

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study on Work-Life Balance In Working Women of TNAU

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ABSTRACT

In the historical context, women were predominantly confined to domestic roles or limited employment options. However, contemporary advancements have enabled more women to pursue higher education and establish careers, ushering in new challenges. Modern working women, particularly those who are married and mothers, face the intricate task of balancing professional responsibilities with family obligations. This study investigated the challenges encountered by married working women, specifically affiliated with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore. Employing an Ex post facto research design, the study explored the profile characteristics and work-life balance of 60 participants through interviews and a comprehensive questionnaire. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of working women experienced challenges in achieving work-life balance, impacting their overall quality of life. Professional challenges, including long working hours and inadequate support, contribute to the struggle, leading to stress, health issues and strained personal relationships. The study underscored the need for a holistic understanding of these challenges and advocates for comprehensive strategies, acknowledging the intricate interplay between work and personal life. The findings contributed valuable insights for organizations and policymakers aiming to support the well-being and work-life balance of contemporary working women.

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INTRODUCTION

In earlier centuries, women were mainly limited to household roles or jobs in factories, farms or shops, with only a few having access to higher education Kumari and Devi (2015). They often relied on their fathers' or husbands' views on women and work. However, with the rapid growth of knowledge and the economy, more women now have the opportunity to pursue higher education and build strong careers Alqahtani (2020). Yet, this has brought new challenges, as women are expected to juggle multiple roles at home and in the office Verma *et al.* (2018). When working women marry, they take on additional responsibilities and as mothers, they must balance childcare and family demands while pursuing their careers Aslam *et al.* (2023). Today's working women works hard to meet family obligations while staying committed to their career, managing the demands of their various roles, which can be incredibly stressful Uddin *et al.* (2020). Work-life balance refers to how individual sees their ability to keep personal time, family responsibilities and work obligations harmoniously and with as little conflict between them as possible

Clark (2000); Ungerson & Yeandle (2005). Living a well-balanced life means finding fulfilment in various aspects of life and requires distributing personal resources like time, energy and commitment evenly. For many married working women, the goal is to achieve a good quality of life by working diligently both at home and in their career, sometimes at the expense of their personal health and well-being Pahuja (2016). However, the desired quality of life is often dependent on achieving a proper work-life balance Vasumathi (2018). Any imbalance between work and family responsibilities can significantly undermine an individual's overall quality of life. This highlights the crucial importance of addressing the topic of work-life balance for working women, the need of the hour. This paper aims to investigate the challenges that working women encounters when trying to balance their personal and work lives.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed Ex post facto research design to assess the profile characteristics and work-life balance of married women in employment, aiming to identify and address the challenges they encountered. The study was specifically conducted among married working women affiliated with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore. A total sample of 60 married working women were chosen through simple random sampling method. The primary data were gathered through a well-organized and in-depth interview schedule. The subsequent analysis of the collected data was processed using descriptive statistics.

To assess the work-life balance, a questionnaire comprised 20 items, with the primary instrument being a checklist adapted from Daniels and McCarragher's manual on work-life balance from The Industrial Society (currently the Work Foundation) in 2000 was used. This checklist featured 15 statements related to work-life balance, slightly modified for the study. The respondents were provided with response options such as 'agree,' 'sometimes,' and 'disagree.'

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of working women

Table 1. Profile characteristics of working women (n=60)

Characteristics	Category	Percentage
Age	Young (<30 years)	13.33
	Middle (30-40 years)	30.00
	Old (>40 years)	56.67
Spouse's profession	Business	26.67
	IT Industry	13.33
	Healthcare	3.33
	Academic	30.00
	Insurance	10.00
	Marketing	6.67
	Others	10.00
No. of children	One	53.33
	Two	36.67
	Three or more	3.33

According to the data presented in Table 1, the findings suggested that the predominant group (56.67%) of working women at TNAU were aged 40 and above. Additionally, 30.00% fall within the middle age range of 30 to 40 years, while 13.33% belong to the younger age group of less than 30 years. Regarding the spouses' profession, majority (30.00%) were in academics, 26.66% were engaged in business, 13.33% work in the IT industry, 10.00% were involved in the insurance sector, and 6.67% were in marketing, with 3.33% in healthcare. Furthermore, the data indicated that 53.33% of the respondents had one child, 36.67% had two children, only 3.33% had three or more children and the remaining respondents had no children. These findings were in similar with the findings of Tiwari (2017).

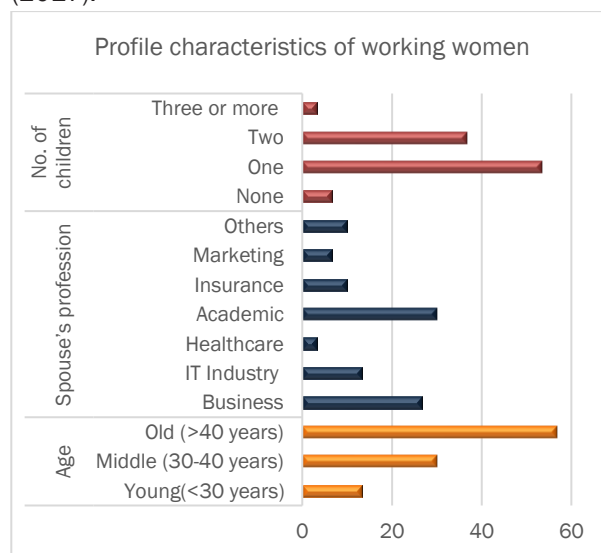


Figure 1. Profile characteristics of working women (n=60)

Work-life balance of working women

Work-life balance for employed women refers to the balance between their professional responsibilities and personal life. Achieving this balance involves managing time and energy effectively to meet work demands while also addressing personal and family needs. A percentage analysis was conducted to assess the respondents' reactions to the checklist instrument. The following table illustrated the proportions of 'A's (Agrees), 'B's (Sometimes), and 'C's (Disagrees) chosen by a sample of 60 participants in response to the checklist instrument.



Table 2. Work-life balance of working women (n=60)

Qs	Statements	Agree (%)	Sometimes (%)	Disagree (%)
Q ₁	I am able to balance my personal and professional life well	83.34	13.33	3.33
Q ₂	As a working woman, my biggest challenge is work-life balance and quality life	60.00	36.67	3.33
Q ₃	There is strong relationship between work-life balance and quality of life	60.00	23.33	16.67
Q ₄	I feel that better work-life balance in my life can guarantee me a better quality of life	83.33	16.67	0
Q ₅	In general, my level of satisfaction towards my quality of life is good	53.33	46.67	0
Q ₆	At the moment, because the job demands it, I usually work long hours	80.00	16.67	3.33
Q ₇	There isn't much time to socialise / relax with my partner /see family in the week	23.33	56.67	20.00
Q ₈	I have to take work home most evenings	3.33	63.34	33.33
Q ₉	I often work late (or) at weekends to deal with paperwork without interruptions	30.00	43.33	26.67
Q ₁₀	Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do	53.33	20.00	26.67
Q ₁₁	I worry about the effect of work stress on my health	20.00	53.33	26.67
Q ₁₂	My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure (or) long hours of my work	0	43.33	56.67
Q ₁₃	My family are missing out on my input, either because I don't see enough of them/am too tired	3.33	70.00	26.67
Q ₁₄	Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult	63.33	20.00	16.67
Q ₁₅	I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the current situation	16.67	56.66	26.67

The findings from Table 2, which examined that the work-life balance of 60 working women, revealed a subtle perspective on the challenges they faced in balancing personal and professional aspects. A substantial majority (83.34%) expressed confidence in their ability to balance personal and professional life, while 60.00% identified work-life balance as their primary challenge. The correlation between work-life balance and the quality of life was acknowledged by 60.00% of respondents, and an overwhelming 83.33% believed that better work-life balance guarantees an improved quality of life. However, 46.67% sometimes reported dissatisfaction with their overall quality of life. Long working hours, influenced by job demands (80.00%) and the necessity to take work home (63.34% sometimes) illustrated the tangible impact on their schedules. Additionally, concerns about the effect of work stress on health (53.33% sometimes) and strains on personal relationships, as seen in the acknowledgment that relationships with partners (43.33%) and family (70.00% sometimes) were affected, further underscored the multifaceted challenges working women encounter. Despite a desire to reduce working hours and stress (16.67%

agree), a significant proportion (56.66% sometimes) felt a lack of control over the current situation. Overall, these insights emphasized the intricate interplay between work and personal life, highlighting areas of struggle and the desire for improved work-life balance among the surveyed working women.

It has been observed that there is a significant prevalence of the category 'A,' indicating an imbalance in work-life balance that requires urgent attention. The consistent predominance of 'A' across various work-life balance statements, other than the routine of taking work home in the evenings, implies that women in the workforce encounter challenges related to work-life balance in multiple aspects of their daily lives. The issue of work-life balance is widespread among female employees at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. The results are in line with Lakshmi and Prasanth (2018).

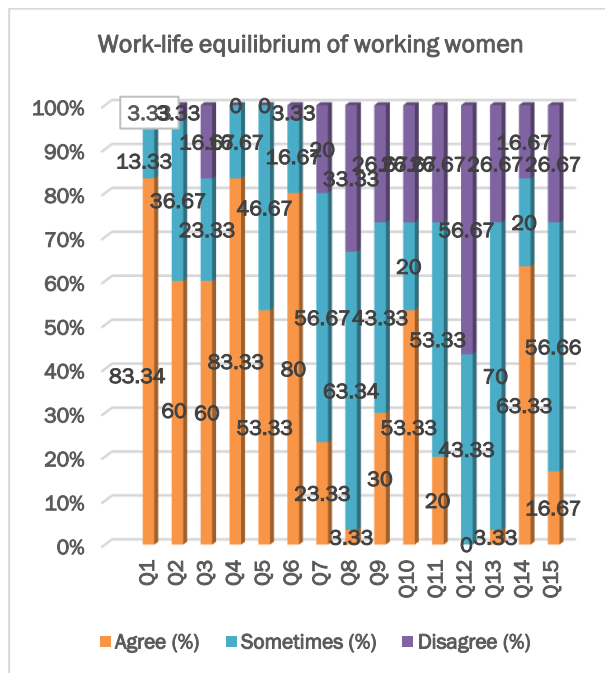


Figure 2. Work-life balance of working women (n=60)

Assessment of Professional Challenges

The study suggested that women encountered difficulties in achieving a work-life balance primarily due to the professional challenges they confront daily. These challenges encompassed prolonged working hours, insufficient supervisory support, excessive workloads and the absence of robust policies. Both surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted as part of this study to underscore the observation that contemporary working women contend with more professional challenges than obstacles arising from family responsibilities. This analysis was conducted in different aspects and represented through figures which indicated the current scenario.

From Figure 3, it was evident that 54.00% expressed satisfaction with their working hours, while 46.00% indicated dissatisfaction. Nearly equal division in satisfaction with working hours might result from inadequate flexibility or alignment between job requirements and personal time preferences. Followed by Figure 4, when working women were queried about work overload, a significant majority (86.00%) reported experiencing occasional work pressure, with only 14.00% stating that they rarely felt overloaded at their workplace. This reflected due to the pervasive challenge of work overload, potentially stemming from high job demands and insufficient resources. Figure 5 revealed that 60.00% of participants could occasionally make time for their families, 20.00% rarely found such opportunities, and a mere 20.00% felt they had enough time to spend with their

families. Family time concerns might arise from demanding work schedules or the absence of family-friendly policies

Figure 3 Satisfaction regarding working hours (n=60)

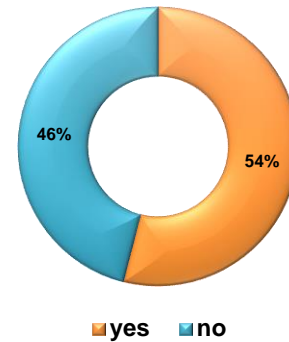


Figure 4 Work overload status (n=60)

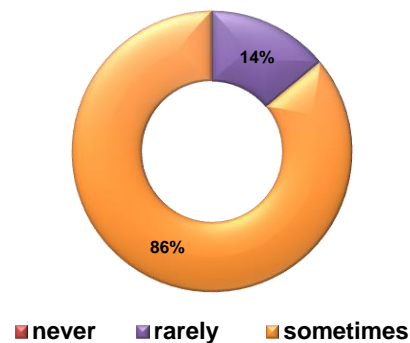
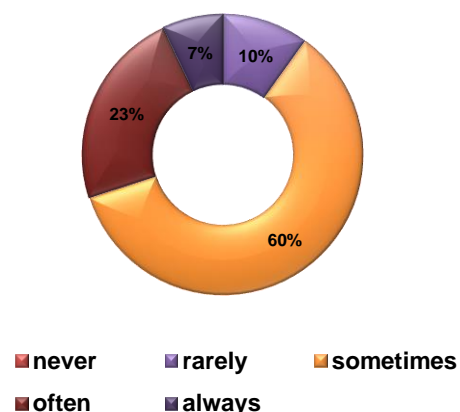


Figure 5 Family time status (n=60)





In Figure 6, 54.00% indicated receiving support from their colleagues, while 46.00% reported a lack of adequate support from their coworkers, while colleague support appeared relatively balanced. Regarding family support, Figure 7 highlighted that 60.00% responded positively, while 40.00% stated they did not receive support from their families. The lack of familial encouragement might be influenced by societal or cultural expectations. Figure 8 revealed that 46.00% expressed that their organizations did not undertake any initiatives to balance work and life, whereas 54.00% affirmed that their organizations were cognizant of and had taken steps to promote work-life balance. The split in organizational initiatives have indicated variations in corporate cultures or a lack of comprehensive strategies for promoting work-life balance.

As per the findings of this investigation, Figure 9 indicated that 17.00% of participants frequently experienced feelings of depression, impacting both their personal and professional spheres. Additionally, 53.00% of women rarely felt depressed and 2.00% consistently grappled with depression due to imbalances in their work-life. Consequently, a substantial 68.00% of participants encountered challenges in maintaining a balance between work and life due to the aforementioned factors. Figure 10 underscored that 51.00% of respondents suffered from stress-related ailments, while 49.00% were free from such conditions. The significant incidence of depression and stress-related ailments suggested that the cumulative impact of workload, inadequate support systems and organizational shortcomings may be taking a toll on the mental health of the working women surveyed. The results are in line with Yadhav and Jadhav (2023).

Figure 6 Support from colleagues (n=60)

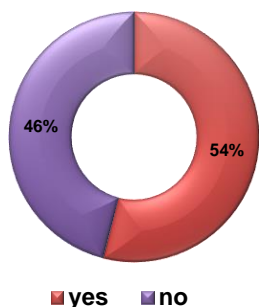


Figure 7 Support from family (n=60)

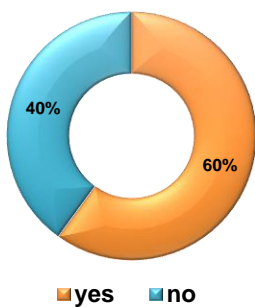


Figure 8 Organisation's initiative to balance work-life (n=60)

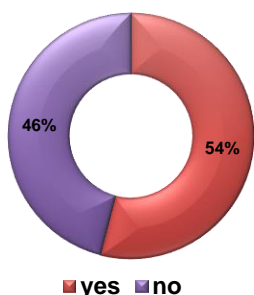


Figure 9 Consequences of imbalance work life (n=60)

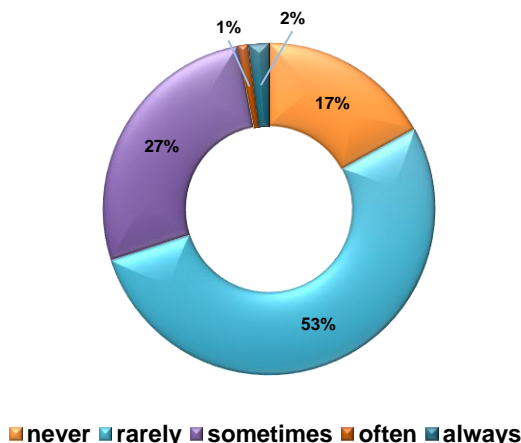
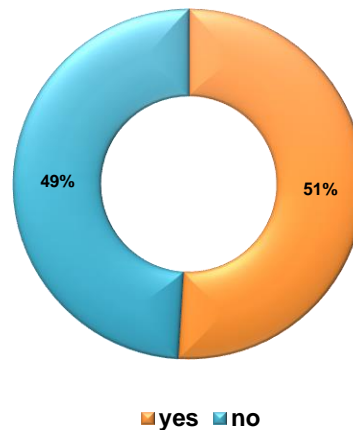


Figure 10 Health problems due to imbalance work-life (n=60)



CONCLUSION

In the contemporary era characterized by the prevalence of dual career couples, there is a pressing need for systematic research to delve into the intricacies of work-life conflict. Additional insights are essential to better understand how the interface between work and home can be more efficiently managed. Further research is crucial to comprehensively grasp the meaning and ramifications of achieving a harmonious work-family balance. This study successfully gauged employees' work-life balance, identifying weekly work hours and work-related stress as pivotal factors, alongside considerations such as occupation, age, and caregiving responsibilities. The study revealed that conflicts in the work-life balance of working women significantly impact their health, leading to increased stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gain and depression compared to their male counterparts. Balancing familial obligations, organizational expectations and the ongoing struggle to maintain balance between work and family can profoundly affect an individual's well-being and overall quality of life. In the present busy world, where personal time is scarce, there is a widespread employee demand for the right to balance work and home life. While health and wellness programs can contribute to assisting working women in achieving this balance, they alone cannot fully address the complexities involved. The multifaceted challenges faced by women, as evident in the reviewed literature, call for further exploration to provide effective support for working women in achieving a harmonious integration of work and family life.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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