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A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG WORKING WOMEN FOR SERVICE INDUSTRY

R. DIVYA[1], R.IYAPPAN[2]

[1] RESEARCH SCHOLAR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BHARATH INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
[2] ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BHARATH INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

ABSTRACT :

This study investigates the issues surrounding work-life balance (WLB) and its relationship with job satisfaction (JS) among middle-level female employees in the service sector in Ahmedabad, India.Using purposive sampling, data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The study employs hierarchical cluster analysis to classify employees into high- and low-level WLB groups.

The findings of the present study align with the job demands-resources (JDR) theory. The results reveal that higher levels of WLB correlate positively with greater JS. Among factors influencing WLB, family care ranked highest, followed by personal expectations.This study provides actionable insights for HR practitioners to develop gender-inclusive policies that enhance retention and employee satisfaction in the service sector.

Introduction

The intersection of work and personal life represents a critical balancing act for employees, particularly for working women. Post-pandemic shifts, including the widespread adoption of work-from-home (WFH) models, have intensified challenges related to work-life balance (Mehtha, 2012). This is particularly relevant in India, where the service sector contributes over 55% of GDP (IBEF, 2021) and female participation in this sector is on the rise. WLB is only one of the most in-depth issues that female agents in the twenty-first century looked into (Mehtha, 2012). Employees occasionally find it difficult to balance their personal and professional lives because of how dynamic and interconnected they are (Haung et al., 2004).

The study seeks to add to the body of knowledge already available in lower-middle income countries in order to provide a fresh field of inquiry for future study.

The study's findings aim to make two significant contributions to the literature. India's economy, one of the fastest to emerge, is the subject of the study. As most research is done in high-income countries, this encourages research.

Existing research highlights a direct link between WLB and JS, with socio-demographic parameters such as age, marital status and work tenure further shaping this relationship (Mérida-López et al., 2019). However, limited studies focus exclusively on female employees in the Indian service sector. Addressing this gap, this study evaluates the factors influencing WLB and JS, offering practical insights for lower-middle income countries.

Review of Literature

In the twenty-first century, WLB has become an important concern. According to Naithani (2010), WLB refers to the effective management of many tasks both at work and on a personal level. Different authors have defined WLB. It is defined as 'An individual is equally engaged in and evenly satisfied with his or her work role and family role' according to Greenhaus et al. (2003). Das and Baruah (2016) refer to WLB as maintaining the ideal balance between one's personal and professional lives.

Yunita et al. (2023) explored the career development of millennials, focusing on work-life balance, job satisfaction and affective commitment as factors influencing their professional growth. The findings show that work-life balance and job satisfaction positively influence affective commitment, which in turn positively affects career development. It concludes that work-life balance is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction, emotional commitment and career advancement.

Current Scenario of the Service Sector in India

The Indian government's 'Startup India' initiative, the technical infrastructure required for such an ecosystem, the low startup costs and the developed markets all these elements make the Indian service sector a profitable ecosystem for both investors and entrepreneurs.The service sector saw a 34% increase in FDI inflows from 2023 to 2024. The years 2023–2024 saw a lot of significant structural changes.

Work-life balance in the Service Sector

According to Kshirsagar (2018) outlined how to strike a balance between the two in order to prevent JS in working women in the service sector. Working women are being hit very hard by the contradiction of roles and the uncertainty. According to Wu et al. (2013), supervisors can help the service industry attain WLB and improve working conditions. The association between workplace variables and WLB among employees in a particular service industry is examined by Wong et al. (2017). The findings indicate a beneficial association between work-life balance and flexible scheduling, co-worker support and supervisor support. The current study intends to investigate WLB among female workers of the service sector in India.

Construct Identification and Hypothesis Development

Support from Family

In their study, Uddin et al. (2020) evaluated the moderating effects of social support on WLB among Bangladeshi women who work in banks. The study found that WLB amongst females is promoted by social support. The significance of family support is amplified to a higher extent by insufficient formal support and WLB policies (Bosch et al., 2018).The study found that women who are in charge of their parents' health needed assistance in juggling their professional and personal lives.

Dependent Care

Support for child care has a favourable effect on employee retention (Suman Babu & Bhavana Raj, 2013).Work from home provides independence and flexibility, but it also urges employees to put in longer hours. The quality of life is significantly influenced by the surroundings at home. When a woman is in charge of small children, it can sometimes get stressful. A Boston Consulting Group (BCG, 2024) study revealed that childcare benefits could yield returns of up to 425% by boosting retention and reducing absenteeism.

Self-management

Having better emotional control makes it easier to accomplish daily goals. Guest (2002) highlights the many features of workaholics who choose to put in long hours even when they do not have to, often at the expense of other pursuits.

Personal Life Expectations

Women place a higher value on their jobs and families than they do on themselves (Burke, 2002). When family care is neglected in favour of a professional position, dejection, disappointment and frustration follow. The lines between job and family should be clearly drawn, and neither should cross the other.

Workplace Support and WLB Policies

To attain a goal, teamwork and workplace support are crucial (Lee et al., 2019). Ganguli and Padhy (2023) also confirmed that workplace motivation has a significant effect on retention with reference to Indian organisations.

Workload

To evaluate the effects of role conflict and workload on WLB, Omar et al. (2015) conducted a study among staff members of Malaysia's enforcement agency. Workload was found to be the primary factor affecting WLB. Work-life balance suffers when workload is higher.

Job Satisfaction

The study by Haar et al. (2014) examined the impact of WLB on job satisfaction, life satisfaction, anxiety and depression across seven cultures: Malaysian, Chinese, New Zealand *Maori*, New Zealand European, Spanish, French and Italian. The results showed that WLB positively influences job and life satisfaction and negatively affects anxiety and depression in all cultures

Job Demand-Resource Model

The job demand-resource (JDR) model posits that every occupation has associated risk factors that can be categorised as job demands and job resources. Job demands are aspects of the job that require sustained effort, leading to psychological or physiological costs, while job resources help in achieving work goals, reducing job demands and promoting personal growth.
The model suggests two psychological processes: job demands lead to strain by exhausting mental and physical resources, while job resources foster motivation by helping individuals meet goals and promoting development.
Based on construct identified and elaborate with literature review, the study investigates the following hypotheses.
- *H*1: Family support has a significant impact on work-life balance.

- *H*2: Family care has a significant impact on work-life balance.
- *H*3: Self-management has a significant impact on work-life balance.
- *H*4: Personal life expectation has a significant impact on work-life balance.
- *H*5: Workplace support has a significant impact on work-life balance.
- *H*6: Work-life balance has a significant impact on job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Participants

Data were collected from 88 middle-level female employees in Ahmedabad's service sector using a structured questionnaire. Convenience sampling ensured a representative demographic distribution

Collection Instrument and Procedure

The target area of respondents is Ahmedabad city. The constructs were found in earlier publications. The questionnaire comprised two sections: (1) opinions on WLB and JS and (2) socio-demographic details. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded values between 0.585 and 0.877, confirming internal consistency (Field, 2006).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 25.0, with regression and hierarchical cluster analyses applied to test hypotheses and classify WLB levels.

Results and Discussion

Using Cronbach's alpha, the data were evaluated for reliability contains the Cronbach's coefficient derived for several groupings of questions. In cases of exploratory study, the acceptable value for Cronbach's can be as low as 0.6). The Cronbach's alpha value lies between 0.585 and 0.877. The gathered information is analysed to examine working women's work life concerns and their effects on JS.

The mean values and SD of the responses are executed for each statements. The results show that the statement 'I want to spend quality time with my family' has the highest mean (4.43; SD = 0.657), followed by 'I can give my family healthy food' (mean = 4.27; SD = 0.784) and 'I want to have nice sleep of at least 8 hours at night' (mean = 4.26; SD = 0.837). In addition, before using cluster analysis, the mean and SD for each group. The highest mean belongs to personal life expectations (4.13; SD = 0.92), followed by family care (4.02; SD = 0.96) and family support (3.68; SD = 1.14).

One-way ANOVA for WLB Groups.

Criteria	F	P
Family support	47.05	1E-09
Family care	31.84	2.1E-07
Self-management	81.71	4.09E-14
Personal life expectation	3.99	0.048803
Workplace support	24.62	3.48E-06
Job satisfaction	46.66	1.14E-09

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Regression analysis confirmed that all proposed factors significantly influenced WLB ($p < .05$), except personal life expectations, which were rejected at $p = .048$

Conclusion

According to the theory of work-life boundary, incongruence leads to work-life conflict. When people's desired boundaries differ from their real boundaries, incongruity results (Kreiner et al., 2009). The greatest obstacles to family devotion and finding a work-life balance were faced by working womenThis study highlights the integral role of WLB in enhancing JS among female employees in the service sector. Key drivers include family care and workplace support, while self-management and personal expectations require further exploration. Future research should extend the scope to include comparative analyses across genders and sectors to validate findings.

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