

## Theoretical Insights into Work–Life Balance of College Teachers in the Era of ICT and Online Education

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### ABSTRACT

Work Life Balance (WLB) is a critical issue among the college teachers in the modern academic set-up, especially with the growing adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and online learning. Digital platforms, virtual classes, learning management systems, and online communication tools have changed the teaching-learning process considerably in higher learning institutions. Although ICT has presented potentials of flexibility in learning and enhanced access to educational materials, it has also created more work and the work life boundary between the teachers has been blurred. College professors usually cannot avoid creating online material, teaching online courses, grading online papers, and staying online and available to the learners in a number of different ways. These duties can be beyond the normal working hours and put one with difficulties of balancing between work and the personal life.

In theoretical terms theories like role theory and boundary theory describe the situation of multiple professional and personal roles becoming the cause of role conflict and stress in case the boundaries are not established. The female college educators especially can feel the extra strain when they have to care about academic tasks and family and social life. A good work-life balance in a classroom with ICT facilities is thus critical towards the well being of teachers, job satisfaction as well as professional performance. These theoretical components would ensure that institutions come up with favorable policies and plans that would facilitate healthy work conditions, effective technology utilization, and work-life balance among teachers..

### 1.INTRODUCTION

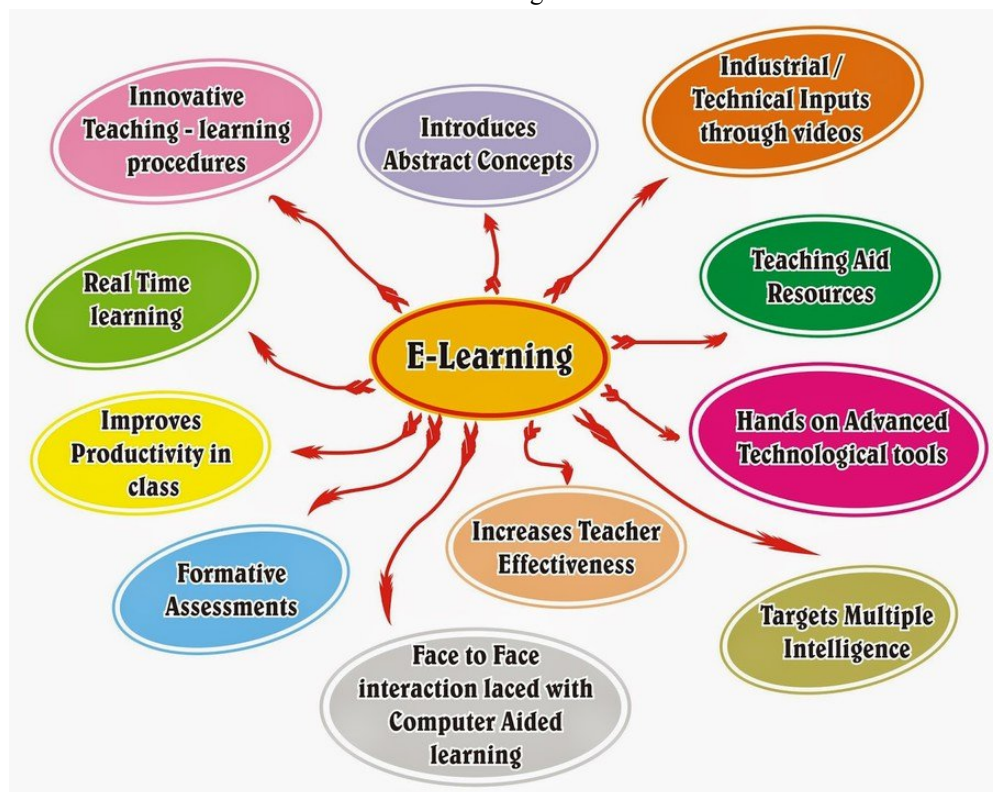
Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a concept that depicts the level of perfection of individuals to have a healthy balance between both their work-life commitment and their personal life. It entails proper time and energy management between professional and personal, social, and family lives. Work-life balance is now a fundamental concept in the contemporary workplace especially in the light of the rising work load and the endless digital connectivity and the rising performance expectations on employees as workers.

The idea of work life balance came up as a reaction to the rising issues of work pressure and its adverse health, relationship, and job satisfaction impacts. Employees have been expected to be available even after the working hours because of integration of ICT tools like online teaching platforms, learning management systems, digital communication, and virtual meetings. Work-life balance does not however imply the even distribution of time between the work and personal life; it is all about having achieve a state whereby people are able to balance between both the work and the family lives without any considerable conflict. A good balance among employees makes them feel better satisfied, motivated and productive in their work.

In the case of women employees, particularly college teachers, the issue of worker-life balance becomes especially relevant due to the fact that women workers can easily fulfill two roles at work and at home. The teaching, research, student mentoring, administration, and digital learning materials preparation are academic duties that demand a lot of time and effort. The added responsibilities include e-content preparation, virtual classroom management, answering online questions, and online

assessment due to the rising application of ICT and online teaching techniques. Meanwhile, family issues like child care, home management and social obligations have to be considered. Thus, work life balance in an ICT facilitated academic setting is essential to personal well-being, career performance and sustainability in the long term among female college faculty

Figure: 1



#### Significance of Work-Life Balance to Female Workers.

The work-life balance concerns women employees in particular since they frequently have to cope with various roles both at work and at home. Attaining the right work to life balance helps in their physical health, psychological health and general satisfaction with life. The modern workplace has witnessed even more users of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) thus affecting the nature of work in that employees are more attached to their occupational duties through the use of digital communications, online work platforms and virtual work set-ups. Women who manage to balance their work on an effective way show less stress, job satisfaction, and increased performance at work.

Women in most societies are still taking a big portion of home chores including childcare, care of the elderly and also managing the home. Concurrently, women are engaging more in professional jobs and being used to develop the organization. As more and more ICT tools are introduced to the fields of work and education most people tend to blur the line between work and personal life, due to increased use of emails, online meeting tools, the use of digital documents and teaching platforms. These two roles, along with the regular digital connectivity, could become exhausting, straining, burnout, and less productive without a healthy work-life balance. Thus, the balance in an ICT-enabled workplace environment will allow female staff members to stay productive, inspired, as well as able to perform their professional and personal duties successfully.

A healthy work-life balance by female employees also comes in handy to organizations. Balanced employees will be more likely to show commitment levels, low levels of absenteeism and will be more engaged in the job. Organizations practicing work-life balance in terms of flexible working hours, work systems that are facilitated by ICT and other enabling systems, supportive policies and work environments that are friendly to the family tends to have a greater employee morale and retention. In the teaching industry, especially as the ICT and online teaching practices gain popularity, a balance between work and life is beneficial to women involved in the teaching profession to balance between family and educational quality. This balance eventually leads to personal well being, effectiveness in the work carried out by individuals and the success of schools and colleges in general.

Figure: 2



### Work Life Balance in Teaching Profession.

Teaching is a profession that encompasses many duties beyond the classroom in the teaching profession, especially in higher education. College teachers are supposed to work in various capacities which include preparing lectures, research work, offering guidance to students, assessment of assignments as well as administration. Such duties tend to demand extra time beyond the usual hours of work and this aspect makes it very difficult that teachers can strike the right balance between their work and their personal lives.

In the case of women college teachers, work life balance is a more complicated issue because they have two responsibilities both at the workplace and at home. The heavy workloads can be caused by academic tasks like preparing course material, taking examinations, attending meetings, as well as doing research. Meanwhile, women tend to organize the household chores and care about the family, which makes them even more time-strained.

The growing pressure to produce research, meet the publication demands, and institutional performance criteria has also added pressure to the workload of college teachers. Consequently, a great number of teachers get work-related stress and lack of time management. Work-life balance deficit can result in work dissatisfaction, inefficiency, and emotional burnout.

Work life balance is therefore crucial in teaching profession in ensuring that teachers are well and productive. Organizations offering positive workplace conditions, job flexibility, and workload that is not overwhelming can assist teachers in totting a balance between their career and personal life.

### Information Technology and Female presence in University.

Women are the most important in the development and enhancement of the higher education systems in the globe. In recent decades, there has been a great growth in the involvement of women in the academic career. Women college teachers are also involved in more than classroom teaching; they are also involved in research, student mentoring, curriculum development, and institutional administration. As the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education continues to rise, the role of women in education is changing to involve digital teaching, online learning, creation of e-content, and virtual communication tools to augment the teaching-learning process.

Women educators can also act as role models to students in institutions of higher learning, with female students being the ones who would want to pursue an academic career and professional life. Through them, gender equality is facilitated in the universities and colleges and more women are likely to participate in education and employment. Their function has also been enhanced through ICT as it provides new modes of teaching like online lessons, web-based tests and interactive learning systems.

## **Challenges Faced by Women College Teachers**

Women college teachers play an important role in higher education, but they often encounter several challenges while managing their professional and personal responsibilities. These challenges arise due to the multiple roles they perform in their workplace and family life. The most common difficulties include balancing professional and family duties, handling heavy workloads, and coping with emotional and social expectations. These challenges can influence their work performance, personal well-being, and overall job satisfaction. Understanding these issues is important in order to create supportive institutional policies that help women teachers maintain a healthy work–life balance.

### **Dual Role (Professional and Family Responsibilities)**

The issue of women college teachers balancing between their careers and family is one of the most significant problems. Along with their teaching duties, most women have to shoulder major responsibility of taking care of the home, bringing up children, taking care of elders, cooking, and other family chores. It may be a challenging and time-consuming task to strike a balance between these roles.

College teachers are frequently called to make lectures, assess work, participate in meetings and carry out academic research. These are professional responsibilities that are often not within their normal working hours. Women teachers can face time and stress issues when they are put in charge of family commitments. The stress of having two roles to play efficiently may cause exhaustion and emotional burnout.

Nevertheless, in spite of the challenges, a good number of women are trying to excel in both areas. Nevertheless, in the absence of proper assistance of relatives and schools, it is hard to balance between work and personal life properly.

**Workload and Time Pressure:** Heavy workload and time pressure are also another major problem that can be experienced by women college teachers. The teaching career demands constant training, classroom instruction, assessment of the work of students, research, and attending academic events. In most instances, the administrative duties of a teacher include the arrangement of academic programs, record keeping and even serving in institutional committees. Such activities tend to consume more out of classroom time. Lecture preparation, paper accessing and research activities can go to the extent of evenings and weekends. Consequently, educators might not be able to get enough time to carry out personal tasks and family responsibilities. The women teachers can be under added pressure trying to deliver professional deadlines, and still meet the domestic duties. This may pose pressure and minimize the time to rest and relax. Consequently, workload management is critical in ensuring that work and life balance is achieved.

### **Emotional and Social Expectations.**

Women teachers in colleges are not exempt as they have emotional and social expectations of the society and family. According to most cultures, women are supposed to put family first and ensure that there is peace in the home. Meanwhile, professional jobs are demanding and need dedication, commitment, and constant performance. It may be a taxing task trying to strike a balance between these expectations. Women might sense the need to live up to the expectations of becoming a good professional and a good family member in society. Such two-sided expectation can be stressful, especially when work necessitates one to balance work requirements with family demands.

The social expectations can also play a role in the career advancement in the sense that women might be afraid to take up leadership roles or any other professional opportunities giving their family-related duties. Nevertheless, a good number of the women teachers still play a significant role in promoting education due to their efforts and endurance. These pressures can be alleviated to support better work life balance by supportive family environments, and gender sensitive institutional policies.

### **The Impact of Factors on Work-life Balance among Women College Teachers.**

The work-life balance among college teachers that are women depends on a number of personal, professional and organizational factors. These aspects define the level of effectiveness in handling the teaching roles by the teacher together with family and personal aspects. The key ones are working hours and workload, institutional support, family responsibility, career aspiration, and organizational policies. The knowledge of these factors assists institutions to develop strategies and policies that will facilitate a healthier work life and personal life balance.

**Working Hours and Workload:** The working hours and workload are important in determining work-life balance among women college teachers. Teachers in the higher learning institutions are not just expected to teach in the classrooms, but to undertake a number of academic and administrative roles. They comprise the preparation of lectures, examinations, marking of assignments, teaching, holding of meetings, and research. These duties frequently go out of the normal working hours.

The female college teachers can also use extra hours out of the classroom to create study resources, do academic paperwork, and engage in professional development. This long working time may decrease the time to have family and relax time. Workload can cause stress, fatigue, and even decreased job satisfaction when it is too heavy. Time management becomes an uphill task, particularly among women who have got other major roles at home. Teachers can better balance their professional and personal lives in case working hours are flexible and the workload is fairly distributed. Thus, workload and decent working hours can be viewed as the concern of the institutions to take care of the well-being and productivity of female college teachers.

**Institutional Support:** The other aspect that can determine the work life balance of women college teachers is through institutional support. Positive learning institutions establish a culture in which the teachers feel that they are valued, respected, and motivated to handle their professional and personal duties efficiently. The institutional support can be in the form of flexible working hours, good leadership, career growth prospects, and availability of the required academic resources. The management and administrators of a college are able to enact policies that enable work-life balance when they understand the plight of women teachers. To illustrate, teachers can be more efficient in their work by using flexible schedules, less administrative burden, and accessing research support, among other things. Colleague and departmental support is also very important in alleviating work related stress. Moreover, childcare facilities, counseling facilities, or programs that are friendly to the family are established in the institutions making the working environment more inclusive. With this kind of support, the women teachers will be able to conduct their academic operations without being pressured highly by their personal responsibilities. Teachers who feel that their institutions support them would enjoy more job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. Thus, an institutional support plays one of the significant roles in ensuring that female college teachers have a positive work-life balance.

**Family Responsibilities:** Family responsibilities play a major role in determining work life of women in colleges. In most families, women are the ones who are in charge of house work which includes taking care of children, taking care of the elderly, making dinner, and running the house. Such roles send a lot of time and effort and at times can be in conflict with professional roles. Women teachers in colleges are usually required to juggle between their work and family. On exhausting their teaching and institutional assignments, they can proceed to work back at home to complete their family responsibilities. This dual accountability may cause time constraints, levels of stress. The degree of encouragement by the family members is a significant factor to the effectiveness of women teachers in handling their roles. Women teachers will find it easier to balance their work and personal life when their household tasks are shared by spouses, parents, or any other family members.

**Career Aspirations:** Career aspirations are professional ambitions and envision of individuals that they want to realize in their careers. Among female teachers in colleges, they might have career goals of acquiring more qualifications, writing research papers, earning promotions, and being elected to leadership in colleges. Such aspirations involve commitment, effort and career advancement. Advocacy of career promotion may be based on conducting research, participating in academic conferences, attending training programs, and institutional development. On the one hand, these opportunities are necessary to enhance the professional growth; on the other hand, they can increase the number of tasks and time requirements of teachers. In some cases, women college teachers can be unable to follow their career ambitions because of family and social pressure. Striking the right balance between work and personal life necessitates time management and favourable conditions. When a professional development opportunity is offered by institutions and when the contributions of women teachers are recognized, then this gives them the confidence to move on to attain their career ambitions. Long term job satisfaction and professional success among women college teachers requires a balance between career ambitions and personal life to be attained.

### **Organizational Policies**

1. Policies of the organization are important in determining the work-life balance of college teachers who are women. Working hours, leave policies, promotion policies and welfare of the employees are policies that directly affect the way in which teachers balance their professional and personal lives.
2. By providing supportive and flexible policies, the educational institutions assist teachers to have a healthy balance between work and family life. To illustrate, the pressure that women teachers endure can be minimized with maternity loans, childcare benefits, flexible working hours, and workload allocation.
3. Women teachers also have a clear and fair promotion policy that motivates them to take the career ladder without worrying about discrimination and bias. When gender equality is encouraged and equal opportunities are given by institutions, a favorable working environment is generated among the female educators.
4. In addition, policies, which support professional growth, research experiences, and professional learning communities, allow the teacher to develop academically and stay personally healthy. When institutions appreciate the need of having work-life balance and take up supportive policies, it is of benefit to both the institution and employees.

Organizational policies that are well designed are thus needed to ensure the well being of women college teachers so as to boost their productivity, and their professional development, as well as allowing them to lead a balanced and full life.

### **Strategies for Improving Work–Life Balance in Higher Education**

Enhancing the work-life balance within the platform of higher education is critical in improving the well being, job satisfaction and professional performance of women college teachers. There are a number of measures that can be implemented in educational institutions to enable teachers to balance their professional lives and personal as well as family lives.

Implementation of flexible working arrangements is one of the strategies. Flexible work schedules enable the teachers to cope with their teaching duties and meet the needs of their family. The options available could include flexible working hours, decreased workloads at some times, or the possibility of remote working by institutions.

The other important strategy is workload management. Colleges and universities must make sure that teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities are evenly shared by the faculty. Having fewer administration duties and assigning sufficient support personnel can assist teachers to concentrate more on their academic duties without taking too much pressure.

There should also be institutional support and good working environment to maintain work-life balance. The teachers feel valued and motivated with the help of supportive leadership, clear communication, and collaborative work culture. Professional development programs and counseling services can also be organized in institutions to help faculty well-being.

Another strategy that is good is to provide family friendly policies. Childcare support, maternity, and parental leaves are some of the facilities that may significantly ease women teachers who have family related issues. These policies will motivate teachers to stick to their professions as they play their own roles.

Lastly, time management and stress management should be encouraged as a measure to allow teachers to have better balance between work and personal lives. Teachers can be informed with workshops, training sessions, and wellness programs that will enable them to manage their tasks better. Through these strategies, the institutions of higher learning are in a position to establish a conducive environment which will positively influence the work life balance, job satisfaction and the overall performance of the women in colleges.

### **Conclusion**

The equilibrium between work and home life has emerged as a crucial element for the professional and personal welfare of college educators, especially with the rising prevalence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and online education. The use of digital tools, online learning platforms, and virtual communication has profoundly altered the teaching profession. Although ICT offers prospects for flexible pedagogical approaches, easier access to educational resources, and enhanced student engagement, it has simultaneously augmented the burden and obscured the distinctions between professional and personal life.

College instructors are now obligated to oversee numerous obligations, including the preparation of digital content, the facilitation of online classrooms, the response to student enquiries via various online platforms, and the execution of administrative activities utilising ICT systems. These supplementary responsibilities frequently stretch beyond conventional working hours, complicating educators' ability to establish a distinct boundary between their professional obligations and personal lives.

The problem of achieving work–life balance is particularly intricate for female college educators due to their multiple responsibilities in professional and familial spheres. Effectively managing scholastic tasks alongside household activities and family commitments is essential to prevent stress, exhaustion, and diminished personal well-being. Consequently, it is essential for educational institutions to cultivate supportive work environments by advocating balanced workloads, offering ICT training, facilitating flexible work arrangements, and enacting policies that endorse work–life balance. These metrics not only elevate the well-being and job happiness of educators but also augment instructional quality and institutional productivity. Ensuring a healthy work–life balance in the ICT-enabled academic setting is crucial for the long-term efficacy, motivation, and professional sustainability of college educators.

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