

An Empirical Assessment of Work-life Balance among Women Professionals: A Study of Higher Education Institutions in Delhi NCR

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance (WLB) has become a vital concern in academia, where faculty navigate teaching, research, and administrative tasks alongside family and social responsibilities. For women, this challenge is often magnified by cultural caregiving expectations and limited institutional support, making WLB an especially pressing issue in higher education.

Objectives: This study examines the state of WLB among female teaching faculty in Delhi-NCR using Fisher's (2009) three-dimensional framework: Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work-Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE).

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 200 female faculty across universities and colleges in Delhi-NCR. Fisher's 15-item WLB scale was used, and data were analyzed through SPSS 26, including reliability checks, descriptive statistics, correlations, and multiple regression.

Key Results: The tool showed strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$). Findings revealed moderate interference from work to personal life ($M = 3.45$), low interference from personal life to work ($M = 2.67$), and high levels of enrichment ($M = 3.89$). Correlations indicated that all three dimensions were linked to overall WLB, with WPLE showing the strongest association ($r = .61$). Regression analysis reinforced this pattern, where WPLE ($\beta = 0.41, p < .001$) emerged as the most powerful predictor, followed by WIPL ($\beta = 0.32, p < .001$) and PLIW ($\beta = 0.21, p = .003$). Together, these explained 52% of the variance in WLB ($R^2 = 0.52$).

Keywords: Work-life balance, female faculty, higher education, WIPL, PLIW, WPLE

INTRODUCTION:

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical topic in organizational behavior and human resource management. It reflects the extent to which employees can effectively manage the demands of their professional and personal lives (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Among teaching faculty, particularly women, the struggle for balance is pronounced due to academic responsibilities, research expectations, family obligations, and societal roles (Eikhof, Warhurst, & Haunschild, 2007). Female faculty often juggle multiple roles, making them particularly vulnerable to work-life conflicts (Nguyen, 2020).

In India and globally, higher education institutions are experiencing transformations, increasing performance pressures on faculty. For women, these challenges intersect with cultural expectations of caregiving, intensifying the need for institutional support. Therefore, assessing the current state of WLB among female teaching faculty is both timely and necessary.

1.2 Dimensions of Work-Life Balance

Fisher's (2009) conceptualized WLB through three interrelated dimensions:

- **Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL):** the extent to which work commitments encroach upon personal or family life.
- **Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW):** the degree to which personal or family responsibilities disrupt work activities.
- **Work-Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE):** the degree to which work experiences enrich and improve personal life.

This multidimensional approach allows a comprehensive understanding of how work and personal life interact in complex ways.

1.3 Research Gap

While work–life balance (WLB) has been widely studied in organizational research (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone, 2003), much of the focus remains on corporate or industrial sectors. Higher education, despite being a knowledge-intensive profession, has received comparatively less attention, particularly in the Indian context. Studies that do exist often generalize across faculty populations without adequately considering the unique experiences of women, who face dual pressures of academic responsibilities and cultural caregiving roles (Agha et al., 2017). Furthermore, most research emphasizes conflict (work interfering with family) rather than also acknowledging the positive side of the interface, such as enrichment (Fisher, 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). There is thus a lack of region-specific, gender-sensitive studies that capture both conflict and enrichment dimensions of WLB in academia, especially in Delhi-NCR, where diverse institutional environments and socio-cultural dynamics shape women’s experiences in distinctive ways.

1.4 Problem Statement

Female faculty in higher education often struggle to balance demanding academic roles with cultural and family responsibilities. In Delhi-NCR, this tension is compounded by limited institutional support, yet research rarely explores both the conflict and enrichment aspects of work–life balance in this context. Addressing this gap is essential to design strategies that help women thrive personally and professionally.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to measure the current state of work–life balance among female teaching faculty in higher education institutions using the three dimensions WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE. Specific objectives include:

1. To examine the reliability of the WLB scale in the Indian higher education context.
2. To evaluate the mean scores of WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE among female faculty.
3. To analyze the relationships among the three dimensions and their overall impact on work–life balance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Dimensions of Work Life Balance

The study of work–life balance (WLB) has evolved considerably, with scholars focusing on both the negative and positive aspects of the work–life interface. Three theoretical dimensions are most relevant for the present study:

Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL):

This construct originates from the role conflict theory, which suggests that individuals experience strain when demands from one role (work) impede the fulfillment of another (personal life). WIPL reflects the extent to which professional responsibilities such as workload, deadlines, and academic expectations intrude into personal and family domains (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023). Higher WIPL scores are indicative of work–family conflict, leading to stress, reduced well-being, and higher turnover intention.

Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW):

PLIW examines the reverse interaction—how personal responsibilities interfere with work performance. Rooted in boundary theory, this model highlights the challenge of maintaining clear boundaries between professional and personal roles. For women professionals, caregiving, domestic responsibilities, and cultural expectations often contribute to higher levels of PLIW (Jamunarani & Syed, 2024). Unlike WIPL, PLIW is underexplored in academia, making it an important area of study in the Indian higher education sector.

Work–Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE):

Going beyond conflict-based models, enrichment theories emphasize the positive spillover between work and personal life. WPLE posits that resources such as professional growth, recognition, and social networks gained through work may enrich personal domains, enhancing overall satisfaction (Wei & Ye, 2022). Similarly, supportive family dynamics may contribute positively to professional performance. The inclusion of WPLE addresses the imbalance in earlier studies that primarily emphasized conflict, offering a holistic view of WLB.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies (2018–2024)

Several empirical studies conducted across the globe in the last five years shed light on the dynamics of WLB among academic professionals:

Faculty Experiences in India and Asia:

Jamunarani and Syed (2024) found that women faculty in India face significant antecedents of WLB challenges, including workload, lack of institutional support, and gendered expectations. Similarly, Rani and Dua (2025) highlighted that female schoolteachers in Haryana struggle with balancing roles, with newer employees experiencing higher conflict.

Cross-cultural Studies:

Wei and Ye (2022) revealed that Chinese college teachers with poor WLB experienced higher emotional exhaustion, directly impacting their well-being. Kori et al. (2022) documented that Malaysian lecturers during COVID-19 faced heightened work-life imbalance due to online teaching demands, though institutional resources helped mitigate stress.

Pandemic-related Shifts:

Kotowski et al. (2022) reported that teachers worldwide experienced increased stress and burnout during COVID-19, directly linked to deteriorating WLB. Sofronieva et al. (2024) emphasized that university teachers who worked remotely for two years continued to struggle with boundaries between work and home, underscoring long-term implications of telework.

Organizational Factors:

Medina-Garrido et al. (2023) and Biedma-Ferrer and Medina-Garrido (2023) noted that family-friendly HRM policies and organizational support systems significantly reduce WIPL and enhance WPLE, leading to improved well-being and job performance. Similarly, Inegbedion (2024) established that WLB strongly predicts job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

European Contexts:

Kovács et al. (2024) examined university staff across Central and Eastern Europe, concluding that institutional demands and lack of resources exacerbate WIPL. Conversely, engaging leadership styles were shown to buffer the negative effects on well-being (Kohnen et al., 2024).

Taken together, these studies confirm that WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE remain robust constructs for measuring WLB. However, the intensity and manifestations differ by cultural, organizational, and demographic contexts.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite extensive global scholarship, certain gaps persist:

Indian Higher Education Context: While several studies examine WLB in schools or corporate settings in India (Rani & Dua, 2025; Jamunarani & Syed, 2024), few focus specifically on women professionals in higher education institutions in Delhi NCR.

Positive Spillover Dimension: Most prior studies concentrate on WIPL and PLIW, neglecting WPLE as a measure of enrichment. This study integrates both conflict and enrichment perspectives, offering a balanced framework.

Primary Data Collection: Much existing research relies on secondary datasets or online surveys. This study strengthens reliability through **first-hand data collection** across five institutions, ensuring contextual richness.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted to measure the current state of WLB among female teaching faculty.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study surveyed **200 female faculty members** from universities and colleges in Delhi NCR, India. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation from varied disciplines and academic positions.

3.3 Instrumentation

The study employed the **15-item Work-Life Balance Scale by Fisher's 2009**, covering WIPL (5 items), PLIW (5 items), and WPLE (5 items). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

4. Data Analysis & Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 26. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, descriptive statistics were computed for each dimension, Pearson correlations were used to examine relationships, and multiple regression was conducted to assess predictors of overall WLB.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
WIPL	5	0.84
PLIW	5	0.78
WPLE	5	0.81
Overall WLB	15	0.87

The Cronbach's alpha values for all three dimensions (WIPL = 0.84, PLIW = 0.78, WPLE = 0.81) are above the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating good internal consistency. The overall WLB scale also demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$), confirming that the measurement instrument is both consistent and reliable in the Indian higher education context.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of WLB Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
WIPL	3.45	0.82	Moderate interference
PLIW	2.67	0.76	Low interference
WPLE	3.89	0.71	High enhancement

The mean scores show how female faculty members perceive different aspects of work-life balance. WIPL (M = 3.45, SD = 0.82): Respondents reported a moderate level of work interfering with personal life, suggesting that professional duties frequently spill over into personal time. PLIW (M = 2.67, SD = 0.76): The relatively low score indicates that personal responsibilities interfere less with professional roles, meaning women are largely able to keep family/domestic demands from disrupting work. WPLE (M = 3.89, SD = 0.71): This higher mean suggests that many respondents experience positive spillover, where skills, experiences, or support at work enrich their personal lives.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variables	WIPL	PLIW	WPLE	Overall WLB
WIPL	1	.41**	.28**	.53**
PLIW	.41**	1	.22*	.39**
WPLE	.28**	.22*	1	.61**
Overall WLB	.53**	.39**	.61**	1

Note: **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05.

WIPL and PLIW (r = .41, p < .01): There is a moderate positive relationship, meaning those who experience greater interference from work into personal life also tend to feel more interference in the opposite direction.

WIPL and WPLE (r = .28, p < .01): A weaker positive correlation, suggesting that even when work interferes with personal life, some women may still derive enrichment from their professional roles.

PLIW and WPLE (r = .22, p < .05): A small but significant association, indicating a subtle link between personal-life interference and positive spillover.

Overall WLB correlations: Each dimension shows a significant positive correlation with overall work-life balance (ranging from .39 to .61). WPLE has the strongest correlation (r = .61), highlighting its central role in shaping overall balance.

Table 4. Regression Results (Dependent Variable: Overall WLB)

Predictor	Standardized β	t-value	Sig. (p)
WIPL	0.32	4.56	0.000
PLIW	0.21	3.01	0.003
WPLE	0.41	6.02	0.000

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.52$, $F(3,196) = 71.5$, $p < 0.001$.

The regression model explains 52% of the variance in overall work-life balance ($R^2 = 0.52$, $F = 71.5$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong explanatory power.

WIPL ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$): Work interfering with personal life significantly reduces overall balance, confirming it as a major challenge.

PLIW ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = .003$): Personal life interference also negatively affects balance, but its impact is weaker compared to WIPL.

WPLE ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$): Work–personal life enhancement is the strongest predictor, showing that when women perceive positive spillovers from work into personal life, their overall balance improves substantially.

5. DISCUSSION

This study set out to understand how female teaching faculty in Delhi-NCR experience work–life balance, using Fisher's (2009) three-part model of conflict and enrichment. The findings paint a picture that many women in academia will find familiar—one where professional responsibilities often spill into personal life, yet work also provides meaningful rewards that enrich life outside the university.

The first insight comes from the **moderate level of work-to-life interference (WIPL)**. Many faculty members reported that their teaching, research, and administrative duties sometimes leave little space for personal or family commitments. This echoes what earlier studies have observed: that academic work is rarely confined to fixed hours and often stretches into evenings and weekends (Kinman & Jones, 2008; Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006). For women, who often carry a disproportionate share of caregiving and household responsibilities, this creates additional strain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

At the same time, respondents reported **low levels of life-to-work interference (PLIW)**. Despite the heavy demands of home and family life, most women felt able to keep these responsibilities from disrupting their professional roles. This finding reflects what other Indian studies have also noted—women academics often go to great lengths to prioritize their professional identity and performance, sometimes at personal cost (Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004; Rani & Panchanatham, 2010).

What stands out most in the results, however, is the **high score for work–personal life enhancement (WPLE)**. Many women saw their academic careers not just as a source of pressure, but also as something that enriched their lives—bringing recognition, confidence, learning, and even fulfillment that spilled over into their personal domains. This aligns with Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) argument that work can be a source of personal growth, not only conflict. In fact, WPLE was the strongest predictor of overall balance, suggesting that women feel most “balanced” not when interference disappears, but when they are able to carry positive energy and learning from work back into their personal lives.

The **correlations and regression results** support this story. While conflict in both directions (WIPL and PLIW) undermines balance, it is the sense of enrichment (WPLE) that makes the biggest difference. This dual reality—struggling with interference but thriving through enrichment—captures the complexity of women's lives in academia. It suggests that the solution to better balance is not only reducing workloads or conflicts but also amplifying the positive aspects of academic work, such as professional development, recognition, and opportunities for creativity.

In short, these findings remind us that work–life balance is not simply about avoiding conflict, but also about creating conditions where work can add value to life outside of work. For female faculty in Delhi-NCR, that enrichment appears to be a key ingredient in sustaining both their academic careers and their personal well-being.

6. Implications

6.1 Practical Implications

- Institutions should implement **flexible scheduling** and **workload management** policies to reduce WIPL.
- Supportive infrastructure such as **on-campus childcare** and **family leave policies** can help mitigate PLIW.
- Encouraging **mentorship, recognition, and career development programs** can enhance WPLE.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

This study validates the applicability of Fisher's 2009 multidimensional WLB framework in the Indian higher education context. It demonstrates that WPLE is a vital but underexplored dimension, shifting focus beyond conflict to enrichment.

7. Limitations and Future Research

While the study contributes valuable insights, certain limitations exist. First, the sample was limited to Delhi NCR and may not generalize to all regions. Second, the study used self-reported data, which may involve response bias. Future research should explore longitudinal designs, include male faculty for comparative insights, and investigate the role of organizational culture in shaping WLB.

8. CONCLUSION

This study explored the work–life balance of female teaching faculty in Delhi-NCR through Fisher’s 2009 three-dimensional model. The findings reveal a mixed picture: while many women struggle with the demands of academic life spilling into their personal time, they also report that their work enriches them in meaningful ways. Among the three dimensions, work–personal life enhancement emerged as the strongest predictor of overall balance, reminding us that balance is not simply about reducing conflict but also about creating space for work to add value to life.

For women in academia, this dual reality reflects both challenge and opportunity. Institutions, therefore, have a crucial role to play—not only in easing conflicts through supportive policies but also in amplifying the aspects of academic life that bring confidence, recognition, and growth. Doing so will not only improve the well-being of female faculty but also strengthen the higher education sector by retaining talented educators and researchers.

In essence, work–life balance for women is not just about “surviving” the push and pull of work and home—it is also about finding ways for work to enrich life, and for institutions to make that enrichment possible.

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