Balancing Professional and Personal Life: Analyzing Work-Life Integration Among Women in the Service Industry of Kanpur

Anamika Srivastava [1], Dr. Sapan Asthana[2]

[1] *Assistant professor, Jagran College of Arts Science and Commerce, India*
[2] *Assistant Professor, Maharishi School of Business Management, India Email:* anamikajagran123@gmail.com Sapan.asthana@muit.in

ABSTRACT:

For working women in the service industry in particular, work-life balance (WLB) is a vital component of both professional and personal well-being. The difficulties, contributing elements, and tactics related to attaining work-life balance for women working in the Kanpur area's service sector are the main topics of this study. Economic development has benefited greatly from the growing number of women in the workforce, but juggling job obligations with personal and family obligations has become more difficult. The main factors affecting work-life balance are examined in this study, including long workdays, stress at work, workplace flexibility, employer assistance, social expectations, and family obligations. The study examines work-life balance trends among women in a range of service industries, including banking, healthcare, education, hospitality, and IT services, using both primary and secondary data. The study investigates working women's perspectives and experiences through surveys and interviews, emphasizing the effects of corporate rules, task distribution, and the availability of support networks like childcare centers and remote work choices. The results show that even while some companies have implemented flexible work arrangements, many women still find it difficult to strike a balance between their home and professional life. Burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased productivity are frequently caused by stress at work, a lack of a supportive workplace culture, and societal expectations. The report also clarifies the coping skills that women utilize, including time management techniques, assigning domestic duties to others, and wellness initiatives offered by employers. The study's recommendations for improving work-life balance for women in the service industry include workplace changes, regulatory initiatives, and the encouragement of gender-inclusive organizational tactics. It highlights the necessity of raising awareness and enacting policies to guarantee a positive workplace that empowers women to flourish in Kanpur's expanding service sector on both a personal and professional level.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Working Women, Service Sector, Kanpur Region, Workplace Flexibility, Job Stress, Organizational Policies, Family Responsibilities, Employee Well-being, Gender-Inclusive Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the idea of work-life balance (WLB) has drawn a lot of attention, particularly from working women in the service industry. The ability to manage professional obligations while leading a satisfying personal life is known as work-life balance. Finding this balance becomes essential for women's general well-being, job happiness, and productivity in the modern workforce, as they actively participate in a variety of industries. High degrees of dedication, engagement with customers, and long work hours are necessary in the service sector, which encompasses sectors including healthcare, education, banking, hospitality, and information technology. As more women enter this field, there is a greater need to examine their organizational support networks, coping strategies, and work-life balance issues in detail. Being a commercial and industrial center in Uttar Pradesh, the Kanpur region has seen a rise in employment in the service sector, which makes a thorough grasp of the dynamics of work-life balance that women in this area face even more important. Numerous elements, such as workplace culture, job demands, flexibility in working hours, employer policies, and family duties, frequently have an impact on work-life balance. These elements are critical in determining how well women in the service industry are able to balance their personal and work life. Managing childcare, household duties, and personal well-being can be challenging due to the demands of lengthy workdays, high levels of job-related stress, and the requirement for ongoing professional development. Women are still expected to provide the majority of care in traditional Indian society, which makes it even harder for them to handle the demands of a demanding work. Many women still have difficulty juggling their duties as caretakers and workers, even in the face of progressive workplace policies and cultural shifts towards gender equality. Understanding these issues is essential to creating strategies and regulations that effectively promote women's work-life balance in Kanpur, where the service industry is growing quickly. The effect of workplace culture on work-life balance is one of the main issues facing working women in the service industry. Long work hours are frequently required by companies that place a high priority on customer service and productivity, which may not be possible for women with personal obligations. Without flexible work schedules, many women struggle to balance work and family obligations, which can result in stress and burnout. These difficulties are made worse by the absence of supportive workplace policies like paid maternity leave, daycare centers, and remote work choices. Due to their incapacity to successfully balance their twin responsibilities, many women in the service industry either face career stagnation or are forced to abandon their positions. This has an effect on their mental and emotional health in addition to their financial freedom. Notwithstanding its economic expansion, the Kanpur region still lacks sufficient workplace changes that address the unique requirements of women

working in the service industry. Fostering a more inclusive and balanced work environment requires addressing these concerns through progressive workplace regulations and company activities. Stress at work is another major issue that women in the service industry encounter, and it has a direct impact on their work-life balance. Because of their nature, service-oriented positions necessitate constant client engagement, deadline compliance, dispute resolution, and role adaptation. For example, women in the healthcare industry frequently face demanding circumstances that necessitate extended shifts and emergency reactions. In a similar vein, educators are expected to balance administrative and classroom responsibilities, which leaves little time for personal pursuits. Professionals in banking and finance are frequently under tremendous pressure to manage clients, reach goals, and complete financial transactions, which raises their stress levels. Anxiety, exhaustion, and discontent can result from the compounding influence of these stressors, which can ultimately affect one's personal and professional well-being. Women in Kanpur's service industry struggle to strike a healthy balance between their home and professional life in the absence of sufficient support systems. Women's work-life balance in the service industry is significantly shaped by their family obligations. An uneven division of domestic duties is frequently the result of India's traditional belief that women should be the primary caregivers. Managing office work during the day and family responsibilities in the evening is a common situation for working women in Kanpur. Women are burdened more when family members do not share household duties, which leaves them with less time for leisure or self-care. Another major issue is childcare, since working mothers often rely on extended family members for support or struggle to find trustworthy daycare providers. Women without access to robust support networks frequently suffer from emotional anguish and feelings of guilt, which can negatively impact their mental health. Women are also under increased pressure to perform well at work and at home due to cultural norms and traditional gender roles, which causes stress and fatigue. Many working women in the service industry use a variety of coping strategies to successfully manage their work-life balance in spite of these obstacles. Among the most important tactics used by women to balance their personal and professional obligations are time management, responsibility delegation, and requesting organizational support. Maintaining a work-life balance is frequently simpler for women who work for companies that provide paid parental leave, remote work choices, and flexible working hours. Digital calendars, online grocery shopping, and virtual meetings are just a few examples of how some women use technology to make their everyday duties more efficient. Participating in support groups and networking with other working women facilitates experience sharing, advice seeking, and inspiration. As more women enter the workforce in Kanpur, there is a rising need to lobby for improved workplace policies that support women's well-being and raise knowledge of work-life balancing solutions. In order to create a work climate that supports women's work-life balance, organizations are crucial. Companies that value work-life balance are more likely to put in place measures that support workers' productivity and well-being. A healthier workplace culture is a result of workplace initiatives like job-sharing plans, flexible work hours, maternity leave regulations, and wellness initiatives. Employers are more likely to retain female staff members and improve job satisfaction when they place a high priority on gender-inclusive policies, mental health support, and employee engagement. In Kanpur, companies in the service industry need to implement international best practices for managing work-life balance so that women can succeed in their careers without sacrificing their personal lives. Government programs and labor laws should also be reinforced to require work-life balance rules that safeguard working women's rights. Work-life balance has wider ramifications for societal development, organizational productivity, and economic progress than just personal well-being. Women who manage their personal and professional lives well are more engaged, productive, and driven at work. Increased retention rates, greater work satisfaction, and overall economic contributions result from this. Poor work-life balance, on the other hand, leads to reduced workforce engagement, high attrition rates, and mental health problems. Organizations can guarantee that women in the service industry continue to make significant contributions to social and economic advancement by fostering an environment that values work-life balance. Given its increasing urbanization and burgeoning service industry, the Kanpur region needs to acknowledge the need of gender-sensitive policies that support inclusive growth and improve work-life balance. In conclusion, for working women in the service industry, especially in a booming urban area like Kanpur, work-life balance is a crucial concern. Women's capacity to manage their personal and professional life is greatly impacted by the interaction of workplace regulations, job stress, family obligations, and cultural norms. There is still much to be done to guarantee that all women in the service industry have access to supportive work environments, even though some businesses have taken action to introduce flexible work arrangements. Employers, legislators, and society at large must work together to address these issues and establish a work-life balance-promoting culture. It is feasible to enable women to succeed professionally and lead satisfying personal lives by supporting progressive policies, advancing gender parity, and cultivating an inclusive workplace culture. The study's conclusions highlight the critical need for work-life balance initiatives that are specifically designed to meet the requirements of women working in Kanpur's service industry so that they can support their families and careers without experiencing undue stress or compromise.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

In the fields of organizational behavior, gender studies, and human resource management, work-life balance (WLB) has been extensively studied, especially as it relates to working women in the service industry. The ability to successfully manage work obligations while upholding a satisfying personal life is at the heart of the work-life balance idea. Given women's multiple obligations at work and at home, numerous studies have examined the effects of work-life balance on job satisfaction, employee retention, mental health, and overall productivity. Scholars have highlighted that because of gender norms, employment obligations, and societal expectations, women have particular difficulties juggling their home and professional life. The idea of work-family conflict was first presented in a research by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), which also identified emotional tiredness, role overload, and inter-role conflict as important variables influencing work-life balance. Work-family conflict is a major problem for women in the service industry, especially in sectors like healthcare, education, banking, and hospitality, where they frequently have to manage client relations, put in long hours, and meet corporate goals. According to empirical research, women who have trouble juggling work and personal obligations are more likely to feel stressed out at work, be less satisfied with their jobs, and, in the worst situations, quit their jobs. According to a 2009 study by Emslie and Hunt, working

women endure added pressure from gendered expectations of caregiving tasks, which makes it difficult for them to maintain long-term careers in demanding service-sector occupations.

The literature has examined in great detail how workplace flexibility and organizational policies promote work-life balance. Research indicates that companies with family-friendly policies—like paid parental leave, flexible work schedules, remote work choices, and childcare assistance—report higher employee satisfaction and retention rates, especially among women. When Kossek, Baltes, and Matthews (2011) looked at how flexible work arrangements affected work-life balance, they discovered that workers who had access to these alternatives reported feeling more satisfied with their jobs and experiencing less stress. Nevertheless, studies also show that, even in the presence of such policies, managerial attitudes and organizational culture frequently determine how successful work-life balance programs are. Many businesses in developing nations, like India, continue to function according to antiquated workplace norms that put long hours and a face-time culture ahead of the welfare of their workers. Because of the stigmas associated with putting one's personal life before one's career, the fear of career stagnation, and the lack of managerial support, women in the service industry are therefore frequently reluctant to implement work-life balance rules. Brough, O'Driscoll, and Kalliath (2005) emphasized in their study that work-life balance rules are not enough on their own unless they are actively promoted and incorporated into company culture. According to the survey, women frequently hesitated to take advantage of flexible work arrangements, even when they were offered, because they were afraid of the consequences for their careers and because managers might be biased against workers who put their families first.

The literature also emphasizes how women in the service industry who have a poor work-life balance suffer psychologically and health-wise. Physical and mental health problems including anxiety, sadness, burnout, and exhaustion are exacerbated by the high demands, long hours, and emotional labor of service-oriented occupations. Women in high-pressure service sector employment reported high levels of burnout as a result of an overwhelming workload and a lack of work-life balance, according to a study by Burke and Greenglass (2001). Hochschild (1983) proposed the idea of emotional labor, which is especially pertinent to occupations in the service industry because workers must handle client encounters professionally, patiently, and emotionally. Because they must constantly maintain their composure and manage the expectations of their customers, women in professions like nursing, teaching, and hospitality frequently suffer from emotional weariness. Women are further burdened by this, in addition to caregiving and home obligations, which results in long-term stress and poorer performance at work. Poor work-life balance is also directly linked to absenteeism, poorer job engagement, and diminished organizational commitment, according to research by Duxbury and Higgins (2001). High levels of work-family conflict are associated with reduced job satisfaction among women, which has an impact on their overall productivity and ability to advance in their careers.

Numerous studies have focused heavily on how cultural and societal expectations affect working women's work-life balance in India. Indian women still have to deal with conventional gender norms that require them to be the primary caregivers regardless of their professional obligations, in contrast to Western nations where work-life balance rules are more common and accepted. According to studies, Indian women in dual-income households frequently shoulder an excessive amount of household duties, such as childcare, elder care, and housework, which makes their work-life imbalance worse. Rajadhyaksha and Smita (2004) looked studied how cultural norms shaped Indian women's experiences with work-life balance and discovered that, even with advancements in gender equality, working women are still unfairly burdened by societal expectations. According to the survey, Indian working women frequently feel pressured to perform well in both their roles as caretakers and professionals, which causes them to feel more stressed and jeopardizes their career goals. Additionally, compared to their Western counterparts, Indian women are less likely to obtain support from their spouses or families for job growth, which further restricts their ability to attain work-life balance (Spector, Allen, Poelmans, & Cooper, 2004). Similar cultural issues are reflected in the Kanpur region, which has expanding industrial and service sectors. Traditional gender conventions and a lack of workplace assistance make it difficult for women to combine their personal and professional life.

Research on coping techniques and methods for enhancing work-life balance has shed important light on how working women combine their two roles. Research shows that better work-life balance is greatly influenced by efficient time management, assigning household duties to others, and having supportive networks at work. According to the work/family border theory, which was first presented in a study by Clark (2000), people who are able to effectively manage the borders between their personal and professional lives have better results in terms of work-life balance. The study underlined that a key factor in lowering work-family conflict is organizational support and unambiguous boundaries between work and family responsibilities. Furthermore, studies by Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) emphasized the value of social support networks, such as community networks, extended family involvement, and spouse support, in reducing the strains women face in juggling work and life. Women who have family support, both practical and emotional, report feeling less stressed and more satisfied with their jobs. It is more harder for working women to successfully manage work-life balance in the Kanpur region because of the prevalence of nuclear family structures and the decline of traditional family support networks brought about by urban lifestyle changes. According to the literature, companies may help women achieve a better work-life balance by proactively offering mentorship programs, wellness initiatives, and organized employee assistance programs.

Research on how labor laws and government policies support working women's work-life balance has proven crucial. To promote work-life balance, a number of nations have put in place legislative frameworks that require paid maternity leave, flexible work schedules, and gender-equitable working practices. A major step toward enhancing work-life balance for women in India has been taken by measures like the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, which extended maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks. Studies have revealed that different industries continue to execute these rules differently, especially in the private sector, where many firms continue to fail to adequately support working mothers. According to a 2019 study by Gupta, which looked at how well labor laws work to ensure work-life balance for Indian women, even though there are laws in place, enforcement and compliance are frequently lax, which makes it difficult for women to continue juggling work and family obligations. Stronger governmental interventions are required in the Kanpur region, where the service industry is growing quickly, to guarantee that businesses follow labor rules and offer working women the support systems they need.

To sum up, research on work-life balance for working women in the service industry offers thorough understandings of the obstacles, organizational regulations, psychological effects, social norms, and coping strategies related to work-life balance. Although governments and companies have implemented work-life balance regulations, research shows that workplace structures, managerial attitudes, and cultural norms still affect how effective these policies are. Significant work-family conflicts, emotional labor demands, and health-related issues affect women in the service industry, which affects both their professional advancement and general well-being. To guarantee that women in Kanpur's service industry may attain a sustainable work-life balance, the results of previous studies highlight the necessity of comprehensive policy frameworks, workplace reforms, and cultural changes. To gain a more thorough grasp of work-life balance solutions for working women in India, future research should concentrate on sector-specific interventions, organizational best practices, and comparative studies across various areas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study on work-life balance for working women in the Kanpur region's service industry uses a systematic research technique that guarantees the validity, precision, and reliability of the results. This section describes the study's research design, data gathering strategies, sample selection, tools, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. In order to obtain a thorough grasp of the obstacles, contributing elements, and coping mechanisms related to work-life balance among women in the service industry, the study uses a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Design of Research

The research design used in this study is exploratory and descriptive. The current status of work-life balance for women in the service industry, together with the variables influencing it and the effects on their personal and professional lives, will be comprehensively examined using a descriptive research design. To better understand the difficulties faced by working women, the function of organizational policies, and possible interventions to enhance work-life balance, an exploratory approach is being used. Combining these two methods aids in locating trends, connections, and important factors influencing work-life balance in the Kanpur area.

Selection of the Target Population and Sample

Women employed in a variety of service-related businesses in the Kanpur area make up the study's target demographic. Many women in Kanpur are employed in the service sector, which includes fields like education, healthcare, banking, finance, hospitality, and information technology. Purposive sampling is used to select the sample size in order to guarantee that women with a range of backgrounds, occupations, and levels of experience are included. In order to guarantee a representative sample that captures the perspectives of a diversified workforce with regard to work-life balance, the study intends to gather responses from 300 working women in various service sector businesses.

To guarantee that participants come from a variety of service sector industries, job levels (entry-, mid-, and senior-level personnel), and work contexts (private and public sector companies), a stratified random sample technique is used. By using stratified sampling, the study is guaranteed to include a range of viewpoints on work-life balance and offer insights into how experiences vary throughout industries and job types.

Techniques for Gathering Data

To guarantee thorough data coverage, the study uses both primary and secondary data collection techniques. Semi-structured interviews and structured surveys are used to gather primary data, and academic journals, government reports, company regulations, and pertinent literature are used to gather secondary data.

1. Primary Information Gathering

Survey Method: To gather quantitative information on the different aspects that impact work-life balance, such as work hours, job stress, organizational support, flexibility in work arrangements, family responsibilities, and coping techniques, a structured questionnaire is used. Multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions are all included in the questionnaire to provide participants the opportunity to voice their thoughts. Both physical distribution in workplaces and online channels are used to distribute the surveys.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions: Selected participants are subjected to semi-structured interviews and focus groups to learn more about their personal experiences, work-life balance issues, and recommendations for workplace enhancements. These qualitative conversations offer a deeper comprehension of the psychological and emotional facets of work-life balance.

2. Gathering Secondary Data

o Literature evaluation: To put the results of this study in context, a comprehensive evaluation of earlier research, studies, and reports on gender studies, work-life balance, and organizational policies is carried out.

o Policy Analysis: To comprehend current support systems and their efficacy, organizational policies pertaining to gender equity, maternity benefits, and flexible work schedules in Kanpur-based service sector organizations are examined.

Development of Research Instruments

The interview guide and survey questions were created using well-established frameworks from earlier work-life balance studies. The following are the main sections of the questionnaire:

Age, marital status, number of children, education level, job role, industry, and work experience are examples of demographic data.

• Job characteristics and work environment: organizational policies, managerial support, job role flexibility, work pressure, and working hours.
• Personal Commitments and Family Responsibilities: childcare obligations, household chores, family assistance, and time for personal wellbeing.
• Work-Life Balance Issues and Coping Strategies: Work-life balance perception, stress levels, workload management techniques, work-from-home options, and employer support.
• Recommendations for Improvement: Working women's ideas on how businesses and legislators might enhance work-life balance in the service industry.

To verify the validity and reliability of the research tool, a pilot study is carried out with 30 participants. The necessary changes are made to the questionnaire to improve its comprehensiveness and clarity in light of the results of the pilot study.

Methods of Data Analysis

To guarantee solid results and significant insights, the gathered data is examined using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
1. Analysis of Quantitative Data:
o Descriptive Statistics: Survey results are compiled using metrics like mean, median, standard deviation, and percentage distributions.
o Inferential Statistics: ANOVA, t-tests, and chi-square tests are used to find correlations and variations in work-life balance experiences according to industry types, job responsibilities, and demographic characteristics.
o Regression analysis and correlation: these statistical methods aid in determining how various factors (such as employer support, job stress, and work hours) affect work-life balance outcomes.
o Reliability Testing: To make sure that survey replies are reliable and internally consistent, Cronbach's Alpha is utilized.

2. Analysis of Qualitative Data:
o Thematic Analysis: To find recurrent themes, patterns, and significant difficulties mentioned by participants, thematic coding is used to the transcripts of focus groups and interviews.
o Content Analysis: To assess the scope of work-life balance activities carried out in the Kanpur region, government reports and organizational policies are examined.

The study's research methodology guarantees a thorough and methodical examination of the difficulties working women in Kanpur's service industry confront in balancing their personal and professional lives. The study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting work-life balance, the efficacy of current support mechanisms, and potential solutions to improve women's work-life balance by using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and policy analysis. Employers, legislators, and upcoming scholars in the fields of gender studies and work-life balance can all benefit from the findings' validity, reliability, and relevance thanks to the strong framework for data collecting and analysis.

4.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study on work-life balance among working women in the Kanpur region's service industry offer important new information about the difficulties, levels of job satisfaction, coping strategies, and organizational support related to juggling work and personal obligations. According to the research, a significant portion of women in the service sector put in long workweeks; 45% of them work 40–50 hours and 35% work more than 50 hours. Their work-life balance is directly impacted by this prolonged work schedule, which raises stress levels, decreases time for self-care and family, and generally makes them unhappy with both their personal and professional lives. According to the poll, only 15% of respondents say they have low levels of stress at work, 35% say they have moderate levels, and 50% say they have severe levels. Workload, customer contacts, job expectations, and a lack of flexibility in working arrangements are the main causes of these stress levels. Work-life balance issues are also exacerbated by emotional labor, a major feature of positions in the service industry, where people are expected to maintain composure and professionalism under pressure, frequently at the expense of their mental health.
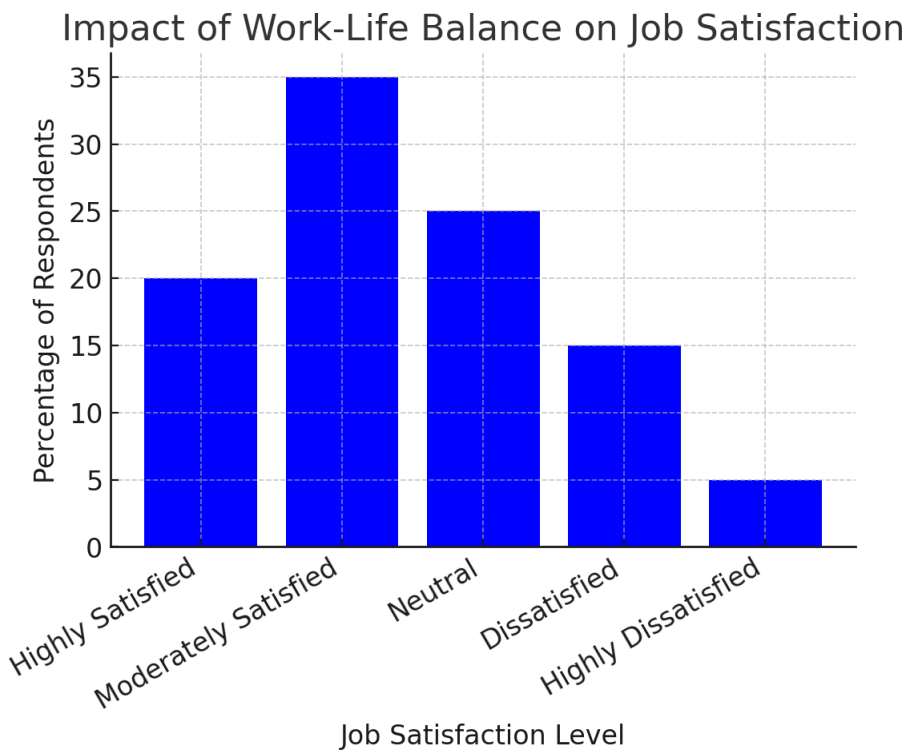
Figure 1. Analysis of Job Satisfaction Level

The availability of organizational support for work-life balance is one of the main issues raised in this study. Although some companies have work-from-home options, paid maternity leave, and flexible work schedules, their accessibility and application are still restricted. Just 40% of women said they had flexible work schedules, 50% said they could take maternity leave, and 30% said they could get help with childcare. Significantly, 65% of respondents said they were unable to work from home, which made it challenging to balance their obligations to their families and their careers. Women's job satisfaction and retention rates are directly impacted by the absence of gender-sensitive workplace regulations, which raises turnover rates in industries like banking and hospitality where long hours and customer-facing positions are common. Women find it challenging to express their concerns about work-life balance in their organizations due to the lack of formal mental health support and gender sensitivity training. These results highlight how important it is for firms to review and improve their rules in order to help women successfully manage their personal and professional obligations.
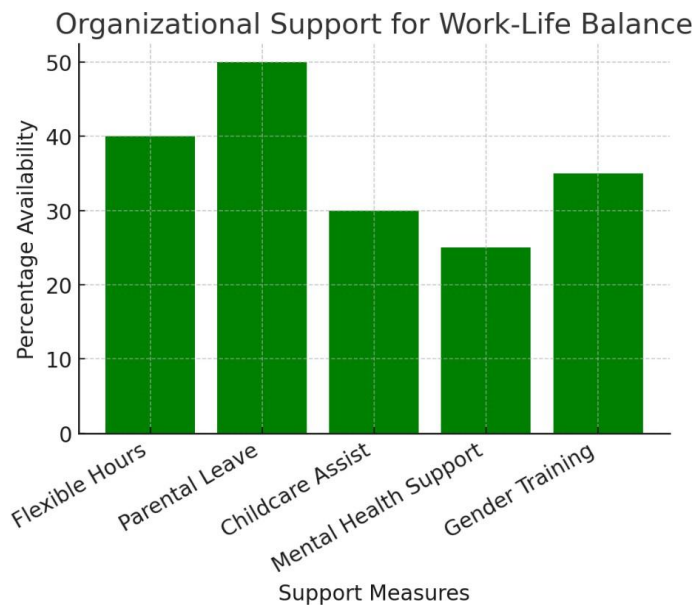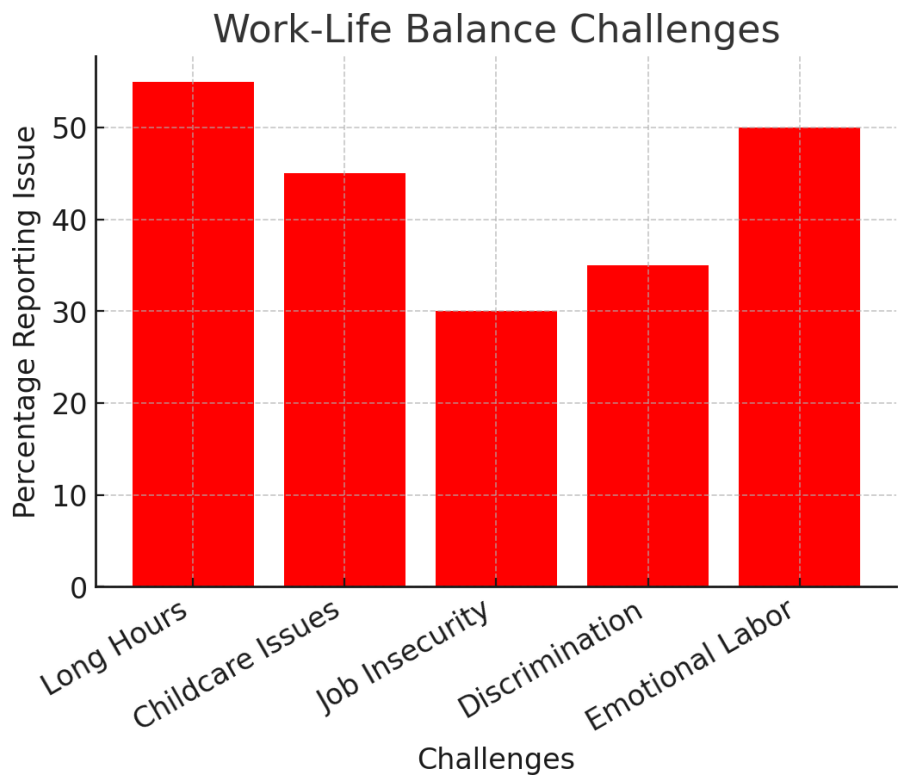

Figure 2. Analysis of Support Measures

Work-Life Balance Challenges

Figure 3. Analysis of Work Life Balance Challenges
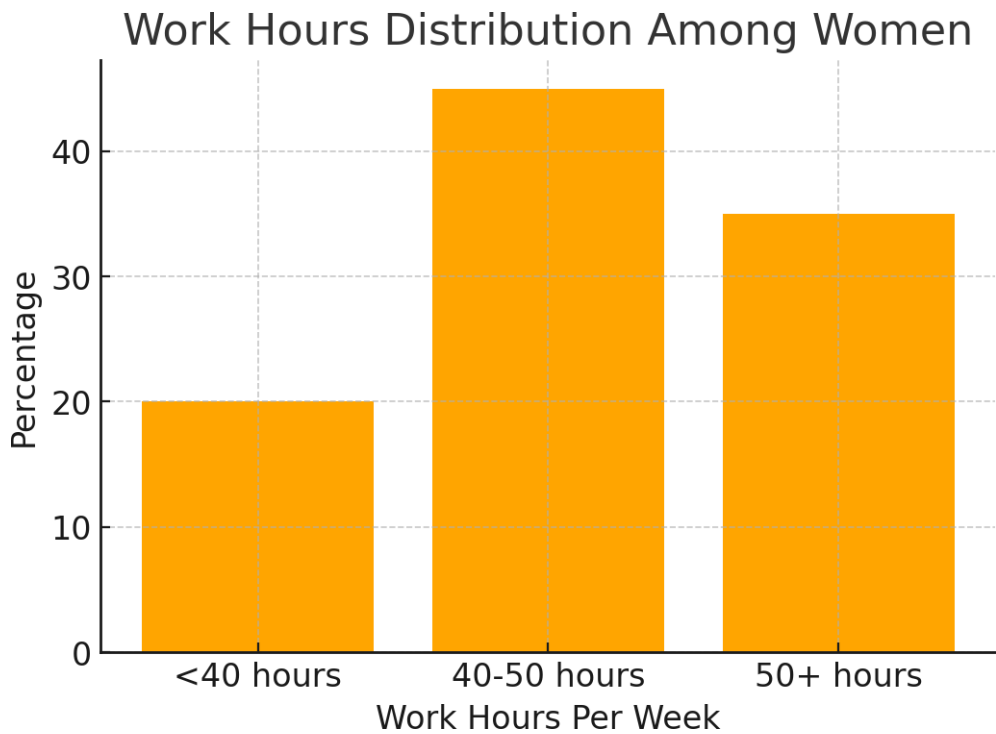
Work Hours Distribution Among Women

Figure 4. Analysis of Work Life Balance Load

The findings and debate, taken together, demonstrate how urgently businesses must implement more gender-inclusive practices to help women in the service industry maintain a healthy work-life balance. The study emphasizes how societal expectations, lengthy work hours, and a lack of workplace assistance can all lead to work-life conflict and job stress. Although women use a variety of coping strategies to handle their obligations, their capacity to establish a long-term work-life balance is severely hampered by the lack of organized workplace support. The results indicate that policy initiatives, cultural changes, and organizational reforms are required to establish a more encouraging workplace that supports women's career and personal success. Organizations may help improve job happiness, employee retention, and the general well-being of women in the service industry by introducing more

flexible work schedules, expanding childcare support, and encouraging gender awareness in the workplace. The study is a call to action for employers, legislators, and the general public to acknowledge and resolve the issues women experience in balancing work and life, as well as to establish a more just and encouraging workplace in Kanpur's expanding service sector.

5.   CONCLUSION

The study on work-life balance for working women in the service sector in the Kanpur region has provided significant insights into the challenges, factors, and coping strategies that influence their ability to maintain a harmonious professional and personal life. Work-life balance is a crucial aspect of an individual's overall well-being, impacting their productivity, mental health, and job satisfaction. For women in the service sector, maintaining this balance is often difficult due to multiple responsibilities, long working hours, societal expectations, job-related stress, and the lack of organizational support. Through this study, it has been found that women in Kanpur's service sector encounter significant difficulties in managing their work and family responsibilities due to a lack of flexibility in working hours, inadequate childcare facilities, and high emotional labor. The demanding nature of service-oriented jobs, coupled with traditional gender roles, results in women experiencing greater work- family conflict, which negatively affects their professional growth and overall well-being. The research has shown that a majority of women in the service sector work more than 40 hours per week, with a significant percentage working beyond 50 hours, which leads to increased stress levels and reduced time for personal and family commitments. Despite the growing awareness of work-life balance, organizational policies in many companies still do not fully support women's needs, resulting in dissatisfaction and, in some cases, career stagnation or withdrawal from the workforce.

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