

An Analysis of Work Life Balance and Mental Health of Women in India during Work from Home with Special Reference to IT Sector

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Abstract - The Indian IT industry has helped place India on the world platform. With the sector's rise has come a rise in female employment. Work-life balance is a problem that affects all genders, although it affects women more than men. Work-life balance is vital for women in the Indian IT industry because of cultural considerations and the fact that professional women in India still do most, if not all, domestic tasks. The current research explores the mental health of top female IT employees to identify their work-life balance concerns especially during working from home. The majority of respondents agreed that parental recognition and economic circumstances at home influence women's career perspective, they disagreed that women with career growth focus are less likely to be responsible spouses, mothers, or daughters-in-law, or to take on extra family obligations. The respondents also agreed that work-life balance is tied to self-inclination as well as ambition; several of them believed that a woman who wants it would seek solutions. Working at home and balancing personal life as well is the hard task for women in India.

Keywords: Work From Home (WFH), Working at Home (WAT), Mental Health of Women, Work Life Balance (WLB), Work Family Conflict (WFC)

I. INTRODUCTION

Working women's lives are not simple, and managing home and work duties leaves them busy. Although this, many succeed at both. But the equation has altered after the Covid-19 epidemic. Work-from-home (WFH) was once advertised as a perfect option for individuals seeking work-life balance, particularly working moms who could devote more time to their children and house. Many working women found it difficult to balance daily tasks, Continuous childcare, and a work career.

Working moms have both professional and personal duties. Owing to the pandemic, classrooms have gone digital, causing problems for kids. They need their parents' help since they are struggling to adjust to this new form of learning, and it is ++hard for working women to balance work with online education. They have to assist youngsters with schoolwork, which adds to their job. Their job performance suffers. It's especially harder with nursing toddlers. Women have limited time individually in such situations. It has thrown off the work-life balance of women, hurting their physical and emotional health. Her

lengthy hours of work and caring chores sap her vitality. The very same pattern affects her psychological state.

Long workdays and home chores have made it difficult for women to advance in their jobs. They can't apply for a better job or a greater responsibility since both are too much. The crisis is revealing new gender disparities as working moms bear a heavier weight. Working remotely has unique problems in terms of efficiency and production. Employers struggle to allocate resources and time, while workers, particularly working moms, struggle to meet the requirement.

In the lack of household assistance owing to the epidemic, women normally undertake most of the home chores. In reality, co-worker engagement is minimal, leaving little room for debate, idea exchange, or informal workplace talks. Remote employment has taken away people's ability to communicate. Below given figure perfectly shows the work life balance one can follow.

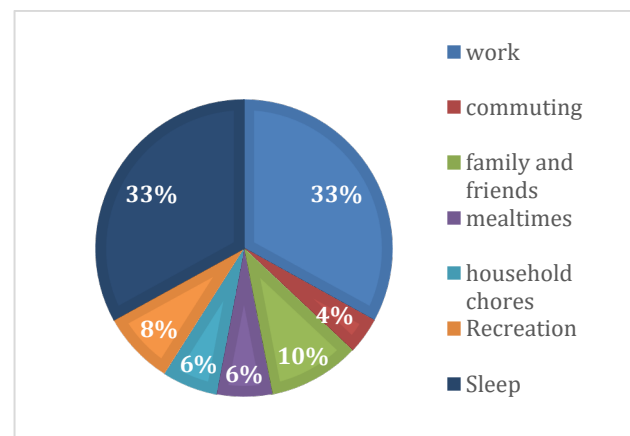


Fig. 1 Ideal WLB (Work-Life Balance)

A. Work-Life Balance of Women in India

Work life balance is about minimizing role-conflict and achieving fulfilment in both work - family interface. Even allocation of time, effort, as well as dedication across life areas leads to happiness across domains, facilitating Work life balance. Therefore, how people understand Work life

balance relies on how well their life parts are composed. But the value of life roles changes with job and family life phases. Given the person-centric approach to Work life balance, Greenhaus and Allen suggest that people’s understanding of Work life balance will change over time, based on their life and career phases, beliefs and ambitions.

“Work-life conflict controls work life balance literature. Work–family balance is generally well-defined as the absence of family–work conflict”. WFC and FWC are widely used to describe work–life conflict. WFC occurs when work-related stress and challenges adversely impact family life, while FWC occurs when family obligations conflict with work-related needs. Some WLB research has concentrated on only two aspects: “work interference with personal life (WIPL) as well as personal life interference with work (PLIW)”.

Work-life balance is reflected in Work life balance. Work–life issues negatively impact an employee’s health. Work life balance loss promotes emotional tiredness. Working remotely during the lockdown may have been difficult for many employed people to balance work and home life. Official duties took greater effort, while personal/family duties required more time as well as energy. Several employed people may have faced WFC when WFH during a lockdown. Psychological weariness is a common aspect of burnout. Emotional fatigue is a core component of burnout.

Excessive duration requirements, excessive psychological and emotional requirements result in emotional tiredness. Emotional weariness results from a sense of being overworked. Work–family strife may result in feelings weariness.

Work-life and emotional fatigue studies have often included gender as a variable. It is also investigated as a moderating factor in the work-family interaction. Differences between men and women and gender roles help us better comprehend the work-family interaction. Work-life balance is a key component of gender role theory. According to this belief, males prioritise job above family, whereas women prioritise family.

According to research, every shift in the work–family environment necessitates examining gender differences inside and between work and family roles. WFH during the national lockdown altered the work-family environment. Given these shifts in the work-family setting, it was chosen to investigate the gender variances in WIPL and PLIW emotional weariness. During a countrywide lockdown, the line between work and personal life is fairly porous between the official working hours. To decrease WIPL in such a work–family setting, participatory leadership in establishing work schedules and task performance levels may be explored.

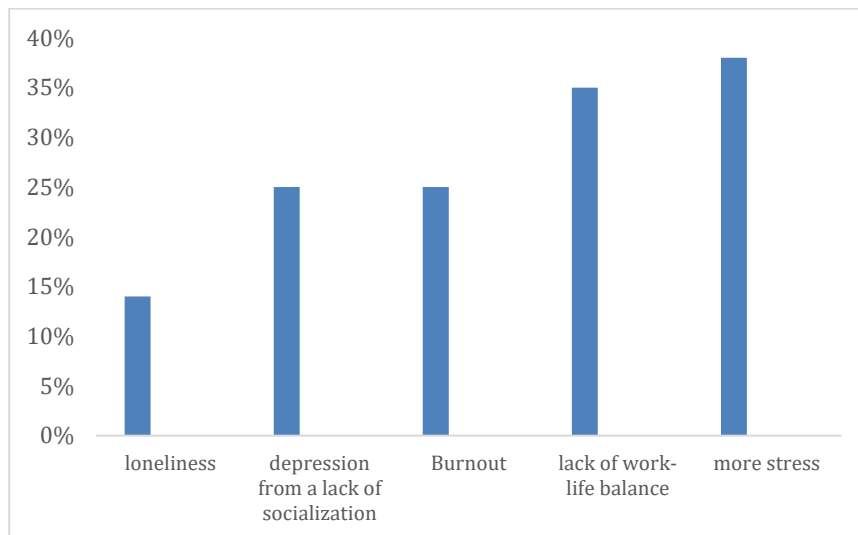


Fig. 2 Effect of work from home on women employees

As shown in the above graph 14 % of the felt loneliness, 25 % of them were in depression due to less social activities, 25 % were feeling burnout, 35% of them were having problem in WLB, while 39 % had some other stress due to working from home.

B. Impact on Mental Health

The bulk of research focused on mental health and working from home. Work at home has complicated mental health

effects. Working from home may have beneficial or bad effects depending on systemic moderators including household needs, organizational commitment, including social relationships outside of work.

Increased work at home times were connected with reduced emotional tiredness and intellectual stress, according to Vander Elst. Grant surveyed WAH personnel and found that peer influence and interaction were critical factors in psychological health. Tietze surveyed seven full-time WAH

workers over a three-month period. Because they were no longer in a demanding workplace atmosphere, employees reported feeling better.

Anderson observed that WAH had a beneficial influence on mental well-being while having a less negative impact on the mental well-being. An honesty to involvement, reduced contemplation, and higher social connectivity all mitigated the association between WAH as well as positive well-being. Two studies looked at the home setting as a mediator between working at home as well as healthcare consequences. Job-family conflict develops when work expectations collide with personal obligations. Although WFC was low, workers felt less tired than those who WAH just sometimes. Another research identified a link between WAH and greater energy and lower stress among workers with dependent care duties.

The WAH was compared to stress, life quality, well-being, as well as anxiety. Five research found that part-time WAH personnel had less stress. One research looked at workers who were WAH for part or all of the day and found no link between WAH increased stress. Workers in the public, corporate, and education sectors reported a better feeling of well-being while working WAH than when functioning inside the workplace. Notably, individuals prefer combining WAH with office time to engage with coworkers. Henke studied workers of a financial firm and found that those who worked fewer than 8 hours per month had fewer symptoms of distress than those who did not. Depression and more WAH hours had no statistically significant relationship. Four research looked at the effect of working at home on tiredness, with inconsistent findings. Two trials suggested WAH reduced tiredness. Others determined WAH had no influence on tiredness levels.

C. Work-Life Balance During WFH of Women Employees in IT Sector

An IT survey found that women left the industry by over half in 2021, as more companies turned to remote work models to accommodate the outbreak. Insights were provided by Avtar, a non-profit dedicated to inclusion and diversity, and Moneycontrol.com. The research examined total female attrition in IT. From non-managerial to managerial and corporate executive, attrition decreased by about 40%. Also, the industry employs many women. Diversity has been a significant priority area for enterprises in the field, with over a quarter of its 5 million employees being women. Contrary to early fears that more women would leave the workforce due to the pandemic's normalization of working remotely as well as flexible working hours, the epidemic is now creating possibilities for women. In August 2020, Hexaware Technologies, a mid-tier IT business, conducted a poll on the effects of work - from - home on women. Women workers were reported to be more stressed owing to demands on both the work and home fronts, according to the poll findings. Working remotely caused stress to four out of ten working women in

India, according to a March 2021 research. Some CEOs and female workers feared the stress from both sides may push women over the edge, reducing their engagement. Between 2016 (25%) and 2021, women's involvement in the workforce increased by about 10%. 4% growth in total female workforce between 2020 and 2021. Proportion of female in IT/ITeS climbed from 30% in 2020 to 33% in 2021. Women in management positions increased from 19% in 2020 to 21% in 2021.

“Organizations have struggled for decades to overcome challenges of female representation and female workplace participation,” said Chakraborty. Many efforts and possibilities are steadily pushing this transition. One is the D&E&I policy.” Female participation in leadership positions has almost quadrupled in the previous 18 months, so according to Sunita Cherian, chief culture officer as well as senior vice-president, Human Resource.

A working remotely ethic and a hybrid workforce structure will grow to assist more women, experts say. To minimize worry and tension, many women chose to leave their occupations, Mental health measures and an inclusive and adaptable workplace will have a good impact on overall growth,” Chakraborty remarked.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample and Procedure

The data for this research was gathered from employed women who are working from home. The respondents were full-time professionals, therefore their employers wanted them to be accessible online at least during typical business hours on weekdays. The study's participants were a diverse group of women working in the IT industry. An online survey was used to obtain the information. Data was gathered from employed women in India who worked from home at the time. Due to the time constraints, data had to be gathered in a short period of time, the questionnaire was sent to the author's known professional connections. These professionals were largely hired by firms based in India. A total of 200 potential responders were sent the questionnaire. A total of 170 respondents submitted valid data, resulting in a 90% response rate. The vast majority of respondents (77%) worked in the private sector, were between the ages of 25 and 40 (66%) and had far more than 3 members in family with them throughout the lockdown (57 percent).

B. Measures

The elements used to assess the factors in the research were mostly taken from rating scales, with a few additions made in consensus by a committee of five informed specialists. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating significant disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The following sections provide further details on data recording.

C. WLB (Work-Life Balance)

The scale was used to assess two of Work-life balance selected parameters, notably WIPL as well as PLIW, was based on Hayman’s scale. Three elements were modified from Hayman’s scale, and 2 additional elements were constructed and added to the scale to quantify WIPL. Three elements were taken from Hayman’s scale, and one was created and placed in the scale to assess PLIW. Only those elements from Hayman’s scale that looked to be connected to the changing situation were selected, taking into account the changes in work-family environment during remote work during the time of work from home.

D. EE (Emotional Exhaustion)

Emotional fatigue was measured using five questions modified from the Maslach Burnout Inventory’s tiredness sub-scale. Moore utilized these five questions to operationalize labour weariness and also to report satisfactory psychometric characteristics.

E. Participative Leadership

The altered questions from Harris and Ogbonna’s scale were used to assess participatory leadership. Only three elements were chosen to assess a certain style of leadership out of the five on the scale, and the other two were deleted since they did not correspond well to the changing work setting while work from home. Participants used a 5 scale with anchoring 1 = not at all to 5 = to a considerable degree to indicate their answers for this category.

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis was carried out in two stages. The accuracy and reliability of the factor scale items were examined in the first stage employing exploratory and confirmatory modeling. The hypotheses were then tested in the second stage. The impacts of WIPL as well as PLIW on emotional fatigue were investigated. Afterwards, researchers looked at how gender affected the relationship between WIPL and PLIW and emotional weariness. Finally, we looked at the direct and indirect impacts of perceived participatory leadership on emotional tiredness using WIPL. The hypothesised moderated mediation impacts were investigated using the SPSS macro Process. Bootstrapping was used to generate unstandardized coefficient estimates as

well as bias-corrected CIs using the macro Procedure. For significance level, the p0.05 criteria was used.

Firstly, principal components analysis was used to assess the scales’ convergent validity. The EFA findings confirmed that all elements were appropriately classified for the design. The loadings of five WIPL elements varied from 0.73 to 0.81. The effect size of four PLIW products varied from 0.75 to 0.86. Five mental exhaustion measurement scale exhibited loadings between 0.78 to 0.86. Three items indicating participatory leadership had factor loadings of 0.86–0.88. Loadings over 0.60 are deemed excellent by Bagozzi and Yi. All factors exhibited factor loadings over 0.60, supporting composite reliability at the EFA stage. It was also tested for dependability. Cronbach’s alpha (Cr) and composite reliability (CR) both exceed 0.6. All scales are internally consistent. Consensus validity is shown by CR > 0.50.

The general quality of the measurement items was examined using RMSEA, SRMR, and a comparative fit index (CFI). Figures less than 0.50 indicate excellent fit, 0.500-.08 suggest moderate fit. CFI values of 0.96 or above indicate good fit, while 0.91 is adequate. Emotional weariness, WIPL, PLIW, and participatory leadership were evaluated as elements in a hypothesised measuring model.

The CFA loadings determined the composite reliability for every component. An effect size of 0.50 or above indicates validity. In terms of convergent validity, the loadings for WIPL items varied from 0.78 to 0.88, whereas those for PLIW ranged from 0.73 to 0.99. The square root of each concept’s average variance must exceed the measure’s correlation with other components. The square root of average variance extracted establishes discriminant validity. The influence of common technique variance was tested using Harman’s single-factor test as well as partial correlation.

Using Harman’s single variable test, only 38percent of variation was attributed to a single component. Factor analysis was used for correlation test. The initial unrotated factor’s impacts were statistically adjusted to see if the correlations between the measures remained significant. No notable changes were found. Based on both tests, common method variance is expected to be a major concern in this research.

TABLE I THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCALES OF MEASUREMENT AND THE CORRELATION MATRIX OF LATENT VARIABLES

Construct	PL	AVE	EE	WIPL	Cronbach’s α	CR	PLIW
PLIW (Personal life interference with work)		0.647	0.535	0.521	0.87	0.880	(0.805)
PL (Participative leadership)	0.799	0.638	-0.152	0.209	0.84	0.841	-0.153
WIPL (Work interference with personal life)		0.679	0.755	(0.824)	0.92	0.913	
EE (Emotional exhaustion)		0.724	(0.851)		0.93	0.929	

IV. DISCUSSION

The link between PLIW and mental exhaustion was larger for women. This conclusion echoed prior studies linking family–work conflict to female emotional weariness. WIPL was shown to be associated to perceived participatory leadership. As per gender role theory, women’s primary domains are family and work, whereas men’s major domain is work. Employed women may struggle to combine job and family, especially when both need more attention and effort. Family support would be invaluable in such a circumstance. During the lockout, most employees struggled to balance work and personal obligations. Most employed people dreaded being laid off as they anticipated a possible economic slump. Employees’ emotional tiredness was linked to work-family conflicts while working from home. Women may experience greater emotional exhaustion when remote working during a work from home for two reasons. First, they, like males, feared job loss owing to the working from home. Second, they were unable to give their all when work from home due to onerous domestic duties.

V. CONCLUSION

Women are becoming more prevalent in the workforce, and their contributions to enterprises are increasingly recognized as significant. It is critical for firms to recognize the contributions of female workers by implementing more acceptable work-life balance policies. Upholding a respectable WLB is important for all workers, regardless of sector to which they are assigned. It is the joint obligation of the employers and the employees to encourage a healthy WLB that will benefit the business and even the personnel in the long run. Furthermore, India’s outdated standards forbid permanent work-from-home setups in back offices. In response, the government removed decades-old reporting requirements, such as submitting office network schematics to get information sharing circuits. The modifications allowed individuals to work from home on a permanent basis. Many professional women in India, especially the less wealthy, have struggled to balance childcare, online learning, and office job from home, prompting others to drop out. Due to the inability to work from home, millions of women lost employment. But the shifts in the IT services business indicate how much the epidemic is changing Indian workplaces.

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