



## Work–Life Balance Challenges of Women Employees in the IT Sector: Implications for Mental Health and Productivity.

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, the information technology (IT) sector has emerged as one of the key sources of employment for women in India and in many other parts of the world. The sector has provided opportunities for economic independence, skill development, and career advancement. At the same time, the working environment in the IT industry has created new challenges related to work–life balance. Long working hours, demanding project schedules, continuous digital connectivity, and high-performance expectations often make it difficult for women to maintain a clear separation between professional and personal life.

This study examines work–life balance issues experienced by women employees in the IT sector and explores how persistent imbalance affects mental well-being and work performance. The study is conceptual in nature and is based on secondary sources of data. The discussion is guided by theoretical perspectives related to work stress, role overload, and employee well-being. The review of existing studies shows that sustained work pressure has a noticeable impact on the mental health of women employees. Many women experience stress, emotional fatigue, and mental exhaustion due to overlapping professional and domestic responsibilities. These conditions gradually reduce focus, energy levels, and emotional stability. Over time, job satisfaction declines, and the quality of work performance is affected.

From an organisational point of view, poor work–life balance among women employees creates several challenges. Reduced productivity at work and home as well, lack of motivation, increased absenteeism, and higher employee turnover are commonly observed outcomes. The findings also suggest that women face greater pressure due to the

combined demands of paid work and unpaid household responsibilities. In the absence of adequate organisational support, work–life imbalance tends to become a long-term issue rather than a short-term adjustment problem. The study highlights the need for organisations in the IT sector to adopt supportive and realistic workplace practices. Measures such as flexible work arrangements, manageable workloads, access to mental health support, and gender-sensitive human resource policies can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being. A work culture that values employee health alongside performance can contribute to higher productivity and long-term organisational stability. By focusing on women employees in the IT sector, this study adds to the discussion on work–life balance and mental well-being in knowledge-based industries. It offers useful insights for organisations and policymakers seeking to build a healthier and more sustainable workforce.

**Keyword:** Work–life balance; women employees; IT sector; mental well-being; work performance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, women’s participation in paid employment has expanded considerably across both developed and developing economies, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations and increasing educational attainment. Within the Information Technology (IT) sector, women have emerged as key contributors to organisational growth, innovation, and overall economic development. However, this rise in workforce participation has not been matched by an equitable redistribution of unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Consequently, many women continue to experience disproportionate pressure in balancing their professional obligations with personal and family roles.

Work–life balance (WLB) refers to an individual’s capacity to effectively manage work-related demands alongside personal and familial responsibilities in a manner that minimises role conflict and enhances overall well-being. In the context of the IT sector, achieving such balance is particularly challenging due to demanding project timelines, continuous digital connectivity, and performance-oriented work environments. These challenges are further intensified by persistent gender norms that continue to assign primary caregiving responsibilities to women, thereby constraining their ability to achieve equilibrium between work and life domains.

The contemporary IT workplace has further amplified these pressures. Extended working hours, expectations of constant availability, and coordination across multiple time zones have increasingly blurred the

boundaries between professional and personal life. Such conditions tend to affect women more acutely, especially married women and working mothers who simultaneously manage multiple responsibilities. As a result, work–life imbalance has emerged as a significant concern influencing not only women’s mental health but also their job satisfaction and overall work performance.

The consequences of this imbalance extend beyond individual well-being to organisational effectiveness. Psychological strain manifested through stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion can adversely affect employee engagement and productivity, leading to absenteeism, presenteeism, and higher turnover intentions. For IT organisations that rely heavily on skilled human capital, these outcomes translate into tangible productivity losses and reduced workforce stability. Therefore, work–life balance must be recognised as a strategic organisational priority rather than merely an individual coping issue.

Although a substantial body of literature has examined work–life balance in organizational contexts, existing research often treats mental health, productivity outcomes, and gender dimensions in isolation. There remains a need for a more integrated and sector-specific approach that captures the interrelationships among these variables. In this context, the present study aims to bridge this gap by analysing work–life balance challenges, mental health outcomes, and productivity implications within a unified framework, specifically focusing on women employees in the IT sector.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work–life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical concern in contemporary organisational research, particularly within the Information Technology (IT) sector, where job demands are high, and work structures are increasingly flexible yet intensive. For women employees, the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with domestic and caregiving roles remains pronounced, making WLB an important determinant of both individual well-being and organisational outcomes.

Early theoretical foundations of WLB are rooted in Role Conflict Theory, which posits that incompatible demands between work and family roles lead to stress and reduced well-being, and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which suggests that individuals experience stress when their personal resources (time, energy, emotional capacity)

are depleted. These frameworks provide a useful lens for understanding the pressures faced by women employees in the IT sector.

Raut and Nimbhorkar (2025), in their review *Work Life Balance and its Impact on IT Employees: A Review of Literature*, synthesised multiple empirical studies and concluded that work–life imbalance significantly affects job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and stress levels. Their findings highlight extended working hours, high performance expectations, and workplace pressure as major contributors to imbalance, particularly among female professionals who simultaneously manage domestic responsibilities.

Extending this understanding through empirical investigation, Thoutreddy and Ramanjaneyulu (2024), in their study of IT companies in Telangana, analysed primary data from 220 women employees. The study revealed that respondents worked approximately 11 hours daily, with additional commuting time leading to over 12 hours of professional engagement. Such prolonged work durations were associated with physical fatigue, psychological stress, and diminished family interaction. The authors also noted organisational constraints such as rigid leave policies and implicit expectations prioritising work over personal life.

Similarly, Flora and Kalai Lakshmi (2022), in their quantitative study of 113 women IT employees, examined the impact of work-from-home arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings indicated that while 67.3% of respondents worked remotely, only a minority experienced effective work–life balance. The study identified work pressure, extended working hours, and unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities as key stressors. Importantly, it emphasised that flexible work arrangements alone do not ensure balance unless supported by equitable household role distribution.

Adding to this, Shah et al. (2025), in their study on working women in the service sector, applied the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model to analyse work–life balance dynamics. Their findings demonstrate that higher WLB is positively associated with job satisfaction, while family responsibilities and personal expectations significantly influence perceived balance. The study further establishes that organisational support and job resources, such as flexibility and supervisor support, can mitigate the negative effects of high job demands.

Supporting these findings, Haar et al. (2014) conducted a cross-national study and found that work–life balance is positively related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction, while negatively associated with

anxiety and depression. Similarly, Allen et al. (2013) demonstrated that work–family conflict leads to increased stress and decreased organisational commitment, reinforcing the psychological implications of imbalance.

In the Indian context, studies by Bano and Jha (2020) and Mishra and Bhatnagar (2019) highlight that women in IT and service sectors experience higher levels of role overload and time pressure due to dual responsibilities. These studies emphasise that socio-cultural expectations regarding gender roles continue to shape women’s work–life experiences, often limiting their career progression and well-being.

At the institutional level, global reports further contextualise these issues. The World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law (2023) report highlights structural barriers and inadequate workplace flexibility as key factors affecting female labour force participation and retention. The OECD (2020) report on Balancing Paid Work, Unpaid Work and Leisure underscores persistent gender disparities in unpaid care work, contributing to time poverty among women. Additionally, the WHO (2022) report on Mental Health at Work links prolonged work-related stress to burnout, anxiety, and reduced productivity, while the ILO (2023) report on Care at Work emphasises that family-friendly workplace policies enhance employee retention and organisational sustainability.

Despite the growing body of literature, a significant research gap remains. Existing studies largely examine work–life balance, mental health outcomes, or productivity indicators in isolation. Limited research integrates these dimensions within a single analytical framework, particularly in the context of women employees in the Indian IT sector. Furthermore, the mediating role of mental health in linking work–life balance challenges to organisational outcomes remains underexplored.

The present study seeks to address this gap by providing an integrated analysis of work–life balance challenges, mental health outcomes (stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion), and productivity-related variables (job satisfaction, engagement, and retention) among women employees in the IT sector. By adopting a structured conceptual framework, the study contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical policy implications.

### 3. RESEARCH GAP

Although a growing body of literature has explored work–life balance among women employees, existing studies tend to examine its dimensions in isolation rather than as an interconnected phenomenon. Much of the prior research focuses either on stress and burnout, job satisfaction, or organisational outcomes independently, without adequately capturing the underlying relationships between these variables. Furthermore, while institutional reports provide valuable macro-level insights into gender disparities and structural constraints, they often lack a sector-specific focus, particularly within the rapidly evolving IT industry. In the Indian context, empirical studies addressing women professionals in the IT sector remain fragmented and limited in scope. Notably, there is a lack of comprehensive research that integrates work–life balance challenges with mental health outcomes and productivity-related implications within a single analytical framework. This gap restricts a holistic understanding of the issue. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by offering an integrated, sector-specific analysis focused on women employees in the IT sector.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is primarily conceptual in nature. It is based exclusively on secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers, and reports published by reputed national and international organisations. The selection of literature was guided by relevance to key themes such as work–life balance, mental health outcomes, and productivity implications, with a specific focus on women employees in the IT sector.

A systematic and thematic review approach has been employed to analyse the selected studies. The literature was critically examined to identify recurring patterns, theoretical linkages, and empirical relationships among work–life balance challenges, psychological outcomes (including stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion), and organisational variables such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and employee retention.

Furthermore, an analytical synthesis technique was used to integrate findings from diverse sources, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the issue. By combining empirical evidence with institutional insights, the study develops a cohesive conceptual framework that explains how work–life imbalance among women employees leads to psychological strain and subsequently affects organisational performance and sustainability.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

- To identify the key work–life balance challenges faced by women employees in the IT sector.
- To examine the impact of work–life imbalance on mental health outcomes, including stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion.
- To analyse the relationship between work–life balance and productivity-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and retention.
- To develop an integrated conceptual framework linking work–life balance challenges, mental health, and organisational implications within the IT sector.

## 5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This part proposes a structured relationship between work–life balance challenges, mental health outcomes, and productivity implications among women employees in the IT sector. Work-related stressors such as long working hours, digital connectivity, workload intensity, and role overload are identified as primary determinants of imbalance.

These stressors are hypothesised to influence mental health outcomes, including stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. Mental health is conceptualised as a mediating variable that explains how work–life imbalance translates into reduced job satisfaction, lower work engagement, and higher turnover intentions.



FRAMEWORK OF A SEQUENTIAL LINKAGE:  
Source: Author Compiled

By integrating individual psychological effects with organisational outcomes, the framework enables a comprehensive sector-specific

analysis of work–life balance among women professionals in the IT industry.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that women employees in the IT sector are consistently exposed to significant work–life balance (WLB) challenges. The nature of IT work—characterised by extended working hours, stringent deadlines, and performance pressures, and continuous digital connectivity creates an environment where detachment from work becomes increasingly difficult. For women, these professional demands coexist with persistent domestic and caregiving responsibilities, resulting in role overload and severe time constraints. This dual burden reinforces structural inequalities and intensifies the complexity of achieving a sustainable work–life balance.

These conditions have profound implications for mental health. The inability to effectively manage competing role demands leads to heightened stress levels, which, when prolonged, manifest as emotional exhaustion and burnout. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that mental health functions as a critical mediating mechanism through which work–life imbalance influences work-related outcomes. In other words, it is not merely the intensity of work that affects performance, but the psychological strain arising from continuous imbalance that significantly undermines employee well-being and efficiency.

Within the IT sector, productivity is closely linked to cognitive performance, creativity, and sustained engagement. However, stress and burnout adversely affect concentration, decision-making ability, and motivation. As a result, employees experiencing work–life imbalance often report lower job satisfaction and reduced work engagement. This, in turn, increases turnover intentions and withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and presentism. For organisations operating in knowledge-intensive environments, such outcomes are particularly detrimental, as the loss of skilled human capital leads to increased recruitment costs, disrupted workflows, and reduced organisational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings emphasise that work–life balance should not be interpreted as an individual limitation or a failure of personal time management. Instead, it reflects broader organisational structures, cultural expectations, and policy frameworks. Inflexible work schedules, unrealistic performance targets, and lack of managerial support exacerbate imbalance, particularly for women employees. Conversely, organisational practices such as flexible working arrangements,

supportive leadership, and family-friendly policies have the potential to mitigate these challenges and enhance both employee well-being and productivity.

The discussion also highlights that addressing work–life balance is essential for long-term organisational sustainability. Companies that fail to recognise and respond to these challenges risk higher employee turnover, lower morale, and reduced competitive advantage. In contrast, organisations that prioritise employee well-being are more likely to achieve higher retention, improved performance, and a more resilient workforce. Therefore, promoting work–life balance should be viewed as a strategic imperative rather than a peripheral human resource concern.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Report &amp; Year</b>
Unpaid Care Work	Women spend significantly more time on unpaid domestic and caregiving work	OECD, <i>Balancing Paid and Unpaid Work</i> (2020)
Mental Health	Work-related stress is strongly associated with anxiety, burnout, and depression	WHO, <i>Mental Health at Work</i> (2022)
Work-related Stress	Dual burden of paid and unpaid work increases stress among women employees	ILO, <i>Women at Work</i> (2022)
Productivity	Absenteeism and presentism reduce overall efficiency and output	OECD, <i>How's Life?</i> (2020)
Employee Retention	Work–life imbalance increases turnover intentions among employees	World Bank, <i>World Development Report</i> (2019)
Organisational Performance	Employee well-being directly influences engagement and productivity	Gallup, <i>State of the Global Workplace</i> (2021)
Gender Inequality	Unequal distribution of care responsibilities limits women’s career growth	UN Women, <i>Progress of the World’s Women</i> (2019)
Sustainability	High attrition and burnout weaken long-term organisational stability	ILO, <i>Care at Work</i> (2023)

Table 1.1: Linkages between Work–Life Balance and Organisational Outcomes  
Source: Compiled from secondary data.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study examined the work–life balance challenges faced by women employees in the IT sector and analysed their implications for mental health, productivity, and organisational sustainability. The findings clearly indicate that persistent work–life imbalance leads to significant psychological strain in the form of stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. These mental health challenges, in turn, adversely

affect job satisfaction, work engagement, and overall productivity. In knowledge-intensive sectors such as IT, where performance is closely linked to cognitive efficiency and sustained engagement, such outcomes have far-reaching organisational consequences, including increased absenteeism, higher turnover intentions, and reduced workforce stability.

Importantly, the study highlights that work–life balance should not be perceived as an individual-level concern or a matter of personal time management. Rather, it reflects deeper structural and organisational issues, including rigid work arrangements, high performance expectations, and inadequate institutional support systems. Addressing these challenges is therefore essential not only for enhancing employee well-being but also for ensuring long-term organisational effectiveness and sustainability.

To address the identified challenges, the following measures are recommended:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Organisations should implement flexible work schedules, remote or hybrid working options, and reasonable workload distribution to help employees manage dual responsibilities more effectively.
- **Mental Health Support Systems:** Workplace mental health initiatives, including counselling services, stress management programs, and awareness campaigns, should be strengthened and normalised to reduce stigma and promote psychological well-being.
- **Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Companies should expand policies such as paid parental leave, childcare support facilities, and re-entry programs for women returning to work after career breaks.
- **Supportive Leadership and Work Culture:** Managers and organisational leaders should foster an inclusive and empathetic work environment that recognises the importance of work–life balance and actively supports employees in achieving it.
- **Integration with Organisational Strategy:** Work–life balance initiatives should be embedded within broader human resource and sustainability strategies, ensuring alignment with organisational

goals related to employee retention, productivity, and long-term growth.

Overall, promoting work–life balance is not merely a welfare measure but a strategic necessity for organisations aiming to build a resilient, productive, and inclusive workforce.

## 8. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the present study provides a conceptual understanding of work–life balance challenges among women employees in the IT sector, it also opens several avenues for future research. Subsequent studies may adopt empirical approaches using primary data to validate and extend the proposed conceptual framework. In particular, quantitative techniques such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) can be employed to examine the causal relationships between work–life balance, mental health outcomes, and productivity variables.

Future research may also undertake comparative analyses across different sectors (e.g., IT, banking, healthcare) or demographic groups (e.g., gender, marital status, parental status) to better understand variations in work–life balance experiences. Additionally, cross-cultural studies could provide insights into how institutional and societal factors influence these dynamics in different national contexts.

Longitudinal research designs would be especially valuable in capturing the long-term effects of work–life balance practices and organisational interventions on employee well-being and performance. Furthermore, future studies could explore the role of emerging work patterns, such as hybrid work models and digital work environments, in shaping work–life balance outcomes. Such research would contribute to a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of sustainable workforce management.

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