

## Work-Life Balance Strategies and Consequences: A Few Aspects

Kohinur Akter\*

### Abstract

*For the last two decades, Work-life Balance (WLB) has emerged as the central and burning issue for developed economies due to dramatic changes in the labour market including female employment with children, dual-earner couples, single parent families and the growing elder care responsibilities. Particularly, European Union (EU) is acting as the leader to include WLB in its employment and social inclusion strategy as part of the public policy and to promote a number of directives on working time, parental leave, child care services and part-time worker's rights. It is found that flexible working, support programs and entitlements, compensation and benefits are widely accepted policies and practices of WLB in EU. The main aim of the article is to identify the best practices of work-life balance strategies among all the prevailing policies along with the consequences of these policies on women's employment status and career progression. In addition, this article will also look into the transferability of the suitable WLB strategies in the developing economy like Bangladesh. It is found that in emerging country like Bangladesh, child care policy and mandatory leave entitlement provisions can benefit and promote women employment which might help them to build better economy.*

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, Career progression, Well-being, and Child Care Policy.

### Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) has got the momentum and immense attention in recent time. In particular, the drive is for women whose higher education attainment, career aspiration and financial independence have increased than ever before. The over-presence of women in the workplace has shaped the demographic trend in a new height. Ultimately, the personal & family life in relation to job life is at stake to reconcile the roles and responsibilities (Cousins & Tang, 2004). In one hand, personal life addresses the family life where individuals wear different hats like parents, son or daughter, friend, activist in social community and also the life partner. On the other hand, work life addresses the professional life where individuals meet their expectations and discover the potentials of their abilities (Bourne et al. 2009). Both these domain are interdependent as human beings represent their identity as a whole. Each of the domains is highly influenced by the other one. For instance, achievement in work or profession brings the ultimate joy in personal life and family wellness makes individuals more capable and productive. But in the competitive world, constant changes in work organization, design, structure, widespread technological diffusion and fast pace globalization have brought the tremendous dimension in wellness and role conflict for employee's life (Fisher, 2000). Consequently, the employees are bound to work under heavy time and workload pressure which cause the visible and invisible conflicts in different domains (Smith and Gardner, 2007). Therefore, family role in conjunction

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\*Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Jagannath University, Bangladesh.

with professional responsibilities hampers the efficiency of the capabilities of individuals. In contrast, overwork culture of the employers harnesses the harmony of the personal and family relationship which might result in depression to the employees' life. As a result, the physical, social and psychological well-being of employees is passing the crisis moment. To resolve this inter domain conflicts of employees, different types of work-family or work-life policies and numerous work-life integration programs have been adopted by organizations. Particularly, the flexible working, support programs and entitlements, compensation and benefits are widely accepted policies and practices of WLB (McCarthy et al. 2010, Poelmans, 2009). To this end, this article will attempt to explore the best strategies of WLB and their impact on women's status of employment and career progression.

### **Preliminary Literature Review**

For the last two decades, WLB has been an emergent issue for organizations, employees and academicians due to dramatic changes in the labour market including female employment with children, dual-earner couples, single parent families and the growing elder care responsibilities (Bach, 2005). Moreover, globalization, talent issues and the use of technology at work are also the instigator to bring WLB in front. Therefore, WLB has become the matter of national policy to look into welfare, employment and gender regime for the developed nations (Redman & Wilkinson, 2013). For instance, European Union (EU) has emphasized WLB in the European Employment Strategy and social inclusion strategy. In this regard, the EU has built the roadmap by focusing on three key areas like flexible work arrangements, enhanced care services, and better reconciliation services (Redman & Wilkinson, 2013).

Furthermore, WLB is often used as work-family balance and work-life integration (Jones et al. 2006). Primarily it refers to the good functioning in each domain and thereby minimises the derived roles-conflict to contribute peace in life as a whole (Clark, 2000). Though, many scholars recognise WLB as the gender issue but it is the concern of everyone's life for greater social stability and equality in the workplace (Lambert and Lock, 2004). However, in greater society, women are responsible and playing multiple roles as partner, mother, and paid worker which cause the psychological distress or imbalances in life (Barnett and Baruch (1985). In the life domain, work is the dominant part of every employed individual and plays the key role for personal well-being as well as for societal well-being resulting in to the greater stable workforce. But the intensification of work, competition and ever-changing battle ground of business makes the work domain more influential than ever before over the personal life domain (Green, 2004). As a result, the physical, social and psychological well-being of employees is passing the crisis moment. To overcome from all the negative consequences of work, different types of work-family or work-life policies programs have been adopted by organizations. Mainly, the flexible working, support programs and entitlements, compensation & benefits are widely accepted policies and practices of WLB (McCarthy et al. 2010, Poelmans, 2009, Glass and Finley, 2002). The flexible working can be termed as flexible work arrangements (FWA). According to Skyrme (1994), there are two forms of flexible working in organizations such as flex time and flex place. Flexible work arrangements are positively associated with good balance of professional &

personal life domain (Goldenhar, 2003 and Golden, 2001). In Europe, average women part-timer is 30% compared to 7% of men. Particularly, in the UK, women part-timer is 43% where as 67% in the Netherlands (Redman & Wilkinson, 2013). Moreover, not only individual perspectives but also the greater economy is also influenced by flexible working system. Brewster et al. (1997) conducted a study in Europe and they found that flexible working system reduces unemployment and increases the efficiency & competitiveness in organizations. The positive aspect of flexibility depends on whether the firm is choosing their preferences or employees are choosing the mode of FWA (Costa and Sartori, 2005). To this end, Hewlett (2007) found that the flexible work hour is the top priority for working mother to survive and succeed in their career. Similarly, Grant-Vallone and Ensher (2011) found that the flexible hour is the top priority of women regarding the balance & integration of different domains.

Apart from that, support programmes are another significant employer and government strategy to facilitate employees with regard to the fulfilment of professional ambition and personal life. Universally, women are entitled to motherhood, so child care services are one of the best pragmatic supports for them. Moreover, among all the support programmes, child care services are one of the major options for dual career parents, single parents and lower-income families. It was found that child care assistance programs not only promote the likelihood of employment of lower income families but also facilitate the parents financially and psychologically (Gennetian et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Kreyenfeld and Hank, (2000) demonstrated that there is close relationship between the employment of mothers and the available presence of day care facilities. Individual employees' work-life integration in relation to child care facilities depends on the employees' economic capacity & child care characteristics. Especially, evidence from Morrissey & Warner (2011) suggests that employees with pre-school children are more satisfied with the employer for given child care facilities compared to those employees with school age children. They also recommend employers to focus on the structure of the child care facilities to address different employees' needs.

Finally, entitlements and benefits is another vital WLB strategy to recruit & retain women in the labour market (Heath et al. 1993). Many studies found the positive impact of WLB strategies on employees including higher job satisfaction, less absenteeism and more commitment. All these are found to boost productivity and retention rates (Baltes et al., 1999; Groover and Cooker, 1995). However, in reality, the developed countries like the United Kingdom and Europe have legislations regarding the WLB & therefore been experiencing the good outcome. But in developing economy, especially in private sector, employees' life domain is dedicated to work rather than improving the social and psychological well-being of them (Chandra, 2012).

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of the article is to identify the best practice of work-life balance strategies among all the prevailing policies along with the consequences of these policies on women's employment and career progression. The specific objectives are:

- To find out the best practice among all the work-life balance policies and strategies including the contents of the best practice.
- To identify how the WLB policies encourage women employment and their career progression for greater social stability and development.
- To suggest how the WLB strategies in developed economy can be replicated to the developing economy.

### **Research Design and Approach**

This study is based on qualitative approach and opts for doing structured literature review. Qualitative design of research rarely represents the formal statistical sample and thus, it's quite problematic to test the hypothesis and make sure the reliability of judgements. So, this research has followed the structured literature reviews and explored the past and present academic research, case studies and reports with regard to this field. Structured literature review has been considered a valuable tool for shaping the current and future research, in particular on the areas where a sufficient number of relevant studies and research were conducted to address not only the unanswered but also the different dimensional research questions and problems (Saunders et al, 2009; Anderson, 2013).

WLB is a challenging matter in the qualitative research arena and the proposed review process will help to get the positivistic output from here with the scope of scrutinizing the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study (Tranfield et al. 2003). Evidence from Davies and Nutley (1999) suggests that the review process presents the high quality evidence which is quite effective to reduce the error and bias. The research questions enabled the author to identify the key themes with regard to understanding the best practice of work-life balance policies adopted by the organizations and to detect the contents of the best practice which address the women's employment and career progression. The author has drawn up and refined the search items and included 'work-life balance', 'strategies for work-family balance', 'flexibility', 'child care', 'employee assistance programs', 'leave entitlement', 'women employment', 'women career progression' and variations on these themes.

The focus of this study is largely within peer-reviewed journals, monograph and book chapters. In addition, the author scrutinized databases across business, gender reviews and social sciences including AbiInform/Proquest; Business Source Premier; Science Direct; Sage journals; Google Scholar; Emerald publications; JSTOR and Social Science Research Network (SSRN). The literatures from these sources have been categorised into two parts including work-life balance

strategies (such as flexibility, childcare or entitlement) and the impact of these strategies on women's employment and career advancement.

In qualitative research, measuring quality depends on the validity justification rather than the statistical significance (Yin, 2003; Mason 2005). The validity of this article was sought by reviewing the articles which have enough empirical evidence and are mostly cited. Wider research findings were taken from the highly esteemed journals.

## **Findings**

### **Impact of WLB Strategies on Women Employment**

The 10 reviewed publications referring enhanced women employment are summarized in Table 1. Several of these reviewed studies illustrated that flexibility is one of the major policy in EU countries as labour market has become flexible. To be distinct and competitive in world market, EU has included the flexibility issues in its league table. But the concern is whether flexibility facilitated employers or employees. The study by Chung & Tijdens (2013) suggests that employment of women is highly linked with the employee oriented flexible policies instead of employer centred practices. They also found that employer oriented flexible working practices have raised intense problems in all the European countries. Similarly, another study by Riedmann et al. (2006) basing the EU companies across the EU nations found that flexibility in terms of working hours is one of the powerful tools to balance the different domains of life. To this end, 26% employee representatives from correspondent EU countries reported that their most preferred choice regarding work-life balance is introducing flexible working hours or expanding the flexibility policies. However, this study found that working time and manager's attitudes are the main obstacles between private life and work life. A case study by Teasdale (2013) on three organizations concluded that women need the flexible working hours to continue to their career. The interviewees took part in this study (most of them had children) mentioned that the managerial & peer supports are the crucial part for taking this facility. Many participants from this study expressed the concern of being childless or very late in mother hood because it affects the career progression a lot. The study also revealed that equality should be made for the use of flexible working hours irrespective of all the employees whether having children or not. Similarly, another study by Thevenon (2009) demonstrated the consistent increase in women employment rate across Europe, except Germany, Austria, Poland and Czech Republic. Government favourable policies, child care facilities, and flexible labour market with the option of becoming part-timer played the key role for this upward movement of women employment. However, this study also postulated the reverse relationship between women's behaviour pattern having one child or being late in taking child and the women's consistent presence in the labour market. Another qualitative study by Lewis & Humbert (2010) concluded that reduced working hours is more helpful & pragmatic for working mothers to continue their work. Therefore, all these five studies ended up with the positive relations between women employment and flexible hours though there are many concerns regarding the use of employer centred flexibility.

In addition, child care services are playing significant role to bring women at paid work in EU economies. Particularly, Finland and Norway developed their universal child care services to

promote full-time employment of women with the services like cash for care (Lewis & Humbert (2010). Another study by Lewis & Humbert (2010) postulated that working mothers choose the paid child care among all the options though the decision is influenced by family status, extent of education, and income level. However, there are some constraints regarding paid child care. It is not suitable for mothers having children over five years old. Furthermore, a study by Ciccio & Bleijenbergh (2014) documented that child care service is not evenly common to all EU member states to support the universal breadwinner model.

Furthermore, leave legislation is also an important WLB strategy to attract and retain women in the labour market. One long term study by Ruhm (1998) on some EU countries found that paid leave entitlement facilitates women employment. The same finding was also documented by the study of Akgunduz & Plantenga (2013) and they also added that long leave has negative impact on the financial wellbeing of women.

**Table 1 : Summary of reviewed studies addressing WLB strategy intervention and women employment**

| Authors                           | Methods/Data  | Study location      | Evaluation of methods   |  | Key findings  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|---|
|                                   |   |                     | Strengths:  | Weaknesses:  |   |
| <b>Chung &amp; Tijdens (2013)</b> | Quantitative (questionnaire survey of 21,031 participants)  | 21 EU member states | Factor analysis, multilevel regression analysis has been conducted for reliability.     | The meaning of flexibility differs in country and institutional context.   | There are strong correlations between female worker participation and employee oriented working time arrangements.                                  |
| <b>Riedman et al. (2006)</b>      | Qualitative and Quantitative (Interviews were conducted on 21,000 establishments where 350 and 1500 cases were carried out consecutively in smallest & largest economies) | 21 EU member states | The study is very rigorous in nature and represents the detailed insight of flexibility | The companies which have more than 10 employees are included in this survey but in many countries like Portugal and Italy, their economies are comprised of many establishments which have less than 10 employees. | Most of the employees from all EU countries voted for introducing or extending the flex-time where reducing the working hours is also their agenda. |
| <b>Teasdale (2013)</b>            | Qualitative (Semi-structured interview of the participants from three organizations)  | United Kingdom      | The interview content was well organized and coherent.                                  | Various sectors, occupations, industries and stages of organization are not taken care of while  | Professional women prefer flexible working hours but peer support plays key role to avail the facilities. So, justice                               |

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|   |   |                          |   | justifying the outcome of the study.  | and equality should be considered to resolve peers aggression and unfriendliness.   |
| <b>Thevenon (2009)</b>  | Quantitative (Log linear model) done on EU-LFS survey                 | 14 countries in Europe   | Cross-sectional study on 14 countries.  | Fertility decisions and parallel trends in employment could contribute more to replicate the evidence.  | Women employment has dramatically increased across the Europe including north to south due to public policy like child care, flexible work hour, part-time and extended leave but women's divergence of behaviours like being childless or late in family formation and small family are also responsible for this outcome. |
| Lewis & Humbert (2010)  | Qualitative (In-depth interview of 18 employees)                      | France                   | This paper adopted the collaborative interactive action research which helped to gain the insight from the interview. | Only 18 interviews were taken and tapped from one company.<br><br>Different sector, occupation, and size of the industry need to be addressed for proper policy making. | Reduced working hours uphold the working mothers but promote the inequality and workplace ineffectiveness.  |
| <b>Crompton &amp; Lyonnette (2005)</b>  | Quantitative (2002 Family module Int. Social Survey Programme (ISSP)) | Five specific EU country | Cross-national variations were checked to measure the extent of work-life conflict.                                   | The samples taken are only full-time employees, so the findings cannot be generalized to all sorts of employees.  | Child care supports the positive societal effect and encourages women to employment and reduces work-life   |

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| <b>Suarez (2013)</b>  | Quantitative (Spanish survey of Quality of working life (2008-2010) of 941 samples) | Spain                  | Cross-sectional study & econometrics model were used for justification of the results.  | There was some information lacking in the sample like employment characteristics.<br><br>This study is based on particular country, so replicating the results will be difficult to all the countries. | conflict.<br><br>Working mother's first priority goes to the paid child care but it depends on their income, education and some other characteristics.              |
| <b>Ciccia &amp; Bleijenbergh (2014)</b>   | Qualitative (FSITA model used)  | EU member states       | Multi-dimensional context of child care services on the European economy was analysed.  | Some other household's characteristics could be useful to draw the findings.   | Child care service promotes the women employment and well-being but it's not available across all European countries to support the universal breadwinner model.    |
| <b>Ruhm (1998)</b>  | Quantitative (data from 1969-1993)  | 9 Western EU countries | Long span of data and econometric model were employed to find the country specific trends.<br><br>The robustness was also tested. | The study didn't find the appropriate extent of paid leave for all the country. The study faced difficulty to put control to the sources of heterogeneity.   | Paid parental leave facilitates women employment but long duration is negatively related with wages.  |
| <b>Akgunduz &amp; Plantenga (2013)</b>  | Quantitative (Legislative archives and Eurofound's observatory data used)           | 16 European economies  | Cross-national study presents the reliable outcome.   | Some variables were missed out while taking the cross-country data.  | Maternity and parental leave legislation enhance women in the labour market positively but length of leave is not equitable in all investigated European countries. |



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|---------|--------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
|---------|--------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|

**Table 2 Summary of reviewed studies addressing WLB strategy intervention and career progression of women**

| Authors                             | Methods/Data   | Study location | Evaluation of methods<br>Strengths:   | Evaluation of methods<br>Weaknesses:  | Key findings  |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Wilton &amp; Purcell (2010)</b>  | Qualitative and quantitative (Questionnaire survey of 4500 samples and 200 semi-structured interviews) | United Kingdom | Longitudinal study has been done on the early career of UK graduates.   | This study has been done on the UK graduates while all other European country's context and regulation are different.   | In respect of dual earner, high qualified women's career advancement after graduation is slow for non-work domain's roles and responsibilities as traditionally they are supposed to build and take care of family. |
| <b>Fagan (2001)</b>                 | Quantitative (British household panel survey data)   | United Kingdom | Broader theoretical framework was established with regard to time preferences and institutional context of men and women. | The study didn't empirically prove the working-time choices separately for men and women. Work-orientations related proxy variable would make the findings more reliable. | Mostly women are supposed to take care of children and domestic responsibilities. So they prefer reduced work-hour or flexible hour to remain in job.   |
| <b>Tomilson &amp; Durbin (2010)</b> | Qualitative (In depth semi-structured interview of 16 part-time managers)                              | United Kingdom | The findings are very useful for policy implications.   | The interview sample size is very small. Other European country perspectives may differ where labour market is regulated.   | The part-time women managers experienced intense work pressure, immobility, zero growth in career and unsocial working hours though they are  |

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|---------------------------------------|---|----------------|---|---|---|
|                                       |   |                |   |   | named as part-timer.  |
| <b>Crompton &amp; Lyonette (2011)</b> | Quantitative and qualitative (400 sample and 40 interviews)                             | United Kingdom | Both type of study tested the research questions from a variety of perspectives such as long hour, part-timer effect. | Two specific professions were investigated such as medicine and accountancy.<br><br>Now women prevail in almost all professions, so the result cannot be generalized. | Domestic responsibilities inhibit women to advance in their career. Moreover, they are becoming part-timer to live in job especially in the private sector but in public sector & specific profession like medicine, views are different. |
| <b>Lewis &amp; Smithson (2001)</b>    | Qualitative & Quantitative (survey of 312 sample and 70 focus group in-depth interview) | 5 EU countries | Social, cultural & economic contexts were studied to realize the value of entitlement.                                | The study didn't discuss about the employer roles to contribute to the implication of leave entitlement policy.   | Entitlement benefits are key determinant of balanced personal life & professional growth. State sponsored and employer provided entitlement, both are needed though the extent depends on the country & organization.                     |
|                                       | Qualitative and quantitative (9600 questionnaire survey and 60 interviews)              | France         | All the professionals and managers took part in the survey.   | This study is based only on company. Different sector and company perspectives might not reflect the implications of this article.                                    | Women's career progression depends on the issue of proper balance between work & life. Corporate policy and social support plays the pivotal role to reach to top management positions  |

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| Authors    | Methods/Data  | Study location | Evaluation of methods<br>Strengths:   | Evaluation of methods<br>Weaknesses:  | Key findings  |
|------------|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| Kan (2007) | Quantitative (British household panel survey data : 5000 households and 10,300 individuals interviewed) | United Kingdom | Three different statistical methods were used to experiment the hypothesis. | This study has been done on the British households and the result should not be generalized to all European economies due to the different characteristics of households. | Women's work-centred attitudes facilitate them to go forward to the full-time job & career progression. |

#### Impact of WLB Strategies on Women Career Progression

A range of studies have addressed women career progression prospects and problems with regard to WLB strategies. One major study by Wilton and Purcell (2010) based on UK found that high qualified female graduates and their early careers are negatively affected by family roles which cause the stumpy progression in their career. Household and child care responsibilities are the main obstacles to be dedicated to the career as documented by Fagan (2001). Similarly, a study by Tomlinson & Durbin (2010) added a new dimension to the existing study. They revealed that part-time women managers suffered from zero career growth and intensified work pressure. In a further study by Crompton & Lyonette (2011) basing on UK, authors wrapped up the same thought about part-timer's career prospects. But they viewed the public sector as an exception. To this end, the careerist women think a little bit different as their role performance capability is high and emotion is in their control (Jyothi & Jyothi, 2012).

Some other studies examined the career aspects of women. In this regard, Lewis and Smithson (2001) indicated that leave legislations facilitate the professional growth of females as their early career development and motherhood stage intersect with the same time frame. They also added that country legislation and employer support are positively correlated with career advancement of women. In a further study by Guillaume and Pochic (2009), it was found that the social support helps the career progressions in organizations. In addition, Kan (2007) demonstrated that work-centric attitudes of women are very important to advance their career. To this end, positive labour market prospect helps them to become work-centric. In sum, career progression of women is not satisfactory. But, effective employer strategies in conjunction with effective integration of state legislation might help them to reach to the top career ladder.

#### Discussion

The article examines the particular WLB strategies and its impact on women employment, career growth, and well being. The review corroborates findings from the previous literature that women employment has increased more or less in all EU countries due to the inception of different forms of flexible work arrangements. It is also found that numerous types of flexible work are the

common priority of all the female employees to continue their career. But there is no such policy extension regarding the job intensification, job insecurity and employer dominance over the flexible work arrangements, so the employment-led policy makes women to become carers or workers to some extent (Lewis et al. 2008). The previous findings also suggest that employed women are trading off between their career and personal life. Still they are suffering from dual economic & social pressures (Tomlinson, 2007). The wave of part time jobs with employment insecurity makes women more vulnerable than ever before though government is trying to incorporate different institutional and social policies.

Apart from this, child care is also another preference for women to be actively visible in the paid employment. Basically, Western European countries like France, the Netherlands, and Germany have the child care benefits, flexible work options, and long leave entitlement to increase the presence of female employees in the labour market. Findings suggest that child care existence promotes women employment in early stages of their career. The child care services are not available in all over the EU countries and availing the child care services depends on the economic capability. Furthermore, the increased female labour force in the job market has brought the new social risks of childbirth and child rearing. These social risks can be reduced through employment led family policy resolving the multiple role conflict of women and facilitating the dual transformation of the social protection and human capital over time (Fleckenstein et al. 2011).

Moreover, parental leave provisions are inequitable in different countries though it has great impact on motherhood entitlement of women. As a result, the motherhood inhibited female employees in excelling their career. The Netherlands and Germany formulated favourable policies for women but all EU countries need to combine the work and care responsibilities through public institutional support (Fourage et al. 2010). To this end, women in the social - democratic welfare state gain the least negative experience for child bearing compared to the Mediterranean states and liberal economy states (Aassve et al. 2005). In Central and Eastern European countries, the childcare and leave entitlement provisions are not highly facilitated by employers, so the institutional solidarity could inspire employer support for better societal developments (Dulk et al. 2010). However, in some EU countries, where dual earner policies and institutional support exist, women are facing double edge conflict as well as enjoying the greater life expansion and well-being (Gronlund & Oun , 2010). Therefore, there is no single strategy that can shore up the work-life life balance. State support, employer support, and social support are significant where each of them has the direct and indirect positive effect to satisfy the multiple domains of life (Abendroth & Dulk, 2011).

Another part of the literature points to the fact that how women's career is moving forward. The number of employment has increased radically due to the employment led WLB strategies but the career progression of female employees depends on various inter-related determinants. There is no such significant career growth observed in the reviewed literatures. Caring and household responsibilities are found to be main hindrance to the continuous career growth of employed women professionals. The part-time female employees' career prospects are more vulnerable

compared to their effort, time, and dedication. However, the overall well-being of females is at stake for the lack of integration among individual aspects, employer support, and government policy. Women professionals are going through the transitional phase of the universal breadwinner model from the male breadwinner model in the EU economies. Crompton (2002) has given a clear view about the employment (economy) and family (social) scenario with the decreasing trend of male breadwinner model which raised the continuous tension for women. He added that institutional and organizational responses are needed to mitigate the derived tension as well as to promote women for greater economic and social benefits. Though Kulic (2013) has got the evidence that the dual-centric attitude of women enables women to have better financial well-being, Huppert et al. (2009) did a study based on the European Social Survey and reported that women's well-being is lower in EU economies. To this end, Wunder and Heineck (2013) found the reason behind that female well-being is greatly hampered by the working time constraints set by the employer.

It should be kept in mind that country context, industry type, demographic trends and the socio-economic influences are different within the EU zones, and so country specific macro-level policy, employer support, and female employment aspects must go hand in hand to make the work-life balance strategy effective and successful. EU State & welfare reform and reconciliation and development policy might help to make the policies in effect (EU WLB reform of the welfare report, 2012).

Apart from that, compared to the developed nation, developing economy is lagging behind in formulating WLB concerns, strategies, and implementation. In South-east Asia, still WLB is the gender based concept and females are considered to play the prime role to nurture the family and men are playing the work role (Rajadhyaksha and Bhatnagar (2000). Moreover, in recent time, the noteworthy participation of women in the mainstream labour force has brought the work-life conflict in forefront for sustainable development (Adya, 2008). So, the transferability of WLB strategies from developed to the developing country should come into action through the legislative provision. Primarily, paid leave legislation and child care are the vital mechanisms to put female employees' life at ease in the developing country like Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, total female employed population was 16.2 million in 2010 whereas 11.3 million in 2005-06 which is increasing in high rate and it represents that women contribution is significantly important for the sustainable development (Bangladesh Labour Force Survey, 2010). It is also important to notice that urban female employed population was 3.6 million whereas rural female employed population was 12.4 million in 2010 (Bangladesh Labour Force Survey, 2010). In addition, Bangladesh government has declared 6 months maternity leave from January 2011 for all working women (Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Government, Leave Entitlement Circular, p. 1872). Still the policy has not been executed throughout all the sectors of the country and very little child care exists to support the working mothers in Bangladesh. So, EU as the development partner of Bangladesh can intervene for formulating child care policy to support working mothers institutionally and for the proper execution of leave legislation all through the public, private and small-medium sectors.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Employer organizations, professional associations, trade union bodies, government policy makers, independent think-tanks and researchers are considering the WLB strategies along with the multidimensional effect on the greater society (Clutterbuck, 2003 and Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). The aim of this research was to discover the best suited WLB strategies within the EU economies and how the strategies are contributing to female labour pool as well as boosting their career. Among the strategies, flexible working hour is widely adopted policy to bring women at paid work. In addition, child care provision is the policy priority of many EU countries to retain the female workforce. Furthermore, the leave entitlement also helps to hold on the women in the competitive labour market.

This paper attempts to set out some recommendations of how public policy with the integration of organization's strategy can protect the employed women holistically by reducing insecurity and uncertainty of job, income, and status. The competitive capitalism offers more economic prosperity for the developed nations but ignores the quality of socio-economic life which would be harmful for social sustainability in the long run (Layard, 2005). Therefore, the WLB strategies should set out for the holistic development of the nations.

Based on the reviewed literature on the EU, it was recommended that cultural, economic, contextual and demographic trends should be considered to adopt the effective WLB strategies. Moreover, the labour market status, gender gap, and occupational segregation should also be taken to outline and implement WLB policies. It was also recommended that paid work and care need to be addressed from the gender neutral view for greater social sustainability. However, for developing economy like Bangladesh, child care policy and mandatory leave entitlement provisions can benefit and promote women employment which might help them to build better economy.

Finally, the findings of the study will create value for the policy makers, employers, and professionals of both European countries and developing countries like Bangladesh which might generate the greater social stability in the long run.

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