

Challenges Faced by Women to Maintain Worklife Balance During COVID Pandemic while Working from Home

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Abstract

The growing concern over work-family issues has become particularly pronounced due to the challenging circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has forced people to balance work and personal lives as they adapt to stay-at-home measures and remote work arrangements. This study seeks to explore the factors that impact women's work-life balance during the lockdown imposed by the pandemic. The objective is to identify the professional and personal challenges and factors that facilitate work-life balance for working women in South India. The study involved surveying 100 women employed in the education sector.

To enhance work-life balance and overall efficiency and productivity, organizations are encouraged to reconsider their policies, benefits programs, work distribution, and internal job arrangements, making remote working a more employee-friendly experience. In summary, this study sheds light on the critical factors influencing work-life balance for women during the COVID-19 lockdown, offering valuable insights for organizations aiming to adapt and improve their work arrangements to meet the changing needs of their female workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Corona Pandemic and its Impact

The year 2020 witnessed a global public health crisis with the rapid spread of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), originating in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. By the end of February 2020, the virus had reached more than 100 countries, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to officially name it a "controllable pandemic" on March 12, 2020. As per statistics first case of COVID-19 in India was testified in Kerala on January 30, 2020, and by March, numerous cases surged, in no time Government of India had to take this tough decision of announcing the Lockdown in the entire India.

Achieving a proper Work-Life Balance yields numerous positive effects,

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including heightened motivation for work, increased job satisfaction, boosted employee morale and productivity, sufficient time for personal and family life, and enhanced overall health and well-being. (Singh, H., & Sharma, R., 2020)

Reaction of the Pandemic and Implementation of Work-From-Home

With no specific medicine or vaccine available, experts emphasized “social distancing” as a crucial preventive measure. In response, the Prime Minister of India declared a nationwide lockdown on March 24, 2020, subsequently extended. Companies across various industries adopted remote work, or “Work from Home” (WFH), to ensure employee safety while sustaining essential business operations.

Evolution of Work-From-Home (WFH)

The term “WFH” has become ubiquitous, representing the practice of telecommuting or telework. Technology plays a crucial role in transforming our lives and making it easier as now the employee is free to work from home. Telecommuting allows employees to replace some or all of their regular office hours with remote work, often conducted from home, client locations, or while on the move, with communication primarily facilitated through technological networks.

Technological Advancements and Work-Life Balance

While technology has unquestionably enhanced convenience, enabling remote work, it has introduced the challenge of constant accessibility. This 24/7 availability expectation emphasizes the importance of establishing clear boundaries and work-life balance strategies to ensure that the benefits of remote work are not overshadowed by the potential drawbacks of being always available for work-related matters.

Debate Surrounding Remote Work

The advancement of remote work has sparked a debate. While some employees favor the

flexibility it offers, contributing to work-life balance (WLB), employers may express concerns about potential shirking of responsibilities, as discussed by Bloom et al. in 2015. This ongoing discourse underscores the need to explore the advantages and potential challenges associated with remote work arrangements.

Work Life Balance

Work-life balance has taken on increased significance in today’s demanding and often stressful environment. When a job hinders an individual’s ability to effectively manage their work responsibilities alongside their familial obligations, it not only impacts their productivity but also the quality of their work. Striking a harmonious balance between these aspects of life is crucial for overall well-being and performance.

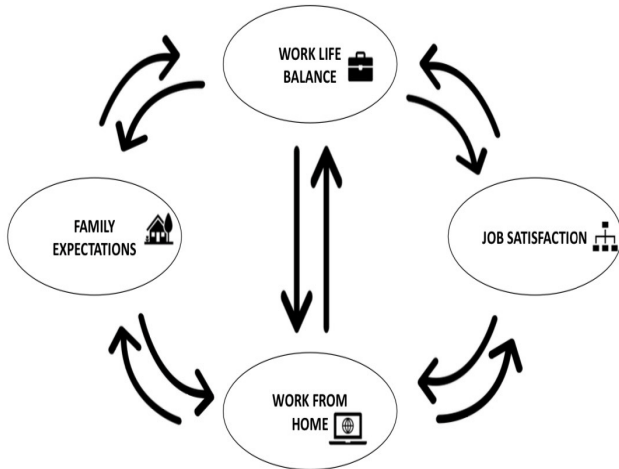
Work Life Balance With Work From Home

Maintaining a work – life balance has proven to be a significant challenge for many employees, particularly women, during the implementation of work from home policies. Regardless of their family structure, be it nuclear or joint, women have found themselves involved in various household responsibilities. In light of these circumstances, this study seeks to investigate the factors influencing the work-life balance of women employees who are working from home in South India during the pandemic lockdown. As when a woman is working from home there are lot of family expectations and at the same time it’s difficult to satisfy both family and employer. The findings from this study are expected to offer valuable insights to stakeholders who may need to address these challenges, as it appears likely that the lockdown will continue to be in effect for an extended period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Vani Haridasan*, 2021) Research on Work life balance on working from home during among female during Covid was done. This study was done both on primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected in which questionnaire by 100





Source: Created by Researcher

respondents was filled. The studies identified that achieving a balance between work and personal life was particularly difficult for these women. The struggle to manage their professional and family responsibilities emerged as a primary source of emotional exhaustion experienced by employees during the nationwide lockdown imposed due to COVID-19. It highlighted the potential importance of receiving support from family members, especially concerning family-related tasks and responsibilities, which could greatly assist working women in coping with the challenges they face.

(Anderson, 2020) In a study, the focus was on the shift to enforced working from home, which became a global necessity due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The study aimed to understand how this enforced work-from-home situation might differ from the practice of working from home by choice. The study’s conclusion highlighted that when both employees and employers have the autonomy to choose their working arrangements, they tend to benefit from this flexibility. However, this positive dynamic may not be as prevalent when working from home is mandated or forced upon individuals. The distinction between voluntary and compulsory work-from-home arrangements can lead to variations in the experiences and outcomes for both employees and employers.

(Bhumika, 2020) in this study the objective was to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and emotional exhaustion experienced

by 180 professionals while working from home in India during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study’s conclusion revealed a notable gender difference. It found that women tended to experience more emotional exhaustion in comparison to men. This increased emotional exhaustion was attributed to a heightened level of interference between work and personal life during the work-from-home setup. These findings underscore the importance of addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting a healthier work-life balance for women in remote work environments.

(Fisher J, 2020) The study conducted by Fisher in 2020 reached a significant conclusion. It highlighted that the challenges associated with maintaining work-life balance while working remotely can potentially exacerbate inequalities, particularly because an expectation exists that a significant portion of household work may fall on women in such a scenario. This finding underscores the importance of addressing and mitigating the gender-related disparities that can arise as a result of remote work arrangements.

Work-life balance is a crucial element of creating a healthy and sustainable work environment. Achieving work-life balance is essential for reducing stress and preventing burnout among employees. While promoting work-life balance might appear challenging for employers, it is a vital goal to pursue. Work-life balance aims to facilitate satisfaction and effective functioning in both the workplace and the family domain while minimizing role conflict, as noted by Clark in 2000. Prioritizing work-life balance benefits not only individual employees but also contributes to a more productive and harmonious work environment.

Objectives of The Study

- To study the influence of demographic factors on work-life balance during Covid Pandemic
- To measure the impact of challenges faced by women on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant influence of demographic factors (age, marital status, family, and monthly

income) on the work-life balance of women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1a: There is influence of age on the work life balance of women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1b: There is significant influence of marital status on the work-life balance of women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1c: There is significant influence of family on the work-life balance of women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1d: There is significant influence of monthly income on the work-life balance of women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2: Challenges faced by women have a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2a: Long working hours have a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2b: The negative attitude of supervisors has a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2c: Lack of training programs has a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2d: Domestic responsibilities have a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2e: High stress level has a significant impact on work life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2f: Role conflicts and role ambiguity have a significant impact on work life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2g: Job insecurity has a significant impact on work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2h: Technology know-how has a significant impact on work life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the Challenges faced by working women to manage the work-life balance during COVID-19 while working from home Data for this research was gathered

through a questionnaire distributed to working women aged 18 and above, who were employed in various institutions in Bhopal. These women had been engaged in remote work from home due to the lockdown enforced during the pandemic period, specifically during the months of April and May 2020.

The study aimed to gain insights into the challenges and dynamics of work-life balance experienced by this group of women during these unique and challenging circumstances. The convenience sampling technique was used to ensure that the respondents were adequately distributed to represent various sectors.

A sample size of 150 working women has been considered with a mix of women from different streams and geographic areas.

Research Design

The data was collected from 100 Working Female professionals working from Home during the coronavirus pandemic through a structured questionnaire.

Sampling Design

Sampling Design Type: Convenience Sampling

Sampling Unit: Bhopal Region

Sampling Frame: Working Women

Sample Size: 100

Data Collection

Primary Data

- Structured Questionnaire was designed which contained different parameters related to work-life balance and work from home.
- In-Depth Interview

Secondary Data

- Research Papers Published in Journals & Conferences (Please refer to references), Reports by various Agencies

Statistical Techniques Used

In this research paper regression analysis has been used as inferential statistics, and further demographic analysis has been done for percentage analysis.



Data Analysis & Findings Of The Study

The above Table:1 Reliability Statistics in this measuring the reliability and consistency of data is measured with the help of Cronbach’s Alpha. Here value is 0.927 indicated that data is 92% reliable while doing research.

Descriptive statistics

The above Table: 2 indicates that in this research 65% of working women fall under the category of 20-30 years have participated while 23% of female were in category of 31-40 years of age.

The above Table 3 indicated that 79% of women who participated in this research were are married while 20 % of female professionals were unmarried.

The above table: 4 indicated that 60% of female were a part of nuclear family and only 40% were the part of joint family during Pandemic.

Here Table: 5 Monthly incomes indicated that 43% of female professionals were earning 20-30K during Covid-19 while 29% of female were receiving from 30-50K.

Hypothesis testing

Table: 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
.927	30

Source: SPSS output

Table: 2 Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-30 years	65	65.0
31-40 years	23	23.0
41-50 years	8	8.0
51-60 years	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: SPSS output

Table: 3 Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	20	20.0
Married	79	79.0
Divorced	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: SPSS output

H1: There is significant influence of demographic factors (age, marital status and occupation) on work life balance of women during Covid Pandemic.

H1a: There is significant influence of age on work life balance of women during Covid Pandemic.

From the above Table: 6 clearly indicate that the F – value is 4.720 and the p value is 0.002 at 5 per cent level of significance which is less than 0.05 that is, the results are significant. Hence, here the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. Which explain that the higher age female professionals are mature enough to manage both personal and professional life well during corona period.

H1b: There is significant influence of marital status on work life balance of women during Covid Pandemic.

From the above Table: 7 it is observed that the F-value is .453 and the p value is 0.770 at 5 per cent

Table: 4 Family

Family	Frequency	Percent
Nuclear family	60	60.0
Joint family	40	40.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: SPSS output

Table: 5 Monthly Income (during pandemic)

Monthly Income (During Pandemic approx.)	Frequency	Percent
20K-30K	43	43.0
30K-50K	29	29.0
50K-70K	14	14.0
Above 70K	14	14.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: SPSS output

Table: 6 ANOVA- Influence of Age on WLB

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.775	4	2.694	4.720	.002
Within Groups	54.215	95	.571		
Total	64.990	99			

Source: SPSS output

level of significance which is more than 0.05 that is, the results are not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. So, we can say that the responsibility of married & unmarried women is same at office level, professionally they have to perform similar tasks when it comes on their job roles.

H1c: There is significant influence of family on work life balance of women during Covid Pandemic.

From the above Table: 8, it is notable that the F-value is 2.279 and the p value is 0.066 at 5 per cent level of significance which is more than 0.05 that is, the results are not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. Thus, we can say that there is no involvement of family to manage work Life Balance of Female employee.

H1d: There is significant influence of monthly income (during pandemic) on work life balance of women during Covid Pandemic.

The above Table: 9 it is noted that the F-value is 1.917 and the p value is 0.114 at 5 per cent level of significance which is more than 0.05 that is, the results are not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. Hence, we can say income has no influence on managing work life balance of female employees.

H2a: Challenges faced by women have a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2a: Long working hours have a significant impact

Table: 7 ANOVA influence of marital status on WLB

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.325	4	.081	.453	.770
Within Groups	17.065	95	.180		
Total	17.390	99			

Source: SPSS output

Table: 8 ANOVA influence of family on WLB

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.102	4	.525	2.279	.066
Within Groups	21.898	95	.231		
Total	24.000	99			

Source: SPSS output

on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2b: Negative attitude of supervisors have a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2c: Lack of training programs has a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2d: Domestic responsibilities have a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2e: High stress level has a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2f: Role conflicts & Role ambiguity have a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2g: Job insecurity has a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

H2h: Technology know-how has a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.

The above table shows that long work hours and culture have the highest mean value of 3.6900 and a standard deviation of 1.32341, signifying that it significantly contributes to enhancing the work-life balance of employees during Pandemic. Following closely, Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues has a mean value of 3.2600 and a standard deviation

Table: 9 ANOVA influence of monthly income (during pandemic) on WLB

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.439	4	2.110	1.917	.114
Within Groups	104.551	95	1.101		
Total	112.990	99			

Source: SPSS output

Table: 10 Descriptive statistics

Challenges faced by women	Mean	Std. Deviation
Long work hours and culture	3.6900	1.32341
Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues	3.2600	1.43984
Lack of training programs	3.2100	1.31268
Domestic responsibilities	3.8300	1.11966
High stress level	3.4800	1.38884
Role conflicts and Role ambiguity	3.4300	1.32768
Job insecurity/ fear of losing job	3.3400	1.38695
Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge	3.3000	1.31426

Source: SPSS output



Table: 11 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.280 ^a	.078	.026	1.071

Source: SPSS output

a. Predictors: (Constant), Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge, Domestic responsibilities, Long work hours and culture, Lack of training programs, Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues, High stress level, Role conflicts and Role ambiguity, Job insecurity/ fear of losing job

of 1.43984, representing their significance impact on work-life balance of female employees. Continuing, Lack of training programs has a mean value of 3.2100 and a standard deviation of 1.31268, with significantly impacted the work life balance in lives of women employees during covid-19. Following this, Domestic responsibilities, with a mean value of 3.8300 and a standard deviation of 1.11966, are crucial factor impacting work-life balance of female employees during pandemic. Next in line is, High stress level, with a mean value of 3.4800 and a standard deviation of 1.38884, are vital factor affecting work-life balance of woman employees during epidemic. Further, Role conflicts and Role ambiguity, with a mean value of 3.4300 and a standard deviation of 1.38695, is another factor impacting work-life balance of woman employees while WFH. Followed by Job insecurity/ fear of losing job, with a mean value of 3.3400 and a standard deviation of 1.38695,

Table: 12 ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	26.806	8	3.351	2.529	.016 ^a
Residual	120.584	91	1.325		
Total	147.390	99			

Source: SPSS output

a. Predictors: (Constant), Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge, Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues, Long work hours and culture, Domestic responsibilities, Job insecurity/ fear of losing job, Lack of training programs, High stress level, Role conflicts and Role ambiguity

b. Dependent Variable: Work-life balance during pandemic

is one of the factors that personal and professional lives of woman employees. Last is Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge with a mean value of 3.3000 and a standard deviation of 1.31426, is one of the factors that personal and professional lives of woman employees during pandemic while WFH

Here from the above Table: 11 Model summary, clearly shows that the R² value is 0.078 which is an appropriate value. Further, ANOVA technique was used to analyze the significance level.

Here The above Table: 12 ANOVA Analysis shows the results of ANOVA where F value ($F = 2.529$) which is significant at level 5% i.e., $p = .016$ ($p < .05$). which shows that the regression model that we have constructed is visibly significant.

Table: 13 Regression analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.991	.445		8.970	.000
Long work hours and culture	.062	.111	.067	.558	.578
Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues	-.338	.106	-.399	-3.195	.002
Lack of training programs	.099	.126	.107	.790	.432
Domestic responsibilities	-.168	.146	-.154	-1.153	.252
High stress level	-.292	.146	-.332	-1.997	.049
Role conflicts and Role ambiguity	.258	.153	.281	1.687	.095
Job insecurity/ fear of losing job	.061	.143	.069	.425	.672
Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge	.134	.141	.145	.949	.345

Source: SPSS output

The above table of regression analysis shows that long work hours and culture has low degree of positive correlation (0.062) to manage WLB during Covid-19. Whereas, Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues is negatively correlated (-.338) during Pandemic to manage WLB in Female professionals. Lack of training programs (.099) has high degree of correlation. Here domestic responsibilities (-0.168) & High stress level (-.292) have low degree of negative correlation in life of female employee during Corona period to manage WLB. The table shows that Role conflicts and Role ambiguity (.258), Job insecurity/ fear of losing job (.061) & Technology know how/ lack of technical knowledge (.134) have low degree of positive correlation to achieve work Life Balance among female employees during Covid-19.

Hence, the regression equation will be:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \epsilon$$

Challenges of Work Life Balance = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (Long work hours and culture) + β_2 (Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues is negatively correlated) + β_3 (Lack of training programs) + β_4 (domestic responsibilities) + β_5 (High stress level) + β_6 (Role conflicts and Role ambiguity) + β_7 (Job insecurity/ fear of losing job) + β_8 (Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge) + ϵ

Challenges of Work Life Balance = 3.991 + 0.062 (Long work hours and culture) – 0.338 (Negative attitude of supervisors / colleagues is negatively correlated) + 0.099 (Lack of training programs) – 0.168 (domestic responsibilities) – 0.292 (High stress level) + 0.258 (Role conflicts and Role ambiguity) + 0.061 (Job insecurity/ fear of losing job) + 0.134 (Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge) + 1.071

Work Life Balance among women Professionals during Corona Period was deeply impacted by various Challenges like Long working hours, Lack of training programs and Role conflicts and Role ambiguity. The other Challenges faced by faculties were Job insecurity/ fear of losing job and Technology know how/lack of technical knowledge.

Thus, the above hypothesis is accepted i.e.; “Challenges faced by women have a significant impact on work life balance during Covid Pandemic.”

CONCLUSION

One of the primary challenges confronted by female employees in striving for a work-life balance amid the Covid-19 pandemic was the extended working hours. The demanding schedules left little room for dedicating specific time to family responsibilities and household chores.

Additionally, faculty members encountered significant hurdles, particularly in adapting to the abrupt technological shift. The lack of adequate training programs and technical know-how posed a substantial obstacle. Those accustomed to traditional, face-to-face teaching found it challenging to transition seamlessly into monitoring students in the online environment.

Role conflicts and ambiguity emerged as prevalent issues. With tasks being assigned through online channels such as WhatsApp groups or emails, employees grappled with increased role ambiguity and the repetition of tasks.

A pervasive fear of job loss loomed over many professionals, driven by organizations implementing salary cuts and layoffs due to financial constraints. Female employees, often the sole breadwinners for their families, felt particularly vulnerable to this threat, intensifying concerns about job security.

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