



# ADVANCING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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*Full Length Research Paper*

## **Women in the Workplace: An Empirical Analysis of the Challenge of the Workload**

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Female employment throughout the world has witnessed a drastic paradigm shift. Several factors like improving literacy, change in the socio-economic scenario, and zest for financial independence and ambition are responsible for this changing trend. Education sector is the largest employer of women in India and is witnessing drastic changes. The present study examines how these changes have specifically impacted this sector. Work-life balance (WLB) of women working in various universities of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is examined. Special emphasis is laid on the work pressure women face in the course of trying to balance their professional life with their personal life. The method draws on the survey of 104 married female staff working on a substantive basis in higher education. The analysis of the paper measures the impact of workload on the work-life balance of women professionals. The results show that most working women are upset with the amount of workload in the universities. Women who work for longer hours tend to be more dissatisfied with their work-life balance. The study strongly suggests that academic expectations must be attuned with the demands of a woman's personal life or else a woman can never give her best!

**Keywords: paradigm, work pressure, workload, dissatisfaction**

Female workforce has grown rapidly in the past few decades worldwide. Rise in literacy, need for financial independence, changing socio-economic scenario and attitude are considered some of the reasons. However, a working woman often finds herself at cross-roads between her professional and personal obligations. Many women succumb to these enormous pressures and quit their jobs. According International Labor Organization (ILO), India Labour Market Update (July 2017), the labor force participation rate for women is one of the lowest in the world. According to World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report (2017), the labor force participation rate for women in 2017 was only 28.5% compared to 82% for men. By 2025, \$700 billion can be added to India's GDP if women's labor participation is increased by 10% (Woetzel et al., 2015).

Therefore, factors like better job opportunities, more educational opportunities for women, better family and social attitudes towards women can go a long way in increasing labor force participation rate for women. As a matter of fact, women employment is more or less dependent upon the inter-play of above-mentioned factors. It is pertinent to mention that the nature of a teaching job is taxing because it requires a deep commitment in terms of time requirements, skills and knowledge

(Sadler, 2010). All these requisites can sometimes adversely affect the other important aspects of a woman's life. Working women often find themselves trying to optimize their time and efforts vis-à-vis to the divergent demands of work and life (Hildebrandt, 2006). The increasing career graph of women is a testimony to this fact and as a consequence work-life balance is a matter of serious concern. Philipsen and Bostic (2010) support this fact by providing a fresh perspective on the career graph of women and its collision with their work-life balance. The authors report on the experiences of women at early, mid and late career stages and strongly stress on the need to strive for a healthy work-life balance.

According to the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) released by Labour Bureau of India for FY-2017; women had a higher share of employment in education sector with 24.47 lakh workers. The survey covered major 8 sectors and 18 sub-sectors of Indian economy namely construction, manufacturing, transport, trade, education, health, IT and BPO, accommodation and restaurant (The Indian Express, 2019). In the light of the above facts, education sector employs a significant number of women. Henceforth, their work-life balance equation is a matter of paramount importance.

The higher education sector in India has witnessed a dramatic change. Focus has been on increasing student enrollment, privatization of education, employment generation in addition to improving the overall quality and standards. Since, education is a service sector with stakeholders like students, parents, employers, society and other broad forces; employees are often under the pressure of tremendous expectations from all these quarters. The current era is an era of knowledge economy and is fueled by teaching, research, collaborations, project work, workshops, seminars and better curriculum from various colleges and universities. The quest to grow and flourish has changed the culture and working pattern of every educational institute and has more or less molded it on lines of corporate culture. Undoubtedly, there have been many positive takeaways from corporations but elements like long working hours, deadlines, work pressure etc. have also made inroads into higher education. This has further burdened female employees who often find themselves unable to cope up with the unprecedented pressures of many roles and responsibilities they have to perform.

The picture of Female Labor Force Participation does not look very promising in the developing world. Sorsa et al. (2015) were puzzled that despite sturdy growth, female labor force participation is on a decline over the past decade. Women labor participation can induce inclusive growth; however, the labor force participation rate of women does not look good. A report by International Monetary Fund (IMF) titled 'Women Workers in India: Why So Few Among So Many?' finds that India has one of the lowest female labor force participation among peer countries (Das et al., 2015). According to Annette Dixon, World Bank South Asia Vice President, "In 2012, only 27 percent of adult Indian women had a job, or were actively looking for one, compared to 79 percent of men. In fact, almost 20 million women had dropped out of the workforce between 2005 and 2012. This is equivalent to the entire population of Sri Lanka. India ranks 120 among 131 countries in female labor force participation rates and rates of gender-based violence remain unacceptably high. It's hard to develop in an inclusive and sustainable way when half of the population is not fully participating in the economy. At 17% of GDP, the economic contribution of Indian women is less than half the global average, and compares unfavorably to the 40% in China, for instance. India could boost its growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9 percent per year if around 50% of women could join the work force."

### Literature Review

Numerous scholars have defined work-life balance in different ways. Clark and his co-authors define work-life balance in simple terms as "equilibrium or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life" (Clark et al., 2004, p. 121-140). The construct has been modified gradually and for some the term 'balance' means "mutual reinforcement of the two spheres, such as work-personal life integration, work-life articulation, or work-personal life harmonization" (Crompton & Brockman, 2006).

Work-life balance of employees is measured by three parameters: (a) working time arrangements in terms of total working hours and flexibility; (b) for those with parenting or other care responsibilities, parental leave entitlements in terms of maternity, paternity leaves etc.; and (c) child care provisions (McDonald et al., 2005). According to Grzywacz and Carlson (2007), work life balance is "an accomplishment of different roles related to expectations that are shared or negotiated between an individual and role-related partners" (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 455-471). Researchers have further explored the concept of Work-Life Balance, increasing the necessity of understanding some holistic definitions also. Kalliath and Brough (2008) define work-life balance as "a balance among six factors related to roles, such as multiplicity, equity, level of satisfaction, fulfilment of role salience, conflict and facilitation, and perceived control between multiple roles" (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Some researchers define work-life balance in an absolutistic way and press on the requirement of adopting a situational perspective to understand the construct. Definitions framed from a situational point of view imply that meaning of work-life balance varies person to person. In other words, depending upon personal context, the definition of work-life balance can vary according to life-stage, income level, gender or family structure (Reiter, 2007).

Valcour (2007) examined the relationship of work-life balance with work hours, job complexity and control over work time; and found an association suggesting that job characteristics influences an individual's work-life balance. Conversely, factors like high work pressure, unsupportive management, long working hours and less control over one's workload have a negative effect on work-life balance (Allan, Loudoun, & Peetz, 2007).

Women have to face unique challenges in balancing the opposing demands of their work and life aspects as they are supposed to fulfill so many additional roles like the role of a wife, mother and home-maker. Combining a career with marriage often results in uncertainty. This ambivalence is further heightened by the birth of children. Marriage, children and the load of other responsibilities; all adversely affect a woman's career prospects as well as progression (Saleem et al., 2014). Research indicates that women are less satisfied with work-life balance than men (Tomer et al., 2015). Gender discrimination over-burdens women with tasks which ideally should have been divided between the sexes. This negatively affects a woman's satisfaction with work-life balance (Tomer et al., 2015). Thus, female employees often face difficulties in achieving a healthy work-life balance (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Creating equilibrium between their personal and professional roles often creates conflicts (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Studies have indicated that women need flexibility and control over their work and prefer to start their own businesses (Agarwal and Lenka, 2015).

Women academicians view about their work-life balance is heavily influenced by their socio-cultural life and attitudes about

paid-work and unpaid care (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). The problem of work-life balance, particularly for women is acknowledged by many studies and a lot of research has been done on women in academics. However, there is a paucity of research on women in higher education sector (Bradley, 2000). This sector remains largely uninvestigated and merits attention. Therefore, despite of the incredible progress women have made, there are areas where their growth has been limited. Better work-life balance practices will ensure an appropriate presence and participation of women in the higher echelons of education.

### Methods

The present study included the female staff at three universities in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The state presents a dismal picture of female employment percentage which increased from 12.3% to 16.4 % during 2012-14; however, it fell sharply to only 7.9% during 2015-2016 (Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2016).

Many factors, including non-economic and social factors can be held responsible for this decline (Swain & Wallentin, 2008). In this context, the number of women working in higher education is lower than their male counterparts (Beede et al., 2011). The respondents were limited to female employees in the largest universities of the state in terms of student enrollment. Therefore, the top three large universities have been selected. Working in a large institute may also mean a higher level of work pressure which in turn has an impact on work-life balance (White et al., 2003). Frone et al. (1992) suggested that factors like work pressure and work overload may cause interference between work and family roles. Hence, concepts under investigation are expected to manifest the challenges of work load especially work pressure and working hours on the work-life balance of working women.

According to Toffoletti and Starr (2016), married women in academia tend to experience additional hurdles that exert a negative influence on their work-life balance. Therefore, the scope was limited to married female staff working on substantive basis to avoid any significant differences in faculty roles in terms of marital status and nature of appointment. Furthermore, only permanent married teaching staff was selected as the respondents for this study. Preliminary inquiries at the offices of these universities indicated that the total number of female teaching staff in these universities was approximately 200. Of which only 157 could be contacted for the survey, and 110 completed responses were collected within the target time, wherein 6 responses were rejected because of incomplete data fragments. Therefore, 104 responses were considered suitable for data analysis. The instrument used for data collection is described in the section following later.

### Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

The primary objective of this article is to explore the status of work-life balance, and the challenges and problems encountered by female staff at various universities in J&K in terms of work load. The secondary objective was to investigate how in

particular work load is a significant challenge in terms of working hours and work pressure.

The following hypotheses were formed to explore the context of female employees at various universities of J&K.

**H1:** Do factors like working hours and work pressure influence work-life balance?

**H2:** Are demographic factors crucial in influencing work-life balance?

### Instrumentation

The items in the questionnaire used the Likert Scale response (1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). The instrument included the following two sections:

(A) Work Related information such as extra hours of work done, whether additional work is taken home, energy level at the end of the end, ability of manage multiple projects/deadlines and work pressure experienced.

(B) Demographic information including age group, number of children, designation, work experience etc.

### Data Analysis and Interpretations

#### Sample Characteristics

In the sample, 5%, 44%, 19% and 32% respondents were in the age group of less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years and above 50 years respectively. Among the respondents, 17.1%, 23.7%, 22.7% and 36.8% had a teaching experience of up to 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years respectively. Almost half i.e., 42% had one child where as 46%, 12% had two and more than two children respectively. The respondent sample had the following designations: Assistant Professors (66%), Associate Professors (13%), Professors (14%), Administrators (3%) and Others (4%) (see Table 1).

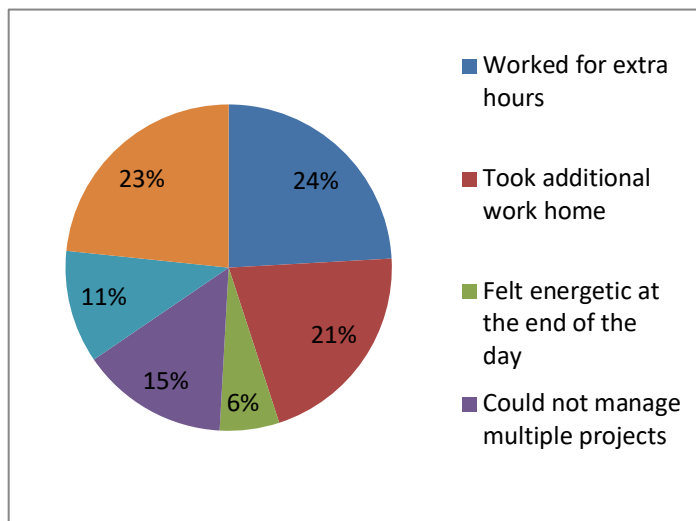
Among the respondents in the sample, 57.2% worked for extra hours, whereas 49.5% took additional work home. Only 14% respondents indicated that they feel energetic at the end of the day. Moreover, 34.6% of the respondents indicated that they cannot manage multiple projects whereas 26.5% respondents were unable to meet prescribed deadlines. An overwhelming 55.4% feel pressurized while working on a deadline. The data has been presented in the following figure.

**Table 1**  
*Sample Characteristics*

| Demographic Variable       | Percentage     |      |
|----------------------------|----------------|------|
| <b>Age</b>                 | Less than 30   | 5.0  |
|                            | 31-40          | 44.0 |
|                            | 41-50          | 19.0 |
|                            | Above 50       | 32.0 |
| <b>Teaching Experience</b> | Up to 5 years  | 17.1 |
|                            | 6-10           | 23.7 |
|                            | 11-15          | 22.7 |
|                            | Above 15 years | 36.8 |

|                           |                      |      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------|
| <b>Number of Children</b> | None                 | 0.0  |
|                           | One                  | 42.0 |
|                           | Two                  | 46.0 |
|                           | More than two        | 12.0 |
| <b>Designation</b>        | Assistant Professors | 66.0 |
|                           | Associate Professors | 13.0 |
|                           | Professors           | 14.0 |
|                           | Administrators       | 3.0  |
|                           | Others               | 4.0  |

**Figure 1**



**Data Analysis**

**Validity and Reliability**

The items in the questionnaire were prepared after conducting a through literature review on the subject. The questionnaire was also adapted as per nature of the current study. The issue of determining the appropriateness of the questionnaire to be able to measure the construct of work-life balance was also discussed with a few experts in the field of marketing, human resources, english and psychology. Discussions were also held with some respondents.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha test. The test result (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.745, and number of items = 50) indicates that items used in the current study were reliable for measuring work-life balance as a construct. The generally acceptable value of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951); however, it is better to have its value close to 0.80 (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 2**

*Reliability Analysis*

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 0.745            | 50              |

Similarly, Table 3 presents the results of Validity Analysis and the results indicate that the items have sound validity parameters.

**Table 3**

*Validity Analysis*

| Constructs/ Factors  | SFL  | AVE  | MSV   | CR   |
|----------------------|------|------|-------|------|
| 1. Work Load         | .813 | .621 | 0.371 | .835 |
| 2. Work-Life Balance | .817 | .677 | 0.241 | .805 |

The results show SFL (Standard Factor Loadings), AVE (Average Variance Extracted), MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) and CR (Composite Reliability) of various constructs. In order to establish the convergent validity of the scale, AVE should be more than 0.5 and SFL greater than 0.6 (Greene, 2008). It is observed from the above table; all the given constructs have satisfied the requisites confirming convergent validity. In order to establish Discriminant Validity, MSV must be less than AVE (Lucas, Diener & Suh, 1996). The same has been observed in our case (see Table 2). Henceforth, reliability analysis suggests that items in the questionnaire are convincing enough to enable the measurement of the said constructs correctly.

**Work-Life Balance and the Challenge of Work Load**

The present study hypothesized that work load has an impact on the Work-Life Balance of working women. Table 4 presents the mean scores. The test results indicate that there is a negative impact of work load on work-life balance of working women.

**Table 4**

*Impact of Work Load on Work-Life Balance of Working Women*

| Independent variable     | Dependent variable |      |                |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------|----------------|
|                          | Work-Life Balance  | Beta | R <sup>2</sup> |
| Work Hours               | -.274*             | .249 | .374           |
| Work Pressure            | -.326**            | .231 |                |
| <b>Overall Work Load</b> | -.565**            | .374 |                |

\*p < .001; \*\* p < .01; ns = not significant

As can be observed from the above table, all the antecedents of work-life balance for work load explain a variance of (R2=0.374) in the construct of Work Load. The more significant antecedent is Work Hours(β=.249), followed by Work Pressure (β=.231). Also, there is a highly significant negative relationship between work load and work-life balance(p= -.565). Findings by Wirtz, Nachreiner & Rolfes (2011), Omar, Mohd & Ariffin

(2015) & Skinner & Pocock (2008) also arrive at a statistically significant negative association between work load and work-life balance.

**Descriptive Statistics of Responses**

Among the respondents, 52.7% reported that they work for extra hours to get work done; 45.9% take additional work to home; just 18% respondents reported that they felt energetic at the end of the day; 36.4% reported that they were not able to manage multiple projects; 54.5% reported that they felt pressurized while working on a deadline; however a considerable 76.5% feel successful in managing home and work demands; 81% reported that they were happy with the contributions that they make towards home and family; 60.3% reported that they had time to reach their personal as well as professional goals satisfactorily; and 67.7% reported that they were satisfied with the way they divided time between work and personal life. This data indicates that work load is a dominant predictor of work-life balance. Most individuals find work load too challenging or overwhelming. Unmanageable work load is bound to create an imbalance in the work and non-work equation of an employee.

As observed in Table 5, among the items in the questionnaire regarding Work Load, the descriptive statistics indicate that the minimum value was 8 and the maximum score was 24 with a mean of 17.03 and standard deviation was 2.751 for the sample size. The responses for work-life balance indicates a minimum and maximum score varied from 3 to 22 and the mean was 9.88. Standard deviation for the sample is 2.959.

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Responses for Work-Load and Work-Life Balance.*

| Construct                | N          | Minimum  | Maximum   | Mean         | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Work Load</b>         | <b>104</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>17.03</b> | <b>2.751</b>   |
| Work Hours               | 104        | 3        | 11        | 5.35         | 1.982          |
| Work Pressure            | 104        | 3        | 19        | 12.77        | 2.220          |
| <b>Work-Life Balance</b> | <b>104</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>9.88</b>  | <b>2.959</b>   |

**A Comparative Demographic Analysis**

The following hypotheses were to be tested on the total work-life balance score:

A. H1: WLB has no relation with the Age of the female employees: -

Generally, family as well as professional responsibilities are expected to be higher among individuals in a higher age group. This can have an adverse bearing on the WLB score. Also, the result of the ANOVA [F=1.692 and sig=0.300] indicates no significant difference between the WLB scores among age groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

B. H2: WLB does not differ among individuals with Teaching Experience of the female employees: -

The result of the ANOVA [F=0.987 and sig=0.605] indicates no significant differences among respondents with varying teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

C. H3: WLB has no relation with the Number of Children of the female employees: -

In general, more the number of children, lower their WLB becomes. The result of ANOVA [F (4, 41) = 2.930 and sig=0.029] indicates that the WLB score depends on the number of children (see Table 6). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

D. H4: WLB has no relation with the Designation of the female employees: -

The result of the ANOVA [F=0.879 and sig=0.705] indicates no significant differences among respondents with varying teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 6**  
*ANOVA for Work-Life Balance w.r.t Number of Children.*

| Demographic Variable      | Categories    | N    | Mean | S.D   | ANOVA (F) | Sig.   |
|---------------------------|---------------|------|------|-------|-----------|--------|
| <b>Number of Children</b> | One           | 42.0 | 9.65 | 2.157 | 2.930     | 0.029* |
|                           | Two           | 46.0 | 8.07 | 2.000 |           |        |
|                           | More than two | 12.0 | 7.47 | 2.217 |           |        |

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; ns = not significant

**Findings and Discussion**

The results indicate that work load is a problem and impacts the WLB of working women. The management and experience of work load in terms of length of working hours and work pressure, in light of our findings, supports our argument that excessive work load does not ensure a healthy work-life balance. As a matter of fact, work load emerged as a strong predictor of negative work-life balance. The repercussions of excessive work load show remarkably as strain on an individual's time and emotions. Such kind of strain clearly disturbs one's life outside of work (Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997).

The results indicate that excessive work load is an important factor that disturbs the work-life balance equation of working women. Long working hours and undue work pressure were found to be predominant factors that create a negative work-life balance for women in this study. Their age, teaching experience and designation did not incur any significant difference in their perceptions regarding work-life balance in general and problems created by work load in particular. However, the number of children did influence their perception of a low work-life balance. The results of the current study are in tune with other research findings discussed already in the literature review.

A related study on female teachers indicated significant differences in work-life balance caused by age, marital status and dependent children (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Furthermore, long working hours were predominantly found to affect work-life balance. Among the respondents, 92% worked for more than five days a week with 71% respondents claiming that they work for more than eight hours per day. The results therefore indicated a significant correlation with working hours. Moreover, those who could either delegate their work or did not stay in the office for long reported significantly higher levels of work-life balance.

All these findings also indicate that over-time at work is an impediment towards obtaining a positive work-life balance. Respondents who were unable to manage long working hours that resulted in a low work-life balance also had difficulties caused by work pressure. The respondent's perception of work pressure also had a significant effect on work-life balance. Too much pressure in terms of overtime hours, tight deadlines and performance pressure can lead to fatigue, irritability, mood swings and burnout at last. This not only affects the health and well-being of employees but also has severe repercussions on the organization's bottomline. Thus, a greater understanding and an improved approach towards the issue of work pressure needs to be achieved.

The respondents who perceived their work pressure as satisfactory, reported a higher level of work-life balance score. A probable interpretation for this may be that work-life balance is not a stand-alone concept but is deeply affected by work load. Some of the factors affecting work-life balance due to work pressure can be improved by working on a deadline with absolute discipline so that undue pressure is not felt later on. This can also be achieved by avoiding procrastination. Similar findings were reported by Syrek, Apostel & Antoni (2013) in their study establishing a negative and significant relationship between work pressure and work-life balance.

Results also indicated that age, designation and teaching experience of working women is not significantly correlated to work-life balance. Teaching Experience of the female is not differentiated by the perception of attaining a satisfactory work-life balance. Similar relationship is observed regarding designation and age. However, number of children have shown a significant relationship with work-life balance. This relationship can be attributed to several factors such as number of dependents especially children. For females with young children work load tends to accumulate drastically. In fact, female employees perceive higher levels of challenges in maintaining work and home after having children.

### **Implications, Suggestions and Limitations**

Several implications and suggestions can be made from the study. Dissatisfaction with work-life balance seems to increase among those women who work for long hours. Therefore, workplaces must sensitize towards the set of expectations women can have from them for example child care provision, maternity leave, separate feeding room and similar other things.

Organizations need to frame policies that are compatible with the personal life of a woman e.g. her parenting needs. Women have achieved a lot in various professions. Therefore, is an important responsibility of organizations to ensure that the progress made by women does not stall due to their continuous work-life balance concerns. Women must not be allowed to get unfairly tossed between the tall expectations of being great mothers and successful career women at the same time. Furthermore, they must be made to take up fair and justifiable work load. The lack of empathy and compassion in this regard can adversely affect the delicate balance they try to maintain between work and life.

The present study was limited to only some universities of J&K; therefore, a larger sample size that includes other universities as well as colleges is required. This will enable the researchers to attain more conclusive findings regarding the impact of work load on work-life balance. The results can also be compared with males in the chosen field and other professional fields as well.

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