

# TRACKING WORK-LIFE BALANCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN EMERGING CHALLENGE TO WOMEN ACADEMICIANS IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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## A b s t r a c t

**Purpose:** To analyze the work-life balance of women academicians involved in management education in Jaipur Rajasthan while working from home.

**Design/ methodology/ approach:** With quantitative approach of research, this study drew a sample of 150 women academicians working in various management institutes in Jaipur, Rajasthan. To collect the data a structured questionnaire was designed and further analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

**Findings:** Findings indicated there is significant impact in work-life balance of sample understudy while working from home. Moreover, childcare and eldercare responsibilities were found to be the key factors influencing the work-life balance of women academicians while working from home.

**Originality/value:** The study brings forward the changes in the delivery of management education in context of work from home system.

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, Management Education, Women Academicians.

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

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## Introduction

Work-life balance conceptually exhibits an individual's capacity to have an equilibrium between performing their tasks in work life and personal life (Campbell & Clark, 2000). Due to various financial and social changes globally, position of working females have also transformed drastically. Women experience more issues while balancing their work life and personal life due to tradition set of mind, where they are stereotyped and expected to give priority to family and the household responsibilities. Therefore, overlooking at work and home could get very complex for working women.

As a result, work-life balance of women employees globally has become an exploratory area of study since time has changed from men being the breadwinners to both women and men being responsible to run family equally.

Since this global outbreak occurred, issues related to work-life balance has become a major concern for not only employees and employers but also for the researcher's to study the distinct outcomes in different societies. Due to COVID-19, people were forced to stay at home and to make adjustments with their homes converting into offices, school and even an entertainment unit (Uddin, 2013). The outbreak of COVID-19 has transformed various aspects of human's life in terms of economic and socio-cultural changes. But the pandemic has majorly affected physical and mental health of individuals, especially of working women (Akmal et.al 2021).

To control the spread of this deadly virus, nations across the globe had to refrain themselves and had to adopt measures like lockdowns, maintaining social distance, shutting down public places including corporate offices and education institutes (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir 2021).

These measures forced the teaching fraternity as well to shift the mode of delivery of education to online platform from home. By the middle of 2020, online teaching became an acceptable trend among the fraternity as well as the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the potent danger of coronavirus, unanticipated change in mode of work and increased involvement in the duties at home created new and even more demanding expectations from teachers (Sunitha & Gopal, 2021).

The current study is an attempt to analyze the impact of various factors on the work-life balance of women academicians in management education while working from home. The current research is conducted among the women academicians working in various Management Education Institutions in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

The overall framework of the study is based on assessing the work-life balance of the sample understudy on the grounds of work-related factors and non-work related factors. Work-related factors includes colleagues & supervisor support, work overload (academics as well as administrative), information and communication technology and compensation policies whereas non-work related factors includes childcare and eldercare responsibilities and family support.

## Review of Literature

### Work from Home:

It is evident from published literature in the past that the workplace in general can be of three different kinds, namely: conventional office, virtual office and work from home (Sunitha & Gopal, 2021).

Conventional offices are a traditional and oldest setup wherein people go to their company offices to work along with their colleagues in physical mode. Virtual offices are usually working spaces where people from different companies can come together in a common space. Lastly, work from home refers to the system of managing work while being at home (Hill et.al. 2013).

Though the concept of work from home does sound a bit comfortable and flexible mode of working, at the same time it can lead to some serious impact on the work-life balance of an employee. Nevertheless, depending on values, primacies and personal situation, outcomes of work-life balance can vary for every individual (Gadeyne et al. 2018). For example, for some work from home can help them to improve their relationships with families and loved ones, whereas for some it can be very tough to draw the line between work life and family life at the same time (Sunitha & Gopal, 2021).

There are four key evaluators of measuring the estimated work from home that includes the location of work, information and communication technology,

support from colleagues and bosses and the time of work (Putri et al. 2021).

With continuous development in information and communication technologies, the pervasive nature of work from home is now increasing at a fast pace and becoming a part of every working industry (Shamir 2014; Baruch 2000). COVID-19 has removed the barrier of remote working in the 'new normal' and people from around the world are now adjusting and getting better in this new system.

### **Work-life Balance:**

Campbell & Clark (2000), explained the essence of the term work-life balance in the simplest form as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict'.

Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) provided a new insight to the studies of work life balance by introducing work-family conflict theory and work-family enrichment theory which explains that in certain situations individual experiences conflict in work life and family life, and at the same time other situations might enrich each other.

In support of the theory, Barnett & Hyde (2001) in their studies proved that in everyday practices work and family brings both support and development as well as stress and problems in a worker's life.

Work-life balance is an employee's attempt to keep equilibrium in maintaining their work life and personal life such that no overlapping leads to an impact from one domain to another. At the same time, the concept of work-life balance is also associated with the flexibility an employee can have to decide from where to work, how to work and when to work (Uddin, 2013).

### **Work-life balance of Women in higher education:**

The capsule of academics mainly comprises teaching, lecture preparation, mentoring, evaluating, research and development, Counselling, administrative and managerial work (Castaneda and Isgro, 2013; Misra, et al., 2012; Philipsen and Bostic, 2010; Sallee, 2008). Whereas, personal life revolves around distinct roles including raising a family with children and elders, running errands around the house, maintaining social relationships, pursuing own hobbies, enjoying leisure time etc.

In the case of academicians, the boundary between work life and family life has started to overlap in the last one decade. The invisible thin line between work and life has now started to vanish and it is getting very tough for academicians to balance the demanding work and personal life (Rapanta, et al., 2020).

In general, the conventional working hours for academicians are 40 hours a week (Castaneda and Isgro, 2013) but various factors add an overload to these working hours. In addition to conventional teaching, information and communication technology have now modified the accessibility and availability of teachers, turning the working hours to 24 hours a day for the complete week and at times including weekends leading to even more disruption in the current imbalance (Currie and Eveline, 2011).

With an interest to explore the emerging challenges of women academicians towards arriving at a balance in work and life when working from home the researcher has formulated the objectives of study.

### **Objectives of Study:**

- To study factors influencing the work-life balance of women academicians in Management Education Institutions.
- To measure the level of the impact of various work related and non-work related on work-life balance of academicians in Management Education Institutions.

### **Hypothesis:**

- Both work related and non-work related factors influence the work-life balance of women academicians in Management Education Institutions equally.

### **Methodology**

#### **Overview of Sample and Procedures adopted**

The sample population for the study consisted of 150 women academicians involved in Management education institutions in Jaipur, Rajasthan was selected using convenience sampling. The academic background supported researchers to contact the Head of Departments of these universities who assisted in the process of data collection from the target population. A total of 230 questionnaires were

received, which further were reduced to 150 after removing incomplete responses.

**Table 1 represents the demographic profile of 150 respondents:**

| Variable                 | Value               | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age                      | 18-30 Years         | 32        | 21.33 %    |
|                          | 31-40 Years         | 77        | 51.33 %    |
|                          | 41-50 Years         | 26        | 17.33      |
|                          | 51 Years or more    | 15        | 10%        |
| Designation              | Professor           | 21        | 14%        |
|                          | Associate Professor | 38        | 25.33%     |
|                          | Assistant Professor | 82        | 54.66%     |
|                          | Adjunct Faculty     | 9         | 6%         |
| Marital Status           | Single              | 32        | 21.33%     |
|                          | Married             | 109       | 72.66%     |
| Childcare Responsibility | Divorced            | 9         | 6%         |
|                          | Yes                 | 92        | 61.33%     |
|                          | No                  | 58        | 38.66%     |

### Measurement

To measure the work-life balance of women academicians during pandemic, a 20-item scale was developed based on six factors that includes: Colleagues & Supervisor Support, Work Overload (academics as well as administrative), Information and Communication technology, Compensation Policies, Childcare and Eldercare Responsibilities and Family Support. The assessing scale was designed on a five-point Likert Scale, with choices ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Furthermore, to check the internal consistency and reliability of the scale Cronbach's Alpha test was applied which was found to be .866.

### Analysis and Results:

To measure the levels of Colleagues & Supervisor Support, Work Overload (academics as well as administrative), Information and Communication technology, Compensation Policies, Childcare and

Eldercare Responsibilities and Family Support, mean scores of these variables and their measuring dimensions were calculated.

Table 2 represents the mean scores of six variables understudy. Among the six dimensions measured, family support scored the highest value of 3.88 followed by Information and Communication tools with mean value of 3.56, childcare and eldercare responsibility with a mean value of 3.46, support from supervisor & colleagues with a mean value of 3.26, work overload with a mean value of 2.96 and compensation policies scored the lowest score of 2.57. In case of compensation policies it can be inferred that there is a good scope of improvement. Though the scale provides the variation of response from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', the majority of respondents preferred to answer neutral responses which led the mean scores to fall more between 'three' and 'four'.

**Table 2 represents the mean score values of variables understudy**

| Variable  | Mean Score |
|---|------------|
| Colleagues & Supervisor Support                     | 3.26       |
| Work Overload (academics as well as administrative) | 2.96       |
| Information and Communication technology            | 3.56       |
| Compensation Policies                               | 2.57       |
| Childcare and Eldercare Responsibilities            | 3.46       |
| Family Support                                      | 3.88       |

It can be observed that 'Family Support' makes the most contribution towards the work-life balance of sample understudy while working from home.

Further, a one -way ANOVA analysis was done to analyze the variation among the different means calculated to understand the impact of various factors and check the hypothesis designed for the study.

**Table 3: ANOVA Analysis**

| ANOVA          |                |    |             |        |      |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 160.222        | 5  | 32.044      | 40.557 | .000 |

|               |         |     |      |  |  |
|---------------|---------|-----|------|--|--|
| Within Groups | 705.557 | 893 | .790 |  |  |
| Total         | 865.779 | 898 |      |  |  |

Source: SPSS output

As it is indicated in the ANOVA (Table 3) analysis, that the significant value is less than .05, it can be concluded that both work related and non-work related factors affects the work-life balance of the women academicians equally.

To further validate the results in support towards the literature reviewed and understand the variation within the variables, post-hoc analysis was done. The output of the analysis is presented in Table no. 4.

**Table 4: Post-hoc Analysis**

| Multiple Comparisons |            |            |                       |                  |      |                         |                   |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------|------|-------------------------|-------------------|
|                      | (I)<br>MWO | (J)<br>MWO | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error       | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |                   |
|                      |            |            |                       |                  |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound       |
| LSD                  | 1          | 2          | .302900820283374*     | .102810433169728 | .003 | .10112259193645         | .50467904863029   |
|                      |            | 3          | -.299321401938846*    | .102810433169728 | .004 | -.50109963028577        | -.09754317359193  |
|                      |            | 4          | .689567486950042*     | .102810433169728 | .000 | .48778925860312         | .89134571529696   |
|                      |            | 5          | -.191543624161070     | .102810433169728 | .063 | -.39332185250799        | .01023460418585   |
|                      |            | 6          | -.613765846383291*    | .102810433169728 | .000 | -.81554407473021        | -.41198761803637  |
|                      | 2          | 1          | -.302900820283374*    | .102810433169728 | .003 | -.50467904863029        | -.10112259193645  |
|                      |            | 3          | -.602222222222219*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.80366274618460        | -.40078169825984  |
|                      |            | 4          | .386666666666668*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .18522614270429         | .58810719062904   |
|                      |            | 5          | -.494444444444444*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.69588496840682        | -.29300392048207  |
|                      |            | 6          | -.916666666666665*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -1.11810719062904       | -.71522614270429  |
|                      | 3          | 1          | .299321401938846*     | .102810433169728 | .004 | .09754317359193         | .50109963028577   |
|                      |            | 2          | .602222222222220*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .40078169825984         | .80366274618460   |
|                      |            | 4          | .988888888888887*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .78744836492651         | 1.19032941285126  |
|                      |            | 5          | .107777777777776      | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.09366274618460        | .30921830174015   |
|                      |            | 6          | -.314444444444445*    | .102638365378557 | .002 | -.51588496840682        | -.11300392048207  |
|                      | 4          | 1          | -.689567486950041*    | .102810433169728 | .000 | -.89134571529696        | -.48778925860312  |
|                      |            | 2          | -.386666666666668*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.58810719062904        | -.18522614270429  |
|                      |            | 3          | -.988888888888887*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -1.19032941285126       | -.78744836492651  |
|                      |            | 5          | -.881111111111111*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -1.08255163507349       | -.67967058714873  |
|                      |            | 6          | -1.303333333333332*   | .102638365378557 | .000 | -1.50477385729571       | -1.10189280937095 |
|                      | 5          | 1          | .191543624161070      | .102810433169728 | .063 | -.01023460418585        | .39332185250799   |
|                      |            | 2          | .494444444444444*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .29300392048207         | .69588496840682   |
|                      |            | 3          | -.107777777777776     | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.30921830174015        | .09366274618460   |
|                      |            | 4          | .881111111111111*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .67967058714873         | 1.08255163507349  |
|                      |            | 6          | -.422222222222221*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | -.62366274618460        | -.22078169825984  |
|                      | 6          | 1          | .613765846383291*     | .102810433169728 | .000 | .41198761803637         | .81554407473021   |
|                      |            | 2          | .916666666666665*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .71522614270429         | 1.11810719062904  |
|                      |            | 3          | .314444444444445*     | .102638365378557 | .002 | .11300392048207         | .51588496840682   |
|                      |            | 4          | 1.303333333333332*    | .102638365378557 | .000 | 1.10189280937096        | 1.50477385729571  |
|                      |            | 5          | .422222222222221*     | .102638365378557 | .000 | .22078169825984         | .62366274618460   |



|              |   |   |                     |                  |      |                   |                  |
|--------------|---|---|---------------------|------------------|------|-------------------|------------------|
| Tam-<br>hane | 1 | 2 | .302900820283374*   | .072905589114875 | .001 | .08757079161175   | .51823084895499  |
|              |   | 3 | -.299321401938846*  | .085851078174156 | .008 | -.55272665164591  | -.04591615223178 |
|              |   | 4 | .689567486950042*   | .140501878969768 | .000 | .27343742657224   | 1.10569754732784 |
|              |   | 5 | -.191543624161070   | .070854630220952 | .104 | -.40089942845971  | .01781218013757  |
|              |   | 6 | -.613765846383291*  | .088424846536268 | .000 | -.87478989092169  | -.35274180184489 |
|              | 2 | 1 | -.302900820283374*  | .072905589114875 | .001 | -.51823084895499  | -.08757079161175 |
|              |   | 3 | -.60222222222219*   | .076549262200615 | .000 | -.82838108518094  | -.37606335926350 |
|              |   | 4 | .386666666666668    | .135019109439475 | .068 | -.01386697080255  | .78720030413588  |
|              |   | 5 | -.494444444444444*  | .059243232048406 | .000 | -.66930990463941  | -.31957898424948 |
|              |   | 6 | -.916666666666665*  | .079425030089739 | .000 | -1.15138731360294 | -.68194601973039 |
|              | 3 | 1 | .299321401938846*   | .085851078174156 | .004 | .04591615223178   | .55272665164591  |
|              |   | 2 | .602222222222220*   | .076549262200615 | .000 | .37606335926350   | .82838108518094  |
|              |   | 4 | .988888888888887*   | .142426621855982 | .000 | .56725153790393   | 1.41052623987384 |
|              |   | 5 | .107777777777776    | .074598547191077 | .000 | -.11271654698744  | .32827210254299  |
|              |   | 6 | -.314444444444445*  | .091452272274854 | .010 | -.58437068834817  | -.04451820054072 |
|              | 4 | 1 | -.689567486950041*  | .140501878969768 | .000 | -1.10569754732784 | -.27343742657224 |
|              |   | 2 | -.386666666666668   | .135019109439475 | .068 | -.78720030413588  | .01386697080255  |
|              |   | 3 | -.988888888888887*  | .142426621855982 | .000 | -1.41052623987384 | -.56725153790393 |
|              |   | 5 | -.881111111111111*  | .133922789746143 | .000 | -1.27854569978065 | -.48367652244157 |
|              |   | 6 | -1.303333333333332* | .143992668127944 | .000 | -1.72946426175142 | -.87720240491525 |
|              | 5 | 1 | .191543624161070    | .070854630220952 | .104 | -.01781218013757  | .40089942845971  |
|              |   | 2 | .494444444444444*   | .059243232048406 | .000 | .31957898424948   | .66930990463941  |
|              |   | 3 | -.107777777777776   | .074598547191077 | .000 | -.32827210254299  | .11271654698744  |
|              |   | 4 | .881111111111111*   | .133922789746143 | .000 | .48367652244157   | 1.27854569978065 |
|              |   | 6 | -.422222222222221*  | .077546689834685 | .000 | -.65150149610689  | -.19294294833755 |
|              | 6 | 1 | .613765846383291*   | .088424846536268 | .000 | .35274180184489   | .87478989092169  |
|              |   | 2 | .916666666666665*   | .079425030089739 | .000 | .68194601973039   | 1.15138731360294 |
|              |   | 3 | .314444444444445*   | .091452272274854 | .010 | .04451820054072   | .58437068834817  |
|              |   | 4 | 1.303333333333332*  | .143992668127944 | .000 | .87720240491525   | 1.72946426175142 |
|              |   | 5 | .422222222222221*   | .077546689834685 | .000 | .19294294833755   | .65150149610690  |

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: SPSS output

After applying the post-hoc analysis, it was found that childcare and eldercare responsibilities had comparatively more impact on the work-life balance of women academics while working from home as compared to other five factors. This finding is further supported by the study conducted by (Mazerolle and Barrett, 2018) and Murthy and Shastri, (2015) on parenting issues which indicates the issues women faced by working women with children.

Further, it can be seen that variable 1 & 5 and variable 2 & 4 are above the significant value of .05 and thus rejects the null hypothesis. Therefore, in case of above mentioned two pairs of variables we can

reject the null hypothesis that all the factors affect the work-life balance of the stated sample equally.

## Conclusion:

With the beginning of the 21st century, a new conundrum has taken the attention of researchers which is the compulsory presence of online education due to COVID-19. Not only the benefits but also the shortcomings of the new education system is creating curiosity globally. With this, work-life balance of resources involved in the system is also a big question that researchers are trying to answer in different settings.

This study examined the impact of various factors on work-life balance of women involved in management education, which concluded that women faced the majority of issues in taking care of their children and elders while working from home. This implies that organizations can work on improving the flexibility of the system to assist their women workforce in a better way.

In nutshell, this study provides an insight that notion of work-life balance is equally important and an advantage to the organizations. Proper balance between work and personal life leads to lower level of stress and positive increase in an individual's productivity. With evident results, it is recommended to the organizations to introduce work-life balance policies in order to nurture the employer-employee relationship and to further support the employee's in achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life.

### Managerial Implications and Recommendations:

In a complex mode of work from home specific to educational institutions, flexibility in work practices is very important in order to support the women workforce. Not only is it important for the employees but also for the employers to understand the importance of work-life balance to increase retention as well as to meet employees' expectations.

The study can be used by various educational institutions to develop better work practices which in turn will improve the connection between the employer and employee. This further will help the experts to improve suitable 'psychological empowerment practices' for the women academicians based on the most important aspects discussed in the results to achieve higher level of balance between their work and personal life. Given that family support makes the most significant contribution organizations should follow flexible working schedules while working from home as the boundary seems to vanish in such system of working. Further in order to nurture the collaborative working environment it is suggested that seniors or reporting heads should emit discrete responsibilities which will motivate the team as well as boost the sense of belongingness and self-confidence, or better and

improved training should be imparted to develop employee's self-efficacy which in turn will increase their ability to achieve better work-life balance. To support the women workforce in taking care of the childcare or eldercare responsibilities, degree of freedom or autonomy is very significant. Therefore, organizations should provide an appropriate level of freedom to the women employees so as to engage and nurture them in carrying out their task without having a constant constraint of time or deadlines. Lastly, in order to achieve desired outcomes even while working from home, organizations should adopt practices like coaching and mentoring, introducing online activities to reduce work stress, working in small shifts, online counselling session from leaders or motivators, promoting health oriented practices like yoga to the women as recommended by.

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