

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WORKING WOMEN: A TIGHTROPE WALK**

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**Abstract:**

The topic of achieving a balance between work and personal life has garnered increasing attention. The issue of work-life balance for women is becoming increasingly prominent and widely debated. The presence of family-work conflict and work-family conflict is more likely to have a detrimental impact on the family unit, leading to decreased life satisfaction and more internal conflict within the family. Factors such as family size, kid age, job hours, and social support have an influence on the occurrence of work-family conflict and family work conflict. It is noteworthy to acknowledge the amount of accomplishment achieved by women in both their professional and familial spheres, despite the considerable stress they experience in the workplace. It is important to take into account the implications that these variables have on the psychological discomfort and overall well-being of women in the workforce.

**Objective:** This study aims to explore various factors contributing to a deeper understanding of work-life balance and the stress experienced by female employees.

**Results and Conclusion:** The study's conclusions highlighted the need of developing policies for managing work-life balance at the organizational level in light of how it affects employee performance and job satisfaction.

**Key words:** work-life balance, women, work-family conflict, female employees

**INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary society, achieving a harmonious balance between professional commitments and personal life has become increasingly pertinent, particularly for women in the workforce. As the participation of women in the labor market continues to rise globally, understanding the intricacies of work-life balance and its implications has become a significant area of research and concern. This introduction seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of work-life balance for working women, drawing insights from prominent scholarly literature in the field.

Work-life balance, defined as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role, in a manner that is compatible with societal and individual values" (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011), encompasses the delicate equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal well-being. For women, this balance often entails navigating through the demands of both career advancement and familial obligations, which can pose unique challenges due to societal norms and expectations (Byron, 2005).

Research suggests that work-life balance is not merely a personal concern but also has organizational implications. It is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor influencing employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance (Ellen, Shaun, Todd, & Leslie, 2011). Organizations that prioritize and facilitate work-life balance initiatives tend to experience lower turnover rates, higher productivity, and improved employee morale (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013).

However, achieving work-life balance is not without its complexities. Various factors such as the nature of work, organizational culture, family structure, and societal norms can significantly impact women's experiences in balancing their professional and personal lives. For instance, women may face challenges related to childcare responsibilities, eldercare obligations, career advancement opportunities, and workplace discrimination (Shockley & Allen, 2007).

Moreover, the advent of technology and globalization has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to increased accessibility and expectations for constant connectivity (Elsbach & Cable, 2012). This phenomenon, often referred to as "work-life blending," presents both

opportunities and challenges for working women, as it offers flexibility but can also exacerbate work-related stress and burnout (Glen, Elaine, & Mathew, 2009).

Given the intricacies involved, there is an increasing demand for research that not only investigates the factors and outcomes of work-life balance for women in the workforce, but also studies successful methods and interventions to promote their overall welfare. By tackling these concerns, organisations may cultivate inclusive and nurturing cultures that empower women to flourish in both their personal and professional lives.

## **WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL MULTITASKING ROLES**

In the modern workplace, professional women often find themselves juggling multiple roles and responsibilities simultaneously, a phenomenon commonly referred to as multitasking. Multitasking involves the concurrent execution of multiple tasks, both within and outside the professional sphere, and has become an integral aspect of the work-life balance discourse for women.

Research indicates that women, more so than men, are frequently engaged in multitasking activities, managing various work-related tasks alongside familial duties and personal obligations (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). This propensity for multitasking among professional women stems from societal expectations and gender norms that place a premium on women's ability to effectively manage multiple roles, often without adequate support or recognition (Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Allen, 2000).

Moreover, the proliferation of technology and the rise of remote work arrangements have further exacerbated the prevalence of multitasking among professional women. With the advent of smartphones, email, and other digital communication tools, women are expected to be constantly accessible and responsive, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life (Elsbach & Cable, 2012). Consequently, professional women often find themselves navigating a complex web of tasks and commitments, leading to increased stress and cognitive overload (Patricia, Sarah, Leon, & Edward, 2007).

While multitasking can offer certain benefits, such as increased efficiency and flexibility, it also comes with inherent challenges and drawbacks. Research suggests that excessive multitasking can lead to reduced productivity, impaired cognitive performance, and heightened levels of stress and burnout (Salvucci & Taatgen, 2008). Moreover, the constant toggling between tasks can hinder deep concentration and engagement, undermining the quality of work and decision-making (Foroughi, Werner, Nelson, & Boehm-Davis, 2014).

Furthermore, the expectation for women to excel in multitasking roles can perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequalities in the workplace. Women may feel compelled to prioritize certain tasks over others, sacrificing personal well-being and career advancement opportunities in the process (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002).

In light of these challenges, it is imperative for organizations to recognize and address the complexities of multitasking among professional women. By implementing supportive policies and practices that promote work-life balance and task prioritization, organizations can create environments where women can thrive both personally and professionally.

## **WORK LIFE BALANCE**

The term "work-life balance" was first introduced in 1986. Work-life balance may be described as the successful attainment and satisfaction of the four aspects of life: work, family, friends, and self. Work-life balance refers to the act of effectively managing and harmonising one's personal and professional life. Achieving balance in one's personal life leads to a corresponding balance in one's work life. Once the female employees are content with their requirements, they may effectively maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives.

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical concept in understanding the well-being and productivity of working women in contemporary society. This section delves into the multifaceted nature of work-life balance, exploring its determinants, consequences, and implications for women in the workforce.

According to Greenhaus and Allen (2011), work-life balance refers to "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role, in a manner that is compatible with societal and individual values" (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Achieving work-life balance involves effectively managing the demands of one's professional career alongside personal responsibilities, such as family caregiving, social activities, and self-care.

For working women, achieving work-life balance often entails navigating through a myriad of challenges and trade-offs. Research suggests that women are more likely to experience work-life conflict, wherein the demands of work encroach upon personal life and vice versa (Byron, 2005). This conflict can manifest in various forms, including time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and can have detrimental effects on women's well-being and job satisfaction (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992).

The determinants of work-life balance for working women are multifaceted and encompass both individual and organizational factors. Individual characteristics, such as personality traits, coping strategies, and time management skills, play a significant role in shaping women's ability to balance work and personal life (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Additionally, organizational policies and practices, such as flexible work arrangements, supportive leadership, and family-friendly benefits, can greatly influence women's experiences of work-life balance (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013).

The consequences of achieving or failing to achieve work-life balance extend beyond the individual level to encompass organizational outcomes as well. Research indicates that employees who perceive a high level of work-life balance tend to exhibit greater job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Conversely, work-life conflict has been linked to negative outcomes such as increased turnover intentions, absenteeism, and burnout (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000).

Work-life balance is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that significantly impacts the well-being and productivity of working women. By recognizing the determinants and consequences of work-life balance, organizations can implement effective policies and practices to support women in achieving a harmonious integration of work and personal life.

## **PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND FAMILY CONFLICTS**

Family conflicts play a pivotal role in shaping the work-life balance experiences of working women. This section delves into the various dimensions of family conflicts and their implications for women in the workforce, drawing insights from seminal research in the field.

Family conflicts can arise from the interplay between work demands and family responsibilities, resulting in tensions and challenges that impact women's well-being and job satisfaction. Research suggests that conflicts between family and work domains, commonly referred to as work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC), can manifest in different forms and have distinct consequences (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work-family conflict occurs when the demands of work interfere with family responsibilities, leading to role strain and dissatisfaction (Byron, 2005). On the other hand, family-work conflict arises when family obligations impede the fulfillment of work-related tasks and goals (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Both forms of conflict have been associated with negative outcomes such as increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and impaired psychological well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

The determinants of family conflicts among working women are multifaceted and encompass various individual and contextual factors. Family characteristics, such as the presence of young children, elderly dependents, and marital status, can significantly influence the experience of family conflicts (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Additionally, work-related factors such as job demands, hours of work, and organizational support play a crucial role in shaping the extent and intensity of family conflicts (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013).

Moreover, societal norms and gender roles can exacerbate family conflicts for women, as they are often expected to assume primary caregiving responsibilities within the family unit (Shockley,

Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Allen, 2000). This gendered division of labor can create tensions between work and family roles, leading to heightened levels of conflict and stress.

In conclusion, family conflicts are a significant determinant of work-life balance for working women, with implications for both individual well-being and organizational outcomes. By understanding the underlying causes and consequences of family conflicts, organizations can implement strategies and policies to support women in achieving a harmonious integration of work and family life.

### **THE IMPACT OF WORK PRESSURE**

Work pressure, characterized by high job demands, tight deadlines, and heavy workloads, is a prevalent phenomenon in today's competitive work environment. This section explores the impact of work pressure on the work-life balance of working women, drawing on findings from seminal research studies in the field.

High levels of work pressure can exert significant stress on working women, leading to detrimental effects on both their physical and psychological well-being. Research suggests that women are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of work pressure due to societal expectations and gender norms that place a premium on women's ability to effectively manage multiple roles (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011).

Work pressure can manifest in various forms, including time pressure, role overload, and task complexity, all of which contribute to feelings of overwhelm and burnout among working women (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Moreover, women may face additional pressures related to the "ideal worker" stereotype, which emphasizes long hours and total commitment to work at the expense of personal and family life (Elsbach & Cable, 2012).

The effects of work pressure on women's work-life balance are manifold and far-reaching. High levels of work pressure have been linked to increased work-family conflict, wherein the demands of work encroach upon personal life, leading to strain and dissatisfaction in both domains (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013). Additionally, work pressure can hinder women's ability to engage in self-care activities and maintain meaningful relationships outside of work, further exacerbating feelings of stress and isolation (Patricia, Sarah, Leon, & Edward, 2007).

Furthermore, the consequences of work pressure extend beyond the individual level to encompass organizational outcomes as well. Research indicates that organizations with high levels of work pressure may experience decreased employee morale, increased turnover rates, and diminished productivity (Salvucci & Taatgen, 2008). Moreover, work pressure can contribute to a toxic work culture characterized by competition, distrust, and poor work-life balance, ultimately undermining organizational effectiveness and performance (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009).

The work-life balance of working women is greatly affected by the ubiquitous phenomena of job pressure. In order to help women achieve a healthy work-life balance, businesses should learn about the negative impacts of job pressure and develop measures to reduce them.

### **WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: PROS AND CONS**

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a prevalent issue affecting the work-life balance of working women, encompassing both positive and negative consequences. This section examines the pros and cons of work-family conflict, drawing on findings from prominent research studies in the field.

#### **Pros of Work-Family Conflict:**

**Role Enrichment:** Some researchers argue that experiencing conflict between work and family roles can lead to role enrichment, wherein involvement in one role enhances performance in the other role (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). For example, skills and experiences gained from managing family responsibilities may translate into improved problem-solving abilities and interpersonal skills at work.

**Identity Integration:** Work-family conflict can foster the integration of multiple identities, allowing individuals to develop a more cohesive sense of self (Clark, 2000). Balancing work and family roles may promote a holistic identity that encompasses both professional and personal dimensions.



**Cons of Work-Family Conflict:**

**Increased Stress and Burnout:** Work-family conflict is associated with heightened levels of stress and burnout among working women (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Juggling conflicting demands from work and family domains can lead to feelings of overwhelm, exhaustion, and emotional strain.

**Decreased Job Satisfaction:** Research indicates that work-family conflict is negatively correlated with job satisfaction, with higher levels of conflict associated with lower levels of satisfaction with work (Byron, 2005). When work demands encroach upon personal life, individuals may feel less fulfilled and engaged in their jobs.

**Impaired Well-being:** Work-family conflict can have detrimental effects on the overall well-being of working women, including physical, emotional, and psychological health outcomes (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Chronic exposure to conflict between work and family roles may increase the risk of health problems such as anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular disease.

**Strained Relationships:** Conflict between work and family roles can strain relationships with spouses, children, and other family members (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Women may struggle to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities while meeting the demands of their jobs, leading to tension and dissatisfaction within the family unit.

Work-family conflict is a complex phenomenon with both positive and negative implications for working women. While conflict between work and family roles may promote role enrichment and identity integration, it can also contribute to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, impaired well-being, and strained relationships. By understanding the pros and cons of work-family conflict, organizations can implement strategies to mitigate its negative effects and support employees in achieving a harmonious balance between work and family life.

**CONCLUSION**

In exploring the intricate dynamics of work-life balance for working women, it becomes evident that achieving equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal well-being is a multifaceted endeavor. Throughout this paper, we have delved into various aspects of work-life balance, including the challenges posed by work pressure, family conflicts, and the intersectionality of societal expectations and gender roles. Working women face unique challenges in their pursuit of work-life balance, often contending with high job demands, conflicting responsibilities, and societal pressures to fulfill traditional gender roles. These challenges can lead to increased stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction, impacting both their professional performance and personal well-being.

However, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for positive change. Organizations have a critical role to play in fostering supportive work environments that prioritize work-life balance initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements, access to childcare support, and a culture of respect and inclusion. By recognizing the diverse needs of working women and implementing policies that accommodate these needs, organizations can create conditions conducive to employee engagement, retention, and overall success. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the intersectionality of work-life balance challenges, recognizing that women from marginalized communities may face additional barriers and systemic inequalities. Addressing these disparities requires a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that all women have equal opportunities to thrive in both their professional and personal lives.

In conclusion, achieving work-life balance for working women is not just a personal aspiration but a societal imperative. By fostering environments that support the holistic well-being of women in the workforce, we can create a more equitable and prosperous future for all

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