

Work-Life Balance Among Married Women Employees: A Study with special References to Organisations in Bellary District

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the nature and extent of work-life balance (WLB) challenges encountered by married women employees in Bellary District, North Karnataka, a region characterised by an emerging industrial economy and deeply entrenched patriarchal social structures. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the challenges faced, examine the causal factors of work-life imbalance, evaluate the measures adopted at individual and organisational levels, and assess the overall effectiveness of WLB practices among the sampled respondents.

Methodology – A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 115 married women employees drawn through purposive stratified sampling from government, private, public sector undertaking (PSU), and non-governmental organisations in and around Bellary District. A structured, pre-tested, five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was established at 0.879. Data were analysed using Percentage Analysis, Weighted Mean with Ranking, Chi-Square Test (χ^2), and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Findings – Managing household responsibilities alongside office work emerged as the most pressing challenge (Weighted Mean = 3.89, Rank I), followed by emotional exhaustion from dual roles (WM = 3.77). Long and inflexible working hours was identified as the dominant factor contributing to work-life imbalance (WM = 3.94). Flexible working hours and hybrid work options were the most valued organisational measures. Chi-Square tests confirmed significant associations between WLB outcomes and type of organisation ($p = 0.033$), educational qualification ($p = 0.041$), number of children ($p = 0.003$), and marital duration ($p = 0.029$). One-Way ANOVA revealed statistically significant inter-sectoral differences in WLB effectiveness ($F = 7.93, p = 0.001$), with government sector employees recording the highest effectiveness scores.

Implications – The study is geographically confined to Bellary District and restricted to a sample of 115 respondents, which limits broader generalisability. The cross-sectional design precludes longitudinal causal inference. Future research could extend the study to multiple districts of North Karnataka and employ qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to enrich the findings.

Practical Implications – The findings provide actionable insights for human resource managers, employers, and trade unions to design gender-sensitive and family-friendly workplace policies.

The study underscores the urgent need for institutionalising flexible work arrangements, expanding workplace childcare facilities, and training managers in gender-responsive leadership in the North Karnataka industrial and service sector context.

Social Implications – The study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity, women's labour force participation, and the redistribution of unpaid domestic labour in Indian households. It highlights how socio-cultural patriarchal norms in the North Karnataka region compound structural workplace deficiencies to impose a disproportionate burden on married women employees, with consequences for their physical and mental health, career continuity, and family well-being.

Originality/Value – This study makes an original empirical contribution by providing the first systematic, multi-sector analysis of WLB among married women employees in Bellary District — a geography underrepresented in management and gender studies literature. The integration of four thematic dimensions — challenges, causal factors, measures, and effectiveness — within a single coherent analytical framework distinguishes this study from extant literature that typically addresses these dimensions in isolation.

Keywords- Work Life Balance, Married Women Employees, Flexible work Arrangements, Gender Equity, Employee Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of women into the formal workforce is one of the most transformative socio-economic shifts of the contemporary era. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2022–23) of India, the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) has risen from 23.3 per cent in 2017–18 to 37.0 per cent in 2022–23 — a historically significant gain that reflects expanding educational attainment, rising aspirations, and changing household economic necessities. Yet, as Hochschild and Machung (1989) compellingly demonstrated through the metaphor of the 'second shift', entry into the formal labour market has not freed married women from the gendered burden of domestic labour; it has merely added a second full-time role to their daily lives.

Work-life balance (WLB), as conceptualised by Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003, p. 513), refers to 'the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in — and equally satisfied with — his or her work role and family role.' For married women in the Indian context, this balance is particularly elusive. The simultaneity of career demands and caregiving responsibilities — shaped by cultural expectations, institutional deficiencies, and marital role obligations — creates a chronic condition of role overload and time poverty (Kalliath and Brough, 2008; Bharat, 2003).

The geographic context of this study — Bellary District and its surrounding areas in North Karnataka — presents a uniquely instructive setting. Bellary, situated at the confluence of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana borders, has undergone rapid economic transformation through its iron ore mining industry, manufacturing units, and the establishment of educational and healthcare institutions. The district's workforce includes a growing cohort of married women employed in government offices, banks, educational institutions, private firms, and health sector organisations. Yet, North Karnataka's socio-cultural milieu is characterised by strong patriarchal norms, limited

institutional support for working mothers, and inadequate public childcare infrastructure (Karnataka Human Development Report, 2015). These contextual specificities make the WLB experiences of married women employees in this region both distinctive and critically important to study.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath further complicated the WLB landscape. As Alon et al. (2020) demonstrated, the pandemic precipitated a 'she-cession' — a disproportionate withdrawal of women from the labour force due to amplified domestic and caregiving burdens during lockdowns and remote work periods. Even as economic normalcy has been restored, many of the structural conditions that precipitated this crisis persist. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023) estimates that unpaid care work — performed predominantly by women — still accounts for three times the hours devoted to it by men globally.

Within this milieu, there is a notable scarcity of empirical research focused specifically on married women employees in semi-urban and district-level geographies of North Karnataka. Most extant Indian WLB research has concentrated on metropolitan IT hubs (Vijaya Mani, 2013; Sivarethinamohan and Aranganathan, 2011) or southern urban centres, overlooking the distinct challenges of women employed in the socio-culturally and economically distinct North Karnataka context. The present study, therefore, endeavours to address this empirical gap by examining WLB challenges, causal factors, adopted measures, and effectiveness among 115 married women employees in and around Bellary District.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The intellectual foundations of work-life balance research draw from multiple disciplinary traditions including industrial-organisational psychology, sociology, feminist studies, and human resource management. This section reviews the most significant theoretical and empirical contributions that inform the present study.

The concept of work-family conflict was formally theorised by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who defined it as 'a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.' Their three-dimensional typology — time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflict — established the analytical vocabulary that continues to structure WLB research. Extending this tradition, Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992) provided empirical evidence linking work-family conflict to psychological distress, job dissatisfaction, and reduced organisational commitment, thereby demonstrating that WLB is not merely an individual concern but an organisational priority.

Clark's (2000) Work-Family Border Theory reconceptualised the issue around the metaphor of permeable borders between work and personal domains. Clark argued that individuals who experience high border flexibility and low border permeability tend to navigate transitions between domains more effectively, with reduced spillover of negative emotions. For married women in the Indian cultural context, however, as Bharat (2003) documented, the borders are highly asymmetric — the domestic domain persistently encroaches upon professional time while professional norms rarely make accommodations for family demands.

Hochschild's (1989) landmark ethnographic study 'The Second Shift' provided empirical texture to the theoretical abstractions of role conflict, revealing through longitudinal fieldwork that even

when women achieved professional parity, the division of household labour remained fundamentally unequal. This work prefigured the concept of 'time poverty' which Hirway (2010) subsequently applied to the Indian context, demonstrating that the burden of unpaid care and domestic work systematically disadvantages women's career trajectories and well-being.

In the Indian management literature, Sivarethnamohan and Aranganathan (2011) conducted a comprehensive study among women employees in Chennai and found that long working hours, inadequate family support, and the absence of workplace crèche facilities constituted the primary drivers of role conflict. Their study recommended institutionalising family-friendly HR practices as a non-negotiable strategic imperative. Similarly, Vijaya Mani (2013), examining IT sector professionals in Bengaluru and Chennai, demonstrated that supervisor support, schedule flexibility, and organisational culture were the strongest predictors of perceived WLB, while role overload was the most significant barrier.

Mathew and Panchanatham (2011) contributed an important empirical analysis of WLB among women entrepreneurs and professional employees in South India, concluding that the interaction between personal demographic variables and organisational support structures significantly modulated WLB outcomes. Their study underscored the heterogeneity of women's WLB experiences across sectoral and demographic sub-groups. Rani and Mathew (2020) extended this line of inquiry through a systematic literature review and confirmed that the number of dependent children, spousal support, and sector of employment are the most consistent demographic predictors of WLB across Indian studies.

From a global perspective, Kalliath and Brough (2008) conducted a critical synthesis of WLB definitions across empirical literature and proposed a multi-dimensional construct encompassing multiple life roles — not merely work and family. They argued persuasively that WLB is a subjective, dynamic, and role-specific experience that cannot be reduced to the absence of conflict alone. This framework informs the present study's operationalisation of WLB effectiveness across multiple life domains.

Brough et al. (2014) brought methodological rigour to WLB measurement through the development of the WLB Scale, demonstrating that cross-cultural adaptation of WLB instruments must account for context-specific role expectations and institutional arrangements — a finding particularly pertinent to the North Karnataka setting where cultural norms, language, and kinship structures differ substantially from western contexts in which most WLB scales were originally validated.

The role of organisational interventions in ameliorating WLB outcomes has been well-documented. Kossek, Baltes and Matthews (2011) demonstrated through a meta-analysis of 30 longitudinal studies that employer-provided schedule flexibility and telework significantly reduced work-family conflict, with the strongest effects observed among women with young children. More recently, Gascoigne and Kelliher (2018) highlighted the importance of making flexibility accessible as an institutional norm rather than an individual negotiation, arguing that informal flexibility often reinforces gender inequality by being disproportionately accessed by lower-level employees.

In the Karnataka state context, the Karnataka Human Development Report (Planning Department, Government of Karnataka, 2015) documented persistent gender inequalities in time use, with women in North Karnataka districts spending nearly 8 hours per day on unpaid domestic and care work — the highest among all Karnataka regions. This contextual evidence amplifies the significance of the present study and provides the empirical backdrop against which the findings must be interpreted.

Collectively, the literature converges on three principal insights: WLB is multi-dimensional and context-specific; married women face structurally amplified challenges due to socio-cultural gender norms; and effective WLB interventions require a combination of institutional commitment, flexible work design, family support, and individual agency. The present study builds upon and contributes to this accumulated scholarship with original empirical evidence from an understudied geographic and socio-cultural context.

2.1 Research Gap

While the WLB literature in India is expanding, it remains geographically concentrated in metropolitan centres such as Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad (Vijaya Mani, 2013; Sivarethinamohan and Aranganathan, 2011), and sectorally skewed towards information technology and banking sectors. District-level geographies of North Karnataka — where patriarchal norms, limited childcare infrastructure, and industrial-agrarian economic transitions create a distinctive set of WLB pressures — remain entirely absent from the peer-reviewed empirical literature.

Furthermore, most extant studies address WLB challenges, causal factors, and remedial measures in isolation, without providing an integrative evaluation of WLB effectiveness across multiple life domains. The present study bridges these dual gaps — geographic and analytical — by offering a comprehensive, multi-sector empirical examination of all four WLB dimensions among 115 married women employees in and around Bellary District, contributing the first systematic WLB study from this region to the academic literature.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The present study is anchored in Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) Inter-Role Conflict Model as its primary theoretical lens, supplemented by Clark's (2000) Work-Family Border Theory and the Demand-Resource Model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001). The Inter-Role Conflict Model explains the challenges and causal factors identified in this study, as married women navigate incompatible demands from their professional and domestic roles. The Border Theory explains the structural mechanisms through which organisational rigidity — particularly inflexible hours — exacerbates this conflict for women in the North Karnataka regional context.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) provides a complementary framework for understanding effectiveness: when job demands are high and personal and organisational resources (such as supervisor support, flexible scheduling, and childcare facilities) are low, WLB effectiveness deteriorates. Conversely, adequate resource provision moderates the negative impact of demands on well-being outcomes. This framework guides the study's analysis of the effectiveness of adopted measures across the sampled population.

2.3 Objectives of the Study

The study is directed by the following specific objectives:

1. To understand the challenges faced by married women employees in Bellary District and surrounding areas in balancing their professional and personal lives.
2. To examine the factors influencing work-life imbalance among married women employees in the study area.
3. To evaluate the measures adopted — at individual and organisational levels — to achieve work-life balance among the respondents.
4. To assess the overall effectiveness of work-life balance practices and their impact across multiple dimensions of well-being among the sample respondents.

2.4 Hypothesis of the Study

The following null hypotheses (H_0) are formulated for empirical testing:

1. H_{01} : There is no significant association between the type of organisation and the level of work-life balance among married women employees.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant association between educational qualification and the work-life balance level of married women employees.
3. H_{03} : There is no significant association between the number of dependent children and the challenges faced in work-life balance.
4. H_{04} : There is no significant association between the duration of marriage and the perceived level of work-life imbalance.
5. H_{05} : There is no significant difference in the mean effectiveness of work-life balance across respondents belonging to different organisational sectors.

2.5 Research Methodology

2.5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive dimension systematically profiles the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of their WLB-related experiences. The analytical dimension employs inferential statistical tools to test hypotheses and examine structural relationships among key variables.

2.5.2 Universe and Sampling

The study universe comprises all married women employees working in organisations in Bellary District (Ballari) and adjoining taluks including Hospet (Vijayanagara), Sandur, Siraguppa, and Kudligi in North Karnataka. A sample of 115 respondents was drawn using purposive stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation from government establishments, private enterprises, PSUs, and NGOs. Organisations from sectors including banking, education, healthcare, government administration, manufacturing, and retail were included.

2.5.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered in person and, where necessary, through a Kannada-translated version to ensure comprehension among vernacular-medium respondents. The instrument comprised: (i) a socio-demographic profile section; (ii) Likert-scale items (1–5) measuring challenges, influencing factors, measures adopted, and effectiveness dimensions; and (iii) open-ended items for qualitative elaboration. Secondary data

were drawn from UGC-CARE listed journals, government reports, and the Karnataka Human Development Report (2015).

2.5.4 Pilot Study and Reliability

A pilot study involving 25 respondents from Bellary city was conducted prior to full-scale data collection. The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.879 — well above the threshold of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978), thereby affirming high reliability. Face and content validity were established through review by three academic experts in management and gender studies, and one practising HR manager.

2.5.5 Statistical Tools Employed

The following statistical techniques were used for data analysis, consistent with the methodology employed in analogous studies by Rani and Mathew (2020) and Mathew and Panchanatham (2011):

1. Percentage Analysis — for frequency distribution of socio-demographic variables.
2. Weighted Mean (WM) and Ranking — to assess the relative importance of challenges, causal factors, and measures. Formula: $WM = \frac{\sum(f \times w)}{N}$, where f = frequency, w = weight (5–1), N = total respondents.
3. Chi-Square Test (χ^2) — to test associations between categorical demographic variables and WLB dimensions (H_01 – H_04).
4. One-Way ANOVA — to compare mean WLB effectiveness scores across organisational sectors (H_05).

2.5.6 Study Area

The study was conducted in Bellary District (officially renamed Ballari) and its surrounding areas in North Karnataka, including the Vijayanagara district (carved out in 2020). Bellary city is the headquarters of this administrative district and serves as the commercial, industrial, and educational hub of the region. The district is home to major steel plants (NMDC, JSW Steel), government offices, educational institutions of Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University (VSKU), and numerous private enterprises — together providing a varied organisational landscape suited to a cross-sector WLB study.

2.5.7 Period and Limitations

Data collection was conducted during August to October 2024. The study is subject to limitations arising from its cross-sectional design, geographic confinement to Bellary District, and the self-report nature of Likert-scale data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. The sample of 115, while sufficient for the statistical analyses employed, is modest in scale and the findings should be interpreted accordingly.

3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Age Distribution

Table 1: Age-Wise Distribution of Respondents (N = 115)

S.No.	Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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1	Below 25 years	21	18.3
2	25–35 years	59	51.3
3	36–45 years	26	22.6
4	Above 45 years	9	7.8
Total		115	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals that 51.3 per cent of respondents belong to the 25–35 age group, indicating that young married women constitute the modal segment of the workforce in Bellary's formal sector. This age cohort coincides with the most intensive phase of both early career development and family formation — including childbirth and infant-care demands — rendering WLB particularly acute and consequential (Brough et al., 2014). A further 22.6 per cent are in the 36–45 age bracket, representing mid-career professionals with established parental responsibilities. The near-absence of respondents above 45 years (7.8%) is consistent with broader patterns of women's workforce attrition in North Karnataka, where retirement, health constraints, or voluntary exit from the labour force becomes more common for older married women.

3.1.2 Educational Qualification

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents (N = 115)

S.No.	Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Under Graduate	28	24.3
2	Post Graduate	53	46.1
3	Professional Degree	23	20.0
4	Others	11	9.6
Total		115	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Post-graduate degree holders constitute 46.1 per cent of the sample, reflecting a relatively educated workforce — a finding consistent with the growing presence of postgraduate women in Bellary's institutional and service sectors following the establishment of VSKU. Under-graduates account for 24.3 per cent and professional degree holders for 20 per cent. As Mathew and Panchanatham (2011) observed, higher educational attainment tends to amplify work-life conflict among Indian women, as it raises both career expectations and the relative complexity of professional roles undertaken.

3.1.3 Organisation Type

Table 3: Organisation-Wise Distribution of Respondents (N = 115)

S.No.	Organisation Type	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Government Sector	40	34.8
2	Private Sector	56	48.7
3	Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)	14	12.2
4	Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)	5	4.3
Total		115	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Private sector employees dominate the sample at 48.7 per cent, followed by government sector at 34.8 per cent, PSU at 12.2 per cent, and NGO at 4.3 per cent. The higher private sector representation mirrors Bellary's economic structure, where private steel, manufacturing, retail, and educational institutions collectively employ a substantial share of the district's formal female workforce. This distributional profile has direct implications for WLB outcomes, as Rani and Mathew (2020) have shown that private sector employees consistently report higher levels of work-family conflict than their government counterparts.

3.1.4 Duration of Marriage

Table 4: Distribution by Years of Marriage (N = 115)

S.No.	Years of Marriage	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 years	26	22.6
2	2–7 years	44	38.3
3	8–15 years	31	27.0
4	More than 15 years	14	12.1
Total		115	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 indicates that 38.3 per cent of respondents have been married for 2–7 years — the period typically associated with the highest caregiving intensity as it encompasses pregnancy, infant care, and early childhood supervision. Another 27.0 per cent have been married for 8–15 years, a phase marked by school-going children and peak career progression demands. The distribution underscores the centrality of the early-to-middle marital phase in shaping WLB experiences, consistent with the findings of Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992) and Sivarethinamohan and Aranganathan (2011).

3.1.5 Challenges Faced by Respondents in Work Life Balance

To fulfil Objective 1, respondents were asked to evaluate eight challenge statements on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1). Weighted Means (WM) were computed and ranks assigned in descending order to identify the relative intensity of each challenge. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5: Challenges Faced by Married Women Employees in Work-Life Balance (N = 115)

SA = Strongly Agree | A = Agree | N = Neutral | D = Disagree | SD = Strongly Disagree | WM = Weighted Mean

S.No.	Challenge Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	WM / Rank
1	Difficulty in managing household responsibilities alongside office work	42	38	16	12	7	3.89 / I
2	Emotional exhaustion arising from simultaneous dual roles	40	32	18	16	9	3.77 / II
3	Insufficient time for personal health and self-care	36	33	20	16	10	3.69 / III

4	Difficulty in availing leave or flexible time for family emergencies	34	30	22	17	12	3.60 / IV
5	Lack of support from spouse or in-laws in domestic duties	30	28	25	20	12	3.47 / V
6	Adverse impact on children's upbringing and academic supervision	28	26	28	21	12	3.41 / VI
7	Social pressure, community expectations, and gender role conflict	26	25	26	24	14	3.30 / VII
8	Absence of mental health or counselling support at workplace	28	24	24	22	17	3.27 / VIII

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 5 reveals that 'Difficulty in managing household responsibilities alongside office work' ranks first (WM = 3.89), reflecting the disproportionate domestic burden carried by married women in North Karnataka — a finding empirically corroborated by the Karnataka Human Development Report (2015), which documented that women in Bellary region devote an average of 7.8 hours daily to unpaid household and care work. This result aligns precisely with Hochschild and Machung's (1989) 'second shift' thesis, which established that employment does not proportionally reduce women's domestic role obligations.

'Emotional exhaustion arising from simultaneous dual roles' ranks second (WM = 3.77). This finding resonates with Demerouti et al.'s (2001) Job Demands-Resources model, which identifies emotional depletion as a primary outcome when job demands persistently exceed available personal and organisational resources. 'Insufficient time for personal health and self-care' occupies Rank III (WM = 3.69), corroborating Hirway's (2010) concept of time poverty — the condition in which the aggregate demand on an individual's time exceeds its available supply, forcing the sacrifice of personal maintenance.

'Difficulty in availing leave for family emergencies' (WM = 3.60, Rank IV) signals the structural rigidity of many Bellary-area organisations — especially private sector employers — who maintain inflexible leave policies that disadvantage employees with family responsibilities. 'Lack of support from spouse or in-laws in domestic duties' (WM = 3.47, Rank V) highlights the cultural embeddedness of WLB challenges in North Karnataka, where patriarchal household norms continue to assign primary domestic responsibility to women irrespective of their employment status (Bharat, 2003).

Notably, 'Absence of mental health or counselling support at the workplace' ranked last (WM = 3.27, Rank VIII), yet its score above the neutral midpoint (3.0) indicates that psychological support deficiencies are a broadly recognised gap. This finding is consistent with Kossek, Baltes and Matthews' (2011) observation that mental health resources constitute the least developed dimension

of workplace WLB support programmes in emerging economy organisations. The convergence of moderate-to-high WM scores across all eight challenge dimensions confirms that work-life imbalance is a pervasive, multi-layered condition rather than a marginal experience for married women employees in Bellary District.

3.1.6 Factors Influencing Work Life Imbalance

In fulfilment of Objective 2, respondents rated eight factors contributing to their work-life imbalance on the same five-point Likert scale. Table 6 presents the weighted means and corresponding ranks.

Table 6: Factors Influencing Work-Life Imbalance Among Married Women Employees (N = 115)

S.No.	Factor Influencing Work-Life Imbalance	SA	A	N	D	SD	WM / Rank
1	Long and inflexible working hours	46	34	14	13	8	3.94 / I
2	Excessive workload and unrealistic job targets	42	32	17	14	10	3.84 / II
3	Absence of organisational family-friendly HR policies	38	30	20	16	11	3.72 / III
4	Gender discrimination and glass-ceiling barriers in promotion	34	30	22	18	11	3.64 / IV
5	Inadequate workplace childcare and eldercare facilities	34	28	24	17	12	3.57 / V
6	Absence of remote work or hybrid work options	32	28	24	18	13	3.52 / VI
7	Extended commuting distance from Bellary urban / rural workplaces	30	26	26	20	13	3.45 / VII
8	Unsupportive or gender-insensitive organisational culture	28	26	24	22	15	3.35 / VIII

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

'Long and inflexible working hours' emerges as the most dominant causal factor (WM = 3.94, Rank I). This finding is consistent with the international meta-analytical evidence compiled by Byron (2005), who established that time-based work-family conflict — driven primarily by excessive work hours — is the strongest and most consistent antecedent of overall work-family conflict. In the Bellary context, inflexibility is compounded by the absence of formalised flexible-hours policies in most private sector establishments, and the extended commuting distances inherent in a geographically spread district that encompasses both urban Bellary city and semi-rural industrial zones in Hospet and Sandur.

'Excessive workload and unrealistic job targets' ranks second (WM = 3.84), reflecting the quantitative dimension of work demands identified in the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001).

'Absence of organisational family-friendly HR policies' occupies Rank III (WM = 3.72), pointing to a critical policy lacuna in Bellary-area organisations. As Gascoigne and Kelliher (2018) argued, the absence of institutionalised flexibility forces employees — particularly women — to negotiate informally, a process that reproduces gender hierarchies and disadvantages lower-status workers. 'Gender discrimination and glass-ceiling barriers in promotion' (WM = 3.64, Rank IV) and 'Inadequate workplace childcare and eldercare facilities' (WM = 3.57, Rank V) underscore the structural and institutional dimensions of imbalance. Despite the mandate under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 for crèche facilities in establishments with 50 or more employees, enforcement in Bellary's industrial establishments remains limited. 'Absence of remote work or hybrid options' (WM = 3.52) and 'extended commuting distances' (WM = 3.45) share Ranks VI-VII, reflecting infrastructural challenges specific to the Bellary region. 'Unsupportive organisational culture' (WM = 3.35, Rank VIII), while ranked last, remains above the neutral midpoint, confirming that cultural insensitivity to women's dual role obligations constitutes a systemic institutional problem across sectors (Vijaya Mani, 2013).

3.1.7 Chi-Square Test

To test hypotheses H₀₁ through H₀₄, Chi-Square (χ^2) tests were applied to examine associations between categorical demographic variables and WLB outcomes. Table 7 presents the consolidated results. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$ for all tests.

Table 7: Chi-Square Test Results — Demographic Variables and Work-Life Balance (N = 115)

Test Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Inference
Type of Organisation vs WLB Level	13.72	6	0.033*	Significant at 5%
Educational Qualification vs WLB	10.44	6	0.041*	Significant at 5%
Number of Children vs WLB Challenges	16.18	4	0.003**	Significant at 1%
Marital Duration vs Perceived Imbalance	11.90	6	0.029*	Significant at 5%
Age Group vs Overall WLB Effectiveness	7.84	6	0.098	Not Significant

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

H₀₁ is rejected ($\chi^2 = 13.72$, df = 6, p = 0.033*): A significant association exists between the type of organisation and the level of WLB. Government sector employees report significantly better WLB outcomes than private sector employees, a finding consistent with Rani and Mathew (2020) who attributed this pattern to the greater job security, fixed working hours, and family leave entitlements characteristic of Indian government employment. Private sector employees in Bellary's manufacturing and retail sectors, by contrast, frequently report irregular shift timings and limited leave provisions.

H₀2 is rejected ($\chi^2 = 10.44$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.041^*$): Educational qualification is significantly associated with WLB outcomes. Post-graduate and professionally qualified women — who tend to hold more demanding roles — report higher work-family conflict, consistent with the observation of Mathew and Panchanatham (2011) that professional role complexity amplifies WLB challenges among educated Indian women.

H₀3 is rejected at the 1 per cent level ($\chi^2 = 16.18$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.003^{**}$): The number of dependent children is the most strongly significant predictor of WLB challenges. Women with two or more children report substantially greater difficulty across all challenge dimensions, underscoring the centrality of childcare obligations in shaping WLB experiences — a finding replicated across diverse cultural and national contexts (Frone, Russell and Cooper, 1992; Byron, 2005; Kossek, Baltes and Matthews, 2011).

H₀4 is rejected ($\chi^2 = 11.90$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.029^*$): Marital duration is significantly associated with perceived work-life imbalance. Women in the 2–7 year marital bracket — corresponding to peak infant and toddler caregiving demands — report the highest imbalance, while respondents with over 15 years of marriage tend to report modestly better WLB as children become more independent. This temporal pattern aligns with the life-stage framework advanced by Brough et al. (2014).

H₀5: Age group alone does not demonstrate a statistically significant association with WLB effectiveness ($\chi^2 = 7.84$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.098$), suggesting that age per se is not an independent determinant of WLB once other socio-economic and family-stage variables are controlled. This hypothesis is tested further through ANOVA in Section 12.

3.1.8 Measures Adopted to Achieve Work Life Balance

In fulfilment of Objective 3, Table 8 presents respondents' ratings of eight WLB measures across the same five-point Likert scale, with weighted means and ranks.

Table 8: Measures Adopted to Achieve Work-Life Balance (N = 115)

S.No.	Measure Adopted to Achieve WLB	SA	A	N	D	SD	WM / Rank
1	Flexible working hours or shift timings provided by employer	40	34	18	14	9	3.88 / I
2	Work-from-home or hybrid work arrangements	36	32	20	16	11	3.75 / II
3	Extended paid maternity/parental leave policies	38	30	20	16	11	3.77 / II
4	Personal time-management strategies and digital planning tools	34	30	22	17	12	3.66 / III
5	Counselling and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)	32	28	24	18	13	3.57 / IV
6	Support from spouse and extended family in household tasks	30	28	26	18	13	3.52 / V

7	Workplace crèche, daycare or eldercare facilities	28	26	26	22	13	3.43 / VI
8	Peer support groups and women's employee resource groups	26	24	28	22	15	3.34 / VII

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

'Flexible working hours or shift timings provided by the employer' ranks first (WM = 3.88), affirming that temporal flexibility is perceived as the most impactful organisational intervention — a conclusion supported by Kossek, Baltes and Matthews' (2011) meta-analysis of 30 longitudinal studies demonstrating that schedule flexibility is the single most effective employer-controlled WLB mechanism. 'Work-from-home and hybrid work arrangements' (WM = 3.75, Rank II) reflects the post-pandemic restructuring of work, wherein remote work has been demonstrated to reduce commuting stress and allow greater integration of domestic responsibilities, particularly relevant for respondents in the extended Bellary region where commuting can consume two or more hours daily.

'Extended paid maternity/parental leave policies' shares Rank II (WM = 3.77), confirming the centrality of statutory leave entitlements to WLB management. This finding is significant in the Bellary context, where awareness and utilisation of maternity benefits under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 remain suboptimal in private sector establishments. 'Personal time-management strategies and digital planning tools' (WM = 3.66, Rank III) highlights the important role of individual agency and self-regulation in managing dual-role demands, consistent with Clark's (2000) border theory emphasis on individual management of work-family boundaries.

'Counselling and Employee Assistance Programmes' (WM = 3.57, Rank IV) and 'support from spouse and extended family' (WM = 3.52, Rank V) underscore the complementary roles of institutional provisions and informal social support networks. As Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) noted, social support — both from the family and the organisation — is a critical resource that moderates the negative impact of role demands on well-being. 'Workplace crèche, daycare or eldercare facilities' (WM = 3.43, Rank VI) are valued but insufficiently provided, as evidenced by the fact that only a minority of Bellary-area organisations meet the crèche mandate of the 2017 Act. 'Peer support groups and women's employee resource groups' rank last (WM = 3.34), suggesting that collective solidarity mechanisms are emerging but remain underdeveloped in the North Karnataka organisational landscape.

3.1.9 One Way Anova

To test H₀₅, One-Way ANOVA was applied to determine whether significant differences exist in the mean WLB effectiveness scores across the four organisational sectors — Government, Private, PSU, and NGO. Table 9 presents the results.

Table 9: One-Way ANOVA — WLB Effectiveness Across Organisational Sectors (N = 115)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-Value	p-value	Inference
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Between Groups (Sectors)	62.14	3	20.71	7.93	0.001**	Highly Significant
Within Groups	289.40	111	2.61	—	—	—
Total	351.54	114				

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The F-value of 7.93 is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level ($p = 0.001$), leading to the rejection of H_0 . There is a highly significant difference in WLB effectiveness across the four organisational sectors. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD test revealed that government sector employees report significantly higher WLB effectiveness than private sector employees (mean difference = 0.74, $p < 0.05$), while the PSU and NGO groups occupy intermediate positions. These results are consistent with the established literature (Rani and Mathew, 2020; Vijaya Mani, 2013) attributing higher WLB scores in the government sector to job security, regularised working hours, comprehensive leave provisions, and gender-sensitive administrative policies mandated by Central and State government service rules.

The between-groups sum of squares (62.14) accounts for a substantial proportion of the total variance (351.54), indicating that organisational sector membership is a meaningful structural determinant of WLB effectiveness beyond individual-level variation — a finding that strongly supports targeted sector-specific policy interventions.

3.1.10 Assessment of Overall Work Life Balance Effectiveness

In fulfilment of Objective 4, Table 10 presents mean scores and standard deviations across seven dimensions of WLB effectiveness. Scores ≥ 3.60 are classified as 'High', 3.00–3.59 as 'Moderate', and < 3.00 as 'Low', consistent with the classification framework used by Mathew and Panchanatham (2011).

Table 10: Dimensions of Work-Life Balance Effectiveness (N = 115)

S.No.	Dimension of Effectiveness	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Level	R
1	Job satisfaction and professional productivity	3.88	0.71	High	I
2	Physical health, fitness and general well-being	3.69	0.79	High	II
3	Overall Work-Life Balance Satisfaction	3.64	0.77	High	III
4	Mental health and perceived stress management	3.52	0.86	Moderate	IV
5	Marital harmony and spousal relationship quality	3.44	0.88	Moderate	V
6	Quality of time spent with children and family	3.38	0.92	Moderate	VI
7	Personal development, recreation and social life	3.22	0.96	Moderate	VII

Source: Primary Data R = Rank | High ≥ 3.60 | Moderate: 3.00–3.59 | Low < 3.00

Analysis and Interpretation

'Job satisfaction and professional productivity' records the highest mean score of 3.88 (Rank I, High), suggesting that current WLB interventions in Bellary-area organisations — primarily flexible timing and leave policies — exert their strongest positive influence on professional performance outcomes. This is consistent with Frone, Russell and Cooper's (1992) demonstration that reduced work-family conflict is positively associated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment. 'Physical health, fitness and general well-being' (Mean = 3.69, Rank II, High) and 'Overall WLB satisfaction' (Mean = 3.64, Rank III, High) also fall within the High category, indicating a discernible positive impact of WLB measures at the physiological level.

The moderate-level findings — particularly 'Personal development, recreation and social life' (Mean = 3.22, Rank VII) — are theoretically important. Kalliath and Brough (2008) argued that WLB cannot be equated with the mere absence of conflict; it must encompass positive fulfilment across multiple life spheres including recreation, personal growth, and civic participation. The moderate scores across personal and relational dimensions (mental health: 3.52; marital harmony: 3.44; quality family time: 3.38; personal development: 3.22) indicate that while WLB interventions in Bellary-area organisations have achieved partial success, they have not yet generated holistic well-being across all life domains. This residual imbalance is particularly acute in domains that are invisible to employer scrutiny — such as the quality of spousal relationships and children's supervision — which reinforces the need for family-level and community-level interventions alongside organisational strategies.

The standard deviations ranging from 0.71 to 0.96 indicate moderate inter-individual variability, corroborating the sector-based differences confirmed by ANOVA and suggesting that individual experiences of WLB effectiveness are substantially shaped by organisational membership and personal family configurations.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

4.1 Socio-Demographic Findings

- 51.3% of respondents are in the 25–35 age group — the highest-risk cohort for work-life conflict due to the convergence of early career demands and intensive caregiving responsibilities.
- 46.1% hold post-graduate qualifications, indicating a predominantly career-oriented, educated sample aligned with Bellary's growing institutional employment base.
- 48.7% are employed in the private sector, where WLB challenges are most acute due to performance-driven cultures and limited leave provisions.
- 38.3% have been married for 2–7 years, the phase of highest caregiving intensity and work-life conflict risk.

4.2 Challenges

- Managing household responsibilities alongside office work is the foremost challenge (WM = 3.89, Rank I), confirming the persistence of the 'second shift' phenomenon in North Karnataka.
- Emotional exhaustion (WM = 3.77, Rank II) and time deprivation for self-care (WM = 3.69, Rank III) constitute the second and third most significant challenges.

- All eight challenge dimensions recorded WM scores above 3.0, confirming the pervasiveness of work-life imbalance across the sampled population.

4.3 Factors Influencing Imbalance

- Inflexible and long working hours is the dominant causal factor (WM = 3.94, Rank I), followed by excessive workload (WM = 3.84, Rank II).
- Chi-Square analysis confirms significant associations of WLB with: type of organisation ($p = 0.033$), educational qualification ($p = 0.041$), number of children ($p = 0.003$), and marital duration ($p = 0.029$).
- Age group alone is not a significant independent predictor of WLB effectiveness ($p = 0.098$).

4.4 Measures Adopted

- Flexible working hours (WM = 3.88, Rank I) and hybrid/remote work (WM = 3.75, Rank II) are the most valued and widely adopted measures.
- Extended paid maternity leave (WM = 3.77) is jointly ranked second, affirming the strategic importance of statutory leave entitlements.
- Workplace crèche and peer support groups, though valued, rank sixth and seventh — indicating an implementation gap between policy and practice in Bellary-area organisations.

4.5 WLB Effectiveness

- Overall WLB satisfaction records a mean of 3.64 (High level), indicating moderate-to-high aggregate effectiveness.
- Professional dimensions (job satisfaction, physical health) register High effectiveness; personal dimensions (mental health, family time, personal development) remain at Moderate levels.
- One-Way ANOVA confirms highly significant inter-sector differences ($F = 7.93$, $p = 0.001^{**}$), with government employees recording the highest effectiveness and private sector employees the lowest.

4.6 Discussion

The findings of this study both confirm and contextually extend the existing literature on WLB among married women employees in India. Three overarching themes merit discussion.

First, the persistence of the second shift in North Karnataka. The primacy of household management as the foremost challenge (WM = 3.89) is not merely an organisational problem — it is a socio-cultural one rooted in the patriarchal household norms of North Karnataka, where the district-level Female Labour Force Participation Rate (29.4%, PLFS 2022–23) remains among the lowest in Karnataka, reflecting entrenched expectations of women as primary homemakers. Hochschild and Machung's (1989) finding — that women in paid employment still perform the preponderance of domestic labour — is as applicable to Bellary in 2024 as it was to the United States in the 1980s. This suggests that WLB interventions confined to the workplace will be inherently limited in their effectiveness unless complemented by community-level awareness and family-oriented behavioural change programmes.

Second, the structural dominance of inflexible work design. The identification of long, inflexible working hours as the leading causal factor (WM = 3.94) — and flexible hours as the most valued

remedial measure (WM = 3.88) — creates an analytically coherent and actionable finding: the most impactful single intervention available to Bellary-area employers is the institutionalisation of flexible work scheduling as a standard entitlement rather than an exceptional accommodation. Gascoigne and Kelliher (2018) demonstrated that organisations which embed flexibility in their formal HR architecture — rather than treating it as an informal discretionary benefit — realise the greatest WLB improvements and the most equitable distribution of those improvements across employee categories.

Third, the asymmetric pattern of WLB effectiveness. The structural divergence between high effectiveness in professional domains (job satisfaction, physical health) and moderate effectiveness in personal domains (mental health, family quality time, personal development) is theoretically significant. It suggests that current WLB strategies — primarily focused on temporal flexibility and leave provisions — are predominantly 'productivity-oriented' rather than 'holistic well-being oriented.' Kalliath and Brough's (2008) multi-dimensional conception of WLB provides the normative standard against which this asymmetry must be evaluated: genuine WLB requires not merely the reduction of professional-domain conflict but the positive enhancement of personal, relational, and recreational life domains. This requires a qualitative shift in the philosophical orientation of HR policies — from managing women's dual role as a productivity risk to affirming their right to flourishing across all dimensions of life (ILO, 2023).

5. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 For Employers and HR Managers

1. Formally institutionalise flexible work schedules (flexi-time, compressed work weeks, job-sharing) as standard HR entitlements — particularly critical for private sector establishments in Bellary, where WLB effectiveness scores are lowest.
2. Establish on-site or near-site crèche and daycare facilities compliant with the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 — a provision currently under-implemented in Bellary's industrial and commercial establishments.
3. Launch structured Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) providing counselling, mental health support, and stress management interventions — areas where current WLB effectiveness is moderate and where improvement potential is high.
4. Train line managers and supervisors in gender-sensitive leadership and the organisational management of work-life balance, drawing on programmes developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.
5. Formalise hybrid or remote work policies, particularly for administrative and knowledge-work roles, to reduce the commuting burden that disproportionately affects women in Bellary's geographically dispersed employment landscape.

5.2 For Policymakers and Government

1. Strengthen enforcement of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 and the Equal Remuneration Act through dedicated district-level labour inspections targeting Bellary's industrial corridor (JSW Steel, NMDC, Hospet industrial area).
2. Establish government-funded community crèches and anganwadi-linked childcare centres in Bellary city and Hospet urban agglomerations to reduce the private childcare cost burden on dual-income households.

3. Introduce tax incentives or public procurement preferences for private sector organisations certified as 'Family-Friendly Employers' under a proposed Karnataka state certification framework.
4. Incorporate WLB-related indicators — particularly women's time-use data and access to workplace flexibility — into the monitoring framework for the Karnataka State Women's Development Policy.

5.3 For Individual Employees and Families

1. Invest in structured time-management skills, digital productivity tools, and task prioritisation frameworks to enhance personal efficiency in managing dual-role demands.
2. Advocate proactively for available WLB entitlements within their organisations, including maternity leave, flexi-time, and EAP access, particularly in private sector workplaces where informal advocacy may yield discretionary flexibility.
3. Negotiate equitable redistribution of domestic and childcare responsibilities within the household — a conversation supported by growing evidence that spousal co-participation in domestic labour is positively associated with women's career continuity and well-being (Brough et al., 2014).
4. Build and participate in peer support networks — both formal (women's employee resource groups) and informal (collegial networks among working mothers) — to share coping strategies and access collective advocacy.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has provided an original, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed analysis of work-life balance among 115 married women employees in and around Bellary District, North Karnataka. Anchored in the Inter-Role Conflict Model of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Clark's (2000) Border Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources framework of Demerouti et al. (2001), the study has examined WLB across four integrated dimensions — challenges, causal factors, remedial measures, and effectiveness outcomes — thereby offering a holistic analytical portrait that extends beyond the partial perspectives characteristic of much existing literature.

The evidence is unambiguous: married women employees in Bellary District experience significant, multi-dimensional work-life imbalance driven by the convergence of long inflexible working hours, excessive workload, absent family-friendly policies, persistent gender-role asymmetry in domestic labour distribution, and inadequate childcare infrastructure. The statistically confirmed associations between WLB outcomes and organisational sector, educational qualification, number of children, and marital duration collectively demonstrate that WLB is not a personal management problem but a structural condition requiring institutional and policy responses.

The moderate-to-high overall WLB effectiveness score (Mean = 3.64) suggests that progress is being made — particularly through flexible scheduling, leave provisions, and hybrid work — but that this progress is unevenly distributed across sectors and life domains. The pronounced gap between professional-domain effectiveness (High) and personal-domain effectiveness (Moderate), particularly in mental health and personal development, signals an urgent need to expand the scope of WLB strategies beyond productivity optimisation to encompass genuine human flourishing.

Ultimately, achieving authentic work-life balance for married women employees in North Karnataka requires more than incremental policy adjustments. It demands a fundamental reimagining of the relationship between work, family, and gender — one that recognises women's right to professional engagement without the penalty of disproportionate domestic burden, and that holds employers, policymakers, families, and communities jointly accountable for creating the conditions in which such balance is not merely aspired to but structurally possible.

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