# WORK LIFE BALANCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON WORKING WOMEN

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## ABSTRACT

The struggle to achieve work-life balance has persisted, especially for women, despite advancements in economic empowerment. The shift to remote work during the pandemic has intensified challenges, with women facing increased responsibilities at home. Limited studies have explored the specific experiences of working women in India concerning work-family stress and satisfaction. Analysing this data using statistical tools like correlation and regression can provide insights into the intricate dynamics of their professional and personal lives.

**KEYWORDS:** Balance between life and serious activities, Coronavirus, Working Women, Work from Home, Stress, Covid-19

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, the challenge of balancing work and personal life is crucial, impacting efficiency and work quality. The disproportionate burden of neglected family and care work on women, particularly in India, contributes to a significant gender disparity. The undervaluation and inadequate measurement of this neglected care work hinder women's ability to enhance skills, secure well-paid positions, and participate fully in social activities.[1] The exclusion of these activities from economic metrics and policy decisions underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to recognize and address women's substantial but often unnoticed contributions to the economy. The estimated value of neglected work can be substantial, constituting a significant portion of a country's overall output.

The unequal distribution of care work can strain family relationships, impacting individual well-being and overall prosperity. Insufficient support, such as paid parental leave and accessible childcare services, disproportionately affects women with lower incomes, often leading them to temporarily or permanently exit the workforce. Extended working hours and inflexible schedules contribute significantly to work-family conflict, prompting women to opt for more flexible job opportunities suitable for managing caregiving responsibilities.[2] This preference for flexibility, however, can result in fewer work opportunities, contributing to the gender pay gap. Globally, organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) are increasingly emphasizing the importance of achieving a better balance between work and life activities.

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[1] Anderson, D. (2020). Enforced remote working and the work-life interface during lockdown, *Vol. 35 No 8 ,* P. 79-80

[2] Azarbouyeh, A. (2021) A Study on the Effect of Teleworking on Quality of Work Life, *Vol. 23 No. 4*, P. 67–68.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

• To study the Balance between serious and life activities during Work from Home is impacted by time-utilization of the respondents.

• To analyse whether Stress of level at Home contribute of anxiety at work.

• To Job-satisfaction affected by Stress at Work.

**WORK FROM HOME DURING COVID-19**

The shift to remote work, initially aimed at improving work-life balance, brought both benefits and challenges. While it enhanced flexibility and overall satisfaction for many employees, the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted lifestyles worldwide. Mandatory lockdowns and work-from-home measures, initially seeming like an opportunity for family time, posed additional challenges for women managing household responsibilities.[3] School closures and limitations on domestic help during lockdowns placed extra burdens on working women. The pandemic's prolonged duration has also contributed to a worsening of gender equality in the workplace, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to address these evolving challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted women, with increased work and income losses. Many women, especially those in healthcare and social work, have faced heightened demands, risking their health with longer shifts at work and additional caregiving responsibilities at home. Despite the surge in care needs within families, women continue to bear the brunt of unacknowledged work.[4] As a consequence, employed women have had to either reduce their paid working hours or extend their overall working hours (paid and unpaid), reaching unsustainable levels. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems to address these challenges and ensure gender equality in the aftermath of the pandemic.

**WORK LIFE BALANCE DURING PANDEMIC**

The quest for balance between professional and personal life has become increasingly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with the widespread adoption of remote work. While working from home offers flexibility, it blurs the boundaries between work and personal time, creating difficulties in managing both aspects effectively. The pandemic has brought unforeseen positive aspects, revealing organizations' commitment to employee well-being and the prioritization of health and safety measures.[5] However, the impact on women's careers has been significant, causing concerns about career growth and the constant struggle to juggle personal responsibilities and professional commitments.

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[3] Bhumika. (2020). Challenges for work–life balance during COVID-19 induced nationwide lockdown: exploring gender difference in emotional exhaustion in the Indian, *Vol. 15 No. 7* P. 75-76.

[4] Butakhieo, L. V. (2021). The impact of working from home during COVID-19 on work and life domains: an exploratory study on Hong Kong. *Policy Design and Practice, Vol. 42 No. 7, P.* 59-76.

[5] Fisher J, L. J. (2020) Community, work, and family in times of Covid-19, *Work From Home, Vol. 53 No. 8, P.* 247

Women, in particular, face additional challenges as the pandemic amplifies existing gender disparities. The fear of layoffs during economic uncertainty has led to heightened focus on work rather than personal life. The lack of external support, such as hired domestic help, further burdens women with increased family responsibilities.[6] The struggle to establish clear boundaries between work and family life during lockdowns has become a source of distress among employees, impacting their overall well-being and efficiency.

The fear of impending job loss has intensified the emphasis on work over personal life, contributing to efficiency fatigue. In India, where traditional gender roles persist, women bear the brunt of family chores, compounded by the unavailability of external help during lockdowns.[7] The challenge for working women to achieve a balance between work and home responsibilities has become particularly taxing. Overall, the pandemic has highlighted the need for organizations to address the evolving dynamics of work-life balance and support employees, especially women, in navigating these challenges.

## TO IMPROVE WORK LIFE BALANCE

Absolutely, achieving a balance between work and personal life is crucial for both employers and employees. Providing greater flexibility in work arrangements not only enhances the overall well-being of employees but also gives organizations a competitive edge in attracting and retaining top talent. Striking a harmonious balance contributes to increased productivity and job satisfaction, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the success of the organization.[8] Indeed, organizations should recognize that long working hours can lead to lower motivation, reduced morale, increased turnover, and decreased employee productivity.

Research consistently shows that happy employees tend to be more motivated and efficient. Fostering a positive work environment, promoting work-life balance, and recognizing the importance of employee well-being contribute to higher job satisfaction, engagement, and overall productivity.[9] Implementing online training programs for employees to acquire new skills, especially in using innovative software, is a great idea. This not only helps reduce stress by equipping employees with the tools they need but also promotes a more relaxed and efficient work environment. Continuous learning opportunities can enhance job satisfaction and empower workers to navigate challenges with ease

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[6] Jaimee Felice Caringal-Go, M. T.-C. (2021). Work-life balance crafting during COVID-19: exploring strategies of telecommuting employees in the Philippines. *Community, Work & Family, Vol. 25 No. 7, P. 113*

[7] Swarnalatha, Lalitha (2020) Work-Life Balance In Pandemic: A Conceptual Study of Problems And Challenges Faced By Working Women Professionals, Mukt Shabd Journal, Vol 9 No. 5, P. 61

[8] Bataineh Adnan Khaled(2020) Impact of Work-Life Balance, Happiness at Work, on Employee Performance, International Business Research, Vol. 12 No. 2, P. 99

[9] Bhumika (2020) Challenges for work–life balance during COVID-19 induced nationwide lockdown: exploring gender difference in emotional exhaustion in the Indian setting', Journal of Critical Reviews, Vol 7 No 3, P. 69-70

- **Offer Adaptability:** Balance between serious and life activities drives can help managers and representatives to be useful and gain a superior harmony in their work and individual lives. Associations can give representatives more prominent adaptability by the way they work .This will offer bosses the cutthroat business edge in drawing in and holding great workers.

- **The long hours of working should be avoided:** Associations need to comprehend that extended periods of time might prompt lower inspiration, resolve, diminished turnover and efficiency of representatives.[10] It has been observed that cheerful workers are inspired and more proficient.

- **Working from home with specific time schedules:** Work from home office ought to be given to representatives fix time plans, the associations shouldn't accept unjustifiable significance of workers by making them work constantly.

- **Organize online workshops**: Online studios ought to be coordinated to cause the representatives to manage better approaches for chip away at new programming's that can assist in diminishing the pressure with evening out of workers and empower them to work calm.

- **Develop positivity**: Associations ought to energize a positive culture that will help the specialists working calm and this inspiration helps in expanding the efficiency and proficiency of workers.

- **Socialisation:** Because of work from home social cooperation's have nearly become immaterial, causing the representatives to feel unapproachable and desolate.[11] They can be tackled by addressing the subordinates and partners eventually 0f the day to make one vigorous.

- **Communicate**: Correspondence is extremely useful in eliminating the questions and inquiries of representatives and it likewise assists in upgrading the inspiration and responsibility with evening out of workers. In this way, legitimate progression of data should be made between the prevalent and subordinates.

- **Workspace at home**: A little space might be planned as work area in the home to stay away from interruption and aggravation while taking care of business from home.[12]  It is

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[10] Breitenecker, R. J, & Shah,  S. A.  M (2021)  Relation of work-life balance,  work-family conflict, and  family-work conflict with the employee performance-moderating  role of  job satisfaction, South Asian  Journal of  Business Studies,  Vol. 7 No. 1,  P. 129

[11] Amal Krishna Saha, Sumita Chaudhuri & Sharad Soumya Mazumdar (2020) 'Work-Life Balance of Women Teachers, The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations,Vol. 52 No.2, P. 217

[12] Sharma P and Dayal  P (2021); 'Work Life Balance: Women Employees Working in Banking Sector  of India', International Conference on Recent Research Development in Environment, Social Sciences and Humanities. Vol. 48 No. 2, P. 39

hard to sit for such extended periods of working, so making a work area with great easing up and ventilation facilities.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that most respondents are content with their work-life balance, and remote work from home during the pandemic isn't seen as a significant factor affecting this balance. Factors influencing work-life balance include the amount of caregiving hours, personal time, and the presence of a support system at home. Flexible working hours, employer initiatives, and networks contribute positively to work-life balance. Stress at work and home are interconnected, affected by factors such as marital status, working hours, and family structure. Employer initiatives, including networks and policies preventing gender discrimination play a vital role achieving a balance and job satisfaction for working women. The ongoing challenges faced by professionals during the pandemic emphasize the need for adaptive strategies to maintain a healthy work-life balance while working from home.