

# Work Life Balance and Professional Sustainability; an over view of Women Teachers of Kerala University

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching is one of the most respected and sought-after careers in Kerala, India, particularly for women. The work-life balance (WLB) and professional sustainability of Keralan women teachers are examined in this study. It examines the challenges they face, including professional workload, societal expectations, and personal commitments, and it places a focus on strategies for finding equilibrium. The study also examines how their job experiences were influenced by legislative measures, cultural dynamics, and institutional assistance.

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, professional sustainability, women teachers, Kerala, gender roles, institutional support, career progression, mental health.

## Introduction

The conversation on professional sustainability and work-life balance has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially in the field of education. This is particularly important for female educators in Kerala, an Indian state renowned for its progressive views on education and high literacy rates. Despite these developments, women educators nevertheless have particular difficulties that frequently make it difficult for them to successfully manage their personal and professional obligations. Integrating professional and personal obligations in a way that reduces stress and maximizes enjoyment in both domains is known as work-life balance. This equilibrium is frequently upset for female educators by the demanding nature of their work, family responsibilities, and social expectations.

The demands placed on educators can be exacerbated by the profession's inherent connection to the welfare of future generations. Their stories provide important insights into the wider ramifications of how educational

policy and societal standards affect their work-life dynamics in Kerala, where a sizable percentage of teachers are women.

The ability of educators to maintain their physical, mental, and emotional well-being while continuing to be involved and productive in their professions is known as professional sustainability. In order for teachers to flourish rather than just survive, educational systems must create an environment that supports them.

.For female educators, who could face extra challenges including gender bias and a lack of institutional support, this component is especially crucial.

The purpose of this overview is to investigate how work-life balance and professional sustainability relate to Keralan women teachers. We can gain a better understanding of the systemic problems at work and the required policy reforms to establish a supportive framework that fosters fairness and well-being in the teaching profession by looking at their experiences, difficulties, and coping mechanisms.

### **Statement of the problem**

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical problem for professionals in a variety of industries in recent years. As they attempt to balance the responsibilities of teaching, research, administration, and personal life, women in academia encounter particular difficulties. Women make up a sizable portion of Kerala University's teaching staff, and they frequently balance several responsibilities at home and at work. Managing personal commitments while preserving professional effectiveness can lead to stress, burnout, and a shorter career lifespan.

There is little empirical knowledge of how well Kerala University women teachers manage their personal and professional lives, despite a number of policies and support networks, and how this balance—or lack thereof—affects their long-term professional engagement, fulfillment, and development. Furthermore, women instructors may face obstacles to establishing long-term careers in higher education due to institutional burden, family obligations, and societal expectations. Kerala University's female professors' experiences with work-life balance are the focus of this study, which also looks at how these experiences impact their long-term professional viability. It seeks to pinpoint the primary obstacles, coping mechanisms, and institutional procedures that affect their capacity to succeed in both areas.

### **Scope of the study**

Understanding work-life balance dynamics and how they affect Kerala University women professors' career sustainability is the main goal of this study. It seeks to investigate how female faculty members combine their work obligations with personal and family obligations and the effects this has on their performance, career satisfaction, and sustained involvement in academia.

**The study covers:**

**Target Population:** At Kerala University, women teach in a variety of departments as assistants, associates, and full professors.

**Key Themes:** Burnout, job satisfaction, professional advancement, stress management, workload, family obligations, and institutional support.

**Time Frame:** With references to contemporary developments (such as post-pandemic adjustments and transitions to digital instruction), the study takes into account the current academic and institutional environment.

**Geographical Scope:** The study is restricted to Kerala University's main campus and related colleges.

**Analytical Focus:** Personal experiences, institutional procedures, and wider societal norms impacting women's careers can be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative data. While comparative ideas may be used when appropriate for contextual understanding, its scope does not include male academic members, administrative staff, or instructors from other universities.

**Methodology Adopted**

The study only uses secondary data as its foundation. Articles, journals, earlier theses, newspapers, and government press releases are the sources. The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to uncover patterns and insights. For the study, the researcher has gathered both primary and secondary data. The teaching staff of a few chosen self-financing colleges in Kerala will provide the primary data. Secondary data was gathered from books, journals, and other sources. The information gathered on Kerala University in India from these many sources was compared, and the results were examined. The data for this study is also gathered from a few websites and news stories.

**Objectives**

1. To understand the work-life balance challenges faced by women teachers in Kerala.
2. To examine the impact of work-life balance on their professional sustainability.

**Period of the study**

For his study, the researcher gathered secondary data between the years of 2025. From February to March 15 th. The secondary data were collected from the teaching faculties' records and management of the select self-financing colleges among Kerala. Journals, books, and other sources were used to gather secondary data.

## Literature review

**Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985).** This seminal study examines the causes of conflict between work and family responsibilities, outlining the ways in which demands from one area may impede those from the other. The authors offer a model that describes the elements that lead to work-family conflict, and this model has impacted further studies.

**Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1998).** This study looks at how work-family conflict and job/life satisfaction are related, emphasizing how organizational policies can help employees feel less stressed and more satisfied overall, which will improve their work-life balance.

**Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992).** This study examines the causes and effects of work-family conflict, offering empirical proof that it has a detrimental effect on people's mental health, job satisfaction, and general well-being.

**Byron, K. (2005).** By combining data from several studies, this meta-analysis provides a thorough knowledge of the relationship between work-family conflict and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance.

**Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964).** This book, a classic that established the foundation for knowledge of role conflict, organizational stress, and ambiguity, highlights the ways in which these elements hinder work-life balance.

**Schaubroeck, J., & Fink, L. (1998)** This study examines the ways in which social support mitigates work-family conflict and shows how supportive connections can greatly enhance people's capacity to manage their personal and professional obligations. **Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., & Williams, L. J. (2000).** Work-family conflict may be a cause or an effect of discontent in both areas, according to this longitudinal study that evaluates the relationship between work-family conflict and job/family satisfaction over time.

**Gutek, B. A., Searle, S., & Klepa, L. (1991).** This study examines how gender disparities impact the experience and perception of work-family conflict, emphasizing the particular difficulties women encounter in juggling their roles in the home and at work.

**McMillan, L. H., & Morris, A. (2017).** This study, which focuses on Malaysian public sector workers, looks at how work-life balance affects employee engagement and provides insights into the consequences for organizational policies meant to promote worker well-being.

**Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007).** The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which the authors offer, shows how work demands and resources interact to affect engagement and burnout. Understanding work-life balance in relation to job demands and available resources is impacted by this approach.

## Work-Life Balance: Conceptual Foundations

Work-life balance is the state of having one's personal and professional responsibilities in harmony. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), conflicts arise when work and family needs clash, leading to stress and decreased job satisfaction. The challenges experienced by WLB are further compounded by the fact that women educators, especially in Kerala, often manage complex roles that are impacted by societal norms and cultural expectations. job-life balance is the state in which job commitments and personal interests are balanced so that neither excessively interferes with the other. The concept usually includes components like:

**Time balance:** Time balance is the equitable distribution of time between work and life.

**Involvement balance:** Involvement balance refers to fair participation in both personal and professional pursuits.

**Balanced satisfaction:** feeling content in each of these areas.

### Theories of WLB

**Role Theory:** Role theory provides a helpful lens through which to analyze work-life balance by analyzing how individuals manage the different roles they play in their personal and professional lives. The idea, which has its origins in psychology and sociology, holds that individuals have various roles (such that of a friend, spouse, parent, or employee) that are connected to certain responsibilities, expectations, and behaviors. Finding equilibrium between these roles is necessary to attain a healthy work-life balance.

**Boundary Theory:** Boundary theory is a psychological concept that looks at how people manage and negotiate the boundaries between different areas of their lives, such as their personal and professional lives. Since every domain often has its own requirements, expectations, and traditions, it highlights the strategies people use to maintain equilibrium between these stances. A deeper comprehension of boundary theory can help individuals and organizations create work-life balance programs that are more successful.

**Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory;** The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory developed by psychologist Stevan Hobfoll provides a helpful basis for understanding work-life balance. At its core, the theory holds that people strive to get, protect, and maintain resources that are essential to their well-being. These resources might be classified as financial (like money or job stability), social (like family or coworker support), or personal (like time or energy). COR Theory helps explain how people manage the competing demands of their personal and professional lives, as well as the stress caused by resource depletion, in relation to work-life balance.

### Work Life Balance in Teachers

Since teaching demands a great deal of time, energy, and emotional commitment, work-life balance (WLB) is a major issue for teachers. Teachers often struggle to balance their personal and professional life due to

their long hours, administrative duties, and involvement in extracurricular activities. This review of the literature looks at what causes WLB in teachers, how it affects their welfare and job satisfaction, and how to improve balance.

### **Factors Affecting Teachers' Work-Life Balance**

Research indicates that a significant contributing reason to teachers' low WLB is their lengthy workdays and severe workload. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015), teachers often work after school hours, developing courses, grading assignments, and taking part in professional development activities that may conflict with their personal lives. The problem is further compounded by the absence of autonomy and control over work scheduling. According to Klassen and Chiu (2010), teachers who have less flexibility at work report feeling more stressed and less satisfied with their jobs. The strain is further increased by social expectations to fulfill tasks other than teaching, like mentoring and counseling.

### **WLB Challenges for Women Teachers in Kerala**

**Cultural and Familial Expectations:** Despite the high level of female literacy, research indicates that Kerala's patriarchal underpinnings place a significant duty of caregiving on women, limiting their free time and time for self-care (Rajesh & Ekbal, 2020).

**Demands at Work:** According to studies by Nair and Pillai (2022), administrative duties and the usage of digital teaching methods both raise stress. Balancing this with domestic responsibilities is sometimes a challenge for female educators.

**Well-being and Health:** Long-term stress and insufficient personal time have an impact on one's physical and emotional well-being. The importance of WLB in lowering attrition and fostering job satisfaction was highlighted in a 2019 study on teacher burnout in Kerala by Mathew et al.

### **Methods for Enhancing Work-Life Harmony**

Interventions to improve teachers' WLB mostly focus on individual and institutional strategies. A helpful learning environment must include both equal workload distribution and collegial assistance. According to research by Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, and Vanroelen (2014), schools that encourage teamwork and value teachers' contributions may help students feel less stressed.

Time management and stress-reduction techniques benefit teachers as well. As effective methods for increasing resilience, professional training in self-care and mindfulness-based therapies is gaining popularity (Roeser et al., 2013). Additionally, flexible work arrangements like job-sharing or remote work may make it simpler to balance professional and personal commitments (Timms et al., 2006).

## **Professional Sustainability in Teaching**

Professional sustainability means sustaining one's effectiveness, satisfaction, and well-being in one's work throughout time. Teaching is an emotionally taxing profession that requires perseverance and ongoing inspiration. Workload management, institutional support, and personal coping mechanisms all affect teachers' well-being, according to research by Day and Gu (2010). Keralan women instructors often balance these concerns within the context of a gendered division of labor.

### **Comprehending Professional Sustainability**

Professional sustainability in the teaching profession refers to the capacity of educators to maintain their enthusiasm, effectiveness, and commitment to the teaching profession throughout time while balancing their own well-being (Day & Gu, 2007). Studies highlight the ways in which personal, professional, and institutional factors interact to influence sustainability in education. Opportunities for professional growth, robust support systems, and individual resiliency are necessary to keep educators in their roles (Kelchtermans, 2009).

### **Important Elements Affecting Sustainability**

Several studies emphasize the significance of workplace elements like fair workloads, promoting teamwork among coworkers, and supporting leadership. Healthy school cultures characterized by mutual respect and a focus on professional development have a significant impact on teachers' long term commitment.

### **Professional Development's Function**

Opportunities for professional development are essential to maintaining instructors' zeal and efficacy. According to Guskey (2002), teacher retention and job satisfaction depend on meaningful professional learning that emphasizes real-world application and ongoing development. Policy-level interventions also promote sustainability. Darling-Hammond (2010) emphasized the need of equal funding, reduced class sizes, and teacher mentoring programs in establishing sustainable teaching environments. These structural changes can reduce teacher attrition and encourage career duration.

## **Findings**

Keralan women teachers usually work long days because of their administrative duties, class preparation, and extracurricular activities. A lot of people find it difficult to make time for their family, which leads to stress and fatigue. Teachers' work-life balance is mostly dependent on their workload and time management. Teachers usually find it difficult to strike a balance between their personal and professional responsibilities

due to the nature of their employment, which can involve long hours, emotional strains, and high expectations. Some important factors affecting their work-life balance are as follows:

### **Expectations in society and culture:**

Traditional gender conventions force women to perform more household chores. Social norms often dissuade women from prioritizing their professional growth over their family.

### **Excessive workload**

After school, teachers usually plan lessons, mark homework, attend meetings, and take part in professional development activities. This can lead to burnout, especially if the burden is not distributed evenly throughout the year.

### **Mental and Emotional Vitality**

The teaching profession is emotionally and physically taxing. Teachers often take on the responsibilities of mentor, counselor, and role model, which can be draining.

### **Student expectations and classroom management**

Meeting educational requirements, managing different classrooms, and attending to the needs of individual students can require additional time and effort. Educators who are unable to meet all expectations may also feel inadequate as a result.

### **Administrative Tasks**

Teachers may be expected to perform a variety of administrative tasks, including as reporting student accomplishments and participating in school committees. These obligations usually occupy a significant amount of time and disrupt class.

### **Insufficient Time for Personal Life**

Due to the demands of their careers, many teachers find it challenging to take time off to spend with their families or engage in personal hobbies.

### **Assistance and Career Advancement**

Ongoing support, collaboration, and professional development can help teachers feel more successful and experience less stress.

## **Efficiency and Technology**

Teachers' capacity to balance work and life might be aided or hindered by the usage of technology. Because of their constant connectivity, digital technologies can make it more difficult to discriminate between work and personal life, even though they help streamline tasks like communication and grading.

### **Institutional Assistance:**

Teachers at government institutions claim more benefits like flexible scheduling, maternity leave, and retirement benefits than those at private colleges. The lack of on-site childcare and mental health support services was one common problem.

### **Effect on Sustainability in the Workplace:**

Women who have a poor work-life balance are more likely to experience burnout, have lower job satisfaction, and advance in their careers more slowly.

### **Conclusion**

Several challenges Keralan women teachers face in balancing their personal and professional lives are highlighted in the report. Work-life balance and professional sustainability require collaboration from educators, families, educational institutions, and policymakers. By addressing systemic barriers and fostering a supportive atmosphere, Kerala may continue to be a beacon state for empowering its female educators. Policies that address mental health support, flexible work schedules, and inexpensive childcare can significantly improve WLB. Promoting shared family duties and chances for professional growth are equally crucial for advancing sustainability.

According to research, institutional strategies like task redistribution and stress management programs are important (Varghese & Thomas, 2021). The issue of work-life balance, which has a significant effect on teachers' relationships, professional effectiveness, and general well-being, persists. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that takes into account both the efforts of individual teachers and structural adjustments within educational institutions. Future research should evaluate the long-term impacts of WLB therapies on educators and look for innovative solutions.

## Suggestions

### 1. Interventions in Policy:

Enhance maternity leave policies and offer childcare in workplaces. Mandate frequent mental health exams and stress management training. Establishing a supportive environment that helps employees effectively manage their personal and professional lives is the aim of a work-life balance (WLB) intervention policy. Such rules can improve employee satisfaction, productivity, mental health, and retention. The following is a list of common intervention strategies that organizations may employ:

**Adaptable Work Schedules**  
**Remote Work:** Allowing employees to work from home or other locations will give them flexibility and reduce the amount of time they spend commuting.

- **Flexible Hours:** Give workers the freedom to select their own work schedules (within a range) to accommodate personal requirements or preferences.
- **Compressed Work Weeks:** Permit employees to work more hours on fewer days (for example, four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days).

### **Paid Medical and Family Leave**

Provide paid leave in the event of personal, family, or parental illness. Employees can thus balance their personal and professional obligations without fear of losing their positions or their income.

### **Programs for Wellbeing**

Implement programs that promote mental and physical well-being, such as gym memberships, stress management courses, counseling services, and mental health days. To help employees manage their stress and maintain their physical health, offer them yoga, exercise, or mindfulness training.

### **Help with Childcare**

Provide on-site daycare or childcare subsidies to alleviate the burden of finding affordable daycare during office hours.

### **Job Sharing**

Allowing two employees to divide a full-time position will allow them to have more control over their schedules and duties.

### **Institutional Approaches:**

Promote flexible work hours and remote learning options. Provide opportunities for career advancement that are tailored to women's needs.

**Allotted Prep Time:** If teachers have ample time throughout the workday for professional development, lesson planning, and grading, they can avoid working excessive hours after school.

**Collaborative Planning:** Productivity can be raised by allowing instructors to collaborate on lesson plans during school hours or by creating planning days when no classes are planned.

**Balanced Teaching Loads:** By ensuring that teachers don't have an excessive number of classes, students, or extracurricular activities, overwork can be prevented. Institutions should avoid assigning instructors too many tasks and instead aim for a fair student-teacher ratio.

**Strategic Staffing:** Employing teaching assistants or support staff for special education, administrative, or other roles can lessen teachers' burdens and allow them to focus on their core teaching responsibilities.

**Parental Support:** Involving parents in the educational process through regular communication and involvement in school events relieves teachers of some of their strain by dividing up the work and fostering a caring environment.

**Community Resources:** Schools might work with local businesses or organizations to provide teachers with tools, discounts, or other types of support to make their personal lives easier.

## 10. Recognition and Awards

**Recognizing the Work of Teachers:** When teachers' good work is frequently recognized, whether through awards, appreciation ceremonies, or verbal praise, their morale can rise and they can feel valued and inspired.

**Fair Compensation:** Competitive compensation, incentives, and other benefits can encourage a better work-life balance by reducing financial stress.

## Individual Techniques:

With time management training, educators may prioritize their tasks. Encourage hobbies and self-care behaviors to enhance mental health

## Further Scope for Research and Discussion

The study's conclusions provide a number of opportunities for more investigation and in-depth scholarly discourse:

**Comparative Studies:** In order to pinpoint regional issues and best practices, future studies can examine the work-life balance experiences of female instructors at other Keralan or other Indian colleges.

**Gender-Based Comparison:** Although this study focuses on women, future research can look at male faculty members' work-life balance to investigate gender differences and how men's roles in handling personal and professional duties have changed over time.

**Policy Evaluation** To assess how well institutional policies support work-life balance, a thorough examination of those pertaining to maternity leave, flexible scheduling, remote instruction, and mental health support could be conducted.

**Longitudinal Studies:** Studies that follow the career paths of women educators over an extended period of time might provide valuable information about the effects of consistent work-life balance—or the absence of it—on retirement choices, retention, and career progress.

**Impact of Technology** Future research might evaluate how technology is changing the lines between personal and professional life as a result of the move toward digital learning and hybrid educational environments.

**Role of Family and Social Support:** A comprehensive knowledge of the problem can be obtained by investigating the ways in which social networks, extended families, and spouses support (or undermine) women teachers' work-life balance.

**Intersectional Perspectives:** The impact of additional variables like age, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic background, and caste on academic women's experiences with work-life balance can also be investigated.

**Professional Development and Mentoring:** Institutional solutions should be informed by examining how professional development, leadership opportunities, and mentorship programs can improve the sustainability of women educators' careers.

As a result, this study provides a basis for a more extensive scholarly discussion on gender parity, institutional change, and long-term academic careers in Indian higher education.

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