

A Study on Work–Life Balance of Women Leaders in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

For working professionals, particularly women in leadership positions, work-life balance has grown in importance. Women are becoming more prevalent in leadership roles in academic libraries, including information managers, chief librarians, and library directors. These jobs include user services, staff management, administrative duties, and the use of contemporary information technologies. Even while female leaders make a substantial contribution to the growth of academic libraries, it can be difficult to strike a balance between work and personal obligations.

This research paper examines the work–life balance of women leaders in academic libraries and identifies the major challenges they face in managing professional and personal responsibilities. The study also explores factors such as workload, organizational support, family commitments, stress management, and institutional policies that influence work–life balance. The research is based on both primary and secondary data collected from academic sources, journals, and related studies in the field of library and information science and management.

The findings suggest that women leaders in academic libraries often experience stress due to multiple responsibilities at work and home. Lack of flexible work policies, limited institutional support, and increasing professional expectations can further affect their work–life balance. The study highlights that supportive work environments, flexible work arrangements, professional development opportunities, and strong family support systems can help women leaders manage their responsibilities more effectively. The research concludes that academic institutions should develop gender-sensitive policies and supportive organizational cultures to promote better work–life balance among women leaders. Improving work–life balance will not only enhance the well-being of women professionals but also improve institutional productivity and service quality in academic libraries.

Keywords: Work–Life Balance, Women Leaders, Academic Libraries, Leadership, Organizational Support, Work Stress.

Introduction

Academic libraries are essential to education, research, and innovation in today's knowledge-based society. They are crucial hubs for academic support, digital knowledge services, and information resources in colleges and universities. Academic libraries are becoming dynamic information centres that offer access to electronic resources, research databases, digital repositories, and information literacy initiatives, rather than just being places to store books and journals.

Due to changes in higher education systems and the quick advancement of technology, librarians' roles have grown dramatically over the past few decades. Today's librarians must oversee digital resources, assist with research projects, teach students information literacy, and work with academics to advance their careers. Leadership positions in academic libraries are much more difficult and complex as a result.

Traditionally, women have made up a sizable portion of the library workforce. Librarianship is seen as a career dominated by women in several nations. Despite this significant presence, women have traditionally held more technical or supportive jobs than leadership ones. Nonetheless, the proportion of women in leadership roles, such as information resource coordinators, knowledge managers, chief librarians, and library directors, has significantly increased in recent years.

Through efficient administration, creative information services, and the use of new technology, female leaders in academic libraries make a substantial contribution to the growth of their institutions. Their leadership aids academic institutions in raising the calibre of instruction and research while facilitating better access to information resources. Leadership positions do, however, also come with more obligations and demands from the workplace. It is necessary for female executives to supervise budgets, organize library services, manage personnel, introduce new technologies, and take part in institutional decision-making. Strong leadership abilities, ongoing professional growth, and effective time management are necessary for these duties.

Women leaders must manage their personal and familial commitments in addition to their professional obligations. Women still bear a significant portion of the burden in many communities when it comes to childcare, elder care, household administration, and family

care. Maintaining a work-life balance can be difficult when juggling these obligations with demanding professional employment.

The ability of people to successfully manage their personal and family obligations in addition to their professional commitments is referred to as work-life balance. Maintaining mental health, job satisfaction, and general productivity all depend on a good work-life balance.

Because of their demanding workloads, institutional requirements, and familial responsibilities, female executives in academic libraries frequently face stress. These difficulties may be exacerbated by a lack of organizational support and flexible work practices. Therefore, increasing both professional performance and personal well-being requires an understanding of the work-life balance challenges experienced by female leaders in academic libraries. This study aims to investigate these issues and offer potential solutions to encourage improved work-life balance among female leaders in academic libraries.

Review of Literature

Work-life balance has been widely studied in fields such as management, sociology, psychology, and organizational behaviour. Several researchers have examined the challenges faced by working women, especially those in leadership roles.

Arlie Russell Hochschild (1989) introduced the concept of the “**Second Shift**,” which explains how working women often perform professional duties during the day and household responsibilities after work. According to Hochschild, this dual role increases physical and emotional stress among women and creates difficulties in maintaining work-life balance.

Sue B. Franklin (2008) conducted research on women leadership in academic libraries and observed that although women represent a majority of the library workforce, they often face barriers in attaining and sustaining leadership positions. These barriers include organizational culture, lack of mentoring opportunities, and work-life balance challenges.

Maura A. Smale (2014) discussed the changing role of academic libraries in the digital age. The study emphasized that technological advancements require librarians to constantly update their knowledge and skills. This increasing professional demand may affect the personal lives of librarians, particularly those in leadership positions.

Deborah Lee (2017) examined the importance of organizational support in promoting work-life balance among women leaders. The study suggested that mentoring programs,

professional networks, and supportive workplace policies can help women leaders manage their responsibilities more effectively.

In the Indian context, Shashi Bala (2020) studied work–life balance among women librarians working in academic institutions. The research found that many women librarians face stress due to administrative workload, long working hours, and family responsibilities. The study also highlighted the importance of institutional support in reducing stress and improving job satisfaction.

Another study by Rani and Kumari (2019) focused on the professional challenges faced by women librarians in higher education institutions. The study revealed that women often struggle to balance professional duties with family responsibilities due to social expectations and limited institutional support.

Similarly, Gupta (2021) examined the role of organizational culture in influencing work–life balance among women professionals. The research emphasized that supportive leadership, flexible work policies, and positive workplace environments can significantly improve work–life balance.

These studies indicate that although women have made significant progress in academic library leadership, challenges related to work–life balance continue to exist. Therefore, further research is needed to understand these issues and develop strategies to support women leaders in academic libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this research study are:

1. To understand the concept of work–life balance among women leaders in academic libraries.
2. To identify the major challenges faced by women leaders in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.
3. To examine the impact of work–life balance on the professional performance of women library leaders.
4. To analyse the role of organizational support in maintaining work–life balance.
5. To suggest strategies for improving work–life balance among women leaders in academic libraries.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is an important part of any study as it explains the methods used to collect and analyse data.

Research Design

A descriptive and analytical research design is used in this study. It focuses on comprehending the difficulties women executives in academic libraries experience in striking a work-life balance.

Sources of Data:

Primary Data

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires and personal interactions with women librarians working in leadership positions such as chief librarians, deputy librarians, and library directors in academic institutions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is collected from books, research journals, conference proceedings, research reports, and online academic databases related to library science, management studies, and gender studies.

Sampling Method

The study uses a purposive sampling method to select women leaders working in academic libraries of universities and colleges.

Sample Size

The study includes responses from 30 women librarians working in leadership positions in selected academic institutions.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentages, tables, and graphical representation. Observations and interpretations are used to identify patterns related to work-life balance challenges.

Results and Discussion

Based on the responses collected from women leaders in academic libraries, several key findings were observed.

Table : Major Work–Life Balance Challenges Faced by Women Leaders

Challenges	Percentage of Respondents
Heavy Workload	70%
Family Responsibilities	65%
Time Management Issues	60%
Organizational Expectations	55%
Stress and Mental Pressure	50%

The above table shows that heavy workload and family responsibilities are the most significant challenges affecting work–life balance.

Interpretation

The results indicate that women leaders often struggle to manage professional responsibilities along with personal obligations. Administrative tasks, meetings, digital resource management, and staff supervision require considerable time and energy. At the same time, family responsibilities such as childcare and household duties create additional pressure.

Many respondents also mentioned that institutional expectations related to innovation, research support, and technological development increase professional demands. As a result, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life becomes difficult.

Work–Life Balance Issues Faced by Women Leaders in Academic Libraries

Women leaders in academic libraries face several challenges while managing professional and personal responsibilities.

Heavy Workload

- Leadership roles involve administrative planning, policy development, budgeting, staff supervision, and service innovation. These responsibilities increase workload and reduce personal time.

Family Responsibilities

- Women often carry major responsibilities related to childcare, elder care, and household management. Balancing these duties with professional leadership roles can create stress.

Time Management Challenges

- Library leaders frequently attend meetings, coordinate projects, and manage daily operations. Lack of sufficient time for personal activities may lead to fatigue and burnout.

Organizational Expectations

- Academic institutions expect library leaders to adopt new technologies, improve digital services, and contribute to institutional planning. These expectations increase professional pressure.

Stress and Mental Pressure

- Continuous workload and multiple responsibilities can lead to mental stress, which may affect both personal well-being and professional efficiency.

Strategies for Improving Work–Life Balance

Several strategies can help women leaders maintain better work–life balance.

Flexible Work Policies

- Institutions should introduce flexible working hours, remote work options, and supportive policies to help employees manage personal responsibilities.

Supportive Organizational Environment

- A positive workplace culture that encourages teamwork, collaboration, and mutual respect can reduce stress among employees.

Professional Development Programs

- Training programs on leadership skills, stress management, and time management can help women leaders handle responsibilities effectively.

Time Management Skills

- Effective planning and prioritization of tasks can help leaders manage both professional and personal responsibilities efficiently.

Family and Social Support

- Support from family members and social networks plays an important role in reducing stress and maintaining balance.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made in light of the study's findings:

1. Gender-sensitive working rules should be implemented by academic institutions.
2. It is necessary to provide library personnel with flexible work schedules.
3. To assist female leaders, mentorship programs had to be created.
4. Organizations ought to set up leadership and stress management training courses.
5. Workplace policies that are family-friendly ought to be promoted.

Conclusion

In the creation and administration of academic libraries, female leaders are essential. Their leadership helps educational institutions implement cutting-edge information systems, support research, and enhance library services.

But juggling work obligations with personal and family obligations is still very difficult. Stress and work-life balance are frequently impacted by heavy workloads, institutional demands, and family obligations.

This study emphasizes the value of professional development opportunities, flexible work schedules, and organizational support in assisting female leaders in striking a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. Institutions should encourage gender equality and establish encouraging workplaces so that female leaders may carry out their responsibilities successfully.

Enhancing work-life balance promotes academic libraries' overall productivity, effectiveness, and service quality in addition to women leaders.

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