

A Study on Work Life Balance of Women in Madurai District

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ABSTRACT

Women from Madurai struggle the most in achieving a work-life balance due to rigid gender roles, workplace restrictions, and socio-cultural expectations of the society. They need to balance a professional life and take part in several domestic activities including taking care of children or elderly family members, often single-handedly. Their struggles are compounded by workplace issues such as long working hours, low wages, and minimal opportunities for advancement. There is societal encouragement to force women to take a back seat in their job which results in stress, exhaustion, and sacrificing career goals. This research aims to understand issues faced by working women in the city of Madurai across industries and the impacts of these for the women's work-life balance. The research uses descriptive design based on data gathered from 105 women professionals by means of a structured questionnaire. It was discovered that cultural and societal expectations, health and wellbeing issues, and inadequate organizational policies were the main factors that affect women's work-life balance. The research recommends the adoption of flexible working schedules, gender responsive policies in the workplace, wellness programs, and changing attitudes on caregiving responsibilities within the society to improve the work-life balance and well-being among working women.

Keywords: Work- life balance, women professionals, workplace policies, gender roles, mental well-being, career growth, stress management.

OVERVIEW OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

People seek to maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives, which is known as work life balance. While attending to personal and family obligations, it is essential for maintaining productivity at work. Women's concern about work life balance are growing in Madurai, a city renowned for its economic activity and cultural legacy. Traditional gender norms and cultural expectations make it difficult for women in a variety of industries, such as education, healthcare, retail and IT to balance their work and home duties.

SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In order to help employers and policymakers create a more supportive work environment for women, this study aims to understand the unique challenges that women in Madurai face in maintaining work life balance. It does this by examining workplace policies, societal expectations, and support systems that impact women's ability to balance work and personal responsibilities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shahid Amin and Neha Agrawal (2022)¹: This study looks at how work life balance was affected by the covid-19 epidemic, particularly for female professionals.

Indumathi.R (2020)²: This study highlights the difficulties women employees face in juggling work and personal responsibilities., cutting high pressure, workload and lack of family support as major stressors.

V.E.Santhi and Dr.D.Maria Pon Reka (2020)³: This study, which focuses on female teachers in Madurai, identifies cultural expectations, lengthy workdays and high stress levels as the main obstacles to work life balance.

Dr. Kalpana & K.Deshmukh (2018)⁴: This study explores how technology impacts women's physical, emotional, and social wellbeing by increasing workloads and blurring work life boundaries.

¹ **Neha Agrawal, Shahid Amin (2022).** "study about the work life balance among all women professionals and its impact on their job satisfaction, job performance and job turnover intention in covid-19 crisis".

² **Indumathi.R (2020).** A Study on Work life Balance of Women Employees in private sector with respect to Madurai and Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu.

³ **Dr. D. Maria pon reka & V.E. santhi (2020).** "A Study on Work life balance of female teaching professionals in Madurai district".

⁴ **Dr. Kalpana & K. Deshmukh (2018).** "work life balance study focused on working women".

Dr.M.Sundaresan.S (2014)⁵: The study shows that women are under a lot of stress because of long hours, high work pressure and social expectations. He also suggests that three factor model to assist women in better juggling their personal and professional responsibilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women deal with increasing job demands, limited family assistance, insufficient workplace regulations, and unequal chances and compensation. They suffer from high levels of stress, burnout, and decreased productivity as a result. In order to improve work life balance, this study will look at the difficulties experienced by working women in Madurai and offer suggestions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1 To assess the work life balance of women in various professions in Madurai.
- 2 To examine problems impacting their work life balance.
- 3 To suggest measures for improving work life balance among women.

HYPOTHESIS

H0₁: There is no significant difference in organizational policy perception across different working days in a week and employment sector.

H1: There is a significant difference in organizational policy perception across different working days in a week and employment sector.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in mental and physical well-being perception across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members.

H2: There is significant difference in mental and physical well-being perception across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in societal and cultural expectations based on different marital status and number of children.

H3: There is significant difference in societal and cultural expectations based on different marital status and number of children.

⁵ **Sundaresan.S. (2014).** “work life balance – Implications for working women examined the factors affecting work life balance among women employees in Bangalore and highlighted the consequences of work life balance”.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data is gathered from 105 women professionals in a variety of industries, including IT, education, banking, health care, catering, beautician, government employees, hotel and tourism, textile, and retail workers using purposive sampling. The study uses a descriptive research design and a quantitative methodology. Both primary data and secondary data are used and statistical tool of Anova was applied for analysis using IBM SPSS software.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a descriptive research design to investigate Madurai women's work life balance. Data is gathered quantitatively using structured questionnaire. This design aids in recognizing the several elements that affect work life balance and evaluating how they affect women's personal and professional lives.

PERIOD OF STUDY

The ten month study, which ran from June 2024 to March 2025, allowed for a systematic examination of work life balance elements in both academic and professional contexts.

PROBLEMS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE

- 1. Unequal household responsibilities:** Women balance work and home responsibilities, resulting in stress and career setbacks.
- 2. Maternity and childcare challenges:** Mothers are forced to take job vacations due to a lack of leave and children help.
- 3. Organizational policy:** Long hours and rigid work schedules make it difficult to reconcile work and personal life.
- 4. Mental and physical well-being:** Balancing the responsibilities of work and home leads to stress and exhaustion.
- 5. Social and cultural expectations:** Women are pushed by gender norms to put family before career.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

TABLE 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

PARTICULARS		NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS (in percentage)
Age	Below 25	26	25
	26 – 40	39	37
	40 – 55	38	36
	Above 55	2	2
	Total	105	100
Marital status	Single	26	25
	Married	74	70
	Divorced	2	2
	Widow	3	3
	Total	105	100
Number of children	None	31	29
	1	24	23
	2	42	40
	More than 2	8	8
	Total	105	100
Number of dependent family members	None	14	13
	1 to 2	32	31
	3 to 4	38	36
	More than 4	21	20
	Total	105	100
Working days in a week	Less than 4 days	1	1
	5 days	35	33
	6 days	49	47
	7 days	20	19
	Total	105	100
Employment sector	IT	10	9
	Education	11	10
	Banking	10	10
	Health care	10	10
	Catering	11	10
	Beautician	10	10
	Government employee	11	10
	Hotel and tourism	10	10
	Textile	10	10
	Retail workers	12	11
	Total	105	100

(Source: Primary Data)

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

TABLE 2: Weighted average of problems of women related to work life balance

S.No	PARTICULARS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	RANK
1	Organizational policy	555	736	279	216	29	1815	17.28	3
2	Mental and physical well-being	1400	448	195	98	19	2160	20.57	2
3	Society and cultural expectations	1575	512	150	20	10	2267	21.59	1

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

From the above table, it is analysed that society and cultural expectations is the largest problem faced by women in regards to their work life balance, with many women feeling that they are expected to be the primary care giver for their family, in first rank with a weighted mean of 21.59. Respondents have stated that they feel stress due to tight deadlines affecting their mental and physical well-being, thereby ranking it in second place with a weighted mean of 20.57. Organizational policy has been ranked last with a weighted mean of 17.28. A significant portion of the respondents feel that their workplace does not allow them to take leave when requested, thereby disrupting their work life balance.

TABLE 3: Weighted average of mental and physical well being

S.No	PARTICULARS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	RANK
1	Frequently experience stress due to tight deadlines and heavy workloads.	290	92	39	16	3	440	4.19	1
2	Often skip meals or neglect proper nutrition due to time constraints.	260	96	45	18	5	424	4.03	5
3	Experience physical symptoms like headaches, back pain, or digestive issues due to work-related stress.	290	88	39	16	4	437	4.16	2
4	Stress levels have impacted my sleep and daily routines.	285	76	42	22	4	429	4.08	4
5	Feel burned out and exhausted from trying to	275	96	30	26	3	430	4.09	3

balance work and family responsibilities.									
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(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

As seen from the above table, it is understood that the largest problem for respondents is that they frequently experience stress due to tight deadlines and heavy workloads at the first rank with a weighted mean of 4.19. The problem ranked second with a weighted mean of 4.16 is that the respondents experience physical symptoms like headaches, back pain, or digestive issues due to work-related stress. The other problems ranked third, fourth and fifth are that the respondents feel burned out and exhausted from trying to balance work and family responsibilities, stress levels have impacted my sleep and daily routines and often skip meals or neglect proper nutrition due to time constraints.

TABLE 4: Weighted average of society and cultural expectations

S.No	PARTICULARS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	RANK
1	Expected to be the primary caregiver for my family, even if I have a career	325	120	21	4	1	471	4.48	1
2	Expected to be available to care for sick family members or manage family emergencies	325	104	30	6	1	466	4.43	2
3	Feel that family responsibilities or personal life need to be hidden to be taken seriously at work	305	104	21	18	2	450	4.28	4
4	The expectations from family often conflict with professional commitments	295	92	42	10	4	443	4.21	5
5	Society does not recognize or value the dual roles women manage at work and home	325	92	36	6	2	461	4.39	3

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

From the above table, it is understood that the largest problem faced by the respondents in for their work life balance is that they are expected to be the primary caregiver for their family, even if they have a career, with a weighted mean of 4.48, placing a major burden on their shoulders. The problem ranked second with a weighted mean of 4.43 is that that they are expected to be available to care for sick family members or manage family emergencies. Other problems ranked third, fourth and fifth are that society does not recognize or value the dual roles women manage at work and home, feeling that family responsibilities or personal life need to be hidden to be taken seriously at work, and that expectations from family often

conflict with professional commitments.

TABLE 5: Weighted average of organizational policy

S.No	PARTICULARS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	RANK
1	Organization does not provide adequate paid parental leave for mothers and fathers.	90	156	48	48	8	350	3.33	5
2	Family-friendly policies, such as childcare support, are not available in organization.	110	148	54	44	6	362	3.44	3
3	Workplace does not allow me to take personal or family leave when necessary.	100	132	69	46	6	353	3.36	4
4	There are no wellness programs or initiatives to reduce workplace stress in organization.	110	156	60	40	4	370	3.52	2
5	Gender-specific needs, such as nursing breaks or facilities, are not addressed effectively in workplace.	145	144	48	38	5	380	3.61	1

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

From the above table it is understood that the largest problem faced by women in regards to organizational policy is that gender-specific needs, such as nursing breaks or facilities, are not addressed effectively in workplace, with a weighted mean of 3.61, followed closely by no wellness programs or initiatives to reduce workplace stress in organization in second rank with a weighted mean of 3.52. Respondents have stated that family-friendly policies not being available in the organization are a major cause of concern, in third rank with a weighted mean of 3.44. The other problems with ranks four and five are workplace does not allow them to take personal or family leave when necessary, and that organization does not provide adequate paid parental leave for mothers and fathers.

ONE WAY ANOVA BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES (WORKING DAYS IN A WEEK AND EMPLOYMENT SECTOR)

H0_i: There is no significant difference in organizational policy perception across different working days in a week and employment sector.

H1: There is a significant difference in organizational policy perception across different working days in a week and employment sector.

TABLE 6: Perception of organizational policy across different working days in a week and employment sector

S.No	PARTICULARS	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	Sig.	REMARKS
1	Working days in a week	1.954	3	0.651	1.279	0.286	Not Significant
2	Employment sector	17.192	9	1.910	5.013	0.000	Significant

(Source: Computed Data)

Interpretation:

From the table, it is seen that working days in a week shows an F-value of 1.279 and a significance level (p value) of 0.286, which is far greater than the standard level of 0.05. This indicates that the number of working days in a week does not significantly influence the workplace policies. However, employment sector shows an F-value of 5.013 and a significance value of 0.000, which is far below the standard level. This suggests that respondents from different sectors perceive organizational policies differently. As the p value is less than 0.05 in employment sector, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted. In the case of working days in a week, the null hypothesis is accepted as the p value is more than 0.05.

There is a significant difference in organizational policy perception across different employment sectors.

ONE WAY ANOVA BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES (AGE, MARITAL STATUS AND NUMBER OF DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS)

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in mental and physical well-being perception across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members.

H₂: There is significant difference in mental and physical well-being perception across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members.

TABLE 7: Perception of mental physical well-being across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members

S.No	PARTICULARS	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	Sig.	REMARKS
1	Age	12.846	3	1.949	4.416	0.043	Significant
2	Marital status	10.589	3	1.530	4.776	0.010	Significant
3	Number of dependent family members	6.903	3	2.301	3.654	0.015	Significant

(Source: Computed Data)

Interpretation:

The F-value obtained for age, marital status and number of dependent family members are 4.416, 4.776 and 3.654 respectively, and all three demographic variables have a significance value less than the

threshold limit of 0.05, with age at 0.043, marital status at 0.010 and number of dependent family members at 0.015. This indicates that different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members impact the mental and physical well-being of the respondents differently. Since the p value is less than 0.05 in all three demographic variables, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_2) is accepted for age, marital status and number of dependent family members.

There is a significant difference in mental and physical well-being perception across different age groups, marital status and number of dependent family members.

ONE WAY ANOVA BETWEEN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES (MARITAL STATUS AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN)

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in societal and cultural expectations based on different marital status and number of children.

H_3 : There is a significant difference in societal and cultural expectations based on different marital status and number of children.

TABLE 8: Perception of societal and cultural expectations between different marital status and number of children.

S.No	PARTICULARS	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	Sig.	REMARKS
1	Marital Status	0.387	3	0.129	0.192	0.902	Not Significant
2	Number of children	4.978	2	2.489	4.012	0.021	Significant

(Source: Computed Data)

Interpretation:

The F-value and significance value for marital status are 0.192 and 0.902 respectively, where the significance level is well above the standard level of 0.05, which shows that marital status does not significantly affect societal and cultural expectations of the respondents. Number of children, on the other hand has an F-value of 4.012 and a significance level that is less than 0.05, at 0.021. This indicates that the number of children significantly impacts societal and cultural expectations. As the p value of number of children is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_3) is accepted. Since the p value of marital status is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is accepted.

There is a significant difference in societal and cultural expectations based on different number of children.

FINDINGS

1. The study revealed that 37% of the respondents belong to the 26-40 years age group, making it the dominant category. This suggests that most of the participants are in their early and mid-career stages, balancing work and personal responsibilities. Meanwhile, 36% are in the 0-55 year's category, indicating an experienced workforce.
2. The majority of respondents, 70% are married indicating that a significant proportion of participants balance their work-life responsibilities with family obligations. Meanwhile, 25% are single, suggesting that work-life balance may be influenced by marital status.
3. The study highlights that 40% of the respondents have two children, making it the most common

family structure. 29% have no children, while 23% have one child and 8% have more than two children.

4. The family of dependant family members significantly affects work-life balance. 36% of the respondents have 3-4 dependents, while 31% have 1-2 dependents. A smaller 20% support more than four dependents and 13% have none.
5. The majority of 47% work six days a week, followed by 33% who work five days. A notable 19% work on all seven days and 1% work less than 4 days per week.
6. In terms of employment sector, 11% of respondents work in retail, making it the single largest segment. The remaining 89% are distributed across various fields like IT, education, banking, healthcare, catering, beautician and government jobs, each accounting for 9-10% of the respondents.
7. The most significant challenge for women in achieving work-life balance is societal and cultural expectations (21.59%), as they are often expected to be primary caregivers even while pursuing careers. Mental and physical well-being (20.57%) is another major concern, with many respondents experiencing stress due to heavy workloads. Organizational policies (17.28%) also impact work-life balance as many workplaces do not provide flexible leave options, making it difficult for women to balance professional and personal responsibilities.
8. Women frequently experience stress due to tight deadlines and heavy workloads (4.19%), leading to serious health issues such as headaches, back pain, and digestive problems (4.16%). Many respondents also feel burned out and exhausted (4.09%), as balancing work and family responsibilities takes a toll on their mental and physical well-being. Additionally, lack of sleep and poor nutrition further worsen their overall health and energy levels.
9. Women face strong societal pressure to be the primary caregiver (4.48%), even if they have a career, which adds to their responsibilities. They are also expected to manage family emergencies (4.43%), further complicating their ability to maintain a balance between work and personal life. Moreover, society often fails to recognize the dual roles women manage (4.39%), forcing many to hide family responsibilities at work and struggle with conflicting expectations from both family and employers.
10. A major concern for women is that workplaces do not allow personal or family leave when needed (3.36%), making it harder to balance responsibilities. Additionally, the lack of wellness programs and stress-relief initiatives (3.52%) in organizations contributes to work-life stress. The absence of family-friendly policies (3.44%), such as childcare support and gender-specific facilities, further limits women's ability to manage their professional and personal lives effectively.
11. The analysis shows that number of working days in a week ($p = 0.256$) does not significantly impact perceptions of organizational policies. However, employment sector ($p=0.000$) has a significant influence, indicating that respondents from different sectors perceive workplace policies differently. This suggests that policies may vary widely between sectors, affecting employee's work-life balance.
12. The study finds that age ($p = 0.043$), marital status ($p = 0.010$), and number of dependent family members ($p = 0.015$) significantly affect mental and physical well-being. Younger respondents, married individuals and those with more dependents experience greater stress, highlighting the influence of personal and family responsibilities on their well-being.
13. The results indicate that marital status ($p=0.902$) does not significantly impact societal and cultural expectations. However, number of children ($p = 0.021$) has a significant effect, suggesting that women with more children face greater societal pressure and expectations in managing both work and family responsibilities.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Encouraging shared caregiving roles within families can reduce the pressure on women to be the primary caregivers. Awareness programs and social initiatives can help shift societal norms.
2. Organizations should implement gender-sensitivity training to recognize and address biases related to women's dual roles in work and home life.
3. Employers should consider introducing remote work, hybrid models, and flexible working hours to help employees manage deadlines and personal responsibilities effectively.
4. Implementing structured stress management programs, mental health counselling, and ergonomic workplace initiatives can reduce work related stress and health issues.
5. Employers can enforce policies that discourage excessive overtime and promote healthy work life boundaries to prevent burnout.
6. Employers should introduce parental leave, childcare support, and wellness initiatives to assist working women.
7. Providing nursing breaks, private lactations rooms and menstrual leave can support women's health in the workplace.
8. Ensuring employees can take personal or family leave without fear of job insecurity or penalties can contribute to a balanced work environment.
9. Different industries should customize policies to support women, ensuring fair treatment across employment sectors.
10. Government and organisations should focus on inclusive HR policies that prioritize equal career growth for women across sectors.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that women encounter the greatest hurdles in the integration of professional and personal responsibilities because of sociocultural expectations, mental or physical health problems, and insufficient organizational structures. Because women are socially assumed to take on the role of primary caregivers, they experience addition stress and work overload, which is further exacerbated by the inflexible workplace policies and lack of supportive family policies. According to the analysis of the data, these perceptions relate to the employment sector; whereas age, marital status, and number of dependents are associated with mental health, and the number of children with societal expectations. In order to solve those problems, organizations need to introduce flexible work practices, health promotion activities, and policies that take into consideration gender relations; on the other hand, sociocultural attitudes should change to support a more equal distribution of domestic work and career advancement opportunities. By doing so, women of diverse occupations will experience improved work-life balance, productivity, and general well-being, which will positively impact their health.

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