

Mental Confliction of Professional & Personal Lives of Working Women Employed in IT Sector

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Abstract: *The work-life balance of women employees is one of the most underrated and misunderstood discussions. The technological advancement has resulted in increased working requirements and work pressure, more prominently seen in the Information Technology (IT) sector. This study aims to examine the relationship between work stress and socio-economic factors of female IT professionals. It is based on primary data collected from a structured questionnaire. The sample size consists of 300 IT sector female employees based in Kolkata city, India. This study will address the ongoing battle to strike a balance between work and family while juggling the responsibilities of families and organizational expectations that can have a negative impact on one's well-being. It is essential for all employees, regardless of the industry they work in, to maintain a healthy work-life balance. It is a mutual responsibility of the employer and employees to create a good work-life balance that could be advantageous to the company as well as the associates.*

Keywords: *Work-life balance, Personal Lives, Professional Lives, IT Sector, Working Women.*

I. Introduction

Status of women in the Information Technology (IT) sector in India

India has left significant mark on the world through its booming IT sector. Its contribution towards the country's GDP has led to the steady growth of the nation's economy. India's IT industry is regarded as a hub of innovators providing world-class technology solutions across the globe. It has helped in changing the Indian economy from an agricultural-based economy to a knowledge-driven economy. It has also helped the domestic economy to integrate with the world economy. It has made significant impacts on the lives of many people, both nationally and internationally.

More recently, it has been seen that women are increasingly growing and making prosperous career in this sector since the last decade. It has also significantly influenced the social and economic lives of working women, through the growth of income and handsome salaries and with improved standard of living, lifestyle and social standing. Working women are managing office as well as their household work. Due to the heavy work pressure, their mental health has been negatively impacted by depression, stress, hypertension, etc., which are often a form of disorders that are noticed among the working women in IT sector mostly. The IT sector is known for its tight schedule, including long hours of work, deadlines, and the requirement of IT skills updating with technological advancements. According to several studies, women employees in these sectors face different challenges each day, including workplace biases, family and societal responsibility, which makes it very difficult to manage the balance of harmony in their professional and personal lives.

Causes of Female Workers' Mental Confrontment

Women employees are expected to play multiple roles and projects requiring urgent attention but poor guidance and communication can leave employees frustrated and confused. Irregular sleep schedules and social isolation results in mental confliction and deplete the internal resources needed to cope. Mental conflict refers to the psychological strife and torment experienced by individuals when facing incoherent thoughts and emotions that create a sense of internal hurly-burly. It results in stress which can be by any kind of change in our daily routine or health. It can also be caused by contrary demands from different roles in one's life, which leads to different form of negative impacts, including anxiety, depression, stress, and decreased productivity. Women, as they must undergo more stress than men due to their utmost responsibility to carry through their family roles along with their professional ones (Uddin, 2021). Their mental confrontment can come off due to several factors, such as balancing career and family, societal expectations, workplace challenges, and personal stress. Work-life balance practice for a woman depends on the employee's motivation towards achievement of a greater

position in society (Dousin et al., 2021). The consequences of mental conflict for working women, especially in the IT sector, can be latent. It can lead to increased oppression, flutter, and a sense of being shattered among contending demands. It can also lead to burnout, decrease job satisfaction, and affect neck and well-being and mental health (Koen et al., 2023). They are looked upon as one who must maintain a balance between their careers and residential responsibilities, which can encourage them to feel guilty. Further, they again face avoidance and sexism in the workplace, which can also lead to mental conflict. Working women with children are at the highest risk for mental health. They are more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for their children and elderly parents. The technological and regulatory changes in the IT sector in India have caused a sharp and sudden increase in the demand for female workers. Therefore, stress among IT women workers is a hot topic to discuss. According to Kshetty (2019), there are some important issues and challenges faced by woman in workplace, like-

- Men Versus Women Issues- everyone has a different way of thinking and dealing with situations. In a corporate environment, differentiation is the biggest challenge for women.
- Gender Bias- jobs that require frequent travel, are still open for men only as they are considered more eligible than women.
- Sexual Harassment- most embarrassing challenge women face in the workplace is sexual abuse. They often fall prey to cunning men who use affection as an excuse to seduce and sexually harass women.
- Today's Life Imbalance- differentiating personal life and professional career becomes a little hard for women in general.
- Ego Clashes- men always try to prove their superiority while at work. An alpha male will feel his ego is crushed when he must report to a women manager.
- Security- most threatening challenge for women in the workplace is their safety. Many organizations use special security services to help female employees get home in the middle of the night.

Work Stress

Stress is one of today's most well-known health risks and a common or universal phenomenon. As defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Occupational or work-related stress “*is the response people may have when presented with work-demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope*”. Organizational stress is a chronic condition caused by the situation in the workplace that negatively impacts a person's job performance and general well-being. It is described as the worst condition of emotions in terms of physiological rise when people experience a negative situation in such a way that they perceive a danger to their prosperity. Women have a lot of balancing to do between home and workplace and between social and personal requirements. Moreover, the conflict of women will be all the more intense if her employer, as well as her family members, hold unreasonable expectations from her. Due to this a woman is constantly under stress either at home or at the workplace.

The increase in work-family conflict leads to increase in work stress and vice versa in married working women. It is observed that women in professional job positions with high job demand were more prone to experience work family conflict and work stress. According to Nair (2016), there are various kinds of stress like- Mental Stress, Emotional Stress, Physical Stress, Eustress, Job Stress, Hypo Stress and Episodic Acute Stress. According to Saufi & Eranza (2016), these stresses are caused by some Organisational factors, like- Role demand, Lack of rewards, Feeling of insecurity and uncertainty caused by organization, Lack of interpersonal communication between employer and employee, Long working hours, Physical discomfort, Unpleasant Conditions, Lack of Control and Support, Feeling of responsibility, New changes in workplace, etc; and some Extra-organisational factors, like- Family problems, Life Crisis, Financial difficulties, Conflict of personal beliefs with those of the company, Social and technological changes, Conflict of company with family demands, etc.

II. Review of Literature

According to *Jaggiah & Balaji (2021)*, stress is an emotional problem in India as well as the advanced world. It is becoming a global issue affecting all types of workers and is considered as a negative and undesirable, unpredictable, emotional element, which can be divided into, Negative stress, like distress, anxiety, tension, worry, strain, fear, anger, hatred, etc.; and, Positive stress means exciting and challenging. Emotions experienced in the challenging work or job, promotions, friendships, relationships, the prospect of meeting successful, etc., are the opposite to stress.

Ribeiro et. al (2023) conducted study among 167 employees in Portuguese to examine the impact of WFC on employee engagement, performance, and turnover and found positive relationship between WFC and employee turnover, i.e., a higher level of WFC leads to increasing turnover in the organisations. *GM (2023)* using

Authentic Leadership, Co-worker support, and Family support as independent variables, investigated their impact on Work Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction. The findings reveal a strong association between family support and work-life balance, ultimately enhancing work satisfaction and productivity. *Hosseini et. al (2023)* conducted a systematic review of 31 articles related to work-family conflicts experienced by working women in the workplace and is of the view that attention to be given to individual skills for enhancing women's working conditions. *Uddin (2021)* conducted a study in Dhaka and Chittagong to identify lived experiences about women work-life balance issues and confirms that there is a complex interplay between societal norms, family dynamics, and organizational support in shaping women's experiences of work-life balance. Addressing these while adopting tailored strategies, can bring harmonious balance between their professional and personal lives. According to *Batool (2020)*, women from more than 50% of the world's population are often subjected to discrimination due to the phenomenon of gender which is constructed socially rather than biologically. Moreover, psychological health problems are more prevalent among women employees according to the 2019 WHO report on gender and mental illness. *Purwanto (2020)* examined 1045 female employees in Indonesia and the findings reveal a significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction, with job satisfaction mediating the indirect influence of work-family conflict on employee performance, which is positively associated with job satisfaction. *Sakthivel (2019)* examined the occupational stress level and professional burnout among 220 employees and found that stress and burnout level fluctuate essentially among male and female employees.

Burman & Goswami (2018), conducted a literature review of 204 research papers dated from the years 1993 to 2017. It revealed that work stress not only impacts psychological and physical state but also hurts the social and family life of employees and is not the same among all employees as it depends upon the sectors to which they belong.

Tran et. al (2023), examined the relationship between work-family managerial support and job satisfaction in a manufacturing entity in Australia. The findings of the study indicate that increased managerial support for work-family issues leads to higher levels of job satisfaction for employees. *Sikandar & Sikandar (2023)* investigated the Quality of Work Life (QWL) for women officers in Indian public universities. Despite the education sector's reputation for being female-friendly, the research identified limitations to career advancement and challenging top-level positions. *Saikia & Pathak (2022)* highlighted the pressing issue of mental health problems among women in the unorganized sector of India's workforce that continue to face significant challenges that adversely affect their mental well-being. The findings of this study underscore the need for comprehensive measures to address the mental health challenges faced by women in the unorganized sector. *Purwanto (2021)* investigated how job satisfaction is influenced by work-family conflict of 170 women employees in the automotive industry. The findings reveal that work-family conflict indirectly impacts job satisfaction through its effects on organizational commitment. *Dodanwala & Shrestha (2021)* conducted a study in Sri Lanka among 308 construction professionals, where they investigated the relationship between work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. The findings reveal that exhaustion fully mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. *Babic & Hansez (2021)* surveyed 320 women in managerial positions within a Belgian organization and revealed that WFC acts as a key mediator, fully mediating the effects of the glass ceiling on job strain and engagement while partially mediating its impact on job satisfaction and intention to quit. *Kaciak & Welsh (2020)* explored the relationship between the country's economic and political contexts and the work-life interface of women entrepreneurs across 10 countries. Findings reveal that while the likelihood of total family support declines with higher country development levels, WFC and related personal problems follow an inverted U-shaped pattern, being highest in mid-level developed countries and lower in both low- and high-level developed economies. *Tyagi & Khokhar (2020)* investigated the relationship between mental health and the type of profession among working women in a private sector organization, consisting of a sample of 50 nurses and 50 schoolteachers from Meerut city and found no significant differences between the mental health of the groups. *Immanuel (2020)* encompassed a survey of 282 public and 220 private sector employees in Thirunelveli district, responses being measured according to occupational role, health and psychological stress factors and found no significant difference between the banking sector employees' job stress levels. *Kakemam et. al (2019)* ascertained the appearance of 5422 nurses' occupational and associated risk in Iran and found that stress levels were between moderate and high as 78.4% of respondent reported their job stressful, demonstrating the extent of the different workplace issues. *Palumbo (2020)* studied the work-life balance of public sector employees to identify the direct effects of telecommunicating from home and showed that home-based telecommuting negatively affected the work-life balance of public servants. *Mansour & Tremblay (2018)* examined the effect of family practices on work-family conflict, job stress, burnout and intention to job turnover in the hotel industry in Quebec on 258 staff members. The findings express that job turnover moderate the relationships between family-work conflict, job stress and burnout.

Agarwal & Nelson (2023) investigated the turnover intentions of working women during the transition into motherhood within the Indian IT sector. Through a survey of 203 women undergoing infertility treatment, pregnant women, and new mothers, the study investigated the influence of variables such as supervisory and organizational support, flexible work environment, work-family conflict, and job and family satisfaction on turnover intentions. It confirms that family-supportive leads to lower work-family conflict, increased job, and family satisfaction, and subsequently reduced employee turnover intentions, emphasizing the importance of tailored organizational policies to support working women during the transition to motherhood. **Harshana (2018)** is of the view that the fast-growing IT industry environment creates challenges for employees that drive to very high levels of stress and its accompanying negative outcomes. **Prathyusha (2018)** measured occupational stress among 500 IT Professionals working in various IT corporations in Hyderabad, Telangana State. The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava A. K. and Singh A. P. (1984) was used for data collection. The results clinched that the IT Professionals are experiencing high levels of stress. According to **Shalini & Brindha (2018)**, after IT sectors came into existence, every organization/ IT related sector- started to fix targets cutting down the salaries, immediate retrenchment, recession, competition, unusual timing, etc., making working women more stressful rather than before. All the time working women employees are not treated properly by the male criticism, high turnover of workers, hypertension, lack of training for improvement, lack of interpersonal relationships or communication between the employees and employer, the fear of losing one’s work, long working hours means very short time to spend with the family, etc. made it harder to balance work and home needs.

Objective of the Study

To examine the association between the socio-economic conditions like age, income, education, designation, etc. of the female employees working in IT sector and their work stress.

Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design approach, for which primary data has been collected from the women working in the IT sector. The respondents are selected using purposive sampling technique to answer a structured questionnaire, however the criteria of selection are that the respondents have to be adult working women (aged above 18 years). Here, we have considered work stress and demographic variables like age, education, designation and annual income of the respondents. The total sample size is 300. The collected data are analysed through statistical tools like percentage analysis, chi-square tests, etc. Sampling area consists of Rajarhat and Salt Lake areas of the Kolkata city, in the state of West Bengal. The data was collected between Jan-Mar, 2024.

III. Analysis and Findings

• **Education of the respondents**

H0₁: There is significant relationship between Work Stress and Educational qualification.

H1₁: There is no significant relationship between Work Stress and Educational qualification.

Table 1: Association between Stress and Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Are you stressed due to work	Education of the Respondents							Total
	Graduation	Post-graduation	BTech	MTech	Diploma	Vocational degree	Above Post-Graduate/MTech	
Yes	43	11	8	9	2	1	2	76
					0.4	0.1	1.9	10.9
No	92	50	40	10	10	4	18	224
					0.1	0.0	0.6	3.7
Total	135	61	48	19	12	5	20	300
					0.5	0.1	2.5	14.6

Pearson chi-square value = 14.5721 P-value = 0.024

The chi square result shows the P-value is 0.024 which is less than 0.05 % level of significance, which means we reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between Stress and Educational qualification of the respondents.

• **Work Designation of the Respondents**

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between Work Stress and Rank/Designation.

H1₂: There is a significant relationship between Work Stress and Rank/Designation.

Table 2: Association between Stress and Designation of the Respondents

Are you stressed due to work	Rank/Designation of the respondents						Total
	Senior Analyst	Project Manager	Software developer	Customer support admin	Technical support admin	Programmer	
Yes	0	1	5	64	5	1	76
					0.6	0.5	4.0
No	2	2	29	173	9	7	224
					0.2	0.2	1.4
Total	2	3	34	237	14	8	300
					0.8	0.7	5.3

Pearson chi-square value = 5.3327 P-value = 0.502

In our second hypothesis, P-Value is 0.502 at 6 degrees of freedom which is higher than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we conclude that we accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant relation between work stress and work designation of the women employees.

• **Income of the Respondents**

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between Work Stress and Annual Income.

H1₃: There is significant relationship Work Stress and Annual Income.

Table 3: Association between Stress and Annual Income of the Respondents

Are you stressed do you to work	Annual Income of the Respondents (in rupees)					Total
	1-6 lacs	6-10 lacs	10-12 lacs	12-15 lacs	Above 15 lacs	
Yes	3	0	8	25	40	76
	1.2	1.5	4.8	1.0	2.2	10.4
No	19	6	58	56	85	224
	0.4	0.5	1.5	0.3	0.7	3.5
Total	2214.0	6	66	81	125	300
	1.6	2.0	6.1	1.3	2.9	14.0

Pearson chi-square value = 13.9647 P-value = 0.007

The P-value (0.007) which is less than (0.05 %) level of significance, we reject null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis that work stress and income of women are not independent. Income plays positive role in determining the level of work stress.

• **Age of the Respondents**

H0₄: There is no significant relationship between Work Stress and Age.

H1₄: There is significant relationship between Work Stress and Age.

Table 4: Association between Age and Work Stress of the Respondents

Are you stressed due to work	Respondent's Age			
	18-30 years	31-50 years	51 years & above	Total
Yes	17 1.8	47 2.4	12 0.6	76 4.8
No	76 0.6	101 0.8	47 0.2	224 1.6
Total	93 2.4	148 3.2	59 0.8	300 6.5

Pearson chi2(2) = 6.4526 Pr = 0.040 Table Value/Critical Value 21.026

The P-value (0.040) which is less than (0.05%) level of significance, we reject null hypothesis and conclude that work stress and age of women are not independent.

Therefore, the hypothetical results show that Educational qualification has a significant relation with stress whereas work designation/rank is not having any significant role in the case of women employees of IT sector. Job stress and income of a person are not independent. Income plays a great role in determining the level of stress. Job stress and age of a woman employee are not independent.

Suggestions

Certain suggestions are put forward in the following points to keep in check stress level of women employees-

- Government policies for women employees in the IT sector should be regularly monitored.
- Organisation must arrange comforting facilities, provide some financial incentives, etc. for working mothers.
- Work procedure should be unprejudiced. So, most of the women will be interested in initiating and completing the allotted tasks on time.
- Organisations must conduct programmes for women with regard to stress management.

Implications of the Study

In the area of women empowerment, this study is very helpful, since it contributes to the database of women employees of IT sector in Kolkata. This study is helpful for government and non-governmental agencies for the development of specific stress management models designed to address these vulnerable population of the society. Further research can be done by considering both men and women from the IT sector. This work was prepared within a very short time with limited number of parameters of socio-economic conditions. The study can also be extended with incorporating more variables and examining their significance with other associated variables.

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