centric support	Family Type		Total
	Extended	Nuclear	
Not at all	52 (31.3)	18 (12.5)	70 (22.6)
Occasionally	76 (45.8)	72 (50.0)	148 (47.7)
Everytime	38 (22.9)	54 (37.5)	92 (29.7)
Total	166 (53.5)	144 (46.5)	310 (100.0)
Chi square value: 17.934; df-2; p value: .000			

Source: Same as for Table 1

We find from Table 10 that most of the respondents occasionally find the people around them to be of support. However, 31.3 percent of the women lawyers from extended family do not find any support. 37.5 percent of the respondents from the nuclear family every time find support from the people around them. In this regard, Nilanjana, a forty-one-year-old civil lawyer says,

“My colleagues and seniors have been supportive of me. I have even found support from my family. Thus, when I am away for most of the time of the day, I find my husband taking care of the children. This has eased the burden a lot and helped me perform better in my profession.”

Families need to contribute in order to help retain the female workforce within the legal profession. Makhija and Raha’s (2012) study also discusses the idea that the gendered concept of making women responsible for the childcare duties can be stopped by encouraging shared parenting. Also, Bacik and Drew (2006) stress that sharing of household responsibilities, as suggested by the respondents, can help women lawyers remain in the profession. The women lawyers suggest that there should be sharing of childcare responsibilities, as supportive families

have positive impact on the profession of these women lawyers. In this context Eshani, a twenty-nine-year-old criminal lawyer suggests,

“Women need to break the traditional barriers of being solely responsible for household duties and childcare responsibilities. Women have higher worth, they can take up challenges equally as men, stand on same footing and contribute equally.”

Change in perception of the family and the workplace can be effective measures in dealing with the challenges that women legal professionals encounter. In this regard, Debopriya, a thirty-four-year-old lawyer, practicing civil, criminal, and corporate laws, has many suggestions to give regarding making women feel equal within the profession. She says,

“Family support is required, within the workplace some workshops can be organized or even seminars, which can explain the gender sensitivity issue and also inculcate confidence into the women lawyers. Women lawyers should be given more chances to prove themselves in the legal field. Society should not discriminate women in this field where it is the question of ability, knowledge, and intellectuality -- not gender.”

Annink and Dulk(2012) in their study found that social support is important for the self-employed women, however, there is a lack in this type of support. In the present study the women lawyers are self-employed and thus the support from the family and the workplace is significant as it would help them maintain balance between their family and work.

5. Discussing the Hindrance and Support System

Women lawyers face hindrance from their work, especially the time spent in work, the meetings with clients and seniors, and also the overtime spent in chambers. They also feel that at times their family becomes a hindrance. Relations with the senior lawyers and also with colleagues are important for maintaining a balance between the work and family life. Both these factors of hindrance can also be the factors that support the balance between work and family. It has been observed that women lawyers face hindrance from people and work-time but they also manage time to deal with the imbalance. They also feel that family and at times colleagues can be a source of support in balancing the work and life issues.

The legal profession is a challenging career. The long hours spent in work and after work the time spent on family leave no room to squeeze in ‘me-time’ for these professionals. Thus, most of the women lawyers hardly have a separate time for themselves. In India, even for dual earner families, women continue

to be the providers for childcare and domestic chores. This has made the legal profession very difficult to maintain for women lawyers. Even Bacik and Drew (2006) find that, being unable to give and maintain time with family and children many women lawyers had to quit their profession. Contributions and understanding from other family members and especially the male counterparts are required to maintain their work life balance. Valk and Srinivasan (2011) in their study on women IT professionals highlight the importance of spouse- and family-support that could help women achieve work-life balance. Not only the traditional role expectations of women are the source of hindrance but also important factors like integration in the profession is a problem for many women. Their role in the family hampers their total integration. Also, self-time is crucial for working women and not being able to achieve that acts as a hindrance as well.

Catherine Hakim in her preference theory mentions that women constitute a heterogeneous labour, working according to their interest and preference. Thus, they need to be distinguished from the male labour force (Hakim, 1998). Similarly, in this study it has been found that the women legal professionals try to balance their work and family. They deal with different work-life issues in order to maintain the balance. Even the border theory shows that family members and colleagues and seniors can be a useful source of maintaining work-life balance (Clark, 2000). The role analysis model of Sundaresan (2014) has shown that within the family proper clarification of roles are necessary, especially for working women. Within the work area integration of roles are required to allow individuals to be a part of the domain. The border theory also discusses about the importance of integration with the domains in order to handle the work-life issues better. Together they help understand the women workforce as different from men, which is shown by Hakim (1998) through the preference theory. Women remain on the edge of their profession while meeting with the challenges of the workplace and family. The time and people as factors of both hindrance and support bring out the importance of realization and integration. People who surround the women lawyers must realize the importance of their role and support. The integration in the work area helps women to have better control of their professional space. Women's talent within the legal profession needs to be invested upon. There are many women lawyers who leave the profession after marriage or at times after child birth. This result in losing a set of human resources that could have made valuable contributions towards the profession.

6. Looking Ahead

Women in India are still seen as the primary service providers at home. Their career remains secondary and the societal expectation is that they would sacrifice their career for the requirements of the family. Policies from the

government for the self-employed women lawyers will encourage in inviting a pool of knowledge from women into the legal profession. Women can give a fresh approach to the profession. Society too can help in encouraging women's talent. Since the profession itself is demanding, contributions from the family can be an enormous support system. There is an increased demand for more contributions from the male counterparts on issues of childcare and also the domestic work. Availability of proper facilities, especially daycare facilities are recommended. After all the juggling role of women lawyers in order to maintain the balance between work and family will be incomplete without the support of family and of the support structures at work.

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