

The Feasibility of Job Sharing as a Mechanism to Balance Work and Life of Female Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Balancing life and work is the most important challenge of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs seek a logical balance between their job and life and this issue is of great importance to Iranian entrepreneur women. Inability to handle the contrast between work and family is the main source of job stress and ends in job and personal dissatisfaction. To overcome these problems we have to look for solutions that not only meet the organization needs but also imposes less stress on entrepreneurs and thus results in improving their productivity.

In this article we have studied female entrepreneurs situation and their share in labor market, as well as flexible methods of doing jobs especially job sharing method. We have done structured interviews with entrepreneurs of Azad University and their attitude to possibility of job sharing and its effect on female entrepreneurs at university has been expressed. After performing the qualitative methods, questionnaires were made and the attitude of female entrepreneurs towards job sharing was examined. The results of quantitative research show that they have a positive attitude towards job sharing but we have to notice that job sharing doesn't lead in weakening the bargaining ability of female entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Flexible method, Job-family conflict, Job sharing, Female entrepreneurs

Introduction

Human societies have experienced lots of ups and downs and faced amazing changes in modern age especially after renaissance, each of which has had lots of positive and negative consequences. These societies had to change their systems drastically to adapt with these changes. For instance we can name women's active presence in the society as one of these changes that has redefined their social character as an active one replacing the passive character they had in society.

Society has answered to the need of women's more active presence in society, following this change to reach an ideal society and to avoid women's presence as a crisis in society; there should be a change in societies systems which have been based on men as the only active members so that providing required conditions facilitates women's active presence in the society.

In recent years we have seen that women's presence has been stronger and more active in different social arenas. University training expansion in recent years and women's eagerness to study at universities has caused a remarkable increase in the number of working women who are highly educated. According to the census results in 2006, more than 36% of working women have studied at universities, while it is only 13% for working men. The increase in number of women who go to university shows that there will be a 25% increase in rate of women participation in the coming decade. The statistics show that in recent years the rate of women taking part in concur (university matriculation) has been 65% for women.

Although statistics and numbers show that the presence of women has increased in the society, due to the responsibilities at home and with the family, this important class are hindered from organizational development and they don't usually have the chance to promote to management and supervising positions. Losing women in these positions imposes potential, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term costs on the organization, like losing women senior managers' view about women's needs. We also have to take the cost and value of the lost knowledge, experiences and skills of women in the organizations into account (Nesbit and Seeger, 2007:3).

Regarding this trend and the importance of women's position and role in the family we should think of some solutions to use women's skills in organizations and facilitate their presence in social arenas. To do so there has been lots of researches and effort to invent some ways to balance the time between work and family matters. Due to changes in society, there is more need to family members' (men and women) activities and simultaneously each of them needs more time to spend on family matters (Budd and Mumford, 2006:22). For example lots of mothers go back to work after their child is born due to financial needs. Working full time makes problem balancing home responsibilities and work. Since they cannot reduce their responsibilities at home then they have to reduce their working hours thus they lose the chance to get good jobs because they are full time. These contrasts have ended in creating some plans as work/life in organizations, some of these plans are: flexible working pattern that includes: hob sharing, flexible hours, intensive working weeks, telecommunicating or volunteer part time jobs (Gholipour, 1386, 42).

When an individual's effort to perform tasks at work interferes his efforts playing his out of work roles (family), work-family conflict occurs (Carly et al., 2003). Thus work-family conflict is an inter-role conflict, a conflict between work roles and family roles (Ulla et al. 2003). Regarding this definition, this type of conflict has a two dimensional nature. First, work interface family, it is a situation in which work interfaces with family life and second, family interface work, in which family responsibilities interfaces with work. Recent researches on FIW and WFI express that these two concepts might have different causes and different consequences (Bayron, 2005). Although the two concepts seem highly similar, people mostly mistake WIF for FIW, because it is easier to define work problems and the characteristics of a good employee are clear and set. Therefore a good employee tires not to involve his family issues in work and attempts not to let his family problems interfere with his work. While this same good employee may spend time at home on work problems and issues or in the other words he may involve his family life with work problems. In this paper work-family conflict is studied, a conflict in which teachers' job is not ignored in family roles.

Work-family conflict is a concept to define the conflicts between work and family(Lazarova, et al., 2010). This conflict is being analyzed as an inter-role conflict in which work requisite is in conflict with family role requisites. Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the pressure of a task at work is against family duties. There are three dimensions to work-family conflict:

1. Time based conflict: when the allocated time for a role hinders spending time on the other roles and responsibilities.
2. Behavior based conflict: when the required behaviors of a role don't match the behavior patterns in another role.
3. Pressure based conflict: when the pressures of a role caused problem for another role (Carly, et al. 2002).

Most researches on work-family conflict have been mainly focused on the consequences of this type of conflict. The major theoretical approach on conflict is based on the theory of role and similar elements like role conflict, role ambiguity and over role. Another approach is based on Demographic elements like gender, family statues, the number of children and the number of working hours.

These findings show that the previous researches were mainly focused on the side of work-family conflict (work-family/family-work) or the form of conflict (time, behavior and pressure). This paper is studying both aspects of work-family conflict (side and form) in relation with work and demographic variants.

Conflict theory says that work and family territories are irreconcilable due to their different tasks and norms (Bayron, 2005). The related matters to an individual work (work variants) are influential on family responsibilities. For instance, those people who spend most of their time at work, their work interferes with their family life. Here the most important variables that are studied are being to intimate with work, stress and job satisfaction.

Research findings in field of work interface family show that people's role in family influences their role at work strongly and visa versa. Based on this interaction, there may be some problems for working people that is called work interface family (Byron, 2005; van Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006). Work interface family means that a person is confused about his roles doing duties at work and at home and can not balance his family and work (Matthews et al., 2009).

Studying this field has attracted enthusiastic people to this topic for some decades. Some of the studies are merely about work-interface family(WIF) and some have also studied family interface work. After sometimes and doing more researches it became clear that it was not enough to study these two factors separately and this conflict hasn't been studied from all dimensions. This two elements have interactive relation and studying just one of them is an imperfect job.

Work interface family is a multi-dimensional concept that demands the researchers' dominant knowledge on many areas (Michel et al., 2009). For instance the researcher needs to know the key theories of this conflict so that he can study the root deeply. Boundary theory, compensation theory, ecological systems theory, social identity theory, and spillover theory are some of these theories that one may face in the literature of work interface family literature (Michel and Clark, 2009).

Another important point in work interface family is the influence of this issue on an individual's satisfaction from an organization. In the other words when a person has problem dealing with work interface family, he is dissatisfied with the organization and the activities they do there (Yildirim and Aycan,2009).

Flexible work arrangement

In the past twenty years, flexible working patterns have been controversial issues in Human Resource Management. Regarding challenges like rapid development of technology, heterogeneous labor market, price wars, increasing changes in market and financial changes in capital market, human resource managers are trying to use different means like flexible working patterns to help their organizations survive and besides they intend to use them to compete with their rivals and outshine their competitors (Arvanitis, 2005: 998).

Lots of organizations offer plans to their employees to balance their work with their family. These pioneer organizations could do well far beyond present rules like sick leave. These all show that there has been a belief in organizations in attracting and taking good care of productive employees which is not only morally admitted but also required. Due to presence of different generations in work force and their especial needs this issue is of importance nowadays (Harris, 2007: 34).

Flexible work arrangement includes floating working hours (employees decide the starting and finishing hours of their working time), intensive working weeks (for instance the employee works for 4 days and then gets a working day off), telephone connection or long distance (employees do their job at home or in a different site) and volunteer part time methods especially job sharing (sharing the job with another employee). These plans are attractive for people who run a family. A public poll in The USA shows that 79% of employees are eager to use flexible work arrangement (Bentley and Yoong, 2000: 347).

The result of different studies confirm this hypothesis that high flexibility in working time causes more demands, better quality, increased productivity and commitment and less absences on the side of employees to do it on the other hand these methods simultaneously causes employees to become more independent (they earn the ability to decide about their job) which are on the whole all good results and they leave a positive effect on people and their learning. Using these methods in American companies like General Electric, Microsoft and Google has made them lucrative and successful in gaining their goals. In fact, these plans are not only to the benefit of the employees but it is considered a mutual cooperation between the company and employees in which both parties are beneficiaries (Harris, 2007:34) (Kauffeld et al., 2004:79).

Job sharing

A new and innovative method of work arrangement is job sharing. This method lets 2 or 3 people share a 40-hour working week (full-time) between them. For instance one of them works 8 A.M.-12 noon and the other

works 1 P.M. -5 P.M. or each person works on specific day's full time (Robbins, 2007:232). In the other words in this method two or more people work voluntarily on one job and share the salary and benefits. Each of these people has an independent contract with the manager and their salary and bonus is clear. The job is usually shared based on the job and the people who are performing it in different ways. Depending on the real requirements of the job, the people who are sharing it can be from different genders, ages and generations. A married woman and a single woman or a young woman and an experienced woman or a man and woman may share a job and the type of cooperation depending on the job can be based on responsibilities or time. A time should be considered when both (or all) of them are present together to exchange ideas about their jobs (Branine, 2004: 2-3)

Although job sharing is nowadays practiced more in Europe, it was officially introduced in America in 1970s to do full time jobs which were usually done on one shift as part time. Teaching and nursing were the first jobs which were done as job sharing because they were mostly done by women who wanted to balance their jobs with their family. Both private sector and state sector presented their employees with this alternative (Eick, 2001: 890).

Job sharing has some types. Three types of it are as followed:

- ▲ Responsibility participation: in this method there is no sharing in responsibilities. Although there are some people interacting in doing a job, all of them are equally responsible about doing it correctly. This job sharing method is good for the jobs that are continuously active and demand high interaction and cooperation.
- ▲ Responsibility sharing: is proper when the job can be divided into different projects. Each participant is in charge of her own part and concentrates on her own part. This method is proper when participants do not know each other well.
- ▲ Unrelated responsibilities: participants do totally different jobs while they are in the same place. It is like two people doing a part time job.

Generally speaking, job sharing increases people's motivation and therefore their productivity due to equal job opportunities that it provides for everybody. There are various reasons to confirm the claim of increased productivity in case of increasing job sharing. Increased flexibility, having the opportunity to use experienced employees as well as a vaster area of skills, increased commitment and motivations are some of the reasons. In general we can admit that in compare with full time jobs, job sharing makes employees work more energetically and creatively (Harris, 1997:30).

Despite all the studies that have been done on this method admit the positive effects of it on organizations as well as employees, this method is not widely applied and it is because of managers' resistance, difficulty of planning it practically or difficulty of finding a proper partner or the old negative attitude of people about imperfect performance of the job or perfect communication with the managers (Robbins, 2007:234).

Based on studies done in England and Scotland public sectors, job sharing has some advantages and disadvantages that should be noticed while performing. These points are different from managerial point of view and job holders (Branine, 2004:140; Guglielmo 2008:106).

The advantages from managers' point of view can be classified as followed:

Operation flexibility, Keeping the staff, Less leave and absences and Increasing staff productivity.

From staff point of view who works with this method there are two major advantages in this:

- ▲ Better time management: the first advantage that everybody points out is the possibility to allocate some time to family commitments. In fact, working with this method enables the person to manage her time and catch up with all her responsibility by making a good plan. While, working full time make it impossible and the person is forced to be present in the organization on all working days.
- ▲ Increased learning: the second advantage is learning. A high percentage of these people have expressed that using this method they have been able to perceive their jobs better because they have the opportunity to learn from their partner.

Despite many advantages, there are some disadvantages as followed:

High expenses: The budget which is for training may also go high in this method, because when there is a new system or when a new task is added, two people should be trained, Hardship of managing and coordinating people: it should be noticed that when one person does the job it requires less coordination but when two or more people are doing it needs more coordination to succeed, Expecting job sharing in all occupations: some organizations are afraid that giving permit to job sharing will end in indolence and sloth or offering this possibility to an individual makes everybody want the same right and finally it may end in failure of all standard

processes and human resource procedures that the organization has tried so hard to achieve it, Ambiguity in taking responsibility: some companies think that job sharing would cause confusion in deciding the person in charge. But keep in mind that offering job flexibility has a great effect on people's motivation to do it better. Furthermore treating the team as an individual by team evaluation and team bonus guarantees the commitment of the team members towards the other partners.

Notice that having a good planning and management in job sharing can reduce its flaws and ambiguities to a great extent. To do so here is the steps of a complete plan for job sharing:

1. Which hours and which days each of the staff will be working?
2. How long do they need to spend together (for the overlapped responsibilities)?
3. How will the team mates arrange the meetings, conferences?
4. How will the team mates keep in touch?
5. How the benefits will be shared?
6. How the team work will be evaluated?

Methodology

This research enjoys the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research method simultaneously to be better and experience minimum active error regarding the methodology. Using both methods makes the result more proper for generalization. To collect the data two methods of using questionnaires and interviews have been used. Sample includes the female entrepreneurs in education industry in Tehran. In the qualitative part of the research, the sample includes 18 female entrepreneurs. Regarding the quantitative research, the sample of this research has been estimated 223 female entrepreneurs based on unlimited society formula that all of them are women working at universities.

To collect data for the quantitative part of the research questionnaire have been used. The questionnaire contains 15 questions to evaluate female entrepreneurs attitude towards job sharing based on Likert scale as 1- strongly agree, 2-agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 4-disagree, 5- strongly disagree. 273 out of 300 questionnaires were handed back out of which 237 were complete and thus used in analysis. The rate of returning the questionnaires' was 91% and the rate of complete questionnaires was 86 % that was satisfactory.

To check the validity of the questions we have used specialist, professors and experts' opinion to make sure that the questions are simple and clear enough. At this phase the questions have been checked by the named people through interviews and consulting so that we make sure it has the required features. Also to determine the reliability of items, 30 questionnaires were distributed and completed as pretest. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of women attitude to job sharing was .86 that shows the reliability of items is trustable. Factor analysis of questionnaire is evaluated by confirmative factor analysis and using of LISREL 8.53 software (Table 1).

Research finding

In the present research to analyze the data which was collected through quality method (interviews), Theme analysis was used. It is the most common approach to analyze data in human science studies (Roulston, 2001:6). Theme analysis is a method to determine, analyze and present the patterns (themes) that exist inside the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:17).

To analyze the quality collected data that (interviews) LISEREL version 8.53 and SPSS version 16 software were used. Going through the interviews and coding them, various concepts were found in this research. These concepts were classified in separate groups according to their meanings. And these groups are presented in form of different themes and are discussed in different sections. Not devaluating the responsibility: almost 44% of people believed that job sharing wouldn't devalue the responsibility. Of course they believed that proper conditions should be provided and there should be exact planning.

"If there is good management and planning as well it wouldn't devalue the responsibility", "if the two partners cooperate with each other and regarding their conscience and sometimes professional sacrifice there won't be problems.", "we have to try to write down responsibilities and tasks".

Attracting and keeping elite women: over 75% believed that job sharing has an important role in attracting and keeping female entrepreneurs because it gives people the chance to plan and use their time and they feel free. It gives them the chance to continue their studies and if they are interested in study and research and they wish to be financially independent, job sharing can provide them with the chance to do it and to promote them.

"When the manager is competent, just and kind, female entrepreneurs can be innovative and flourish their talents. If women like their work atmosphere, they are going to love their jobs which is very important because if their job is not tiring regarding the time and environment, they can become creative and it is great for elite women.",

“for an elite woman, her family is prior and if there is a way to help her with her relationship with her family, she would like it”, “an elite woman who has a child may forget about working”.

Lessening work-family contrast: all people unanimously agreed on its positive effect on work-family relationship, because this method teaches us how to do team work. In the other words it also teaches lessons for life and influences the family unity and friendship, it makes the work atmosphere pleasant and gives people time to solve their problems at home. Moreover, most people emphasized its influence on children’s education and peace. Presently, women and men both work and are tired, if the woman works part time, she will save energy and can spend it on her family life. Women will have peace of mind. Lots of employees suggest part time jobs to have a more comfortable family life.

Discussion and Conclusion

Most organizational expenses are on the human forces; therefore it is necessary to take policies that economize on costs and improves the organization management as well. The major policy is flexible working methods. These methods not only benefits from using a wider range of personnel and their abilities, but also motives them by providing better working conditions. Of course labor laws, insurance and retirement plans are not different from full time method.

The results of factor analysis confirms that appropriateness of the questionnaire, because the value of Q-Square, RMSEA and the proportion of Q-Square to its degree of freedom was low and also the value of GFI and AGFI was over 90%. All T values are meaningful (table 1). All these prove that the questionnaire is creditable and valid.

The data that was collected from the questionnaire shows the attitude towards job sharing. two hundred and three people believed that job sharing would reduce the contrast between work and family. 89% believed that job sharing would reduce the quality of work and would increase the chances of promotion and growth at work. As the result of the present research expressed, the three mentioned factors are the results of job sharing. Quality analysis of the data by using Structural Equations Modeling shows that job sharing causes 47% reduction in family-work contrast (t value=12.87 and p value=0.000), causes 32% attracting elites (t value=10.46 and p value=0.000) and 18% devaluates responsibility (t value=8.07 and p value=0.000).

Job sharing method is an advanced flexible working hours method that brings some advantages for both parties, that is employer and employee. Applying job sharing, we can keep the process of a job while an employee is sick or on holiday and also we can have a wide range of skills, experiences, opinions and viewpoints in a job all at the same time. It also avoids stress and illness of the employees and improves their commitment to the organization and keeps the precious employees with the organization.

If all working women do part of the job in a job sharing plan it seems devaluating the responsibility because everyone will blame the other. Depending on the situation, job sharing can be devaluating or not. In some jobs, job sharing is applicable for instance in a kindergarten it won’t be devaluating the responsibility but in positions the person would like to blame another person it will be devaluating. Of course it depends how we divide the job and observe it.

Women’s participation is a criterion of development in every country this make an increase in women’s participation. Some believed that job sharing has no effect on attracting and keeping elite women: a strong person shouldn’t go to these kinds of weak atmospheres, job sharing atmospheres are weak. Elite shouldn’t work in weak atmospheres because she/he will deteriorate. Elite should work in strong places and beginners shouldn’t be allowed there. Regarding our present culture there won’t be any positive effect. To do so we need lots of practice and experience, more than what is usually required. If it is accepted it is effective otherwise there will be no use.

Experience has proven that children who are in kindergarten from morning since 4 p.m. are more depressed than those who spend only morning to noon in kindergartens. Children who feel their mother’s presence feel more uncomfortable. Also the peace of mind which is a byproduct of job satisfaction reduces this contrast remarkable. For example if a woman feels safe about each of the atmospheres will work more efficiently because she is sure that if she doesn’t go to work for some hours or a day, she will have her job. Of course there are still some people who believe it depends on the situation. “If it doesn’t remove the contrast between family and work at least it will reduce it to a great extent. We have to keep in mind that if it is not done correctly, it will cause tension because people want to blame each other for problems.”

To make a good plan for job sharing especial attentions should be paid to constructing an efficient organizational culture to make sure about choosing the correct person, fair job sharing and interaction between people.

This method will cause women to maintain their true identity and not to feel lower than the others. If job sharing is practiced it will bring happiness both at home and at work. We shouldn't ignore all the defects and problems proposed by the people who participated in the research. Job sharing may end in mental fatigue, tension and stress and above all it may reduce women's ability to bargain in the organization. When to women share a job and enjoy the benefit of one job, their bargaining ability lessens.

Applying this method is easier in expert levels and jobs which have routine tasks, but it is also applicable to jobs in management level. In a big organization even for management positions, job sharing can be performed, because these jobs are more difficult it will make them easier with less stress and tiredness.

Thus it is recommended to take the following measures to expand and empower women at work. To apply job sharing to reduce work-home contrast so that we can enjoy both the presence of women while their personal life is not damaged. The presence of scholar women in an organization helps a lot but attracting them and then keeping them at work is difficult and job sharing will provide this opportunity. In our country that elite migration is very common it is a good solution to avoid brain drain.

Practicing job sharing may face resistance, because employees are afraid of losing their jobs. They may think that it is an excuse for redundancies. They may think that managers are doing it to make them redundant little by little and choose one of the two. Therefore to practice job sharing, its culture should be institutionalized which is a difficult task on managers. Maturation and culture of an organization is of great importance. Job sharing is possible for those who are mature regarding the organization. Some employees cannot even balance with lower or higher levels and don't share the information with the others. Job sharing is like a new technology that comes into an organization and it should be institutionalized. Of course we cannot generalize the result of this research to all Iranian women and same researches should be done in other organizations. At the moment no research has been done in this matter.

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Table 1. Factor analysis of the questionnaire of evaluating female entrepreneurs towards job sharing

Questions	Standard Coefficient	T-value
1- I usually recommend job sharing as a good alternative to my friends.	0.72	9.31
2- when two partners put their minds together, the problems are solved more easily.	0.71	8.23
3- job sharing provides the opportunity to share knowledge with your partner.	0.68	7.09
4- job sharing provides the opportunity to make balance between working life and personal life.	0.69	10.12
5- in job sharing there is less tiredness.	0.56	7.77
6- in compare with full time jobs in job sharing less problems occur.	0.57	10.74
7- in job sharing there is more time for the family.	0.82	9.29
8- in job sharing there is more commitment.	0.67	12.70
9- in job sharing there is more eagerness in compare with a full time job.	0.70	9.82
10- in job sharing there is less training opportunities in compare with a full time job(R)	0.66	8.61
11- in job sharing lots of weekly meeting are missed(R)	0.69	8.59
12- partner who have shared their jobs are less satisfied(R)	0.66	9.87
13- managing a job by two people is very difficult(R)	0.47	8.73
14- the quality of the services in job sharing is lower(R)	0.73	10.81
15- lots of people do not like to share a job they prefer to have a full time job(R)	0.78	11.23
$\chi^2=43.96$ RMSE=0.027 GFI=0.93 AGFI=0.95		