Work Life Balance and Employee Retention: Experience of Women Employees in Leading Apparel Manufacturing Organization in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Work life balance and employee retention are important factors that affect an organization. Additionally it has become an interesting topic among researchers. This study was conducted in a leading manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka, focused to determine the impact of five work life balance practices on retention of women employees. This is an attempt to identify the reasons for most significant factors affecting female employee retention and provide recommendations to improve employee retention and decrease employee turnover rate of female employees in Sri Lanka. Selected sample was consisted with 200 women employees in leading manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire and the questionnaire content carried two major types of questions: one set for demographic factors and others for research variables. Five research variables were Job Security, Working Hours, Company Leave Policy, Work Load and Employee Training. Data analysis was done using SPSS statistic technique and Pearson's Product Moment. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The current study found that there is a positive correlation between all five independent variables and employee retention. Though the correlation was

positive between work load and women employee retention, that relationship was not significant as per the analysis results. Results of regression the company leave policy, job security and employee training showed that are strong predictors of employee retention. The study recommended that, by improving the quality of work life balance of employees, they become loyal and willing to stay in the organization for long because of higher job satisfaction and satisfied happy personal life.

Key Words: *Women Employees, work Life Balance, employee Retention, Apparel Manufacturing Organizations*

1. Introduction

During the last few decades, the population of the female workforce in organizations has been increased immensely. Today there can be seen a close-run between female and male employees without gender discrimination. Women are contributing to the national economy as much as the men are. Currently female employees have higher aspirations and are attempting for better position on equal footing with male employees in organizations (Carli, 2001).

With the fast growing technology and the impressive competition in the business world, that people have become similar to machine. Working people have to work additional hours and days to face the challenges in their working place. In addition to that, employers also try to minimize the benefits towards their employees in order to earn more profits. This is leading to create an unhealthy work life balance for employees and it may a cause to create poor relationships between employer and employee. In order to broad employees' occupation and income they tend to do work anytime, according to the employers request. With the continuous practice of this, family members always miss their loved ones and most of the time, they have to spend time separated in two different places (Carmichael, 2015).

Work life balance can be defined in many ways and the simplest definition is the extent to which individuals are equally involved in and equally satisfied with their work role and their family or personal role. It is the term used to describe practices in achieving a balance between the demands of employees' family (life) and work lives (Aravind and Paramashivaiah, 2011). The work life balance concept can reveal as a concept including proper prioritizing between 'workaholics' (career and ambition) on one hand and 'lifestyle' (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other.

It can be seen that finding jobs and taking jobs to a top grade is prevented by family commitment in women than men in UK (Manning, 2003). It has been found that employee turnover and retention have affected the work life balance practices of employees. Therefore, from an organizational perspective, it is necessary to maintain employee engagement strategies in order to increase female employees' retention in the organization. Work life balance practices and their implementations are very important for a working woman and sometimes she has to make hard decisions when the work-life conflict becomes serious. However with the unhealthy situation of work life balance that they have to face between home and work, sometimes they tend to leave the job. Most of the mothers, single parents, dual income families and families which are having elder care duties link with the workforce have to face with the conflict between family life and occupational life (Frone et. al, 1997). From the employees' perspective, some female employees tend to leave the job with their marriage. Willingly or unwillingly, most of them need to retain the job although they are married. Women employees are urged to take responsibility of income generation and their families together, due to economic burdens that they have to go through. Working women are able to generate income while taking care of their children and other household responsibilities.

The stress level of female employees becomes high with the responsibility of balancing family and the job. Unfortunately the policy makers and organizations have no concern over forming work life balance policies in

a favorable manner that balance family life and employment for working females (Sandhya, 2015). With this upcoming situation, the researcher wanted to identify the current trends of work life balance practices which are implemented in leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka and their effect on women employees' retention.

2. Research Problem

When considering the organizational side, critical employees' leaving the job may ultimately affect the productivity of the organization. While the human capital is considered as a source of success in the operation of business organizations, the service quality is subject to employees' behavior especially during the job, and employees are assets for service sector's companies. Through the proactive approach and positive policies, competitive companies are always busy in retaining their employees and achieve organizational objectives (Salman et.al, 2014). Organizations spend more not only in recruitment and selection but also for induction, orientation, socialization, training and development, maintaining and retaining of an employee for minimizing employees' turnover rate. Therefore, it is necessary to know the factors affecting the retention of employees in order to avoid wasting large amounts of money which will be spent for the whole process of recruitment to maintenance.

Most employees try to achieve high productivity and profitability by doing more and more. With the aim of earning profit, they may forget that harmful effects can come across over their employees and company image. Sri Lanka is a women work engaging country and most educated and talented women are working in both government and private sectors. However with the difficulties that they have to face due to some unhealthy practices of private sector organizations in Sri Lanka, most women seem to be leaving organizations as a solution for the work life conflict. Therefore high employee retention and the low rate of employee turnover is a good sign in an organization where a good work life balance among their employees is maintained.

According to the findings of the literature study, it is evident that most women are confronting the issue of having limited time to manage their professional life and family life. Most of the dazzling women employees quit from the employment although unwilling, because they cannot manage their family life after marriage and having kids while doing the job. This is a big problem to the employers as well, because they are losing bright employees. On the other hand, those women employees are losing their income, and sometimes they may face financial issues eventually, as the cost of living is increasing day by day in Sri Lanka. Therefore this study will investigate "how major work life balance practices impact on retention of women employees in leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka?"

3. Research Question

Whether work life balance practices can make an effect on retention of women employees in leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka?

4. Research Objectives

Today there are many practices in organizations that can increase the quality of work life as well as reduce the quality of work life. Therefore it is important to identify the impact of work life balance practices on employee retention and try to create such a healthy environment in all private sector organizations. Therefore the main objective of this study is,

To identify the impact of work life balance practices on retention of women employees in leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka.

Specific Objectives

To identify negative impacts that can effect on both the employee and the employer by having unhealthy work life balance practices within the organization.

To identify the professional or work related factors and the personal or family related factors affecting employee retention of female employees in a leading manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka.

5. Significance of the Study

Due to the pressure by the spouse and the family, or other personal matters, female employees happen to leave the job un-willingly. Therefore, there is a necessity of having a solution for this matter. Researcher is going to examine this problem and attempts to find out the most significant factors affecting employee retention from both sides of family or personal related, and work or professional related. Additionally there are hidden factors with employees' expectations and feelings we cannot determine from our end. These hidden factors can bring some unexpected outcomes to the organization which the top management cannot see. With those findings here, the researcher can suggest a healthy way with effective methods to maintain employee' work life balance while retaining educated and experienced female employees.

6. Women Employees, Work Life Balance, Retention and Turnover Intention

Retaining key employees is critical to the long term health and success of any business (Heathfield, 2017). Retaining the best employees ensures customer satisfaction, product sales, satisfied co-workers and reporting staff, effective succession planning and deeply implanted organizational knowledge and learning. According to Heathfield (2017), there are various matters for a business with factors of employee retention. In addition to that, some other organizational issues such as training time and investment, loss of knowledge, insecure coworkers and a costly candidate search again. As a response to this, managers have implemented human resources policies and practices to actively reduce avoidable and undesirable turnover of employees (Holtom 2008). Oladapo (2014), has mentioned in his study that during the last decade, a shortage of talent has emerged in the workplace. As organizational leaders struggled to find talented workers, leaders faced with the dilemma of how to retain knowledgeable workers. Retention is viewed as a strategic opportunity for many organizations and leads to maintain a competitive workforce. Schramm Frank and Taylor (2004), have argued on some factors like organizational culture, employee engagement and leadership development also having a significant impact on talent retention.

When examining the relationship between work life conflicts, stress and turnover intentions among marketing executives in Pakistan, Noor and Maad (2008), stated that there is a positive relationship between work family conflict and turnover intention. However the findings of Aslam, et. al (2011), in the study of work-family conflicts demonstrate contradictory findings compared to the previous studies of Noor and Maad, 2008. It shows that there is a weak relationship between work-family conflict, family-work conflict and employee retention among public and private sector employees of Pakistan. The results revealed that people are not ready to leave their existing jobs although the work-family conflict is there (Aslam et. al, 2011).

Silim and Stirling (2014) have argued that flexible work arrangements can gain more rates of employment and better consistency between qualification and job skills when considering women and mothers. In the research, flexible work arrangement and employment retention in IT sector, Jain and Swami (2014), have found that employees think flexible work arrangements help them to have a work-life balance, stress release, to be more committed towards the organization and longer containment in the organization. Syed and Akhtar (2014), have mentioned that marriage and motherhood rates decline with women's educational and professional success. Time commitment is highly valued in any working environment and women with family responsibilities have huge a disadvantage in this matter. Huang et.al, (2006), showed that restructuring the workplace is a better way to solve the family work conflict. It can be done by shortening the workweek of

every worker in order to fog the disparity between uneven time periods. Another way he has mentioned is to provide flex time or shorter work hours to people with family responsibilities. The company benefits are consistently associated with functional flexibility and work life balance supports (Kemmis 2012). Employees demand for work life balance arrangements from employers for childcare concerns. Work load is positively related to the employee turnover intention, Employees think of leaving the job when they are overburdened (Qureshi et. al, 2012).

7. Research Model
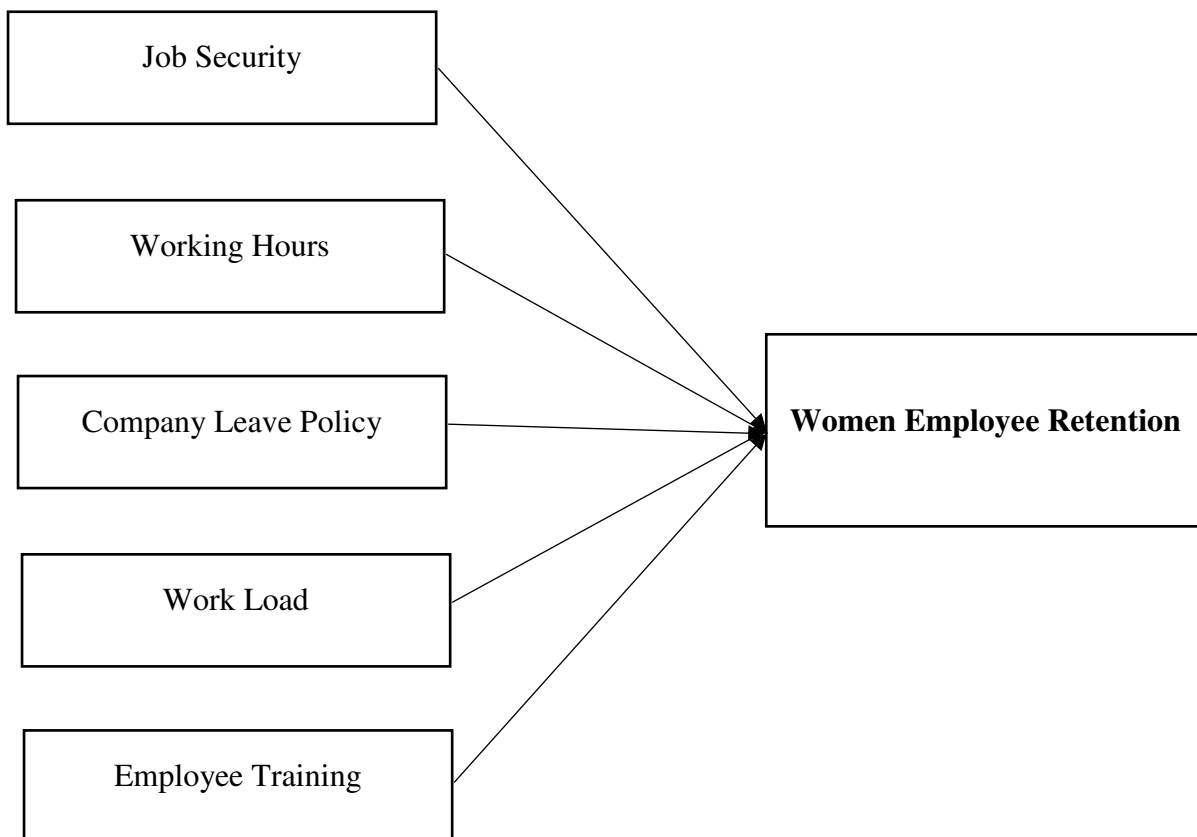
Figure 1: Research Model

Source: Constructed by the Researcher

8. Research Hypothesis
H1- Job security has an impact on women employee retention.
H2- Working hours have an impact on women employee retention.
H3- Company leave policy has an impact on women employees' retention.
H4-Work load has an impact on women employees' retention.
H5- Employee training has an impact on women employee retention.

9. Research Methodology
The target sample for this study is 200 women employees in a leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka. The study collected all primary data and all relevant information through a questionnaire during the research conducting period. Those questionnaires were collected from 200 women employees who are occupied in a leading apparel manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka via hard copies, mails and Google forms. In order to find the relationship between the work-life balance practices and women employee retention, here the researcher will research about the factors like their job security, working hours, company

leave policy, work load and training and career opportunities they get. The information about healthy work life balance practices in the global organizations and benefits of those implementations collected through data bases, journals, books and articles were reviewed in order to suggest a healthy way of work life balance at the end of the study. Data analyzed by using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression according to the primary data and statistics by using SPSS.

10. Data Analysis
10.1 Hypothesis testing with Pearson's Correlation

The Pearson's Correlation, Pearson correlation coefficient and product-moment correlation coefficient are measures which determine the strength of a linear association between two variables. The strength denoted by *r*. Basically, a Pearson product-moment correlation attempts to draw a line of best fit through the data of two variables, and the Pearson correlation coefficient, *r*, indicates how far away all these data points are to this line of best fit.

The results of Pearson's product moment correlation analysis were used to test the hypotheses which are presented in the Tables.

- **H1 – Job Security have an impact on women employee retention.**

Table 01: Correlation between Job Security and Women Employee Retention.

Independent Variable (Job Security)	Dependent Variable (Women Employee Retention)
Pearson Correlation	.194
Sig.(2-tailed)	.019
N	200

Source-Research Data

A Pearson correlation test was run to determine the relationship between job security and women employee retention. There was a positive linear correlation between job security and employee retention which was statistically significant. ($r=.194, n=200, p=.019$) Hence we can reject the null hypothesis and assume that the job security and employee retention are positively, linearly associated.

- **H2 – Working Hours have an impact on women employee retention.**

Table 02: Correlation between Working Hours and Women Employee Retention

Independent Variable (Working Hours)	Dependent Variable (Women Employee Retention)
Pearson Correlation	.734
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
N	200

Source-Research data

A Pearson correlation test was run to determine the relationship between working hours and women employee retention. There was a positive linear correlation between working hours and employee retention which was statistically significant. ($r=.734, n=200, p=.000$) Hence we can reject the null hypothesis and assume that the working hours and employee retention are positively, linearly associated.

- **H3 – Company Leave Policy have an impact on women employee retention.**

Table 03: Correlation between Training and Company Leave Policy and Women Employee Retention

Independent Variable (Company Leave Policy)	Dependent Variable (Women Employee Retention)
Pearson Correlation	.813
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
N	200

Source- Research Data

A Pearson correlation test was run to determine the relationship between company leave policy and women employee retention. There was a high positive linear correlation between company leave policy and employee retention which was statistically significant. (r=.813, n=200, p=.000) Hence we can reject the null hypothesis and assume that the company leave policy and employee retention are positively, linearly associated.

- **H4 – Work load have an impact on women employee retention.**

Table 04: Correlation between Work Load and Women Employee Retention

Independent Variable (Work load)	Dependent Variable (Women Employee Retention)
Pearson Correlation	.091
Sig.(2-tailed)	.282
N	200

Source-Research Data

A Pearson correlation test was run to determine the relationship between work load and women employee retention. There was a positive correlation between work load and employee retention which was not statistically significant. (r=.091, n=200, p=.282) Hence we cannot reject the null hypothesis and assume that the work load and employee retention are not positively linearly associated but not significant.

- **H5 – Employee training have an impact on women employee retention.**

Table 05: Correlation between Employee Training and Women Employee Retention

Independent Variable (Employee Training)	Dependent Variable (Women Employee Retention)
Pearson Correlation	.816
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
N	200

Source- Research Data

A Pearson correlation test was run to determine the relationship between employee training and women employee retention. There was a positive linear correlation between employee training and employee retention which was statistically significant. (r=.816, n=200, p=.000) Hence we can reject the null hypothesis and assume that the employee training and employee retention are positively, linearly associated.

10.2 Multiple Regression Analysis
Multiple regression analysis is used to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables. The variable which is going to predict is called the dependent variable and the variables used to predict the value of dependent variable are called the independent variables. In this study, the multiple

regression analysis was used to determine the overall fit/variance explained of the women employee retention and the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the total variance explained.

Table 06: Outcome of Variables Entered and Removed for the Analysis

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Employee Training	.	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).
2	Company Leave Policy	.	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).
3	Working Hours	.	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).
4	Job Security	.	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).

Source- Research Data

Since it was tested using stepwise multiple linear regressions, it estimates more than one regression model. The outcome shows only four variables and it explains that only these four independent variables were relevant and useful to explain the variance of women employee retention. According to that the best variance explaining variable is employee training. Further it indicates that ''work load'' is not relevant to increase employee retention sufficiently.

Table 07: Model Summary[e]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.817[a]	.668	.666	.53252	
2	.854[b]	.729	.725	.48283	
3	.865[c]	.749	.743	.46662	
4	.870[d]	.756	.751	.46018	1.843

Source-Research Data

In this table that the adjusted R square of model four is .751 with the R square = .756. These results mean that linear regression model with the independent variables employee training, company leave policy, working hours and job security explains 75.7% of the variance of the women employee retention.

The Durbin –Watson d = 1.843 (1.5 < d < 2.5). Therefore we can assume that there is no first order linear autocorrelation in our multiple linear regression data.

Table 08: ANOVA Summary

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	81.029	1	81.029	285.736	.000[b]
	Residual	40.268	199	.284		
	Total	121.298	200			
2	Regression	88.427	2	44.214	189.659	.000[c]
	Residual	32.870	198	.233		
	Total	121.298	200			
3	Regression	90.815	3	30.272	139.030	.000[d]
	Residual	30.483	197	.218		
	Total	121.298	200			
4	Regression	91.862	4	22.966	108.448	.000[e]
	Residual	29.435	196	.212		
	Total	121.298	200			

Source- Research Data

In multiple regression analysis, F test determines the significance of the multiple linear regression. The table shows that the four independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable/women employee retention. Model 01 – F Value is 285.7 at P = .000, Model 02 – F Value is 189.6 at P = .000, Model 03 – F Value is 139.0 at P = .000 and Model 04 – F Value is 108.4 at P = .000.

Table 09: Summary of Coefficient table of stepwise analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-1.468		-3.328	0.001
Employee Training	.334	.300	3.539	.001
Company Leave Policy	.364	.350	4.467	.000
Working Hours	.433	.281	3.972	.000
Job Security	.227	.106	2.224	.028

By this result outcome, unstandardized coefficient B indicates how much the employee retention varies with an independent variable when all other independent variables are held constant.

Women Employee = - 1.468 + (.334*Employee Training) + (.364*Company Leave Policy) + (.433* Working Hours) + (.227*Job Security)

As well as β value for each variable is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the dependent variable since the higher β value of this study is 0.35 for company leave policy. Therefore it was accepted the impact from company leave policy on employee retention was rather big.

11. Findings and Conclusion

11.1 Demographic Data Analysis

The results of the data analysis of this research study can be summarized in different views. According to the demographic data analysis of respondents, among 144 respondents who are occupied as female employees in the apparel sector organization, 73% were below 30 years of age and another 23.6% were between 31 – 40 years of age. When comparing the marital status of these respondents, it was found that almost 50% is there for each married and single status. Single was 48.6% and married was 51.4%. The most highlighted finding was, among women employees who were included in this sample, 81.9% did not have children and only 11.1% had 1 or 2 children. When comparing the education levels of these women, 59.7% are graduates and 25% have achieved post graduate as well. Most of them had around just below 5 years of experiences and among them 37% have below 3 years and 30.6% had 3 – 5 years of total years of experiences. Finally, 48.6% of those women employees had 1 – 3 years of experiences in their existing organization and only 11% had more than 6 years of experiences.

11.2 Primary Data Analysis

A reliability analysis is used to identify the internal consistency of the variables. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability and it scored .825 and .881 and proved that it is a significant good measure with sufficient scale of reliability. This reliability analysis has been done for both dependent variables and independent variable.

The Shapiro Wilk test was run in order to find the significant probability of data set. There the 'P' value was .000 and concluded that there is a normal distribution with a relationship between two variables. By following one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for each group of answers in each variable, it was found that, there is no association between different age groups with women employees retention, p =.238. There is no significant difference of women employee retention among single and married women, p = .317. The p = .223 indicated that the number of children also had no association. But p values of .000 for both total work experience and work period in current organization indicated that there are differentiations among different experience groups on women employee retention.

11.3 Hypotheses Testing

As hypothesized from hypothesizes 1 to 5 mentioned in the study, all five independent variables which were considered to have an impact on retention of women executive employees' in apparel sector had a positive correlation. These findings confirm the theoretical arguments explained in the literature review. There are many related researchers and literature supports for different corners of work life balance. As per the literature findings, below are some literature views for each hypothesis.

As literature supported for the variable of job security. Feelings of insecurity among employees regarding their jobs results in dissatisfaction of their career (Ashford et.al, 1989). When organizational support increases, job turnover reduces, which results in retention of workers in particular job.

As literature supported for the variable of working hours, Deery stated his finding as "Further recommendations for less employee turnover include the need for norms on working hours, role models at the workplace, flexible work hours and arrangements, effective talent acquisition and training practices (Deery, 2008)'' According to the above literature findings and results of hypotheses testing, Hypotheses 1 was supported with both literature findings and data analysis.

Hypothesis 3 was supported with the finding of Hak Fun. "the impacts of family friendly policies on employee's job satisfaction and employee turnover in different types of business organizations have been investigated by Hak Fun(2007), found that five day work week, flextime, family leave, employee assistance program on job satisfaction and employee turnover. He found the relationship between family friendly policies with job satisfaction and employee turnover. He examined that effect of family friendly polices is positive on job satisfaction and has a negative relationship with employee turnover. (Hak Fun, 2007), and it was proved with the hypotheses testing results that company leave policy has a positive correlation with employee retention.

Hypothesis 4 was supported with this statement of Walker; Walker has presented some different thought on work life balance. Job and work design influence employees' ability to take up the flexible working options that may contribute to a better work life balance. It was generally felt senior management believed flexible working arrangements were not compatible with 'core business'. Managing retention of promising employees is considered as fundamental of meaning of achieving competitive advantage amongst organization. (Walker, 2001) According to this opinion the job design and going forward with allocated job description also has an impact on employee retention. It reveals that work load, which means work schedules beyond employees agreed job description also has an impact on employee retention.

Training and career development opportunities take a bigger place when it comes to the point of employee retention as per many literature findings. "Brum (2007) investigated the impact of training on employee commitment and employee turnover by using four variables and using the questionnaire technique among 225 workers. He also has used regression analyses to find out the four variables (employee investments, reciprocity, lack of alternatives and social identity) on employee commitment and employee turnover. He defined and concluded that training is the major element to create more committed employees and establish productive workforce". As investigated from the hypotheses test also, it is mentioned that there is a high positive impact of training and career opportunities of employees on employee retention.

Even the analyses found that all the five variables are having positive correlation between employee retention. Only four variables were found out of five variables which are job security, working hours, company leave policy and work load and employee retention are significantly correlated.

11.4 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis indicated that the R square value to be .757, meaning 75.7% of the variability in women employee retention in apparel manufacturing organizations in Sri Lanka can be explained significantly by these four factors. Further, the results indicated by multiple regression analysis, highest β value is for company leave policy on employee retention.

Thus, it further informs apparel sector employers in Sri Lanka to open doors for women employees to grow within the organization by facilitating other four factors in a suitable way.

The apparel sector employees in Sri Lanka play a greater role in the Sri Lankan economy. This research focused on one of the human resource management area called employee retention and investigated some work life balance practices' effect on it. Even though this research study was done with only five variables of work life balance practices, it is impossible for five independent variables to account for variation in employee retention. In fact, other variables like telecommuting, child care, parental care, supervisory support…etc which were not taken in to consideration in this study should be the variables that will account for the unexplained variance in executive women employee retention in apparel manufacturing organizations in Sri Lanka. Since the researcher wanted to identify the factors which had an impact on retention of women employees who work in apparel manufacturing sector, the study was limited to a leading apparel organization.

With the findings of the research, the researcher could identify that all five variables, which are job security, working hours, company leave policy, work load, and employee training, positively correlated with women employee retention though the work load was not significantly correlated with employee retention. Employee training, job security, and company leave policy were found to be strong work life balance practices which highly effect on women employee retention. Not only are that, but the working hours and work load also considerable factors since all of them affect on employee retention positively. Employers cannot leave any of these variables if they need to maintain high women employee retention with the organization.

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