

A Study on the Balance Between Work and Family of Nepali Army Officers

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Abstract

This study tries to explore and examine the relationships of work-family balance among army officers of the Nepal Army. The objectives of the study is to discover the issues and consequences of the work family conflict by examining and discussing the impact of time, stress and job satisfaction on work-family relation and to suggest some recommendations to maintain the balance between the two. This study is simply base on desk review of research papers and information on work-family relation of army officers. Unprecedented problems of work-family conflict are a common phenomenon within modern organizations. Stress, low performance, absenteeism, quitting from the force and committing suicide are the consequences of the work-family conflict So, the organizations are compelled to manage all causes of conflict before escalating the adverse effects. The study has followed a step-by-step approach to undertake review of the research papers. The results of this study reveal that work-life conflict and stress have a significant positive relationship. The findings of the study will encourage the Nepal Army for further research on work family balance and the additional examination may provide better understanding of truth. It is also hope that the results and recommendations gleaned from this study may assist the Nepal Army in

making policies and programs related to work family conflict in future. Should the Nepal Army leadership fail to work proactively to ensure this balance, this may provide ground for a new kind of conflict.

Keywords: work-family, army officers, deployment, relocation, conflict, stress,

Introduction

The background of work family conflict at the present organizations were ed started, right from the early days. Since the beginning of human life, work has remained as a means of livelihood. In the early stage of human civilization, men used to live in-group and hunt animals for food. They wandered from one place to another place in search of food. When men knew about harvesting crops, they started living permanently in a house with their family. The Advanced Learner's Dictionary meaning of "family" is "members of a household" and "work" is "use of bodily or mental powers with the purpose of doing or making something".

As the industrialization, men started to go to the city seeking work for their livelihood, leaving the family in the village. Families began to drive for work and the door to conflict opened from the dawn of the modern era. The current sandwich generation, whose parents live in the village, spouse and the

children are in the city and he or she is in the field office somewhere. They have to look after parents in the village and the children and spouse in the city from the working station. In this way, the work started getting more importance over family life from the primitive time.

Work-Family Relation

Work and family has an interdependent relation and it interacts frequently with each other. Work is a source of income for family whereas family is a source of labor to do work. Work-family relation means a relationship between a person's work and family life. Both are valuable for a working person. The relation between two may reinforce each other and may weaken each other. "Work and family relation depends upon working environment, flexible working hours, leaves, transparent distribution of career development opportunities, group dynamics, social connection, spouse cohesiveness, and financial freedom" (Koirala, 2019, pp. "1-74).

Work and family relation is ever changing with the time. Sometimes, the factors related to work are significantly important over the family life while at the other times the family related factors become more important than the work life. Ability to maintain work-family balance, time and stress brings happiness within the family, increases job satisfaction and productivity of the organization. On the contrary, failing to maintain the balance creates work-family conflict and strain.

Work and Family conflict

Greenhaus, J.H. and Beutell, N.J. outlined Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work-family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. Time given to

work can't be spent with the family at the same time. Sometimes, our work responsibilities interface with our family lives (known as work to family conflict) whereas at other times our family lives interface with our work (family to work conflict) (Greenhaus, 1985, pp. "76-88).

Many researchers have revealed three types of work-family conflicts.

- (a) Time-based conflict means the time spent in one role generally can't be given to the other role. If he or she is not able to manage, time for work and family then conflict occurs.
- (b) Strain-based conflict exists when inner anxiety of an employee produced within one-role affects the functioning of another role.
- (c) Behavioral-based role pleads that sometimes behavior that is effective in one role is simply inappropriate in another role. Therefore, if people fail to shift behavior they are likely to experience conflict between these roles.

"With responsibilities of multiple roles, employees are more likely to experience role conflict or work-family conflict caused by incompatible demands from both sides" (Aminah & Zoharah, 2008, "pp. " 15-26).

Work -Family Theories: From Conflict to Balance

Many academics have tried to develop theories to explain the work-family relation, conflict and balance. Work and family life balance does not mean spending 50 percent time for family affairs and 50 percent time for work. It is not mathematics. Balancing work family life is an art, skill and tactics. Work-family life balance means increasing

work performance without compromising the happiness of the family life and vice versa.

The boundary, border and enrichment theories developed to explain relation, conflict and balance between work and family roles. According to Boundary Theory, "People have different roles in their workplaces and in their family life, they are frequently engaged in the role transformation which means, they have to leave a role and play another" (Kayvan and Movahedi, 2014, pp. "6-19). The Border theory focuses on identifying the factors that create work and family conflict, and tries to find ways to manage these two spheres and the border between them, in order to reach a balance between work related roles and family related roles (Clark, S.C.2000, "pp. 747-770).

Greenhaus and Powell defined work-family enrichment as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role. The enrichment theory says work-family relations are not always at odds with one another. It is true that work-family lives may conflict with each other but they may be allies as well. Work-family allies can strengthen the family lives and family experiences can improve work lives. These beneficial effects of work and family can enrich one another. Work-family enrichment takes place when resources acquired in one role are used to improve performance and satisfaction in the other role (Greenhaus, 2006, pp. "72-92).

Time, stress and job productivity has a direct relation with work-family balance. Sometimes, the work-family conflict will be unavoidable. Conflict will not be harmful always. However, many researchers indicated that work-family conflict impose more negative influences physically and psychologically rather than positive. When

family has a positive contribution to work role or work role has affirmative support to family life, this results in a state of balance or enrichment for each other.

Nepal Army and Army officers

The Nepal Army is a constitutionally organized organization, which is committed to the Constitution of Nepal, for the safeguarding of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of Nepal. "The institution of the Nepal Army was initiated just after 350 AD" (nepalarmy.mil.np). According to Nepal Army Act 2063, "Nepal Army" means the collective organization of the persons recruited in the Nepalese army under Army Act or any part thereof.

The number of the Nepal Army is not so big but it is sufficient to protect the border of the country, to maintain peace within the country and to contribute in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions (UNPM) when necessary. Nepal Army is an inclusive force, whose appearance is more representative like a rainbow in the sky. Every year a large number of youth joins the Nepal Army through the Public Service Commission's scrutiny process according to its annual report 2076.

According to the Army Act, the "Officer" means an officer of the Nepal Army above the rank of Junior Commissioned Officer and this term includes similar officers of the reserve force. The Army Rules 2069 also defines the "Family" of the army officer as husband, wife, son, daughter, adopted son, adopted daughter, father, mother or step mother whom the army personnel himself or herself has to maintain and subsist and this term also includes father-in-law, mother-in-law in the case of a female army.



Relation Between Military and Family Life

Results of most of the research on military and family life have shown that the work-family conflict influences individuals' work performance and happiness of the family. The Impacts of Military Life on Families: Results from the Perstempo Survey of Canadian Forces Spouses (2009) (in table 1), has revealed three types of military-family, family-work, and work-family conflict to explain the relation between military and family life. Many spouses felt that military service interfered with family life, in terms of, for example, having to make changes in their plans for family activities, or not having

enough time to fulfill family-related duties.

The spouse's career was considered to interfere with family life largely than the respondent's career: whereas 30% indicated that their family life had suffered because of their military spouse's career, only 15% reported that their own career had significantly affected their family life. Many respondents also indicated that family life interfered with their own career. For example, approximately 40% felt that family life had interfered with their career progression, and one quarter of respondents had to put off doing things at work because of their family commitments Sanela and Kerry, 2009, pp. "54-56).

Table-1: Relations between Military work and Family Life

	Agree Strongly Agree
Military-Family Conflict	
Due to my spouse/partner's service-related duties, I have to make changes in my plans for family activities	52.7%
The demands of the military interfere with my home and family life	43.1%
My family life has suffered as a result of my spouse/partner's work commitments	30.8%
The amount of time my spouse or partner's duty takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities	28.4%
Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my spouse of partner's military service puts on me	23.7%
My spouse or partner's job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties	21.0%
Family-Work Conflict	
My career progression has suffered as a result of my family obligations	39.2%
The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with my work-related activities	32.0%
I have to put off doing things at my work because of the demands on my time at home	25.1%
My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime	20.2%
Things I want to do at work do not get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner	17.1%
Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform work related duties	10.8%
Work-Family Conflict	
My family life has suffered as a result of my work commitments	15.2%

Source: Survey of Canadian Forces Spouses (2009, pp. "54-56) Blue Star)

Similarly, the Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey comprehensive report has illuminated pertinent issues of military families. Financial issues, relocation stress, deployments, separation, isolation from family and friends, inability to reliably earn by both, lack of childcare, issues related to children, job stress, marital relationship problem and suicide are top issues related to the military spouse and family (Blue star families, 2019, pp. 13-19).

Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

Many organizations have come to recognize the importance of family life for organizational well-being in this modern age. Work and family issues are becoming increasingly important for organizations because of its negative effects. The Nepal Army is also not separate from this new reality.

Working people in modern organizations are more vulnerable to work-family stress as discussed by the scholars. An army officer, who is mostly away from the house, has frequently realized problems in maintaining the work-family balance. If Nepali army officers become unable to balance work-family life, it undesirably affect effects on performance of the force and happiness of their family.

This study aims to examine the relationships of work-family balance among army officers of the Nepal Army. The study also tries to recommend some suggestions to maintain the balance between work and family by examining and discussing the impact of work-family relation.

Methodological Framework

This study is based on desk review of research papers, literature, constitution, laws and

information on work-family relation, conflict and work-family balance of army officers. The study has followed a systematic approach to undertake review of research papers. At first, research papers, literature and information s were collected from the website. Secondly, the research paper has been grouped general and army specific. Thirdly, the content and available information s related to army specific have been analysed. Finally, based on content analysis of research papers and information on relevant issues, problems, consequences and recommendations were identified.

Information, Analysis and Findings

Relocation and Deployment of Army Officers

The Nepal Army has eight divisions throughout the country including headquarters. The military barracks, Ganas, Gulmas and Posts are in operation under the divisions and dispersed from developed areas to remote and underdeveloped areas to border. An army officer has to work in field offices as well as center through a regular relocation process according to Army Act and Rules. In the military system, provision of group relocation or individual transfer is in practice. Every three to five years, entire Gana or Gulma relocate from one barrack to another. In addition, every year around 3000 personnel of different posts of army service deploy in the UNPM.

According to the constitution of Nepal, the President declares the mobilization of the Nepal Army, in cases where a grave emergency arises about the sovereignty or territorial integrity of Nepal or the security of any part thereof, by war, external aggression, armed rebellion or extreme economic disarray. Besides soldiering, the Nepal Army also deploys nationwide in the time of natural

calamities and pandemic as well as to protect the national parks and the large development projects.

Facilities

The Army Act and Army Rules provide different facilities in different headings to boost up motivation and morale of the army Officers. The army officers get remuneration every month from the day of joining the force. They get festival allowance to celebrate festivals every year and receive uniform and ration facilities. Likewise, army officers get different kinds of leaves, such as casual leave and festival leave, home leave, sick leave, special sick leave, maternity leave, maternity care leave, obsequies leave and study leave from the date of assuming the office, as per the Rule and the level.

According to the army act and rules, army officers having done government service for the defined years as per the level, receive the pension from the date of retirement. If any army officer, who has served for five years or more but has not been eligible to pension pursuant to Rule has retired or is detached from the service upon having the resignation accepted or has been removed from the post without declaring disqualified for government service in the future, he or she shall receive the gratuity.

If any army officer dies in service or within seven years of commencing to receive the pension, his or her family or minor brother or unmarried sister is entitled gratuity or pension as provided in the Rule. If any army officer is physically or mentally handicapped for the army service because of disability, injuries in an accident while performing his or her duty, or in the course of training, such army officer is entitled to get pension as referred to in the rule and disability allowance for life long for

maintaining his or her livelihood. If any army officer cannot work due to an accident, he or she will get monthly family and education allowance as per the Rule.

Furthermore, any army officer is entitled to get the medical expenses in a sum equal to the current salary of 12 months if he or she is an officer employee. In addition, an employee of Padik post gets medical expenses equal to the current salary of 18 months and a classless army equal to the current salary of 21 months accordingly.

Impacts of Relocation, Deployment and Facilities on Work-Family Relation

With the reference of the theories regarding work-family life, the impact of relocation, deployments and facilities on work family relation have been evaluated. To accomplish the responsibility, army officers are at all times on duty. It is obvious that army officers have to live in barracks, work in the fields and spend a great deal of time away from their loved ones.

Relocation, deployment, and the facilities have tremendous negative as well as positive implications on the life of army officers. Barrack to barrack relocation is an opportunity to see the country and interact with the people of different communities. "The relocations that are part of military life can disrupt family life and existing supportive relationships" (Gary and Carl, 2010, pp. "373-393). "Deployment in the UNPM is an opportunity to visit different countries of the world as well as economically beneficial due to high remuneration" (Nepalese Army, 2005, p. 63). In contrast, relocation and deployments are the source of work family conflict and strain on the army officers.

During an informal meeting with stakeholders,

some convincing facts were found. One of the spouses of the army officer said that during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, she could not eat and sleep many nights, when her husband deployed in Maoist stronghold area. A wife of an army officer said that her husband had married a woman for the period of his relocation for five year in the remote area. Likewise, a father told that his son left the army officer service because he did not get the opportunity to go to the UNPM in his term. Moreover, one retired Brigadier General of the Nepal Army also said that the life of Nepal Army is chivalrous and has plenty of adventures but family life and financial health may not be up to expectations of family and stress level is little higher.

Remuneration, festival allowance, medical expenses, pension, gratuity, uniform and ration facilities are the foundation of financial security and quality of life of an army officer. An army officer gets a one-day holiday once a week to relax from the duty. Home leave is important for spending a long time with the family. Public holidays and the facilities of leave and their usage provide an opportunity for army officers to stay at home and spend time with family and to contribute in family affairs together.

Similarly, Casual leave and festival leave gives a break to celebrate festivals with family. The maternity care leave provides a big chance to help a wife in need. Therefore, the leave facility of army service tightens the knot between army officers and the family and avoids the work family conflict.

However, army officers cannot claim leave as their right. They have to engage on duty twenty-four hours a day and he or she may depute anytime and anywhere as per requirements. They do not have time off from their duties and do not get holidays even

in the festivals regularly. They need prior approval of the immediate supervisor before they can stay on leave. If need arises, they may be called back on duty cancelling the approved leave too.

Findings of the Study

This study has raised the curtain from the interesting findings of work and family relation of the Nepal army officers. The findings of the study will be discussed comprehensively.

Proud Feeling Occupation

The Nepal army officers have high social status in the society so that to join the Nepal Army is a matter of pride for the youth of Nepal. Army officers describe the symbolic artifacts of the army that make them proud and joyful instead of their sacrifice.

Time Away From Family

As is the nature of military service, army personnel have to spend a lot of time in the field offices where personal interest are barely achieved. Army officers have to stay in the field office due to relocation or deployment for a very long time away from the family. Time is however, the most conflicting issue because they have to choose between spending time in the barracks or family. When an army officer chooses to spend more time in the barrack, the family life is ignored. Sometimes, an army personnel who comes back home after a long deployment cannot recognize the children who are fully grown up. In the woman case in military service, she has to end up her whole life being spinster.

Financial Demand

Insufficient income has compelled the spouse to earn money to solve the financial demand to fulfil household needs. Thus, military spouses both have started to work. When both are out for work, there will be a big issue

of management inside the house.

Child and Elderly care

When an army is away from the house, the spouse has to manage caring for the children and elderly person alone. Moreover, if both spouses are employed, they cannot explain how much they have to face problems in taking care of.

Child Education

Child education is very important for a couple. The economic theory does not apply in children education because people enroll their children in the best school disregarding the fee structure and source of income. The military couple always wants to maintain better health, education and quality of life but relocation and deployment negatively affect their child's education and spouse working life.

Kids and Spouse's Feelings

By nature, kids want to stay with their parents forever. If their father or mother is deployed in a risky area, the kids become stressful. Relocation and deployment separates them with parents. They cannot read, write and play properly. Children always want to talk with their father or mother who are in the field. Due to poor relationships with spouses and children of the army officers, they feel that their loved one neglects them.

Entertainment and Celebration of Festivals

Going around visiting new places, going together for shopping and dinner makes family less stressful. Celebration of festivals jointly brings joy within the family. During the festival, if any of the parents are absent, kids feel incomplete and sad. This can hamper their celebration and the relations with their parents.

Marital Cohesiveness

Marital cohesiveness and satisfaction is a source of happiness. Separation and extreme tiredness, fatigue, burnout and emotional conflicts lead to a nuptial dissatisfaction, work family conflict and break up.

Consequences of Findings

Nature of the life of the army officers is quite different from the civilian. Their primary duty is always to serve the nation. They love the nation and sacrifice their all-personal aspirations to protect the nation, which gives them eternal happiness. However, relocation, deployment and financial issues remain top sources of stress of an army officer and his or her family. Long experience of such stress could raise blood pressure, hypertension and depression.

If the procedures of deployment in the UNPM and nomination for higher study or training programs are not convincing, dissatisfaction can arise. Besides, satisfying the demand of work and family at a time is a stressful task, which may breed a situation of dissatisfaction, low productivity and low performance of the army officers. Due to the maladjustment between work-family demands, unsatisfactory conditions at workplace and poor welfare facilities in the organization, increase stress.

Work-family conflict is one of the major reasons for absenteeism from the duty. If family conflict heightens, army officers may quit from the force to fulfill the demand of the family. A trend to leave the army service after getting pension is evident. Further, the marital dissatisfaction pushes for divorce and depression, it further drives the army officer beyond his or her limits, and he or she searches easy escape route, which may lead to improper decision of suicide. Recently, suicide is also seen as a danger trend in the force.

Discussions, recommendations and Conclusions

This study found a positive relationship between time and work-family relation and work-family conflict and strain. If the army officers spend more time at work or with the family, they likely face work-family conflict. Time spent on one role generally cannot provide to another role. The army officer who has more work-family conflict, he or she also feels a high level of strain.

The study also found that deployment and relocation has a negative impact on spouses and children in general. Due to relocation outside from the house, married personnel are more stressful and dissatisfied than the unmarried one. The officers who have children or parents in the house become more tense and unhappy than the married one. Newly married officers naturally live in a bigger stress as compared to those unmarried.

The army officers who cannot manage their own time and behavior do not sketch the border between work and family priority and fall in conflict. If army officers cannot clearly fix priorities of their work and family responsibilities, they may lose their job satisfaction and productivity in the organization.

The above discussion draws a substantial conclusion that work and family balance is becoming a vital subject in the army service too. Balancing the work and family life in the military service is very demanding today. The subject of balancing work-family life is more beneficial to increase productivity, motivation, job satisfaction and decrease stress, absenteeism and turnover of army officers as well as to maintain a good relation with the family.

Recommendations

The discussion identified that if army officers, family, the supervisor, peers, military society and the Nepal Army play their respective role well, it will create a stress-free mind to balance the work-family relation.

Army Officers

Army officers are the most responsible in maintaining their work-family balance. They should be self-control for their own behavior and have to manage work and family themselves first. They should spend as much as time with family during the holiday, leave periods and off duties. Frequent communication back at home while at work would create a feeling of unity and oneness despite the distance involved. Family members feel that someone is caring for them even as he or she is far away from home. Likewise, the army officers should make a balance among the responsibilities and establish a boundary between work and family priority.

Families of the Nepal Army Officers

The proud families of the Nepal Army officers can play a crucial role to maintain the work-family balance. They are an integral part of the army organization and they contribute in safeguarding the nation. The understanding about the nature of military works, relocation and deployment process of army officers and salary would help families to adjust their life perfectly. A loving and supporting spouse often backs a good soldier, who is doing better. Families of the Nepal Army are also simply like civilian families. Their aspirations for frequent meetings between couples, quality of life, education for children and better health facilities for family are not beyond the civilian one.

The Supervisor

Supervisor can play a vital role to lessen the work-family conflict and can reduce absenteeism. The army officer can share his difficulties with the immediate supervisor straightforwardly. Good interpersonal relationship between supervisor and army officer is a source of stress relief mechanism. Therefore, the supervisor should listen to the grievances of subordinates and evaluate their responsibility. Moreover, a supervisor should handle all measures perfectly to manage grievances of subordinates and support to balance work-family life.

Peers

As we know, army life is a community life. They live, they work and they enjoy in-group. They know each other and are familiar with personal as well as family life of each other. Everyone can share family problems with one another. In this circumstance, peers should play an important role to reduce strain within a friend and support to balance his or her work-family life.

Military Society

Military society can provide skill oriented training and extend support in income generating activities to the spouses of army officers. Counseling service in the time of deployment to accomplish risky responsibilities will be a friend in need. School facilities and entertainment activities for children and health facilities to the family are useful to increase the happiness of the family. Nepali Army Wives Association (NAWA) should organize many more social support programs for the families of the army personnel. According to the Army Act, an Army welfare fund is established for the welfare of incumbent and ex-personnel of the Nepal Army and their families. Through the fund, the Nepal Army in collaboration

with the NAWA and the army sports clubs should operate programs, which can play an important role in reducing work-family conflict and increasing balance between two.

The Nepal Army

To accomplish the constitutional responsibility the Nepal Army should have disciplined, motivated and satisfied forces. The management level of the Nepal Army should have understood the importance of work-family balance and need a broad vision to review and improve the whole facilities of army officers and the decision making process.

Developing a work-family enrichment policy will support both roles equally and operating programs for the top to bottom levels of army officers will enhance motivation among them. The management should encourage the army officers to balance their work and family life without reducing workload and family demand. A flexible time or part-time facility to manage non-work demand of the officer will be suitable to provide a break from the hectic work environment.

The management should address grievances of army officers in the beginning phase, which does not get a chance to frustrate them. A transparent procedure in facilities distribution is also required. It is also crucial to make a conducive environment for family to stay in and around the barrack. Military kid's entertainment program, military and family counseling program and periodic online meeting with family would be appropriate to improve the good relation with family in deployment.

Spirituality at work is a recent trend in organizations like the army. Practice of spirituality and counseling training will be better to relax them from the higher level of stress. It will also be beneficial if the Nepal

Army should incorporate balancing skills of work-family relation and spirituality at the training course of each level of army officers.

To avoid job dissatisfaction or low productivity of the army personnel the management should mix army officers in different Gana and Gulma through transfer and can enrich or enlarge their job. This study can encourage and recommend that the Nepal Army should organize further research on the life of army families to know the true story first hand.

Conclusion

The work-family conflict is an international phenomenon of modern organization and among the sandwich generation. Relationships between work and family are always on the edge of conflict and balance. Without internalizing true factors that escalate the work and family conflict, the Nepal Army cannot maintain the balance between work-family lives of Nepali Army Officers. If the Nepal Army does not proactively work towards ensuring balance between these two among its personnel, this could provide ground for a new potential conflict, although unintentionally.

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