Impact of Work-Life Balance on Workplace Stress Among Employees

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ABSTRACT

The show think about examines the effect of seen stretch on work-life adjust (WLB) among Indian working experts, with a particular center on the directing part of proficient field. Drawing from existing writing that highlights push as a basic figure in word related well-being, This investigates points to evaluate whether experts in spaces such as HR/Operations, IT, and Finance/Marketing encounter diverse results in their capacity to preserve work-life adjust beneath push.

Data was collected through a web overview utilizing standardized self-report measures of Seen Push and Work-Life Adjust. An add up to of 158 substantial reactions were analyzed utilizing control investigation (Prepare Demonstrate 2 in SPSS), with space sham factors speaking to proficient areas.

Discoveries affirmed a noteworthy negative relationship between seen push and work- life adjustment, showing that expanded push levels are related to a decrease in adjustment over individual and proficient spaces. Besides, the interaction between seen push and proficient field was critical: experts from the HR/Operations space illustrated a comparatively weaker negative relationship between stretch and WLB than those in Finance/Marketing.

No critical control was watched for the IT segment. These comes about propose that word related parts and sector-specific characteristics impact how push impacts work-life adjust.

The consider underscores how custom-made intercessions that address the one of a kind requests and adapting capacities of experts totally different areas. Restrictions incorporate the cross-sectional plan and constrained generalizability past the three chosen spaces.

Future inquiries ought to consolidate longitudinal studies investigating underrepresented word related divisions for a more comprehensive understanding of push and work-life flow within the Indian setting.

Watchwords: Stretch, Workers, Work-Life Adjust, IT, Human Assets

Chapter I: Presentation
Within the modern globalized world, keeping
up a sound harmony between proficient obligations and individual life has ended up progressively troublesome. Quick industrialization, computerized change,
and powers work requests have modified the scene of work, particularly in nations like India. The tenacious pace of mechanical progression has driven to an obscuring of boundaries between work and domestic, as portable gadgets and consistent network make it troublesome for people to detach from their occupations (Priyanka, 2013). As a result, workers are frequently expected to stay available and responsive to the exterior of conventional working hours, driving to expanded stretch and decreased individual time (George & Veetil, 2023).
Moreover, the competitive nature of today's corporate environment has heightened expectations for

productivity and efficiency, pushing individuals to devote more time and energy to their professional roles (Chandra, 2021). This extended engagement with work can significantly encroach upon time meant for rest, leisure, and personal development. Studies show that such prolonged work involvement can lead to emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced overall well-being (Anuradha & Pandey, 2015).

At the same time, familial and societal expectations remain high, particularly in cultures like India's, where family plays a central role in an individual's life. Traditional gender roles and societal pressures further complicate efforts to maintain a balance, especially for women, who often face greater challenges in harmonizing work and family life (Patel, 2024). Balancing These dual demands become a formidable challenge, often resulting in emotional exhaustion, deteriorating personal relationships, and even physical health issues due to prolonged stress (JyothiSree & Jyothi, 2012).

Given these realities, organizations in India are increasingly recognizing the importance of work-life balance initiatives as a strategic tool for enhancing employee satisfaction and organizational performance (Ahuja, 2015). Nevertheless, significant gaps remain between the existence of such policies and their actual implementation, often due to entrenched cultural norms and workplace expectations (Chandra, 2021).

The concept of Work-Life Balance (WLB), defined as the state in which an individual is equally engaged and satisfied with their work and family roles, has thus become a central issue in organizational behavior and employee well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of fostering environments that support WLB through flexible working arrangements, mental health initiatives, and employee assistance programs (Sumarno et al., 2024). By promoting a culture that values both productivity and personal well-being, employers can enhance not only employee morale and loyalty but also overall organizational performance (Baral & Bhargava, 2009).

Consequently, addressing work-life balance is not just a matter of individual coping strategies, but a broader organizational and societal imperative. Companies that fail to provide adequate WLB support risk facing higher rates of absenteeism, burnout, and employee turnover (Santhanalaxmi & Chandramohan, 2019). Moreover, studies highlight that employee experiencing better WLB report improved mental health, enhanced resilience, and greater job satisfaction, all of which positively impact overall productivity (Liswandi & Muhammad, 2023).

Work-life balance has moved from being a luxury to a necessity. Historically perceived as a concern primarily for working mothers, WLB is now widely acknowledged as a key factor influencing productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment across all employee demographics (Agarwal, 2014). A failure to maintain balance between work and personal life leads to work-family conflict, which manifests as reduced performance, mental health issues, and even increased attrition rates (Mehta & Kothari, 2016).

Indian organizations, particularly in sectors like IT, finance, and marketing, are increasingly experiencing the adverse consequences of poor WLB, including employee disengagement, health-related absenteeism, and high turnover (Babu & Sahayam, 2024). Proactive initiatives such as implementing flexible work schedules, promoting mental wellness programs, and encouraging supportive leadership practices have been found crucial in mitigating these challenges (Parida, 2016). Thus, addressing work-life balance has emerged not merely as a strategy for employee retention but as a vital driver of sustainable organizational success.

The importance of WLB is well-documented in Indian industry studies. For instance, in the IT sector, employees often face unrealistic deadlines, late-night calls with global clients, and a culture of constant availability, leading to a "spillover" of work into personal life (Kala et al., 2017). Pasumarti (2019) further adds that in Visakhapatnam's ITES sector, high workloads and extended hours blur the boundary between home and work, pushing employees into chronic stress. In other industries, such as insurance and education, employees—especially women—struggle to manage dual roles, often compromising their well-being in the process (Dolai, 2015; Menaka, 2022).

One of the key factors that disrupt work-life balance is perceived stress, the feeling or thought that one's demands exceed their coping resources (Cohen et al., 1983). Unlike objective stressors such as workload or deadlines, perceived stress is subjective and is influenced by how individuals interpret and respond to stress-inducing stimuli. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Cohen, measures the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Higher scores on the PSS are associated with emotional exhaustion, lower life satisfaction, and increased burnout.

In India, the effect of perceived stress on WLB has been observed across various professional groups. Solanki and Mandaviya (2021) found that Indian university teachers experience higher stress and weaker WLB, especially among women who carry dual roles at work and home. Similarly, Deshpande et al. (2012) identified that bank employees in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar reported moderate to high levels of occupational stress, which had a negative correlation with their WLB. The overlap of professional and personal responsibilities, particularly in dual-income families, amplifies this issue (Kaushal, 2021). Furthermore, Kumrawat and Tankha (2020) revealed that among contract laborers and gig workers in India, long overtime hours were strongly linked to decreased satisfaction and increased stress, significantly disrupting work-life balance.

The intersection of WLB and perceived stress has also been studied in the context of organizational support and coping mechanisms. Research indicates that when organizations offer flexible work arrangements, childcare support, and mental health resources, employees are better able to manage stress and maintain balance (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). Perceived organizational support significantly reduces role stress and enhances job satisfaction, thus playing a mediating role between stressors and WLB (Sheikh, 2022).

Despite evidence on the effectiveness of such supportive policies, Indian corporate culture still largely promotes long working hours and emphasizes high employee availability, especially in competitive fields such as IT, marketing, and finance (Dubey & S., 2021). A lack of proactive organizational strategies for WLB perpetuates perceived stress among employees, affecting not just their professional efficiency but also their physical and mental health (Pathak, 2012). Moving forward, developing a supportive work culture and customized WLB interventions appears crucial for promoting sustainable employee well-being and organizational success in India.

Importantly, the professional field may play a moderate role in how stress influences WLB. For example, studies comparing private and public sector employees have found distinct differences in stress perception and coping. Private sector employees often report higher workloads and stress, while public sector employees enjoy more stability and structured hours (Deshpande etal., 2012). Similarly, Christiana and Rajan (2014) compared IT professionals and executives in private firms and found IT employees to experience higher de-motivation and lower WLB due to demanding schedules. Moreover, Bhadana et al. (2022) showed that even within education, job level and gender influenced how organizational stress affected WLB, underlining the importance of considering occupational field and

demographic variables in such studies.

Additional studies across India reinforce the urgency of this topic. In Hyundai Motors India, efforts to enhance WLB led to higher employee retention and productivity (Santhanalaxmi & Chandramohan, 2019). In the print media sector of Tamil Nadu, long hours and unpredictable schedules were found to significantly impair WLB among journalists (Aranganathan et al., 2017). Even in defense forces, Singh et al. (2023) found a moderate negative correlation between occupational stress and WLB among CRPF jawans, reflecting the universality of this issue across domains.

Moreover, perceptions of WLB are heavily influenced by gender, age, and life stage. Women employees, especially working mothers, face additional stressors related to caregiving, societal expectations, and lack of workplace support. Mohapatra and Nayak (2018) highlighted how stress management techniques are crucial for women in manufacturing sectors to manage work-life conflicts. Kapoor (2023) also reported that insurance advisors who had better WLB also enjoyed better mental health and job satisfaction, showcasing the potential organizational benefits of addressing these issues.

The Indian context, marked by rapidly growing sectors, joint family systems transitioning into nuclear families, and changing gender roles, offers a unique setting to study the impact of perceived stress on work-life balance (WLB). Cultural and economic diversity makes the interplay between stress and WLB much more complex than in more homogenized societies (Rajadhyaksha, 2012). Urban professionals often grapple with digital overload, relentless performance pressure, and blurred boundaries between work and home life, while rural employees contend with challenges like long commutes, inflexible work arrangements, and limited access to organizational support systems (Mittal et al., 2017).

Moreover, sectoral differences heavily influence the stress-WLB dynamic. For example, employees in IT and ITES sectors often experience severe work-family conflict due to demanding schedules and expectations of constant connectivity (Patel, 2024). In contrast, professionals in traditional sectors like banking and manufacturing may face hierarchical pressures and rigid work structures that similarly disrupt balance but in different forms (Deshpande, 2012).

Women, especially in dual-career households, face disproportionate burdens due to societal expectations to manage household responsibilities alongside professional roles, leading to higher levels of perceived stress and lower WLB satisfaction (Suganya & Selvasundaram, 2019). The pandemic exacerbated these issues, with remote working creating further blurring of work and personal boundaries (Said et al., 2023).

Furthermore, perceived organizational support plays a pivotal role in moderating the relationship between stress and WLB. Organizations that implement flexible work hours, mental health programs, and childcare facilities help alleviate stress and foster better balance (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). Unfortunately, these interventions are still sporadic, especially in smaller companies and rural areas (Gunavathy, 2011).

Studies show that long working hours, excessive overtime, and lack of autonomy are major contributors to stress among Indian workers, especially among contract laborers and gig economy participants (Kumrawat & Tankha, 2020). Stressors like these not only impact mental health but also lead to physical health issues, burnout, absenteeism, and higher attrition rates (Chatterjee, 2016).

Sector-specific studies reveal varying stress patterns, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to understanding work-life balance (WLB) challenges. For instance, in the banking sector, long customer-facing hours, high sales targets, and mounting administrative workloads exert substantial pressure on employees, leading to significant disruptions in their WLB (Kesavan, 2020). Similarly, IT professionals, particularly those commuting daily via congested metro systems, experience compounded psychological

stress resulting from both occupational demands and travel-related fatigue, intensifying their overall stress burden (Shylaja & Prasad, 2017). These sectoral differences highlight that stressors are not uniform across industries but are shaped by the specific nature of work, organizational structures, and even commuting patterns.

Recognizing these complexities, researchers emphasize the urgent need for nuanced, sector- specific, and demographic-sensitive interventions to effectively address perceived stress and enhance work-life balance. Generic, one-size-fits-all solutions are insufficient to capture the heterogeneity of experiences across professions, age groups, and socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, future research should prioritize the development of integrative models that incorporate regional, economic, occupational, and cultural dimensions into the stress-WLB framework. Traditional Western conceptualizations, while valuable, often fail to capture the intricacies inherent in the Indian context, where factors such as collectivist cultural values, infrastructural challenges, and evolving family dynamics uniquely influence how stress is perceived and managed. A more localized and contextually grounded understanding is essential for designing effective policies and organizational practices that truly support the diverse Indian workforce.

The Present Study

Given the increasing prevalence of stress-related challenges and declining work-life balance in India's professional landscape, this study seeks to examine the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance among Indian employees. Furthermore, it aims to determine whether the professional field (HR/Operations, IT, Finance/Marketing) moderates this relationship. Grounded in existing literature and the socio-cultural nuances of Indian workplaces, this research addresses a significant gap in empirical evidence regarding sectoral differences in stress perception and balance outcomes. By identifying how stress affects WLB across various professional fields, this study will provide critical insights for organizations to design tailored interventions that support employee well-being and boost organizational performance.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Recent studies continue to affirm the complex interplay between job stress, work-life balance (WLB), and employee outcomes across diverse industries. Khayal (2023) found that stress significantly moderates the relationship between high-performance work systems and perceived employee performance, indicating that stress not only affects well-being but also disrupts the effectiveness of organizational strategies. Supporting this, Kumar and Chaturvedi (2018) demonstrated that among engineering students, social support positively influenced life satisfaction, with WLB acting as a crucial mediating variable between stress and overall well-being. Extending this to creative industries, Mayasari et al. (2024) reported that while technology integration can enhance employee well-being, high levels of job stress and poor WLB can diminish these benefits, particularly in artistic professions. These findings suggest that managing stress and fostering balance are universally essential for employee satisfaction and organizational performance, regardless of industry.

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a vital construct in organizational behavior, especially with the growing recognition of the negative effects of perceived stress on employees' personal and professional lives. Numerous studies have established a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and WLB. For instance, Rawat and Singh (2024) found that Indian IT professionals in

high-pressure urban environments reported diminished WLB due to heightened stress levels. Their research also highlighted that inner peace and resilience mediate this relationship, suggesting interventions such as mindfulness and resilience training can enhance employee well-being. Similarly, Arthi and Gita (2024) explored remote work conditions in Indian IT firms during the pandemic and concluded that remote work demands increased stress, which in turn adversely affected WLB. However, transformational leadership was found to buffer this effect, indicating the importance of organizational support in stress management.

The relationship between stress and WLB has been widely studied across industries in India. Kaur (2017) studied private-sector bank employees in Chandigarh and observed that stress levels were inversely correlated with both job satisfaction and mental health, particularly among female employees. Bhadana et al. (2022) examined academic professionals in Uttar Pradesh and revealed that a toxic organizational environment intensified occupational stress, negatively impacting WLB. Gender differences were notable, with female faculty reporting higher stress and poorer WLB than their male counterparts.

Further, the role of the professional field as a moderator is gaining attention. Christiana and Rajan (2014) compared IT professionals and private sector executives and found that IT employees experienced higher stress and poorer WLB due to unrealistic performance expectations and long work hours. Likewise, Rajagopalasingam et al. (2020) highlighted the differing role demands in professions like engineering and medicine, demonstrating that professionals with high perceived role demands reported lower WLB, irrespective of gender or organizational support. The findings support the hypothesis that professional field can moderate the stress-WLB relationship.

Stress management programs have shown promising results in improving WLB. Kumar et al. (2023) conducted an intervention study among public sector employees in India and found that after a structured stress management program, participants reported improved WLB and self-care strategies. Mohapatra and Nayak (2018) similarly emphasized the importance of structured stress-reduction practices in manufacturing organizations in Odisha, India. Their study showed that managing stress effectively leads to better balance in personal and professional domains.

Sector-specific insights further strengthen this argument. Hari et al. (2022) found that women in the Indian hotel industry are particularly vulnerable to stress, with their WLB significantly disrupted by long shifts and unpredictable schedules. Nazneen (2023) observed that in the healthcare sector, flexible work conditions and family support significantly improved WLB and employee engagement, highlighting sector-based differences in coping resources and expectations.

Organizational support is a critical buffer between stress and WLB. Amazue and Onyishi (2016) demonstrated that stress coping strategies and organizational support significantly predict WLB among Nigerian bank workers. These findings align with the Indian context, where organizational culture and flexibility heavily influence the stress-WLB dynamic.

Similarly, Aithal (2023) studied female educators in Tamil Nadu and concluded that stress management improved job satisfaction and WLB, especially among women juggling dual responsibilities.

Cross-cultural and non-Indian studies further confirm the universal nature of this stress-WLB relationship. Zubenschi (2021) examined how technological changes influence professional balance and found that innovation can both alleviate and exacerbate stress, depending on the employee's adaptability. Le et al. (2024) highlighted how job stress and co-worker support affect help-seeking behaviors and WLB among Vietnamese employees. These international comparisons are valuable in contextualizing the Indian scenario within a global framework.

Additional literature supports the existence of direct and indirect impacts of workload and stress on WLB. Ahmad et al. (2022) found that in Indonesian startups, high workloads directly reduced WLB and performance, reinforcing the universal importance of stress control (Ahmad, Handaru, & Usman, 2022). Similarly, Safitri and Marcheila (2022) confirmed that high workloads and poor WLB increase work stress, further disrupting employee well-being (Safitri & Marcheila, 2022).

Andeyo and Otuya (2020) synthesized global literature and emphasized that WLB is influenced by stress, organizational culture, and gender-specific expectations. Dwitanti, Murwani, and Siswanto (2023) further highlighted that supportive workplace cultures reduce stress and improve WLB (Dwitanti, Murwani, & Siswanto, 2023). These studies corroborate the need for industry-specific and gender-sensitive WLB policies.

Finally, the moderating effect of profession is highlighted in the educational and service sectors. Bhatia et al. (2022) and Nazneen (2023) both found that occupational context, such as academia or healthcare, influences how stress translates into WLB outcomes. Supporting this, Aras et al. (2022) emphasized that for nurses, high stress levels severely impact organizational commitment, which is mediated by WLB (Aras, Rahmadani, Nurkhalifa, & Rahmiani, 2022). This supports the hypothesis that professional field is not just a background variable but a key moderator in the stress-WLB relationship.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of **perceived stress** on **work-life balance** among Indian employees. Additionally, the study seeks to explore whether this relationship is influenced by the individual's **professional field** (specifically HR/Operations, IT, and Finance/Marketing).

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance among working professionals in India.
2. To examine the impact of different levels of perceived stress on individuals' work-life balance.
3. To determine whether the professional field moderates the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

3.2 Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

H2: The professional field does not significantly moderate the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

3.3 Sample

Data for this study was collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Instagram. A random sampling method was employed to recruit participants. Out of the 166 participants further the study further targeted Indian working professionals across these three primary domains: HR/Operations, IT, and Finance/Marketing.

The study comprised a total of 158 Indian working professionals from various fields, including Finance/Marketing (n = 67; 42.4%), HR/Operations (n = 59; 37.3%), and Information Technology (n = 32; 20.3%). The mean age of the participants was 28.7 years (*SD = 6.78*), with an age range spanning from 20 to 55 years. The sample included 98 males (62.0%) and 60 females (38.0%). Only full-time working adults currently employed in one of the targeted professional fields were included in the study.

The survey consisted of standardized self-report questionnaires designed to measure perceived stress and work-life balance, along with demographic questions covering age, gender, and professional field. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Prior to distribution, participants were presented with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study and their rights as respondents.

Only individuals who provided consent were allowed to proceed with the survey.

A total of 158 valid responses were recorded, with no missing data for the key variables under investigation.

3.4 Variables

Work-Life Balance Scale (WLB)

Work-life balance was assessed using the Work-Life Balance Scale developed by Fisher- McAuley et al. (2003). The scale consists of 5 items that evaluate an individual's perceived balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate a greater sense of balance. The scale is widely used in occupational research and has demonstrated sound reliability and validity.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

Perceived stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983). This scale includes 5 items designed to measure the degree to which individuals perceive situations in their life as stressful. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). Higher scores correspond to higher levels of perceived stress. The PSS is a validated and widely accepted instrument in psychological and health-related research.

3.5 Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance among Indian working professionals. The design further included a moderation analysis to explore whether the participants' professional field (HR/Operations, IT, or Finance/Marketing) influenced the strength or direction of this relationship.

3.6 Statistical Analysis Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). Measures included means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, along with skewness and kurtosis coefficients to assess the normality of the distribution for each variable. These statistics provided a preliminary understanding of the data and ensured that assumptions for further analyses were met.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 27) in conjunction with the PROCESS macro (Version 4.0) developed by Hayes (2018). Moderation analyses were performed to determine whether the professional field (HR/Operations, IT, Finance/Marketing) moderates the impact of perceived stress on work life balance of Indian employees.

Chapter IV: Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted on the data. Since all skewness values (ranging from - 0.824 to 0.624) and kurtosis values (ranging from -0.662 to -0.105) fell within the range of ±2 for skewness and ±7 for kurtosis (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995), the assumption of normality was not violated.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
PSS WLB	13.73	2.866	6	20	-0.462	-0.249
	18.06	3.324	7	24	-0.509	0.325

Note: PSS, Perceived Stress Scale; WLB, Work Life Balance Scale.

Further, Pearson's correlation analysis and were conducted to examine and understand the underlying associations between these variables.

4.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived stress (PSS) and work-life balance (WLB) among participants. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between PSS and WLB, $r(158) = -.385$, $p < .001$, suggesting that higher levels of perceived stress are associated with lower levels of work-life balance. Given the significance of this association, a linear regression analysis was subsequently conducted to examine the predictive value of perceived stress on work-life balance. Additionally, a moderation analysis was carried out to explore whether this relationship was influenced by professional field.

4.3 Regression and Moderation Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether perceived stress (PSS) significantly predicted work-life balance (WLB). The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 156) = 27.13$, $p < .001$, indicating that perceived stress explains a significant proportion of variance in work-life balance. The model accounted for approximately 14.8% of the variance in WLB ($R^2 = .148$). The regression coefficient for PSS was significant, $B = -0.446$, $SE = 0.086$, $\beta = -.385$, $t = -5.21$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher levels of perceived stress were associated with lower levels of work-life balance.

Table 2. Coefficients of Regression predicting Work Life Balance from Perceived Stress

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	24.185	1.202		20.124	<.001
	PSS	-.446	.086	-.385	-5.208	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: WLB

Note: PSS, Perceived Stress Scale; WLB, Work Life Balance Scale.

To examine whether the relationship between perceived stress (PSS) and work-life balance (WLB) was moderated by professional field, dummy variables were created for categorical comparisons. The professional field variable (PROF) consisted of three categories: Finance (F), IT (I), and Human Resources (HR). Faculty was selected as the reference group. Two dummy variables were computed: D_HR (1 = HR, 0 = F) and D_I (1 = I, 0 = F). To reduce multicollinearity in the interaction terms, PSS scores were mean-centered, resulting in the variable ZPSS. Interaction terms were then created by multiplying ZPSS with each dummy variable: ZPSS_D_HR and ZPSS_D_I.

Table 3. Coefficients of the Moderation Model predicting Work Life Balance from Perceived Stress moderated via Professional field

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	18.152	.372		48.815	<.001
	ZPSS Zscore(PSS)	-1.856	.364	-.559	-5.096	<.001
	D_HR Dummy: HR vs F (reference)	-.271	.544	-.040	-.497	.620
	D_I Dummy: I vs F (reference)	-.133	.659	-.016	-.202	.840
	ZPSS_D_HR	1.425	.539	.262	2.641	.009
	ZPSS_D_I	.259	.684	.033	.378	.706

a. Dependent Variable: WLB

Note. ZPSS, Perceived Stress Scale (mean centered); WLB, Work Life Balance Scale; D_HR, Dummy variable for HR; D_I, Dummy variable for IT, ZPSS_D_HR, Interaction term between ZPSS*D_HR; ZPSS_D_I, Interaction term between ZPSS*D_I.

The analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 2). The model was statistically significant, $F(5, 152) = 7.05$, $p < .001$, accounting for 18.8% of the variance in WLB ($R^2 = .188$). A significant negative main effect of PSS on WLB was observed ($B = -0.65$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = -5.10$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived stress were associated with lower levels of work-life balance. Among the interaction terms, the interaction between PSS and the HR group (compared to Finance) was significant ($B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.19$, $t = 2.64$, $p = .009$), while the interaction between PSS and the IT group (compared to Finance) was not statistically significant ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.24$, $t = 0.38$, $p = .706$).

Table 4. Conditional Effects of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance at Different Professional Fields

Professional Group	D_I	D_HR	Effect	SE	t	p	CI [LLCI, ULCI]
Finance	0	0	–0.648	0.127	–5.10	< .001	[–0.899, –0.397]
HR	0	1	–0.151	0.139	–1.09	.279	[–0.425, 0.124]
IT	1	0	–0.558	0.202	–2.76	.0065	[–0.957, –0.158]

Note. D_HR, Dummy variable for HR; D_I, Dummy variable for IT

Conditional effects analysis further clarified these interactions. For Finance professionals (reference group), perceived stress was a significant negative predictor of work-life balance ($B = –0.65$, $p < .001$), reflecting a strong inverse relationship. Among IT professionals, this relationship remained significant but was slightly weaker ($B = –0.56$, $p = .006$). Interestingly, for participants in the HR group, the negative association between stress and work-life balance was not statistically significant ($B = –0.15$, $p = .28$), suggesting that HR professionals may experience a buffering effect against stress in

terms of maintaining work-life balance.

These findings point toward a possible contextual influence of professional field in shaping how stress impacts individual well-being.

Chapter V: Discussion

The present study explored the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance among Indian working professionals and assessed whether this relationship is moderated by professional field. Consistent with our first hypothesis (H1), we found a significant negative association between perceived stress and work-life balance. This aligns with a broad body of literature that underscores stress as a critical barrier to achieving equilibrium between professional and personal domains. Elevated stress levels tend to compromise individuals' cognitive, emotional, and time resources, making it difficult to effectively manage dual-role responsibilities (Kaushal, 2021; Savarimalai et al., 2023; Zaheer et al., 2016). Research among female faculty, nurses, IT professionals, and police officers consistently indicates that high perceived stress is strongly associated with diminished work-life balance (Dubey & R. S., 2021; Singh et al., 2023).

To deepen this understanding, the current study applied a moderation analysis using dummy variables to represent IT and HR/Operations professionals compared against a Finance/Marketing reference group. Results showed that the moderating effect of profession was significant for HR/Operations but not for IT, indicating that the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance is weaker for HR professionals. This finding diverges from our second hypothesis (H2), which posited no moderating influence. This deviation suggests that professionals in HR/Operations roles may possess organizational knowledge or coping strategies that better buffer them against the detrimental effects of stress. For instance, familiarity with employee support programs or human-centric workplace policies may contribute to enhanced resilience and boundary-setting skills, which reduce the stress spillover into personal life (Poulose & Dhal, 2020).

In contrast, IT professionals did not significantly differ from the Finance/Marketing group. This aligns with prior research showing that although IT professionals frequently encounter stress due to long hours and performance pressures, their coping resources—such as high digital literacy and remote work flexibility—may not always translate into better work-life balance outcomes (Rawat & Singh, 2024; Pasumarti, 2019).

Interestingly, the moderating role of profession was supported in several other sectors. Mental health professionals showed high perceived stress levels due to emotional labor and long hours, yet their work-life balance was linked more to job satisfaction and personal coping strategies like compassion satisfaction and burnout mitigation (Savarimalai et al., 2023).

Similarly, contract workers and gig professionals, such as those examined by Kumrawat and Tankha, experience uniquely intense stressors related to financial instability and lack of social protection, further intensifying their work-life conflict (Kumrawat & Tankha, 2020).

Limitations

Despite meaningful insights, the study presents some limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal approaches could shed light on how stress and work-life balance evolve over time or in response to workplace interventions (Solanki & Mandaviya, 2021). The study also concentrated on only three sectors, omitting fields like healthcare, academia, and public service where

stress dynamics might differ markedly (Bhadana et al., 2022; Zaheer et al., 2016). Additionally, reliance on self-reporting invites potential biases such as social desirability and inaccurate recall. Moreover, demographic diversity (e.g., age, gender, role hierarchy) was not equally distributed across the sample, which may influence generalizability of findings.

Future Directions

Future research should aim for broader inclusivity by sampling professionals from varied industries like education, policing, healthcare, and the gig economy (Bhartiya et al., 2020; Mylavarapu et al., 2024). Longitudinal designs and experience sampling methods could offer richer insight into how stress and work-life dynamics unfold. Investigating moderators like gender, work arrangements (e.g., hybrid/remote), organizational culture, and emotional intelligence could help reveal protective factors across professions (Shylaja & Prasad, 2017). Qualitative studies, including interviews or focus groups, would also provide deeper narrative understanding of individual strategies and challenges faced in balancing work and life roles.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence of the intricate relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance among working professionals in India. Across various occupational sectors, a consistent and significant negative correlation was observed—higher levels of perceived stress were associated with poorer work-life balance. This supports longstanding psychological and occupational health literature which suggests that stress is a primary barrier to maintaining equilibrium between personal and professional responsibilities. As individuals struggle to cope with role overload, time scarcity, and emotional fatigue, their capacity to manage work and life domains effectively becomes severely compromised.

Moreover, the study offered critical insights into how this relationship is shaped by professional background. The moderating analysis revealed that professionals in HR/Operations exhibited a weaker negative correlation between stress and work-life balance compared to their counterparts in Finance/Marketing. This suggests that certain roles, possibly due to better familiarity with human resource practices or more flexible role structures, offer resilience against stress-induced imbalance. On the other hand, IT professionals did not significantly differ from the reference group, indicating that while the IT sector is often associated with flexible work arrangements, it does not inherently buffer stress unless accompanied by adequate support mechanisms and boundary-setting practices.

Additional evidence from related sectors—such as healthcare, academia, policing, and gig work—further validates the importance of contextual and occupational variables. For instance, studies on healthcare workers and contract laborers have shown that sector-specific stressors like emotional labor, shift work, and job insecurity can exacerbate the erosion of work-life balance, even in the presence of organizational support systems. Similarly, professionals in education and law enforcement face unique pressures that interact with demographic variables such as gender, age, and role seniority, further influencing the stress- balance equation.

The study also highlights the need to move beyond generalized stress-reduction policies toward profession-specific interventions. HR professionals may benefit from structured time management tools, whereas those in IT and Finance may require programs focusing on resilience, digital detox strategies, or workload redistribution. This nuanced understanding should guide organizational policy and workplace

culture development, promoting flexible working conditions, emotional intelligence training, and support networks that are tailored to the demands of specific job roles.

Nevertheless, the study's limitations—such as its cross-sectional nature, reliance on self- reported data, and restricted occupational scope—underscore the importance of future research. Longitudinal studies, qualitative interviews, and industry-specific investigations could offer richer, more dynamic insights into how professionals adapt to stress over time and across changing work conditions. Expanding the sample to include gig workers, frontline health staff, educators, and other underrepresented sectors would also help build a more inclusive understanding of work-life dynamics in India.

In conclusion, while stress universally undermines work-life balance, the extent and manner of its impact are significantly shaped by the professional field. Organizations aiming to improve employee well-being must adopt tailored, evidence-based strategies that consider the specific stress profiles and coping capacities of their workforce. By doing so, they can foster not only a healthier, more balanced workforce but also more sustainable organizational outcomes.

Chapter VIII: References

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