

Work-Life Balance of Women in Higher Education: Challenges, Determinants, and Impacts

Dr. Rothe Nirmala Amit

Assistant Professor, Hind Seva Mandal's,
Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar, 414001.

Email ID: nirmalarothe2428@gmail.com Mob: 7774076979

Abstract:

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical concern for women professionals in the 21st century, particularly those serving in the higher education sector. Historically, women's roles were largely confined to domestic spheres, with employment limited to factories, farms, or shops for those who were hired. Access to higher education was a luxury often dependent on the attitudes of fathers or husbands. However, the emergence of the fast-growing knowledge economy has fundamentally shifted this paradigm, empowering women through higher instruction and providing them with robust career opportunities. In this modern era, brainpower is the requisite skill rather than physical force, allowing women to enter every industry on par with their male counterparts. Despite these advancements, the "nurturing" or "care-giving" roles remain deeply entrenched as feminine responsibilities. Women are now "wearing multiple hats," attempting to manage high-pressure careers while fulfilling traditional household duties. This "double burden" creates significant pressure, as the workload from both domains often overlaps, leading to a "time-squeeze" where personal well-being is often sacrificed.

This paper examines the dimensions, challenges, and implications of work-life balance for women academics, drawing on empirical studies conducted in various Indian regions. The research identifies that while teaching is often viewed as a preferred profession for women, it carries significant stressors, including heavy workloads, research pressures, and the dual burden of domestic responsibilities.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Women in Higher Education, Components, Challenges, Consequences

Introduction:

Work life balance means balancing the personal life and work life. It is the equilibrium in between work life and professional life. Work life balance is the interaction between work and

other activities that include family, community, leisure, social obligations, health and personal development. Work-life balance is a state where the tensions between the work-life and personal life is minimized by having proper policies, supportive management, provisions at work place and good relations in personal life. Performance and job satisfaction of the employees are said to be affected by work-life balance. Work-life balance of employees helps in reducing the stress level at work and increases job satisfaction.

Organizations have realized the importance of work-life balance with respect to the productivity and the creativity of the employees. Employers are now offering flexible working hours, team outing health care centres, day care centres to motivate the employees to work efficiently. As a result employees feel motivated and become loyal and committed towards the organization as it puts an extra effort to strike a healthy balance between work and life.

Objectives of Study:

- 1) To study the work life balance of women in higher education.
- 2) To study the challenges that the women faces in higher education to maintain WLB.
- 3) To study the work life balance components and consequences of Work life balance
- 4) To study the strategies to improve a good work life balance among women in higher education.

Literature Review:

1. Dr. Veenalatha K. (2019) focused in her research paper that when someone is spending more energy in one life that is work life than the personal life then stress occurs in their life. Here author described the work stress among the employees and how they face the problem of work life balance in their life and also how they overcome it also by adopting various work stress related coping strategies and work life balance initiatives.
2. Payal Mahendrasinh Mahida & Ms. Suchita Chauhan (2023) focused in their study that women face various problems in their personal life as well as professional life and she has to handle it efficiently and Work-life balance is one of the most challenging issues being faced by the women employees in the 21st century. This problem is more for women employees because of the type of roles they play at home and the spillover of personal life over work life and vice-versa. Work life balance for women employees is highly desirable, if there is no job satisfaction & consistency in life, it can create a dilemma to them.

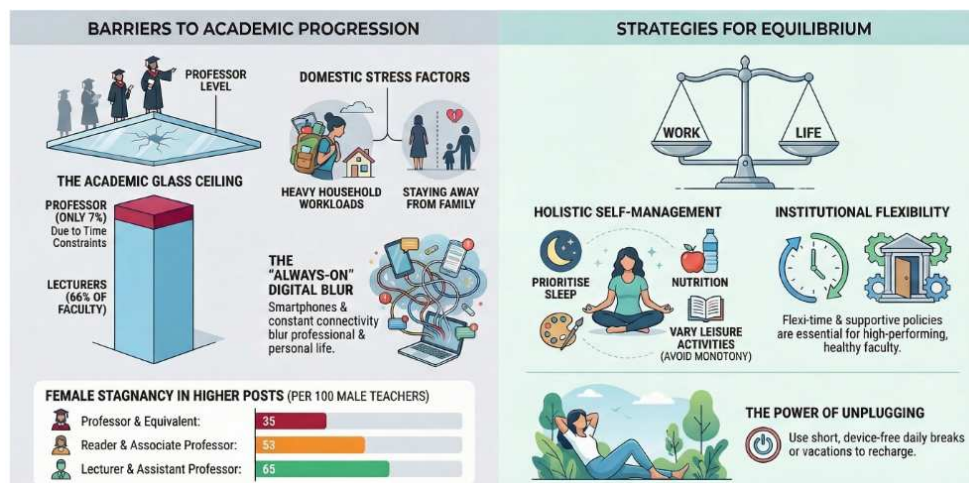
3. Vanitha, A. (2022) studied in her study that Women working in service industries are expected to make greater sacrifices and contributions at work, which can lead to problems in their personal, family, and social lives, as well as challenges with work-life balance.

Research Methodology:

The data for this research purpose is collected by using secondary data sources such as books, magazines, research papers, newspapers, shodhaganga website, internet, thesis, articles etc. The method for this research paper is used qualitative research method and all the data is collected with help of secondary sources.

Work Life Balance:

Work-life balance is one of the most challenging issues being faced by the women employees in the 21st century. This problem is more for women employees because of the type of roles they play at home and the spillover of personal life over work life and vice-versa. consistency in life, it can create a dilemma to them. Work life balance requires attaining equilibrium between professional work and personal work, so that it reduces friction between professional life and domestic life. Work-life balance is a central issue in all types of employment as dual-career families have become coarse and high work demands with long working hours have become the norm. The importance of helping employees achieve a symmetry between the demands of their workplace and their home lives has been stressed. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need for employees to balance their work and non-work lives



Women of the early centuries were largely limited to their kitchens and those who were hired to figure out in factories, farms or shop works. Very few women received the access to higher education and they were driven to be at the clemency of their fathers' or husbands' attitudes towards women and employment. The fast growing knowledge economy has given space for a number of women to be enlightened by higher instruction. Education has not only authorized them, but likewise has made them. robust careers. With brain power being the requisite skill in this knowledge era, rather than endurance or physical force, the women workers look to flood into every industry on par with humans. Only this has indeed become a hard challenge for women as they have to perform a bunch of duties in the home and office as comfortably. As working women get married, they have additional responsibilities and when they become mothers, they bear to manage the principal attention of children and extended household and are thus, under heavier pressure to continue along a career track. Working mothers of today fulfill family duties and also prove to stay fully involved in their careers coping up with the competing demands of their multiple uses. The caring responsibilities that working mothers have put down a great accent on them when it is united with their professional obligations.

Components of Work-Life Balance

Effective management of work-life balance is channeled by several key disciplines that individuals must master:

- **Self-Management:** This involves the recognition that personal resources like time and energy are finite, necessitating proper sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
- **Time Management:** Making optimal use of the day by discerning between tasks that are urgent versus those that are important.
- **Stress Management:** Maintaining tranquillity amidst increasing societal complexity and noise, avoiding the pitfalls of multitasking which often increases pressure.
- **Change Management:** Continually adapting to new methods in both professional and home life to ensure the rate of change does not become overwhelming.
- **Technology Management:** Ensuring that technology serves the individual rather than abusing them, particularly in an era of constant connectivity.
- **Leisure Management:** Recognizing that "time off" is vital to the human experience and varying activities to avoid monotony.

Challenges or problems faced by Women in Higher Education that imbalances the work life:

In Educational sector female teachers are playing vital role and contributing highest in education workforce. Female teachers in India contribute 53.3% of workforce in India's school education sector, their highest recorded proportion. Globally, 67% of teachers in pre-primary through secondary education are women. Working in education professions are facing many challenges and problems this includes gender bias, societal expectations, limited access to resources and the burden balancing work and family responsibilities, which can impact their careers and overall well-being. Gender bias and discrimination playing vital role in educational sectors in hiring, promotions and leadership positions within educational institutions. Traditional gender roles can lead to women being undervalued and underpaid in the education sector, gender stereotypes can affect women ambitions. Indian society expectations and family responsibilities play an important role in the life of women in educational sector. Women are often expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities over their careers. Balancing work and family can be particularly challenging for women in rural areas, where access to childcare and other support services may be limited. Women may face difficulties accessing adequate resources, such as funding for research, professional development, and technology, which can hinder their career growth. Lack of female role models in leadership positions can discourage young women from pursuing careers in education. Inadequate infrastructure and facilities, such as lack of transportation, toilets, and staff rooms, can create challenges for women teachers, especially in rural areas. Women teachers in rural areas may face challenges related to safety, transportation, and lack of access to basic amenities. They may also be assigned duties beyond teaching, such as population surveys and voter card preparation, which can further impact their workload. Women teachers may struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities, leading to stress and burnout. The demands of the teaching profession, combined with the expectations of family life, can create a difficult situation for women.

Consequences of Imbalance

Failure to maintain balance leads to several "grave implications":

1. **Physical Health:** Increased reports of headaches, muscle stress, weight gain, and lack of exercise.
2. **Mental Health:** High levels of stress, depression, and general anxiety.

3. **Professional Productivity:** Health problems and stress likely lead to lower productivity and strength at work.
4. **Relationship Strain:** Long hours and fatigue lead to suffering relationships with partners and children missing out on maternal input.

Recommendations and Strategies

For Organizations and Educational Institutions

- **Work-Life Balance Programs (WLBP):** Institutions should develop employee-friendly programs that increase worker control over the time and place of work.
- **Statutory Benefits:** Introducing statutory benefits and wellness programs is essential for helping women navigate professional obligations.
- **Organizational Culture:** Institutions must foster a culture that respects WLB for all, acknowledging that individuals have different demands at various stages of their life cycle.
- **Infrastructure:** Providing basic amenities such as transportation and adequate staff rooms, especially in rural areas, can alleviate daily stressors.
- **Integrated HR Strategy:** WLB should not be a standalone policy but integrated into the core HR strategy of the organization.
- **Supportive Management:** Management should recognize that stressed employees are less productive and more prone to errors. Sympathy must be converted into action through flexible policies.
- **Flexible Working Conditions:** Implementing flexi-time, reduced working hours, and equitable rewards can significantly enhance job satisfaction.
- **Structured Breaks:** Providing sufficient free time between working hours allows faculty to prepare for classes and focus on professional growth without taking work home.

For Individual Professionals

- **Prioritization:** Women should be encouraged to set their own priorities and seek a "yardstick of control" over how they work.

- **Communication:** It is vital for teaching staff to express their expectations and needs to management, rather than expecting institutions to resolve issues on their own initiative.
- **Identify Time Wasters:** Eliminate activities that do not add value to career or personal life.
- **Build Relaxation Time:** Dedicate 10-15 minutes daily to a hobby or activity that recharges the spirit, such as reading or music.
- **Unplug:** Deliberately turn off technology to recover from weekly stress and allow new ideas to surface.
- **Honesty:** Be honest with oneself about what is needed and wanted from life as a whole, not just work.

Conclusion

Work-life balance is defined as an employee's perception that multiple domains of personal time, family care, and the workplace are maintained with minimum role conflict. It is an inter-role phenomenon reflecting how an individual manages different orientations across various life roles.

In the academic sector, WLB is a critical issue because of the high demands of the profession. Female teachers in India constitute a significant 53.3% of the school education workforce, and globally, women make up 67% of teachers from pre-primary to secondary levels. Attaining balance is not merely a personal desire but a necessity for experiencing a respectable quality of life.

The study of work-life balance among women in higher education reveals that the "best" balance is subjective and varies from person to person. While teaching remains a vital profession for women, the increasing pressures of the modern academic environment necessitate a shift in organizational culture. Effective work-life balance is imperative for staying healthy, gaining job satisfaction, and strengthening family bonds. Ultimately, the performance of an educational institution is intrinsically linked to the performance of its employees. By fostering a congenial environment that respects the personal commitments of women academics, institutions can reduce career stagnancy and ensure their greatest assets—their faculty—can perform par excellence. Achieving this equilibrium is not merely a personal goal for women but a strategic necessity for the advancement of the higher education sector.

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