

Chapter 3

Work Life Balance of Working Women

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1. Introduction

With the passage of changing time and increased urbanization and modernization there has been increase in roles of women, now women are not only centered to the boundaries of house rather they are playing equal role with men sharing the earning responsibility for betterment of their family. Being a working mom is not easy, as it brings its own set of unique challenges. A woman has to adorn various hats and shuffle between multiple roles, such as that of a mom, daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, or working professional, while taking care of herself. Balancing the demands of a career and the responsibilities of motherhood can be overwhelming. We all have limited time, physical, mental and emotional energy. Being a working mom means constantly shifting from one role to the next, which sometimes needs to be done simultaneously. This leaves women, especially working moms, tired, drained, frustrated, and agitated at times as they struggle to manage everything. To top it all, if they think that they aren't being able to manage their roles & responsibilities well, especially when it comes to their kids, feelings of guilt and self-doubt plague them. Moreover, the pressure to excel in both realms can lead to burnout and stress. Balancing childcare arrangements, managing household chores, and coordinating schedules add to the complexity. Additionally, societal expectations and stereotypes can create more pressure. Despite these challenges, moms continue to persevere by demonstrating resilience and determination in navigating this delicate balance between their professional and personal lives [1].

The demand for work life balance is expanding at an unprecedented rate. As a result demand for work life balance is an increasing issue in the work place. The imbalance have given birth to many personal problems like dissatisfaction in work, dissatisfaction in life, stress and illness, spill over of work to home, brings problem associated with attitude, behavioural changes and failures in family care. Being a social worker is one of the often challenging, yet rewarding careers. Social workers are responsible for helping individuals, families, communities and groups of people to cope with problems they are facing to improve their lives and environment. In dealing with multitude of problems social workers employ multiple skills like active listening, social perceptiveness, coordination, service orientation, complex problem solving. Social workers can be required to aid with issues directly caused by trauma, disability, poor family circumstances, abuse, mental and emotional problems, addiction and acute chronic or terminal illness. Work life balance is where the tensions between the work life and personal life is minimized by having proper policies, systems, supportive management and provisions at work place and a good relations in personal life. Performance and the job satisfaction of the employees are said to be affected by work life balance. Work life balance of employees helps in reducing the stress level at work and increases the job satisfaction. Therefore, organizations are adopting for new policies where employees can give time to enjoy and spend time with their family [2]. Maternal employment potentially has both positive and negative consequences for investments in children. Employment may impose demands on women's time that compete with childcare or allocation of time devoted to children's education, but at the same time, it may result in additional income, reduce fertility and create a sense of self-efficacy that may increase overall investments in children.

For example, it has been suggested that income in the hands of women is more likely to result in child-focused investments than income in the hands of men. However, the stress or fatigue associated with balancing employment, childcare, and household chores may negatively affect women's interactions with children. While maternal employment may shape direct investments in children, the role of these investments in shaping children's education and learning outcomes depends on a variety of contexts, including inputs from school and childcare arrangements [3]. Thus, work-life balance (WLB) of mothers may influence their children's mental health and lifestyle.

Hosokawa and Katsura [4] found that when work negatively affects family life, children tend to show more emotional and behavioral issues. Conversely, positive work-family interactions lead to fewer problems and more pro-social behaviors in children. Maternal work-life balance (WLB) influences children's well-being indirectly through maternal stress and parenting practices, highlighting the important link between a mother's WLB and her child's development.

Many working women struggle with balancing work and family due to high job demands, limited personal time, and societal expectations. This imbalance often leads to stress, burnout, home conflicts, and emotional strain. The study introduced two models, Role Analysis and Three-Factor Model to help women manage these challenges. These models aim to empower women globally to handle their personal and professional roles more effectively [5].

Vikram et al [6] studied the effects of maternal employment on children vary depending on the job type. Children of self-employed mothers perform similarly to those with stay-at-home mothers. However, salaried or wage-working mothers outside the home are linked to lower cognitive outcomes in children unless the mothers have higher education levels. Educated mothers tend to have more flexible, resource-rich jobs, which help mitigate negative effects by allowing for both time and financial support for their children's education.

Shah et al [7] showed a strong positive link between good work-life balance and job satisfaction. Among the factors contributing to WLB, family care was rated most important, followed by personal expectations.

Motherhood influences career progression in both positive and negative ways, affecting mothers' behaviour, emotions, and relationships. The study emphasized the need to consider how intersecting identities (e.g., race, class, etc.) shape these experiences. It called for both individual and institutional interventions, such as policy reforms, cultural changes, and better societal support [8].

Fatema [9] pointed out that there is a meaningful correlation between a mother's profession and her child's academic performance. The way mothers parent affects their children's self-esteem and motivation, which in turn influences academic success.

In higher education, the demanding roles of research, teaching, and administration, combined with societal pressures, create stress and imbalance for women in leadership roles. The study proposed support systems that could reduce stress caused by work-family conflicts [10].

Kowsalya and Mohanraj [11] mentioned that beyond work schedules, the quality of parent-child time is crucial for a child's emotional development. Children notice when parents are distracted. The study advocates for family-friendly workplace policies, shared parenting responsibilities, and consistent family routines, especially in rural or nuclear family settings.

Balancing work demands with family responsibilities remains a major challenge. The study identified key areas-career growth, organizational backing, and psychological well-being-as essential to achieving better work-life balance. It suggested targeted HR strategies to address these issues [12].

A comparative study between women in higher education and the IT sector revealed significant personal-professional conflict. While women in education struggle with teaching and admin pressures, IT professionals face issues like shift work and staying current with tech. These stresses often impact mental health, particularly for married women managing both home and career [13].

Anitha N [14] focused on IT women in Tamil Nadu, the study explored how work policies, personal life, and family roles affect WLB. It emphasized the importance of flexible workplace practices, stress reduction programs, and employer support. Recommendations include analyzing demographic impacts and improving company strategies to foster better balance.

Vincent B [15] examined on how Social Group Work can help married women in corporate settings improve their work-life balance. Through guided group sessions, participants developed emotional resilience and coping strategies. Results showed significant improvement in WLB after intervention, proving Social Group Work to be an effective tool for personal development, stress management, and social support.

2. Problems and Challenges Face by Working Mother at Work Place and Family

Working mothers carry a dual burden of professional responsibilities and household obligations. In addition to cultural and societal expectations, they face several day-to-day challenges that affect their physical, emotional, and financial well-being. Here are some of the common challenges working mothers face:

Problem/challenges at Work Place	Problem/challenges at Family
☐ Gender Bias	☐ Time Management Issues
☐ Insufficient	☐ Lack of support
☐ Maternity Leave	☐ Guilt
☐ Mental And Physical Harassment	☐ Work life balance
☐ Unequal Pay	☐ Societal Expectations
☐ Leadership	☐ Financial strain
	☐ Mothers Responsibility
	☐ Business Tour/ Training
	☐ Health Fitness

2.1. Gender Bias and Stereotyping

From an early age, Indian women are subjected to gender-based stereotypes that shape their roles and opportunities. Society often views women as less capable than men, especially in demanding or leadership roles. Despite working outside the home, many women are still seen primarily as caregivers. This mindset leads to:

- Underestimation of their capabilities in the workplace.
- Limited access to promotions, fair pay, and leadership roles.

- Lack of autonomy, as even working women in some households must hand over their earnings to male family members, minimizing their financial independence.

This systemic bias discourages women from pursuing ambitious careers and reinforces a culture where their work is undervalued.

2.2. Difficulty Balancing Personal and Professional Life

One of the most pressing challenges for working mothers is maintaining a balance between their job responsibilities and family obligations. In many Indian households:

- The burden of childcare, eldercare, and household chores still falls heavily on women.
- Professional aspirations are often considered secondary to family duties.
- There is a lack of emotional and moral support from family members.

With high expectations both at home and at work, mothers often experience chronic stress, fatigue, and burnout while trying to meet everyone's needs.

2.3. Inadequate Maternity Leave and Workplace Support

While maternity leave policies have improved on paper in India (e.g., up to 26 weeks in certain cases), many women still suffer due to:

- Insufficient or unpaid leave, especially in informal sectors or private organizations.
- Lack of job security during and after maternity leave.
- High workplace expectations, as women often feel pressured to outperform male colleagues to prove their worth after returning from leave.

The result is a stressful environment, where mothers are torn between caring for a newborn and fulfilling job responsibilities.

2.4. Lack of Personal Space and Time

Working mothers frequently sacrifice their own well-being in the pursuit of managing both career and family. Many face:

- Emotional and mental exhaustion, with little time left for self-care.
- Isolation, as they feel misunderstood or unsupported both at work and at home.
- Mental health issues, including insomnia, anxiety, and depression, due to the constant juggling of roles and lack of personal freedom.

They may feel they have no one to talk to about their struggles, which deepens their emotional burden. This often leaves them with two difficult choices: quit their job or accept ongoing mental distress as part of life.

2.5. Societal Expectations and Traditional Roles

Indian society still largely adheres to traditional gender roles that expect women to be the primary caregivers, regardless of their professional responsibilities. As a result:

- Working mothers are expected to excel both at work and at home, leaving little room for error.
- They are often judged harshly for their parenting choices or for not being as available as stay-at-home mothers.
- There is a lack of systemic support such as affordable childcare, eldercare, and flexible work policies.

These expectations are unrealistic and harmful, often leading to emotional strain, burnout, and social isolation.

2.6. Guilt and Emotional Struggles

Guilt is a common emotional burden for working mothers. They often feel:

- Guilty for not spending enough time with their children.
- Guilty for not being as present or engaged at home as they would like.
- Conflicted between career goals and family needs.

This guilt can severely impact a mother's mental health and self-esteem. However, open communication with employers and families, and advocating for flexible working conditions, can help alleviate some of this pressure.

2.7. Health Fitness

Working mothers face a complex blend of psychological, physical, and emotional pressures due to their dual roles in professional and family life. The stress of constant multitasking, unequal division of labour, workplace discrimination, and lack of time for self-care creates a scenario where their mental health, physical well-being, and personal relationships are all negatively impacted. Addressing these challenges requires societal change, more supportive workplace policies, shared responsibilities at home, and greater awareness of the mental health needs of working mothers.

2.8. Lack of Support

Many working mothers often feel as though they are expected to "do it all." Society places unrealistic expectations on them-to be efficient at work, maintain a well-run household, and be the primary caregiver for their children. This leads to:

- Limited or no support in managing childcare and domestic responsibilities.
- Increased mental and physical stress, as they juggle multiple roles without sufficient help.
- Emotional strain and burnout, due to a constant feeling of being overwhelmed.
- Despite these pressures, many mothers hesitate to seek help, fearing judgment or being perceived as incapable. However, reaching out to family members, friends, or support groups can significantly lighten the load and reduce feelings of isolation.

2.9. Struggles with Work-Life Balance

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is one of the most significant and ongoing challenges for working mothers. They must constantly shift between their professional roles and family responsibilities, which can lead to:

- Exhaustion and burnout, from trying to meet expectations in both areas.
- Reduced personal time, with little opportunity to relax or engage in self-care.
- Guilt, either for not spending enough time with children or for not performing well at work.

This continuous effort to maintain balance often results in chronic stress and mental fatigue, which can negatively impact both their job performance and family relationships.

2.10. Time Management Challenges

Managing time effectively becomes a constant struggle for working mothers, given the multiple roles they play daily. They must handle:

- Strict work deadlines and professional meetings.
- Childcare coordination, including school routines, homework help, and extracurricular activities.
- Household responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, and more.

This constant juggling act can lead to a sense of never having enough time-whether for work, family, or personal care. Without structured routines or support, many working mothers experience chaos and disorganization in their daily lives.

2.11. Financial Strain

While dual-income households can provide financial stability, working mothers still face significant financial stress, particularly when:

- Childcare expenses take up a large portion of the family's income.
- Additional costs like education, healthcare, and household needs continue to rise.
- Career advancement is limited, especially if mothers choose flexible or part-time work to accommodate family needs.
- In many cases, mothers must make tough decisions about whether it's financially worth continuing to work after factoring in the cost of childcare and other expenses.

This financial pressure can lead to anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, especially when trying to contribute equally to the household.

3. Key Provisions for Working Women Under Various Labour Laws

The Government of India has launched various initiatives to enhance women's employment through social security, skill development, education, and legal reforms. These efforts have helped reduce gender gaps and improve workforce participation. However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring workplace safety, flexibility, and social security - areas where employers need to take proactive steps. A list of key government programs supporting women's economic empowerment is included in the annex.

3.1. Welfare Provisions Factories Act, 1948

- Ensures canteen, restrooms, first aid, washing and drying facilities, sitting arrangements and crèches for children <6 years.
- Aims to create a healthy, comfortable, and inclusive work environment.

3.2. The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) (BOCW) Act, 1996 (Construction Workers)

- Mandates first aid, clean toilets, canteens, crèches and restrooms at worksites.
- Maternity benefits provided under the BOCW Cess Fund.

3.3. Beedi and Cigar Workers Act, 1966

- Requires crèches for children of female employees (if number exceeds threshold).
- Crèche must be clean, ventilated, and managed by trained women.

3.4. Mgnrega

- If 5+ children under age 6 accompany women at a worksite, one woman is deputed to look after the children.

3.5. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amendment 2017)

- Maternity leave extended to 26 weeks for up to two children.
- 12 weeks leave for adoptive/surrogate mothers (child <3 months).
- Employers with 50+ employee must provide a crèche.
- Allows Work from Home option post-maternity with mutual agreement.
- Nursing breaks mandated for breastfeeding.

Table 1: The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017

Increase in Maternity leave	Applicability	Adoption/Surrogacy	Creche Facility	Work from home
Paid maternity	Applicable to Businesses With more than ten employees	Both adoptive mother (women who law fully adopts a child under the Age of three months)	Every Business with 50 (fifty) or more	An employer may Allow a woman to continue working From home
Leave increased to twenty-six weeks	Whether in the organized or Unorganized sector	And commissioning Mother shall be eligible For maternity benefit for twelve weeks	Employees Must have a Man-dates creche facility	Beyond the Maternity Benefit Period

3.6. Inter-State Migrant Workmen Rules, 1980

- Requires separate toilets, washing facilities, crèches and accommodation for female migrant workers.

Health Provisions

Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

- Mandates paid maternity leave, nursing breaks, and job security during pregnancy and postnatal periods.

Factories Act, 1948

- Mandates cleanliness, ventilation, lighting, safe drinking water, sanitation, and periodic health check-ups.
- Appoints qualified medical officers for workers' health needs.

Safety Provisions

Factories Act, 1948

Women prohibited from:

- Working near cotton openers
- Operating/lubricating machines in motion
- Lifting excessive weights
- Requires machine fencing, safe handling of hazardous materials, and general safety measures

POSH Act, 2013 (Sexual Harassment)

- Mandatory Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in workplaces with 10+ employees.
- Local Complaints Committee (LCC) at the district level for small units or complaints against employer.
- Time-bound, confidential complaint redressal ensures a safe working environment.

Social Security Provisions

ESI Act, 1948

- Medical care
- Maternity benefits
- Disablement and death benefits
- Covers both employee and dependents

EPF & MP Act, 1952

- Ensures retirement savings, applicable to both men and women
- Equal employer and employee contributions create long-term financial security

Wage-Related Provisions

Payment of Wages Act, 1936

- Ensures timely payment of wages without arbitrary deductions

Minimum Wages Act, 1948

- Sets and revises minimum wages by occupation and region
- Prevents underpayment and exploitation of women workers

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

- Mandates equal pay for equal work regardless of gender
- Prohibits gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotions, and wages

Industrial Relations Provisions

Trade Unions Act, 1926

- Women can form or join trade unions, participate in collective bargaining, and represent workplace interests.

Industrial Disputes Act, 1947

- Safeguards women's rights during retrenchment or layoffs
- Special protection during maternity periods
- Encourages dispute resolution mechanisms that include women's concerns

Working Hours Provisions

Factories Act, 1948

- Maximum 48 hours/week, 9 hours/day, with rest intervals and weekly holidays
- Restrictions on night shifts for women (unless safe conditions are ensured)
- Provisions for overtime pay and compensatory holidays

State Shops & Establishments Acts

- Vary by state, typically regulate
- Work hours, rest breaks
- Night shift permissions
- Women's safety provisions

Provisions Under New Labour Codes (Post-2020) Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions (OSHC) Code, 2020

- Allows night work for women with consent and safety measures
- Mandates:
- Transportation (pickup/drop)
- Crèches in establishments with 50+ workers
- Annual health check-ups
- Safe working environment even in hazardous roles with proper safeguards

Code on Wages, 2019

- Consolidates wage laws
- Reiterates equal pay for equal work, prohibits gender discrimination in remuneration

Code on Social Security, 2020

- Extends social security to:
- Gig and platform workers
- Women in unorganized sectors
- Tea/coffee plantation workers
- Offers access to ESI, maternity, and other welfare schemes

Industrial Relations Code, 2020

- Promotes fixed-term employment with equal benefits.
- Requires proportional representation of women in Grievance Redressal Committees.

4. Ways to Resolve the Challenges Faced by Working Mothers

Balancing professional responsibilities with parenting is a demanding task that many working mothers face daily. Juggling deadlines, household duties, and emotional availability for children can be overwhelming. However, with strategic planning and the right support, these challenges can be significantly reduced. Below are several comprehensive solutions that can help working mothers manage their dual roles more effectively:

4.1. Develop a Structured Schedule and Master Time Management

One of the most important strategies for working mothers is to plan their day meticulously. By creating a structured daily or weekly schedule, you can allocate dedicated time for work, childcare, household chores, and personal time. Using digital tools such as calendars, reminders, or scheduling apps can enhance efficiency. Prioritize tasks based on urgency and importance, and break larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps to stay on track.

4.2. Seek Support and Delegate Responsibilities

It's important to acknowledge that you don't have to do everything alone. Enlist the help of your partner, family members, or trusted friends to share household and childcare responsibilities. Delegating tasks whether it's school pickups, meal preparation, or laundry can significantly reduce the burden. In situations where family support is limited, consider professional childcare services or after-school programs that provide safe and enriching environments for your children.

4.3. Prioritize Self-Care and Mental Health

Taking care of yourself is not a luxury it's a necessity. Many mothers tend to place their own well-being last, which can lead to burnout. Make time for sufficient rest, nutritious meals, regular physical activity, and mental relaxation. Whether it's reading, meditating, exercising, or enjoying a hobby, engaging in self-care can improve your emotional resilience and overall well-being.

4.4. Set Clear Boundaries Between Work and Home Life

Blurring the line between professional and personal life can lead to stress and reduced quality time with family. Establish firm boundaries by designating specific work hours and committing to disconnecting from work after those hours. Inform your employer and colleagues of your availability, and avoid responding to work-related messages during family time unless it's urgent.

4.5. Explore Flexible Work Arrangements

Many companies now offer flexible work options such as remote work, hybrid schedules, or part-time roles. Open a conversation with your employer about options that suit your needs without compromising productivity. These arrangements can offer greater control over your time and reduce the stress of commuting, allowing for a better work-life balance.

4.6. Embrace Realistic Expectations and Let Go of Perfection

Perfectionism can be a heavy burden. Accept that some days will be chaotic, and not everything will go as planned and that's okay. Focus on doing your best rather than trying to meet unrealistic standards. A tidy house or a perfectly balanced meal isn't as important as a healthy, happy you and a loving connection with your children.

4.7. Build a Strong Support Network

Connect with other working mothers, either in your community or online. Sharing experiences, advice, and emotional support can be incredibly reassuring and empowering. Support groups, parenting forums, or even informal meet-ups can provide encouragement and a sense of belonging.

4.8. Utilize Technology to Simplify Daily Tasks

There are numerous apps and digital tools designed to make life easier for busy parents. Meal planning apps, grocery delivery services, online banking, and educational platforms for children can save time and energy. Automate routine tasks whenever possible to free up time for more meaningful activities.

4.9. Advocate for Family-Friendly Workplace Policies

If you're in a position to do so, advocate for policies that support working parents - such as paid parental leave, on-site childcare, mental health resources, and breastfeeding facilities. These benefits not only help you but also create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for all.

4.10. Make Quality Time a Priority

Even with a tight schedule, finding moments to genuinely connect with your children is vital. It's not about the quantity of time, but the quality. Small, meaningful activities like reading a bedtime story, having dinner together, or a short walk can strengthen the bond and reassure your child of your presence and love.

5. Conclusion

Being a working mother comes with unique challenges, but with thoughtful planning, strong support systems, and self-compassion, these challenges can be managed effectively. Every family is different, so it's essential to find solutions that align with your values, needs, and lifestyle. Remember - you're not alone, and it's perfectly okay to seek help and make adjustments along the way.

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