Exploring the Barriers to Work Life Balance for Women in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

In recent years, the increasing demands of organisations on their employees, together with more family and non-work commitments, raise questions of how to balance these conflicting demands. This is especially relevant currently for women in Saudi Arabia as they are have high levels of educational attainment and are being encouraged into the workforce by government initiatives, yet are still expected to perform the traditional domestic roles assigned to them by religion and culture. Flexible work is considered in some cultures as one of the solutions that might resolve conflicts between employees' family life and work. The purpose of this research is to explore the barriers to work life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this aim four questions are raised: 1) Do women in KSA have autonomy and flexibility in their work? 2) Do women in KSA desire to have autonomy and flexibility on their work? 3) What might be the benefits for their work life balance? 4) What barriers do women in Saudi Arabia face to achieving work life balance? The research questions have been formulated to enable different factors in the study to be explored. Semi-structured interviews are to be used in collecting data. Thirty working women in the health, education, and banking sectors are to be interviewed; these are the most important sectors that employ women in Saudi Arabia, and have a significant number of female workers in them. Moreover, this study will explore the effect of religion and national culture in the context of flexible work, and the effects of job crafting for achieving an environment of work life balance. The researcher will adopt a qualitative approach to explore women’s experiences. This will give different points of view and many opportunities for the researcher to expand current knowledge.