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## **A Comprehensive Analysis of Work–Life Balance Strategies and Challenges among Women in Diverse Industries**

**Shada Hasnain<sup>1\*</sup> & Dr. Anisa Khanam<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, School of Commerce and Management Studies, Sandip University, Sijoul, Madhubani, Bihar.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Dean & Associate Professor, School of Commerce and Management Studies, Sandip University, Sijoul, Madhubani, Bihar.

\*Corresponding Author: shada17hasnain@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Women Employees and Work-Life Balance Essay Despite policy efforts across the world, maintaining a work-life balance (WLB) while managing household responsibilities continues to challenge working women globally. Drawing upon available literature, we systematically reviewed studies on WLB among women in various occupations seeking to uncover similarities and differences across professions with a focus on factors impacting WLB and resources utilized by women to help maintain balance. We found recurring themes across sectors including job stressors, work-home overload, organizational policies such as flexible work arrangements and supervisory support. Key differences were also noted with women in IT and academia being the most overwhelmed. Boundary management emerged as a key challenge with the use of technology as both a resource and demand. We discuss how WLB is contingent on organizational policies but are largely influenced by societal and familial factors. With limited research focused on women in occupations other than academia, we call for further research to develop effective solutions.

**Keywords:** Work-Life Balance, Women Employees, Flexible Work Arrangements, Occupational Stress, Gender and Work, Organizational Policy, Job Demands-Resources.

### **Introduction**

The struggle to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance (WLB) has become one of the defining issues of the modern workforce. However, while women continue to enter the workforce in droves and organizations become more supportive than ever, women remain disproportionately responsible for household chores and care-giving duties. The “second shift” many women work at home after their formal job has ended causes significant effects on career advancement, mental health, and quality

of life [1, 2]. WLB can be described as "a feeling of equilibrium when the employees have the opportunity to prioritize both career and home life" [3]. Because of this, organizations and society at large have a vested interest in helping employees maintain this delicate balance.

While research has been conducted on many of the barriers to WLB like overtime hours, work stress, and family-unfriendly policies [4, 5], there is little synthesis between the different sectors where this research is conducted. Many studies focus on WLB as it affects certain industries, like Information Technology's overtime crunch culture [6], health care's long hours [7], or academies always-on culture [8]. Sector-focused research is useful for understanding the unique aspects of each industry. However, it can be difficult to take a broader look at the field and identify meta-trends, compare significance between studies, or determine what interventions can reach the widest audience. Another issue is that the world of work is constantly changing. Many employees now have access to FWAs and ICTs which have been shown to both increase autonomy but also lead to the colonization of home life by work and increased burnout [9, 10]. We must better understand how these new tools of the workplace affect men and women differently.

Thus, there is a need to broadly review the literature on WLB for women in the workplace in a cross-sectional manner. The purposes of this review are to:

- Provide a general overview of the top facilitators and inhibitors to WLB for women in academia, IT, healthcare, banking, and service industries.
- Critically discuss how organizational interventions and policies impact WLB.
- Pinpoint the largest gaps in literature and suggest a future agenda for research and policy to improve working women's lives.

### **Review of Different Research Papers**

[11] Asma Zaheer et al. (2015) study aimed to determine the stressors and work life balance among the female faculty of central universities located in Delhi, India. In order to fulfill this objective we surveyed 120 female faculties of two central universities located in Delhi and collected primary data which we then subjected to statistical analysis. We found that female faculties suffer from a moderate level of work life balance as well as work place stress. There was also a strong negative correlation between work life balance and workplace stress which implies that if a person is more stressed at work they are likely to have poorer work life balance. This study has major implications for universities and colleges. It is evident that they should implement policies that promote work life balance among their employees and help reduce stress. Universities can ensure a healthier work environment which can help their institutions function better as a whole. The workplace will run more efficiently, employees will be happier, and the organization will be more effective. The goal of our study was to analyze the work life balance and stress levels of female

faculty of central universities located in Delhi and study how they correlate with each other. Our study supports the findings of a recent study that concluded that university teachers from Punjab face moderate levels of stress. This shows us that stress isn't really prevalent in university settings. However, our results go against the findings of past studies which concluded that teachers faced more stress than people from other professions. Similarly, another study found that over sixty percent of teachers claimed that their job was the biggest contributor to stress in their life. This study is unique because it only focuses on female instructors of Jamia Millia Islamia and Delhi University. No study has taken into consideration this sample before. Although the organizations may be similar to those of past studies, we can ensure that our sample provide us with accurate results because its never been study before. We found through a correlation analysis that there was a positive and significant relationship between work life imbalance and workplace stress. This shows us that if one variable is affected, it may have an impact on the other variable. This study is extremely helpful to those in charge of making policies because not many studies have focused on workplace stress and work life balance specifically for female faculty of Delhi's higher education. The findings can help us create certain policies that can better the work place for everyone. Faculty members as well as institutions will benefit from it in the long run.

[12] Aditi Aerana et al. (2015) is an empirical study conducted on working women of educational institutes of Meerut aiming at assessing organizational environment and satisfaction level among them according to work life balance (WLB). It also enumerates top factors which influences WLB among working women of all job profiles in educational sector. The study also explores how familial support can help working women to juggle their responsibilities and how technological intervention influences work life balance of these women. One of the significant aims was to understand how women perceive occupational stress and how they manage their work and home life. As the economy continues to evolve at a rapid pace and baby boomers age into their golden years, qualified women are seeking new positions than ever before. This is especially true for women who aren't happy in their current work situation. Many working women who have careers in competitive industries struggle to maintain Work Life balance. This makes it difficult to understand how to excel at both. Work and life can't exist without each other. There are many factors that can help women maintain a balance. The environment they work in, family support and technology are some of them. Educational sector deals with a lot of workload, high academic pressure and are always busy preparing up for their upcoming courses or research grants. Even if you think you have things balanced between your work and personal life, you will often face difficult decisions that may tip the scale. Achieving a sustainable work life balance is key to performing your best at work and being happy

at home. Without it you will probably struggle to perform well in either which is why we need institutional support and workplace policies that strive to improve this.

[13] Johansson et al. (2015) explored if self-employment can be utilized as a method of dealing with work-family conflict. They wanted to compare self-employed individuals and traditional employees in regards to how they spend time on personal needs and family. They examined whether family/lifestyle motivation played a role in being self-employed and contributed to alleviating work-family conflict. This research drew on data from the Swedish Level of Living Survey from 2011 which included 2,483 entrepreneurs and 2,642 regular employees. The results of their research showed that self-employed individuals experience different levels of work-family conflict when compared with regular employees. However, the hypothesis that entrepreneurs experience less work-family conflict was rejected. Instead, the self-employed experienced more work-family conflict, especially if they had employees of their own. There were some qualifications to these results. When the entrepreneur started their business due to family/lifestyle reasons, they had a lower likelihood of experiencing work-family conflict. This held true especially for women who were self-employed with employees. This study shows that self-employment can be used as a method to deal with work-family conflict, but in general self-employed experience higher levels of work-family conflict when compared to regular employees. Family motivation seemed to act as a moderating variable that created an environment in which self-employed experience lower levels of work-family conflict.

[14] Pui-Yee Wong et al. (2017) analyzed Organizational Influences on Work-life Balance which was intended to research employees' views about supervisor support, coworker support, and flexible work arrangements as facilitating work-life balance. Sample size included 98 service workers from Malaysia recruited in the city of Kuching. Methodology applied was quantitative research that used questionnaires to gather information. Study results were statistically measured with Spearman's rho correlation. Correlation between all three factors was found to have a statistically significant positive relationship with work-life balance. It can be concluded that supervisor support had the biggest impact on workers' lives since participants felt that if their boss was supportive of their non-work needs they will find it easier to balance both. Similar conclusions can be drawn about the support from coworkers and flexible work schedules.

[15] M. Akif Helvacı, et al. (2017) conducted their research based on 195 academics, 78 female and 117 male, at Usak University. The authors discovered that there are significant differences between genders when it comes to academics' work-life balance with women having a more difficult time combining work with their personal lives. There were no statistically significant differences between rank, tenure status and majors regarding academics' work-life balance.

[16] Another study conducted by Abraham et al. (2017) focused on work-family conflict which arises among women who work. They stated that work-family conflict had negative outcomes on personal, family, organizational and societal level. They concluded that females face more work-family conflict than males because females experience demands from work and family roles at the same time. They found married women employees to be severely affected as non-working hours, night shifts, work load and household work affects their mental and physical health. Married women who work are affected by stress due to all of these factors they mentioned. Abraham et al. (2017) stated that work life balance programs can help not just married women but all employees who have multiple responsibilities.

[17] Memon, et. al (2018) studied work-life balance issues in married female bank officers working in Government banks located in Salcete Taluka of Goa. There were 40 participants in this study, which employed convenient sampling. Results showed that although majority had established good work-life balance and were satisfied with their jobs, most respondents felt anxious about work during their non-working hours. Workload was cited as one of the reasons contributing to anxiety along with childcare and eldercare. Health issues like headache, hypertension/hypotension and weight gain were also reported by many respondents. Various activities like watching TV, watching movies and spending time with kids were some ways participants chose to cope with stress. Other methods included yoga, exercises, meditation, etc. Response further indicated that lack of support from co-workers and seniors made it difficult for them to maintain work-life balance. Marriage and family support (support from husband and other family members) helped greatly in maintaining work-life balance.

[18] The Research Study conducted by Deshmukh et al. (2018) aimed to identify the problems faced by working women regarding their work-life balance (WLB). The study targeted married women working in academic institutions, the IT industry, and hospitals in Pune city of India. The sample size consisted of 180 respondents, and Deshmukh used a checklist provided by The Industrial Society to gather information. Results of the study found that issues with WLB was negatively affecting women and their ability to handle work as well as personal activities. Issues noted included workload, child care, elder care, work timings, less family time, lack of flexible work options, lack of supportive environment, etc. Due to lack of balance many women reported illness and health issues such as stress, headache, sleeping disorders, weight gain, etc. Deshmukh's study found that majority of women employed in the IT sector had major issues with imbalance (90% had issues with WLB). Women working in hospitals had the second-highest issues with WLB (76.7%) while academic professionals were closely behind (80%). Women between the ages of 30 or younger were more likely to struggle with WLB than those older. Women who had a spouse that was involved in businesses or marketing experienced more issues

with WLB than women whose spouses had other job roles. Overall, 70.56% reported that WLB was their biggest issue faced as a working woman. Women also responded that WLB directly affects their quality of life (61.67%). Additionally, 75.56% were unsatisfied with their quality of life. Average scores of questions designed to target times spent at work versus personal time allowed Deshmukh to conclude that working women in India put more time and effort into their job than their personal life. This means they have less time socializing with friends (mean = 2.76), family (mean = 2.65) and managing work-related stress (mean = 2.63). Some controls that were taken by the employers to provide WLB included flexible work timings. But there are other factors that lead to WLB problems such as workload, control over job, and unequal distribution of household labour (which are due to societal views on male vs female careers and roles in the household). Many organizations provide females with the opportunity to have a balance but are just skimming the surface. There are other areas that need to be addressed in order to provide women with better WLB including decreasing workload, providing better resources to manage stress, and ensuring the family and husband are cooperative and supportive. The author states that WLB is important for all women and allows them to stay happy and productive. The study suggests that WLB should be addressed at the industry or job position level. The Indian study supports the notion that women face issues with WLB but identifies additional issues that are due to Indian culture. Indians like many other countries place women in the household parent role. Employers need to step in and understand how to provide better policies for women and changing the idea of success from attendance to productivity.

[19] Chung et al. (2020) analyse how flexible working arrangements (FWAs) impacts men's and women's WLB and gender equality differently. Flexible working arrangements including flexi-time and tele-work provide benefits that allow employees to balance their work and family commitments. However, Chung and van der Lippe's (2020) study finds that although men and women access flexible working arrangements differently and that this affects work-life balance differently. Men are more likely to use flexibility to increase work hours and gain rewards associated with work commitment, while women more frequently use FWAs to access care giving responsibilities. The propensity to which men and women use FWAs to enhance their work or care giving commitments are affected by national level policies such as Sweden (egalitarian) vs. Poland (traditional maternal care) as well as workplace culture with more supportive cultures alleviating WLB conflict (for women in particular). Furthermore, flexibility policies can disproportionately affect those of lower social classes as women with less predictable or fuller control of their schedule are typically in lower paid positions. Professionals and especially professional men have more control over their schedules. The article concludes that FWAs should not be seen as a singular policy to fix gender inequalities. For instance, if social norms do

not support paternal care giving or access to flexibility policies are not universal then FWAs can have negative consequences for gender equality.

[20] Katharina Ninaus et al. (2021) contribute to science in several ways. First, we used the JD-R framework to study ICT use at work. This allowed us to take into account both positive and stressful demands (boom and bust), which have received less attention so far. Second, we built the ICT demands-resources model which can assess both demands and resources related to ICT use at work at the same time. Third, we added work-family balance as a mechanism that might explain the link between ICT use and burnout. We found that work-family balance moderates the relation between ICT demands and burnout across Studies 1-3: having a good work-family balance helps prevent burnout, and being satisfied with your work-family balance can protect you from the stress of ICT demands. Prior research has shown the importance of work-family balance for employee health, but our study shows that this also applies to the use of ICTs at work. Fourth, we examined several sectors to get more insight into the effects of ICTs at work. Taken together, our three studies showed that ICTs have a negative, not positive, effect on burnout, work-family balance, and job satisfaction. Therefore, although organizations may want to provide employees with these technologies, they also need to take measures to (1) inform employees about the potential negative effects of ICT use at work, (2) help employees establish guidelines for their ICT use at work, and (3) create a culture where employees can use these ICTs in healthy ways. Instead of exclusively providing employees with new technologies, organizations should ensure that employees know how to use these technologies in ways that prevent them from becoming chronic stressors.

[21] Renkema M. et al. (2024) gives the reader an understanding of where artificial intelligence is currently and will impact academia. What the author learned was AI will affect when, where, and how academics work, research, teach, and serve. The author provided a list of various ways AI is already being used to transform how academics work. The author focuses on the future and explains what academia will look like with the integration of bots. She even provides a framework to understand AI impact during all parts of the knowledge lifecycle. How we discover information, create knowledge, share knowledge, and apply knowledge. This will include what forces will impact us. The framework from this article will help scholars think through the stages of the Future of Work. The author concludes by talking about what are some key topics to research when discussing AI in academia. As well as how to provide policy discussions to help prepare institutions for AI.

[22] Ciccarelli F. C. et al. (2025) hypothesizes that the territorial location of co-working spaces (urban vs. non-urban) affects users' satisfaction with work-life balance (WLBS) and experience of work-life conflict (WLC). Through statistical analysis of a survey administered in Italy between 2022 and 2023, this study shows

that co-working spaces located in non-urban areas help increase WLBS and decrease WLC. Other variables found to affect WLBS and WLC included: (i) job attributes (hours worked and income stability), (ii) worker classification, (iii) gender, (iv) age, (v) multi-local residency, and (vi) commute method. Study hypotheses were supported. Limitations of this study included not distinguishing between types of rural/non-metropolitan co-working spaces (small sample size did not allow) which may vary in their relationship with work-life patterns. This study was also limited to Italy and therefore may lack geographical generality. Furthermore, as a quantitative study, limited information was able to be gathered about the ways in which non-urban co-working spaces facilitate work-life balance which would be better answered through mixed methods study with qualitative interviews of coworking space users and managers. Policy recommendations include healthy work culture within coworking spaces with regards to regulated working hours and the right to disconnect. Income insecurity was identified as another understudied attribute which influences work-life balance, especially among creative workers in co-working environments.

## **Conclusion**

The central conclusion to be drawn from this review is that WLB among women remains a complex issue affected by a combination of organizational, technological and entrenched societal factors. Key takeaways from each article include: that there exists a universal "double burden" of work and family responsibilities placed on women that contributes to high levels of job stress and WLB conflict; However, there are large differences among sectors, with women in IT and academic fields facing the starkest problems with WLB, likely due to constant work "connectivity expectations." While organizations can implement policies to help address WLB for women, it is made clear that these policies such as FWAs in isolation are often not enough to help women maintain WLB and can even serve to reinforce gendered stereotypes if not part of a larger accommodating culture that includes factors such as supervisor support. Technology can help with WLB by allowing women to integrate work and personal tasks, but can also extend work hours and lead to burnout. Finally, while many of the articles focus on organizational interventions to improve WLB for women, non-work factors such as family support and gendered norms play a large role in determining the effectiveness of any given policy or solution. With that in mind, future policies should move away from one-size fits all and take into consideration the specific needs of different sectors and gender differences. Solutions with long term potential must address the systemic and societal reasons for WLB conflict such as organizational culture, supportive management, "right to disconnect" policies and wider social policies like paternal leave and affordable childcare. Women shouldn't have to balance inequality.

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