



## **Work-Life Balance and Mental Health Challenges among Women Professors: An Empirical Investigation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Maintaining a healthy work life balance is crucial for the overall well-being and success of working women. A successful existence also depends on having good mental health. This study investigates the relationship between work life balance and mental health among the women professors. The primary objective of this study is to identify the factors affecting the work and life and mental health of women faculty members. This study underscores the significance of work life balance in working women's lives, highlighting the challenges of balancing career and personal commitments. Despite these challenges, a significant proportion of respondents successfully manage both commitments, employing various strategies to maintain equilibrium.*

**Keywords:** *Work life balance, Mental Health, Sustainable lifestyle, Personal fulfilment, Social well-being, Personal and professional achievement.*

### **Introduction**

Work-life balance is a condition of equilibrium that individuals strive to attain, where they successfully integrate their professional responsibilities with their personal life. Achieving this delicate balance enables individuals to merge their career aspirations with personal fulfillment, ultimately leading to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Mental health is a multifaceted concept that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, exerting a profound influence on an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in their daily lives. Maintaining good mental health necessitates effective stress management, coping with the demands of work, and ensuring that personal well-being is not compromised in the pursuit of professional achievements.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The work-life balance of women professors is a state of equilibrium that they strive to attain, where they efficiently prioritise, allocate, and manage their time to reconcile their work obligations with their personal life. This equilibrium ensures that their work commitments do not overshadow their personal pursuits and overall well-being. Maintaining

a healthy work-life balance is necessary for everyone, regardless of their profession or position. However, achieving and maintaining this balance can be a challenging task. Women faculty members' mental health is positively impacted by maintaining a healthy work-life balance, whereas a poor balance can have negative consequences. Conversely, instability in mental health can compromise work-life balance and job satisfaction, ultimately affecting efficiency and effectiveness within academic settings. Therefore, this research attempts to investigate the tactics employed by women professors to manage their work commitments and family responsibilities, and to investigate the effects of achieving a balance on their mental health.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study undertakes an in-depth examination of the work-life balance of women faculty members, with a specific focus on its influence on their psychological well-being. The study offers a thorough and detailed account of the challenges that women faculty members encounter in managing their dual responsibilities of work and personal life. Additionally, this research endeavour investigates the various elements that affect women faculty members' work-life balance, and examines the strategies and techniques that they employ to effectively manage their personal and professional obligation. The study also examines the degree of life and work satisfaction among female faculty members and offers suggestions for how they might manage their many obligations without sacrificing their health.

### **Scope of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to especially look into the mental health and work-life balance of female academics who work at the Arts and Science College in Nagercoil. This study's main goal is to determine and investigate the variables that affect women academics' work-life balance. Historically, women have faced numerous barriers to education, including being denied access to educational institutions due to widespread illiteracy and restrictive social norms. Women have, however, made great progress in the field of education in recent years, and they now hold a variety of roles in educational institutions, ranging from administration and management to teaching and research. These shifts have led to women taking on a variety of roles in society as well as in their homes. The imbalance between work and life seems to be most likely caused by conflicts between the demands of job and family requirements. The planned study will shed important light on the mental health and work-life balance of female professors and is socially relevant. Furthermore, the study's findings will contribute to improving the overall quality of life for working women.

## Review of Literature

Eugene Elden Blalock (2024), conducted a study on “Teachers’ perception of how a 4-day school week impacts employee attendance, recruitment and retention, and wellness/work-life balance”. The purpose of this research-based report was to examine teachers’ perceptions of switching from a 5-day school week to a 4-day school week. This research showed that transitioning from a 5-day school week to a 4-day school week positively affected teachers’ perceptions. Overwhelmingly, teachers communicated how the 4DSW improved their wellness/work-life balance by allowing them to spend more time with their families and attend to their personal affairs.

Dr. Prasad Jeevan Pathak (2024), conducted a study on “Work-life balance – a key for job satisfaction and remedy to overcome job stress”. This study has gone further to determine and quote a few top factors that have an impact on the Job Satisfaction and Job Stress for the employees. This study concluded that there is an indirect relation between Job Satisfaction and Job Stress. More Job Satisfaction, less Job Stress. From the factors affecting the Job Stress and Job Satisfaction, Organisations should ensure to maintain Work-Life balance, Supportive work environment along with Employee Job Security. This will ensure low Job Stress and more Job Satisfaction among the employees. More the Job Satisfaction, the more the productivity of the employee.

Armaana Malhotra (2024), conducted a study on “Job Autonomy, Work life balance and Job Satisfaction among IT Professionals”. This study synthesizes research findings on work-life balance in the IT sector, examining various factors influencing employees' ability to manage work-related stressors and achieve satisfaction in both their professional and personal lives. It revealed a complex interplay of factors that influence employees' perceptions and well-being. Work-life balance significantly influences job satisfaction, with a strong positive correlation between WLB and JS. This study concluded that job autonomy, a key determinant of job satisfaction, may vary within the IT sector, with factors like task complexity, team dynamics, and organizational structure potentially impacting perceptions.

Dr. Anita Patel, Dr. Jacksan Judan Fernandes (2023), conducted a study on “The Essence of Work-Life Balance and Solutions”. The objective of this paper is to first comprehend the idea of work-life balance, its significance and problems in different professions, and then to determine how work-life balance impacts one's physical, economic, psychological, societal, spiritual, and environmental wellbeing of employees. It concluded that the Work-life balance rules are evident in most companies. Such solutions boost employee dedication, contentment, innovation, and problem-solving. However, work-life

balance is challenging to achieve due to the diversity of employee and company needs. Despite these challenges, it's evident that employees need an open, trusting, autonomous, and interactive workplace.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- ❖ To examine and identify the various factors that affect the work-life balance and female faculty members' mental health.
- ❖ To investigate and explore the strategies and practices adopted by women faculty members to effectively balance their professional responsibilities and personal obligations.

### **Methodology**

The researcher's goal in this study was to investigate the mental health and work-life balance of female academics. The data on women faculty members' work-life balance was gathered, examined, and tabulated.

### **Sampling Method**

The study is descriptive and analytical. It is descriptive in the sense that it exists at present and it includes findings and facts. It is analytical in the sense that it involves analysis and interpretation of data. The required data relating to the research were obtained through a well-structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed for data collection.

### **Sample Size**

Data was gathered from 115 respondents in the Nagercoil research region.

### **Sources for Collecting of Data**

Data for this study was gathered from both primary and secondary sources.

### **Data Analysis Tools**

The factors influencing work-life balance, the effect of mental health on job happiness, and the methods professors employ to manage their work-life obligations are all examined using statistical tools. Software called SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyse the data.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **Factors that impact mental health and work-life balance**

Maintaining healthy professional-personal life equilibrium can be challenging due to competing demands and responsibilities that pull individuals in different directions.

### Factors that impact mental health and work-life balance

Particulars	Mean score	Rank
Excess workload	8.52	I
Excess household work	7.55	III
Flexible work arrangements	6.58	VI
Family responsibilities	8.37	II
Equitable compensation for work performed	5.87	VII
Support from peers, family and management	6.83	V
Overtime working	7.43	IV
Administrative works	5.86	VIII
Colleagues' dismissive or cooperative attitude towards personal and family needs	3.50	IX
Family members' disapproval or lack of understanding regarding work demands	2.55	XI
Travelling far away from work place	2.94	X

#### Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that excess workload ranks first with the mean score of 8.52 and family responsibilities ranks second with the mean score of 8.37 and excess household work ranks third with the mean score of 7.55 and family members disapproval ranks last with the mean score of 2.55. The majority of those surveyed believe that an excessive workload jeopardises their work-life balance.

#### Strategies to attain a balance between work and life

Effective management of work and life commitments requires intentional approaches and practices that promote balance and well-being.

#### Strategies to attain a balance between work and life

S. No.	Particulars	Mean score	Rank
1	Sharing family responsibilities with spouse/family members/Friends.	3.30	II
2	Completing lesson plans on schedule.	3.68	I
3	Completing all college related tasks on campus.	2.64	IV
4	Utilizing holidays to spend quality time with family.	2.33	V
5	Adapting and gaining new knowledge	3.05	III

#### Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that the completion of portion on time ranks first with the mean score of 3.68 and sharing family responsibilities ranks second with the mean score of 3.30 and adapting new knowledge ranks third with the mean score of 3.05 as well as spending time with family ranks last with the mean score of 2.33. The significant proportion of the respondents should complete their teaching portions on time; this will help to manage the work and life commitments.

### **Findings**

- ❖ Excess workload ranks first with the mean score of 8.52 and family responsibilities ranks second with the mean score of 8.37 and excess household work ranks third with the mean score of 7.55 and Family members disapproval ranks last with the mean score of 2.55.
- ❖ Completion of portion on time ranks first with the mean score of 3.68 and sharing family responsibilities ranks second with the mean score of 3.30 and adapting new knowledge ranks third with the mean score of 3.05 and utilizing holidays to spend quality time with family ranks last with the mean score of 2.33.

### **Suggestions**

- ❖ Many respondents expressed challenges in prioritizing self-care and finding time for personal hobbies due to overwhelming academic demands. To mitigate this issue, professors can establish clear boundaries and realistic expectations for academic work, thereby preventing it from encroaching on their personal lives.
- ❖ Respondents cited numerous distractions during work hours, leading to overtime. To address this, professors can utilize time-blocking tools to schedule reminders and breaks, enhancing productivity and work life balance without compromising academic rigor.
- ❖ Most respondents reported that excessive workload negatively impacts their work life balance. To mitigate this, they propose delegating less urgent tasks, setting realistic Work Hour Limits and Prioritizing Manageable Tasks Based On Deadlines.

### **Conclusion**

Work life balances are very crucial in every working woman's life and maintaining the optimal mental well-being is also essential to live their life peacefully. This study underscores the significant role of work life balance in working women's lives, highlighting the challenges of balancing career and personal commitments. Despite these challenges, the significant proportion of the respondents successfully manages both commitments, employing various strategies to maintain equilibrium. However, a notable exception

emerged, as some respondents sacrificed quality family time. However, the study found that the majority of participants were content with their present work-life balance.

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