

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background & Context

Work-life balance (WLB) has recently been an essential problem for female professionals due to the impact it has on job satisfaction (JS), productivity, & overall well-being (OWB). This research focuses on WLB for women working in the service sector in Gujarat's main cities. The service industry, with its diverse position portfolio and highly dynamic work conditions, presents unique problems and opportunities for women seeking to reconcile their professional and home lives. Gujarat is one of the country's key economic engines with the highest proportion of single young women in paid work in industry and services (Figure 1.1), making it an appropriate location for research into how regional characteristics influence WLB. The current study would more effectively analyse the experiences and challenges of female employees in the industry to determine how current rules and practices are working, as well as suggestions for implementing WLB in Gujarat's changing economic landscape.

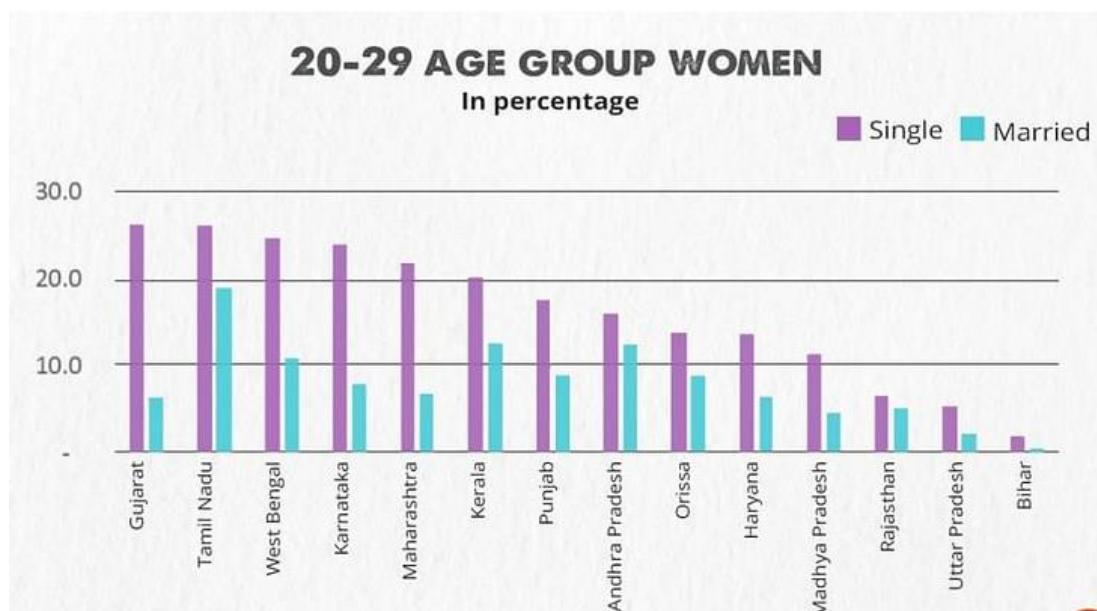


Figure 1.1: Single women Employment (**Source:** Mahambare et al. 2021)

1.2 Work-Life Balance

WLB refers to how much time a person spends juggling work and personal responsibilities. WLB exemplifies the criteria of JS as well as physical and mental health in general, which

always leads to a positive connection with the employer. WLB is an ability to perform work-related tasks while maintaining personal components such as health, family, friendship, cultural pursuits, and hobbies. It does not imply the equal allocation of time and energy across all aspects of life, but rather the conscious subjective investment of them by goals and preferences (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

WLB is centred on making the best use of time both at and away from work, including time for relationships, family duties, and personal hobbies. The strategies that a person employs to keep these pressures in check define their WLB. Despite its basic formulation, many people, including professionals, struggle to define and achieve WLB. In pursuit of WLB, there is an open complex sector with several papers and tactics that claim to help discover a solution. The rising stress levels and feelings of disequilibrium among professionals highlight the need to reconsider our existing concept of WLB (Thomas, 2022).

WLB is all about flexibility and holistic approaches to fast-paced work situations. It establishes limits, prioritizes tasks, and provides flexibility in both work and leisure time. Employers, like employees, are responsible for creating supportive work environments that promote balance through policies such as flexible working hours, telecommuting possibilities, and well-being initiatives. After all, WLB is a personalized and dynamic idea that must be worked on consistently and adjusted to the ever-changing demands of the individual's professional and personal lives in current times (Dutton, 2024).

1.2.1 Importance of Work-Life Balance

- Improved employee well-being, including greater physical and mental health, lower stress, and burnout.
- Increased productivity as employees become more focused, effective, and engaged.
- When people have a better WLB, their JS, & morale improve.
- Increased staff retention, decreased turnover, and less staff variation.
- Improved the employer's branding, making it more appealing to potential employees and competitive.
- There would be more motivation and engagement with employees due to effective management of both work and personal commitments.
- Improved health outcomes, fewer sick days, and decreased health care costs for the organization.

- Increased employees' loyalty by maintaining a positive and supportive working environment.
- Superior innovation and creativity through employees who have been re-energized with changes in their mental robustness.
- Contributes towards bringing in a positive work culture for a win-win situation for employees & organization (Johari *et al.*, 2018).

1.2.2 Measures to Improve Work-Life Balance for Employees

Several work-balance methods can be implemented to achieve a well-balanced workday. The adoption of hybrid work paradigms has proven to be effective. Daily commutes to work can lead to burnout and health issues like sleep difficulties and high blood pressure. Full-time employment from home might cause feelings of loneliness, lack of exercise, and anxiety. However, the hybrid style of working allows employees to select when & where they work, avoiding all of the negative consequences of extremes while creating a healthy work atmosphere.

Another important approach in this direction is to provide flexible work hours. This is because restrictive schedules typically require people to labour during periods of low productivity, limiting their potential and output. Working hour flexibility allows employees to work during peak productivity periods and better integrate their work schedules into everyday routines. Such liberty boosts productivity and allows employees to better balance work and leisure (Oludayo *et al.*, 2018).

An elimination of weekend work is critical to keeping employees healthy. Health-conscious recuperation intervals should be observed, and weekends are typically reserved for family, friends, and personal hobbies. Workload that extends over the weekends eats into recovery and family time, hastening burnout. Employers who remove weekend work provide employees time to recoup & pursue their interests, resulting in JS & lowering risk of burnout. These strategies promote a more balanced work environment and increase employee well-being and productivity (Tamunomiebi & Oyibo, 2020).

1.2.3 Brief History of Work-Life Balance

Workers in the late phases of the Industrial Revolution, including small children, worked 14-16 hours each day, six days a week. The terrible conditions prompted labour reformers in the United Kingdom to advocate for a reduced working week and, eventually, work time

limitation legislation for women and children. It was the first of several acknowledgments of social and health issues created by an excessive workload (Brough *et al.*, 2020).

Parallel to this period, the United States began monitoring working hours and discovered that average workweeks exceeded 100 hours, posing a severe health and safety danger. Following extensive labour action and social engagement, the United States government revised Fair Labor Standards Act on October 24, 1940, & established 40-hour workweek. This law turned out to be a significant step in giving workers more personal time and reducing excessive work.

Women's Liberation Movement in the United Kingdom first coined the term "work and life balance" in 1980. Recently, they have been lobbying for flexible working hours and maternity leave to satisfy the requirements of women who had both professional and traditional responsibilities, such as housework and family. The expression "wondering if women could 'have it all'" emphasizes the inequity of WLB. So, despite all of these efforts and assertions of such requirements, significant progress toward WLB for women was not obvious at the time. This historical backdrop will highlight the reality that women have continued to search for a peaceful balance between their professional & personal lives (Dutton, 2024).

1.2.4 Definition of Work-Life Balance Today

WLB is now defined as time management and prevention of burnout and stress. Whereas WLB was primarily concerned with gender issues in the 1980s, it is now understood to mean providing a balanced work environment to all employees, regardless of gender. This movement aims to make the concept of WLB more equitable & realistic across different segments, as indicated by the 2015 EY Global Generations Survey (Thomas, 2022).

The modern employee demands improved time management abilities to make informed decisions about how to balance family, personal interests, and professional commitments. They strive for flexible working arrangements that allow them to better blend work & personal life. Employers adopt a practice known as flexible scheduling, which allows employees to select work hours that are most convenient for their personal lives. This could involve starting later or earlier than the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. timetable to accommodate individual demands and achieve JS (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015).

However, there are certain limitations to that versatility. Many of its critics believe it will simply relegate time management difficulties without solving any significant quality-of-life issues. Furthermore, when flexitime benefits recruitment, it may work to the disadvantage of

younger workers, who often desire the most flexibility and so find themselves in a position where they can face reduced pay, a lack of potential career growth, and job insecurity.

Digital integration complicates WLB. If technology spreads and the "always on" mentality blurs line between work & personal life workers will frequently use flexible time while remaining linked to work, making it impossible to entirely disconnect. The WLB argument should evolve as technology progresses. It will no longer be about flexible working arrangements or alternative working hours, but about how individuals can manage the impact of continual connectedness on their well-being. So, the evolving discourse emphasizes the importance of a multidimensional approach while attempting to achieve an optimal WLB in today's modern workplace (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

1.3 Evolution of Work-Life Balance Concepts

WLB remains one of most critical concerns for employee welfare and productivity, most likely due to the rise of the millennial workforce. With millennials accounting for 75% of the workforce by 2025, there is a growing desire to redefine what WLB means for today's employees. This trend demonstrates the growing requirement for elasticity to accommodate differences in expectations and demands between generations.

Historically, WLB was associated with workplace difficulties such as working hours and family duties, with a focus solely on reducing hours worked and making time for personal life. In the late twentieth century, the debate centred on gender issues, specifically the difficulty women experienced in achieving a balance between work & home life. However, in recent years, conversation has expanded to include a far broader range of factors related to WLB, including diverse workforce & technological advancements (Randstad, 2023).

Over the last two years, it has evolved to include stress management and burnout prevention measures. Stress is a typical, long-term job issue that can lead to serious health problems like hypertension, digestive difficulties, and heart disease. Stress influences mental health, raising risk of depression, anxiety, and insomnia. The latter two may lead to burnout, which is characterized by symptoms such as exhaustion, mood fluctuations, irritation, & decreased work performance. According to a Harvard Business Review study, the financial cost of burnout health problems ranges between \$125 billion to \$190 billion each year in United States (Dave & Purohit, 2016).

WLB is now viewed in terms of flexibility and other workplace rules that promote excellent employee health, such as stress-reduction programs and mental well-being. WLB, however, means various things to the three generations of Baby Boomers, Generation X, & Millennials, each with their own set of values, expectations, and orientations; as a result, enterprises must be able to adapt and respond to these variances. Because WLB is shifting, it is critical to understand generational disparities to design and execute successful and inclusive workplace policies (Kohll, 2021).

1.4 Theories of Work-Life Balance

Work & life research presents a fundamental challenge in that no core language or important ideas have been widely acknowledged; there is no single framework or perspective that is widely accepted. This body of knowledge is based on a variety of theoretical frameworks, making the academic body of knowledge in work-life scholarship extremely diverse: spillover, compensation, resource drain, enrichment, congruence, work-family conflict, segmentation, facilitation, integration, and ecological theories.

1.4.1 Spill-over

Spillover is the process by which experiences in one role impact experiences in another, resulting in increased similarity between the roles. Spillover has been studied to identify how mood, value, skill, and behaviour transfer from one position to another, with the majority of the research focusing on mood spillover. Spillover occurrences can be positive or bad. Other authors have used the terms generalization, isomorphism, continuation, extension, familiarity, and likeness to describe spillover. There are two major ways to view the concept of spillover: a) A positive association or overlap between life and work satisfaction and values, such as a carry-over effect in which work exhaustion is carried home and vice versa, or when family responsibilities conflict with work requirements. In a spillover study that employed experience sampling methodology to track mood-related spillover on a daily basis, researchers discovered that working parents were more likely to carry work-related emotions home than to transmit family-related feelings to the workplace.

1.4.2 Compensation

The compensating theory describes attempts to minimize the effects of negative experiences in one domain by boosting efforts to get positive ones in another. For example, an unhappy employee may begin to emphasize family over work. That is; by realigning human resources,

compensation can be divided into two broad categories: supplemental and reactionary. Supplemental compensation is employed when enjoyable work experiences are insufficient and relief is sought in the form of family or home. Reactive compensation illustrates how a negative work experience is compensated for by positive home experiences. In other words, compensation theory implies the inverse link between work and life, meaning that people try to cover gaps in one area with satisfactions in another.

1.4.3 Resource drain

Resource drain theory describes the movement of resources from one domain to another. It results from a reduction in the quantity of available resources in the original domain, which are limited in terms of time, money, and attention. Resources can also be allocated to non-work or non-family sectors, such as community or personal hobbies.

1.4.4 Enrichment

Enrichment refers to how experiences in instrumental or emotive sources improve the quality of the other area. Enrichment refers to the amount to which experiences in one function increase the quality of life in another, and employees believe that their work and personal roles complement one another. This concept is connected with the term instrumental, which is defined as good job outcomes resulting in positive living outcomes and vice versa.

1.4.5 Congruence

Congruence theory describes how additional variables unrelated to work or family affect the balance of numerous jobs. While spillover is a direct relationship between work and family, congruence measures similarities using a third variable, such as personality traits, behavioural patterns, hereditary influences, and socio-cultural forces. According to congruence theory, a third characteristic, such as IQ or amount of education, may favourably affect both work and personal domains.

1.4.6 Segmentation

According to segmentation theory, work and life are fundamentally unrelated. The term "segmentation" refers to the separation of professional and personal duties so that they do not interfere with one another. Work and life have been organically separated by time, space, and function since the dawn of the industrial revolution. This process was defined by segmentation as what occurs when people intentionally suppress work-related thoughts, feelings, and

behaviours in their personal lives, and vice versa. Since this is no longer true and may never have been, especially for female workers, segmentation is sometimes referred to as the active process by which people create and maintain boundaries between work and family. The literature also advises using the terms compartmentalization, independence, separateness, disengagement, and neutrality to describe this concept. Segmentation prevents this from happening, because some people may consciously repress work-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours at home, and vice versa.

1.4.7 Facilitation

Facilitation theory describes what happens when engagement in one domain increases, allowing for increased engagement in another. Portable augmentations include skills, experiences, resources, and knowledge. Facilitation occurs because, by definition, social systems always use the resources at their disposal to improve conditions, regardless of domain limits.

1.4.8 Integration

According to integration theory, a healthy system with fluid and porous boundaries can improve work-life and community-life outcomes. It acknowledged that integration theory best defines how extra contextual components, such as community, are integrated into the corpus of knowledge about work and life. Integration needs new meanings that include rethinking traditional work and life paradigms, as well as forming an active stakeholder group of employers, workers, and communities with equal voices in developing a new holistic model of WLB. Integration implies that an inclusive approach to work and family, with shared accountability, will deliver higher results in both areas than solutions developed separately.

1.4.9 Ecology

According to ecological systems theory, work and life are a combined function of process, person, context, and time aspects, with each having an additive effect on the work-life experience. Later, ecology theory developed into a person-in-environment theory, with the unifying thread being the idea that individuals and groups have dynamic connections with their social, physical, and environmental settings.

1.4.10 Inter-role conflict

Inter-role conflict theory is employed when acting in the best interests of one domain complicates meeting demands in another. In the literature, this phenomenon is also known as opposition or incompatibility theory. Inter-role conflict prevents an individual from suffering role conflict when one role's expectations or demands interfere with the ability of another to achieve those expectations or demands. An example of role conflict is an employee who is both pressured to work extra hours and advised by family members to return home. Inter-role conflict describes eight statements in which beliefs differ concerning time, role strain, and specific conduct, as follows: Pressures must come from both job and family. Self-identification with roles is essential. Moderating relationships due to role salience are positively related to level of conflict; conflict is strongest when there are negatives associated with noncompliance; the source of conflict serves as the foundation for directionality; relationships are linked to career success and stage; and the presence of external support is linked to conflict (Nirmala, 2021).

1.5 Development Over the Decades

WLB has changed dramatically during last decades and is result of broader socio-economic changes and shifting attitudes towards work and personal life.

The focus during the early 20th century was mainly on reducing the working hours and improving the basic working conditions. Long working hours were a norm set by the Industrial Revolution, and labour movements supported shorter workdays and better working conditions. It was in 1940 that the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act created 40-hour workweek, bringing in a positive shift toward valuing personal time.

The 1970s & 1980s became decades of WLB, thanks in part to feminist groups advocating for gender equality and family-friendly laws. It was then that concept of "WLB" emerged in response to requirements of workers, particularly women, to combine job duties with family and personal life. However, improvement has been gradual, and most workers, particularly women, continue to struggle to balance professional and domestic responsibilities (Shanafelt *et al.*, 2015).

The 1990s & early 2000s saw the rise of technology and flexible work arrangements. Work began to penetrate homes through the usage of email and mobile phones. Companies have recently implemented flexible working hours & telecommuting to help employees attain a

better WLB. This was a critical moment in which the movement transitioned away from simply reducing hours and toward addressing flexibility and well-being.

Over the last decade, this concept has expanded to include concerns about mental health & OWB. This is all about creating a work culture that is low-stress and free of burnout. This redefinition has impacted some reforms, such as unrestricted PTO, including mental health days, and enhancing workplace culture, which lean toward a more holistic approach to employee satisfaction and productivity. The evolution of WLB over decades demonstrates an increasing realization of the need to combine work & personal life in a way that fosters professional success while also promoting personal well-being (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

1.6 Modern Interpretations and Trends

Modern definitions of WLB reflect a better awareness of how work & personal life intersect, driven by technological advancements and increasing employee expectations. Nowadays, WLB is about flexibility, mental health, & well-being rather than boundaries.

One notable trend is the rise of flexible working. Employees are also requesting choices like as telecommuting, flexible hours, and hybrid work models that allow them to adjust their work schedule based on changes in their personal lives. This was expedited by the COVID-19 epidemic, which demonstrated that many functions may be performed effectively outside of a traditional office environment. Companies are thus shifting toward more flexible rules to satisfy workers' diverse requirements and preferences.

Other recent trends focus on mental health & total well-being. Organizations recognize influence of work-related stress on mental & physical health and have implemented measures to support mental health, including counselling, stress management programs, and mental health days off work. These also reflect a growing understanding of worker-life balance as a focus on one's emotional, mental, and psychological health rather than just a physical separation between work & personal life (Kellihe *et al.*, 2019).

Work-life integration is another emerging concept that focuses on work by integrating it with personal life rather than segregating it. The concept is that professional and personal life demands frequently overlap, and what needs to be accomplished is a harmonic approach of balancing both. Some firms have implemented policies such as defining boundaries in after-hours communication or allowing employees to participate in activities that benefit both their personal interests and professional progress.

Furthermore, this model incorporates an emphasis on inclusivity, diversity, and a variety of policies to meet the requirements of employees, such as parental leave, caregiver support, and other accommodations for different life stages and circumstances. There has always been a trend toward doing things with the modern WLB in mind, so that people can be fulfilled on both levels in a flexible, understanding working environment (BetterYou, 2023).

1.7 WLB Best Practices

Best practices in WLB encompass a wide range of techniques and policies that firms worldwide have effectively used to promote employee well-being, productivity, and satisfaction. These practices show an understanding for the workforce's different requirements while attempting to create a supportive work environment.

Flexible Work Arrangements: Offering flexible working hours & option of working remotely is one of the greatest practices in this regard. This is aimed at achieving a balance between work obligations & personal responsibilities, as corporations such as Google and Microsoft have pioneered flexible scheduling. Such a strategy has the potential to reduce stress and improve JS, hence increasing productivity.

Comprehensive Leave Policies: Generous leave policies, such as those for parental leave, vacations, and sabbaticals, are critical in guaranteeing employee support for their personal lives. Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden and Norway, have the most extensive parental leave regulations, ensuring gender equality and allowing parents to spend meaningful time with their children while maintaining their work goals.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): EAPs provide discreet counselling & support to any employee who is experiencing personal or professional difficulties. Organizations such as Johnson & Johnson have made significant investments in EAPs, which vary from mental health resources to financial counselling and legal support, in order to assist employees in dealing with stress & maintaining a healthy WLB.

Health and Wellness Initiatives: Wellness programs, gym memberships, and monthly health examinations can all help you live a healthier lifestyle and are important drivers of good health for any employee. For example, IBM provides complete wellness programs that include physical fitness challenges, nutrition advice, and mental well-being—in short, all kinds of activities that encourage a healthy lifestyle among its employees (Abdirahman *et al.*, 2020).

Encouraging Time Off: It is critical to encourage everyone to spend their vacations and to guarantee that employees receive frequent breaks. In France, this is officially written into law. Workers are entitled to at least five paid vacation weeks each year, allowing them to rest and rejuvenate.

Supportive Work Culture: It is critical to foster a workplace culture in which employees feel valued and respected. Companies like Zappos carve out firms that do everything right and foster a joyful and inclusive workplace characterized by open communication, team-building activities, and work practices that boost employee morale and involvement.

Professional Development Opportunities: Employees feel more fulfilled and motivated when they have access to opportunities for ongoing learning and development. Many organizations, such as Deloitte, give their employees comprehensive training programs that include mentorship opportunities for professional development, all while maintaining WLB. These best practices can assist a company in creating a workplace environment that prioritizes employee well-being by incorporating retention, productivity, & a stronger workplace culture. The practices that support respect for understanding and meeting the diverse requirements of the workforce are those that lead to a healthier, more professional life balance (Deery & Jago, 2015).

1.8 Work-Life Balance in Gujarat

WLB has become a critical concern among female employees in Gujarat, as it has in other regions of the country, and should be reflected in sweeping changes to the workplace culture. Traditionally, the state's workforce, like that of other areas of the country, was mired in a workaholic ethos, particularly in high-profile sectors such as information technology. Long hours that lasted till midnight and weekend work were regarded as indicators of dedication. This rigorous work ethic frequently blurred the distinction between professional and personal life, resulting in burnout and stress. However, WLB has developed in recent years and has become the most talked-about topic, particularly among women, in Gujarat.

The concept of WLB is evolving in Gujarat, as it is throughout India. Millennials and Generation Z are driving this trend, preferring a more balanced life over a work-centric approach. Women employees, who typically juggle professional and home responsibilities, are more sensitive to the need for balance. One learns that the capacity to balance professional

and home life without being overwhelmed is increasingly being discussed as a prerequisite for long-term wellness and JS (Solanki & Mandaviya, 2021).

Gujarat's major cities, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, and Rajkot, are growing in response to rising demand. It has expanded flexible working hours and the option of telecommuting or working from home to support women's dual roles as professionals and caretakers. For example, the time saved from commuting, which can be significant in urban areas, allows women to devote more hours to family, personal hobbies, and themselves, improving their quality of life.

Employers in Gujarat are increasingly realizing the importance of providing a work environment that allows for WLB. Organizations that prioritize employee well-being and flexible working are far more effective in attracting and retaining competent women professionals. The kind-hearted employer who is particularly sensitive to the obstacles that women encounter in terms of childcare or eldercare is in a good position to minimize burnout and ensure JS. Particularly, there is a paradigm shift going place in Gujarat's IT and service sectors, with corporations implementing more WLB-friendly practices. For example, companies that allow workers to work from home or offer flexible hours help women manage their multiple duties better. Such techniques benefit not just employees, but also enhance productivity and minimize attrition rates since satisfied employees are less likely to leave their firms (Faldu et al., 2022).

Gujarat's socio-cultural setting also has an impact on women's WLB. A woman in Gujarat is traditionally obligated to fulfil the twin roles of a homemaker even as her professional responsibilities increase. This double burden could become overpowering, making the need for WLB even more urgent. However, as societal standards shift and knowledge of gender equality grows, this growing need for help is becoming more apparent. One of the most important aspects of WLB for women in Gujarat is the provision of support networks such as cheap childcare and eldercare services. Furthermore, the fact that the family cannot be overlooked bodes well. In many circumstances, extended families play an important role in assisting women with their duties, giving the necessary assistance to maintain a WLB.

As Gujarat's economy grows, WLB will become increasingly vital to female employees. The corporate industry is gradually accepting the notion that a balanced workforce is a productive one. Firms that invest in workplace flexibility and well-being initiatives, together with other support management strategies, will see the long-term benefits of increased employee

satisfaction and organizational success. WLB serves as the fulcrum of women's professional lives in Gujarat. As the state moves toward a more modern and inclusive work culture, flexibility, well-being, and a supportive work environment will undoubtedly be prioritized in the coming years. This benefits not only female personnel but also increases overall organizational productivity and sustainability. WLB is much more than just a personal issue; it is a strategic need for any business that wishes to remain in business in Gujarat's competitive economic environment (Udaykumar et al., 2022).

1.8.1 Concept of Work-Life Balance a Misnomer in Gujarat

WLB has remained mostly a fantasy for women in Gujarat and across India. According to a recent survey, Indian labourers work an average of 2,195 hours per year, compared to 1,473 in Hamburg, Germany. That distinguishes the difference and highlights the problem that Indian employees continue to face in balancing work and personal life (Agrawal, 2017).

The problem is further compounded for women in Gujarat by the duality of traditional gender roles, requiring excellence as both an employee and a homemaker. Many times, this dual burden involves significant physical and mental strain, leading them to resign, take a long break, or find part-time jobs with better flexibility. Unfortunately, stepping out of the workforce frequently results in career stagnation or disadvantage upon re-entry, and some women opt out of the workforce altogether.

This struggle for WLB is not exclusive to women; in fact, men too suffer from the drudgery of long commutes, unending working hours, and toxic work environments. As primary breadwinners, many men face enormous stress, leaving little time for family or personal well-being. As a result, many Gujaratis are still unfamiliar with the concept of WLB. However, there is some optimism. It lays the groundwork for a more realistic and practical WLB through shifting company policies, flexible work arrangements, and cultural shifts away from conventional gender roles. Adoption of these improvements might transform WLB from an idealistic concept to a reality, benefiting all Indian employees (Ganguly et al., 2022).

1.8.2 The Changing Workplace Scenario in Gujarat

Even as the workplace in Gujarat is gradually changing, it is part of a larger trend in India to improve women's WLB. Various business and government initiatives now recognize the importance of employee well-being, with reputable organizations like Amazon, Tata Motors, IBM, TCS, and Reliance Industries taking proactive steps to ensure better WLB standards.

Some organizations will offer flexible work arrangements, promote health and wellness initiatives, and have policies that encourage people to be satisfied with their jobs. Such initiatives at all levels show a favorable trend toward building a more balanced and healthier work environment for female employees.

Parental leave is one area where India's labor policies have improved significantly. India is in the top five for paternity leave, with women employees receiving 26 weeks of fully compensated maternity leave. These policies are a positive step toward supporting female employees in managing their career and personal duties. Despite the foregoing, considerable hurdles remain ahead. In Gujarat, the most common barriers to having a successful WLB were poor urban infrastructure, long commutes, and a desire for greater flexibility at work. The pressures of city living can make it difficult for women to strike a balance between job and personal life without being overly stressed and burned out.

Employees must feel motivated to care for their health in the workplace. For this reason, Gujarat-based enterprises must continue to invest in infrastructure, minimize commute time, and provide flexible work options. Although the situation is gradually improving, the struggle for WLB remains difficult for the majority of Gujarat's women. Employers and policymakers must continue to work together to make WLB a reality for all (Yadav, 2017).

1.8.3 Government Policies and Regulations

Over time, the Indian government has recognized the importance of WLB and has established several policies and regulations aimed at improving workers' quality of life and fostering a healthier balance between professional and personal lives.

On this count, the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act of 2017 sets a new standard. The act increases the duration of maternity leave for female employees from twelve to twenty-six weeks. It applies to all businesses with ten or more employees and requires any firm with fifty or more employees to provide crèche services. This expansion will help new mothers during the important first few weeks of childcare and make the workplace more family-friendly. While paternity leave has not yet been enacted into law, there is rising support for its implementation to help fathers better balance their work and family responsibilities.

The Factories Act of 1948 addresses working conditions in factories. This Act says that no employee shall work more than 48 hours per week and must be off duty at least once a week. It also states that a break is required for a specific period in order to prevent worker weariness.

As a result, this legislation is critical in preventing workers' mental and physical health from deteriorating due to extended hours of work.

Each state in India has its own version of the Shops and Establishments Act, which aims to regulate employment conditions in retail and commercial establishments. More importantly, this legislation governs working hours, overtime, leave, holidays, and rest intervals to ensure a good WLB for all employees in these enterprises.

The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952 requires every employer and employee to contribute to employees' provident funds, which provide workers with financial security and encourage long-term planning, thereby improving overall well-being and contributing to a better WLB (Bala, 2017).

The Payment of Gratuity Act of 1972 provides for the payment of gratuity after five years of continuous employment. This provision provides him with financial stability, which aids in his long-term financial planning by providing additional support to enable him live a more balanced life.

The Minimum Wage Act, 1948 According to the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, a fair return for employees' work protects them from exploitation and reduces financial stress. This is an important aspect of WLB since fair compensation for work done has a direct impact on the worker's financial security and thus his quality of life.

The Child Labour (ban and Regulation) Act of 1986 emphasizes the ban on child labor while also protecting young workers aged 14 to 18. It ensures that they are not exploited in hazardous conditions and that their working environment promotes their development and well-being, ultimately contributing to a better WLB.

The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, is a collection of labor legislation aimed at improving safety and health conditions in numerous industries. This code aims to improve the quality of life for workers at all levels by providing improved WLB as a result of a healthier and safer work environment.

Although these policies are far from implementing WLB for all employees in India, they do lay the groundwork for a more balanced and supportive workplace. If these rules are adjusted with experience and then effectively implemented, they have the potential to bring millions of workers across the country into a healthy WLB (Chindarkar, 2017).

1.9 Women's Participation in the Workforce

Women's participation in labor is a critical component of both economic success & social progress. Women's participation in numerous areas around the world has altered over time, with far-reaching consequences for economies and communities. This sector demonstrates how women make up a significant portion of workforce in many countries. Increased access to education, shifting social norms, and pro-women government measures have all contributed to the shift. Education, for example, has played an important role in empowering women to obtain skills and information for a variety of professional prospects. Furthermore, shifting rules regarding equal pay legislation, maternity leave, and anti-discrimination laws have made it easier for women to enter and stay in job market.

Despite these developments, challenges remain far from being resolved. Females continue to face gender bias, income inequities, and fewer opportunities in upper management roles. In addition, another dual burden is associated with family duties, which has been shown to have a negative influence on career growth & participation rates in particular locations. Furthermore, traditionally female-dominated areas such as health, education, and hospitality pay lower wages and offer fewer prospects for advancement than male-dominated sectors such as engineering & technology (Hyland *et al.*, 2020).

However, women's labor-force participation remains mixed in India. Despite great advances in women's education and career possibilities, cultural and institutional impediments prevent full involvement. According to recent statistics, India's female labor force participation rate has been declining, with many women opting out of the workforce to meet family and other social demands. Coping with such difficulties requires a diverse strategy. Policies that promote gender equality, such as cheap childcare, flexible work schedules, and robust anti-discrimination laws, should be implemented. A work culture that values diversity and actively supports women's professional advancement could help to create more equal chances.

Women should be encouraged to enter the labor for reasons of both justice and economic necessity. Research has shown that increased gender diversity in any workplace leads to better decision-making, innovation, and, ultimately, commercial performance. Offering them a working environment in which women have equal opportunity to advance professionally as their male counterparts implies that societies will benefit from human capital in its whole, hence driving long-term economic growth and social progress (Lahoti & Swaminathan, 2016).

1.9.1 Historical Trends in Female Employment

The historical trends of female employment are complex, with constant social, economic, and political changes. Over last century, trend of women's engagement in workforce has shifted considerably, driven by causes such as industrialization, wars, economic shifts, and the changing face of humanity.

✓ Early 20th Century:

At the start of the century, women laborers were limited to household work, agricultural, and low-wage factory jobs. The few employments available did not comparable to men's jobs and were mostly low-wage. This mirrored a broader social perspective on work--what was essential and what could be supplemented.

✓ World Wars:

The World Wars marked watershed moments in the evolution of women's employment. Massive conscription into the military during World Wars I and II decreased the available male labor pool. Women were anticipated to replace males in industry, transportation, and clerical work. This was an era of strong, yet short-term, female labor force participation, demonstrating women's ability for a wide range of jobs (Hakim, 2016).

✓ Post-War Era:

Whereas this work experience, as well as the economic need for two incomes, helped to gradually but steadily boost female employment when many women were expected to return to conventional household responsibilities following the wars, the postwar years saw the growth of women's rights movement. It called for equal opportunity, remuneration, and anti-discrimination laws.

✓ Late 20th Century:

The 1960s and 1970s were particularly unusual periods in which feminist groups gained traction. In many countries, legislative changes have institutionalized equal pay and other anti-discrimination regulations. More & more women are pursuing higher education & entering professional professions such as medicine, law, and business.

✓ 21st Century:

During the last few decades, there has only been one trend: gender equality at work. These have been fueled by rapid technological advancements, service industry expansion, and a rising need for dual-income households. Despite these achievements, numerous issues continue, such as the gender wage gap, underrepresentation in leadership, and balancing work & family duties.

A participation of women in the labor varies greatly among regions & is influenced by cultural, economic, & policy factors. Women's career options remain limited in many regions of the world due to traditional gender norms and educational limitations. However, there is a general trend toward increased engagement and recognition of women in the economy. Knowing these patterns is useful in eliminating the final remaining barriers to gender equality in the workplace and developing policies that will support women's continuous growth in all industries (England, 2017).

1.9.2 Sector-Wise Distribution of Women Employees

Historically, the sector-wise distribution of female employees has been expected to reflect broader shifts in the economic and social arenas. In the early twentieth century, women worked mostly in agriculture, domestic service, and textile production. These were low-wage jobs that typically upheld traditional gender roles. household service was represented by jobs like maids and nannies, which were merely an extension of a woman's typical household tasks. World Wars had a significant impact on the terrain. With men forced into military service, women stepped into vocations from which they had previously been barred. Female employment has increased significantly in manufacturing, transportation, and clerical labor. Women worked in munitions factories, shipyards, and administrative offices in large numbers, which contrasted with pre-war job trends.

Economic prosperity and the expansion of the service industry had an impact on women's work patterns after WWII. Women were expected to return to conventional household responsibilities, but the expanding economy and changing standards opened up new opportunities. In the 1950s and 1960s, women began to enter the educational, health, and retail sectors, gradually moving away from the more traditional roles of the early twentieth century. During the 1960s and 1970s, feminist movements and anti-discrimination laws helped to shape the nature of employment. As more women went to college, an increasing number of them began to work in professional and technical fields. By end of twentieth century, women

were progressively entering business, law, medical, and STEM sectors, despite facing impediments to progression and equal pay (Chawadha, 2022).

Women's career opportunities have expanded in the twenty-first century. They can be found in a variety of areas, including technology, finance, government, and academia. Despite the setbacks, the process faces hurdles such as occupational segregation & a lack of senior leadership representation. Female sectoral distribution varies around the world, with most underdeveloped countries continuing to engage in agriculture and informal industries due to a lack of education and work prospects. Women's employment rates are generally increasing across industries. These patterns highlight both how far the country has come and how many obstacles remain in this area. What women most need are ongoing efforts to encourage equal representation and opportunities in all sectors, as well as the removal of cultural and structural impediments that have hampered women's economic engagement (Patil, 2018).

1.9.3 Challenges Faced by Working Women

- Evidence of the persistent wage and compensation gaps is the fact that women usually earn less than their male counterparts in similar jobs. This pay gap holds across sectors and experience levels.
- There is normally discrimination against women at the point of hiring, promotion, and even in day-to-day workplace-related activities, therefore forcing them to face limitations to career growth and JS.
- Most working women cannot cope with dual demands of work & home. This situation worsens because of a lack of reasonable child care and family leave policies.
- According to Kaur et al. (2018), inflexible working hours and lack of telecommuting can make it challenging for women to balance their home & professional lives.
- Women are underrepresented in senior management & executive positions, limiting their ability to influence decisions and advance in their careers.
- Women may face sexual advances in the workplace, and a hostile environment can negatively impact their mental and emotional well-being.
- Women face fewer mentorship and networking opportunities than men, limiting their professional growth and development.
- Gender stereotypes and unconscious biases can impact women's career paths and professional relationships.

- Women working in physically demanding or dangerous situations face additional health risks due to inadequate safety precautions.
- It's a digitally connected life, and having more of everything may imply an expectation of constant access. This may obscure the distinction between work & personal life, resulting in increased stress & an inability to achieve WLB (Panda, 2018).

1.10 Service Sector Overview

The tertiary sector, sometimes known as service sector, has maintained an important element of economy centred on the provision of services rather than physical things. It contributes to a wide range of businesses, including health, education, financial services, retail, hospitality, & information technology. Unlike the primary sector, which deals with natural resources, and the secondary sector, which includes manufacturing & construction, the service industry is concerned with the delivery of intangible products that meet specific client wants and desires. The service industry is the largest and most dominating portion of industrialized nation economies, employing the majority of workers. Improvements in technology, particularly in communication and information technology, have significantly aided the expansion of service-related companies. These have improved the effectiveness and scope of coverage for services, resulting in their rapid expansion and innovation.

Furthermore, increased information and data are fueling the sector's growth through new services and innovation in existing ones. The service sector has been the driving force behind economic development, and its contribution to job creation and economic growth will be significant as economies progress (CFI Team, 2015).

1.10.1 Major Economic Sectors

- **Primary Sector:** Extractive industries are in the business of gathering raw resources, therefore the primary sector includes mining, lumber, & oil-drilling companies, as well as agricultural & fishing industries.
- **Secondary Sector:** Secondary industries comprise all enterprises that make and sell goods, such as vehicle manufacturers, furniture stores, & apparel sellers.
- **Tertiary Sector:** The tertiary sector includes service sector. It encompasses a wide range of businesses, including financial services, internet technology, health, & entertainment (Cusumano *et al.*, 2015).

Economists categorize the economy into three main sectors: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary activities include extracting and exploiting natural resources connected to agriculture, mining, and forestry. Secondary manufacturing and construction entail transforming raw resources into finished products. The third part of the economy is known as the tertiary sector or the service industry. It focuses on providing services rather than actual items, including health and education, banking, and retail.

Some economists add a fourth sector, quaternary sector, which includes industries that rely on knowledge and information. This encompasses research, information technology, education, and consulting. This clearly suggests that intellectual and data-driven services are becoming increasingly important in today's economy. In a knowledge-based economy, businesses use information and communication technologies to give more personalized products and services to clients. For example, internet shops like Amazon use consumer information to provide targeted adverts and recommendations to customers (CFI Team, 2015).

1.10.2 Growth and Development in India

1.10.1.1 Role of Women in the Service Sector

Given their significant contributions, women should support and advance the service industry. Like health, education, hospitality, and retail, the service sector employs a lot of women and has become a major hub for women entering the workforce. Most people working in the health field as nurses, doctors, administrators, and so forth are women. Their engagement in the field has been a timely factor in meeting the growing need for medical care. They have made a very substantial contribution to the supply of high-quality healthcare services. In addition, women have a vital role in educational institutions as instructors, administrators, and support personnel who shape the future of the workforce and enhance student achievement (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019).

Women are the backbone of hospitality, beginning with hotels, restaurants, and tourist services. They work on the front lines of service as well as in management and senior roles. Their ability to handle a wide range of consumers while providing high-quality service is vital in this profession. The same is true in the retail industry, where they make up a sizable workforce as sales staff, store managers, and so on. Their engagement is vital to successful sales, customer happiness, and shop operations. Most women hold leadership and managerial positions in retail, influencing strategic decisions and contributing to business success.

Despite their significant contributions, women in this industry continue to confront numerous hurdles, including income discrepancies, limited promotion prospects, and issues with WLB. Bridging these disparities is critical for creating equitable opportunities and fostering a positive work environment. Overall, women's positions in the service sector are critical, and their continued involvement and promotion are essential for the sector's ongoing development and progress (Kabeer, 2021).

1.11 Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Work-Life Balance

Socio-cultural factors influence WLB because they shape how people experience and manage their professional and personal lives. The issues include societal standards, cultural expectations, and family relationships, which all have an impact on employees' WLB.

- **Societal Norms:** Societal expectations can also be used to determine what is appropriate in terms of WLB. For example, in many nations, the cultural view is that long work hours and hard work are essential to one's profession; this attitude puts pressure on individuals to devote personal time to work. On the contrary, societies that prioritize family life and personal well-being may increase support for WLB programs such as flexible working hours and parental leave.
- **Cultural Expectations:** Gender roles and obligations are perceived differently throughout cultures. For example, in countries with strong traditional standards, women may be responsible for all household and caregiving responsibilities, leaving little room for WLB. In more progressive gender role cultures, responsibilities would be split, giving men and women equal opportunities to achieve a better WLB.
- **Family Dynamics:** Family obligations, such as caring for children and the elderly, as well as housework, play an important role in maintaining work-family balance. The presence of support systems that extend to extended family members or paid childcare providers can help workers cope. Countries with large extended families may provide more assistance for both work and family commitments.
- **Workplace Culture:** Another aspect that has a big impact on WLB is corporate culture. Workplaces that provide friendly working rules, such as working time flexibility and benefits that help their employees' families, create an environment in which employees can achieve WLB. On the other side, too much hard work in an environment with insufficient flexibility is certain to exacerbate stress and produce a work-life imbalance.

These are some of the most important socio-cultural aspects to consider when establishing measures to improve WLB and promote a better workplace environment for employees (Mohanty & Jena, 2016).

1.11.1 Cultural Norms and Gender Roles

Cultural norms and gender roles have a significant impact on individuals' WLB since they determine how one is supposed to manage both their professional and personal lives. These elements form the cultural norm by determining work, family, and gender expectations, as well as whether or not WLB is facilitated. These establish what is anticipated in terms of work and family roles, as well as acceptable behavior at home, in the community, and on the job. Traditional conventions in many cultures emphasize the necessity and responsibility to work long hours and be dedicated to employment, causing pressure to prioritize work over personal life.

WLB is heavily influenced by gender role expectations, which are deeply ingrained in most societies. Most traditional cultures have defined roles for women; the latter are expected to handle the majority of home and caregiving chores. This creates an imbalance, making it difficult for women to achieve a satisfying WLB. On the contrary, it is sometimes claimed that males face societal pressures to be career successful first and foremost, and thus are not expected to share household tasks equally (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

With changing gender roles, there is a greater understanding of the importance of more equitable work and family duties. As cultures become more liberal, women are more likely to take on these obligations and support policies like parental leave and flexible working hours. The modifications make it easier for both genders to combine their professional and personal lives. Cultural norms and gender roles will consequently have varying effects on WLB depending on how well they correspond with individual requirements and organizational regulations. Changing cultural norms and gender roles is critical for creating an environment in which everyone, regardless of gender, can achieve WLB (Lester, 2015).

1.11.2 Family Structure and Support Systems

Family structures and support systems play a crucial role in determining how people manage their work and domestic duties, making them essential components of WLB. The workload that can be shared or the available help depends on several factors, including the family structure who is really in the family such as whether there are nuclear, extended, or single

parents, for example, and how the family is set up in terms of dependents. It is said that nuclear parents find it especially challenging to strike a balance and typically manage with little to no help. However, extended families can occasionally assist with this problem by providing childcare as well as handling a lot of household chores, saving working people's time.

Nonetheless, the external support networks that are accessible are just as crucial to WLB. The provision of reasonably priced and trustworthy childcare services alleviates the burden of obtaining appropriate care for their children while they are at work for employed parents. Similarly, eldercare support would lessen the workload of extra care that workers might be giving to senior family members. These can prove to be highly significant in determining an individual's ability to effectively balance their tasks at home and work (Schnettler *et al.*, 2018).

WLB appears to be impacted by the multitude of caregiving tasks that exist within families. Women typically shoulder the majority of the burden for childcare and housework, which tends to restrict their options for career advancement and flexibility. More and more people are realizing that to achieve more balanced approaches, shared caring obligations between spouses are necessary. Support from coworkers is another crucial element. Employers who implement policies that allow for flexible work schedules, remote work, and family leave can best improve WLB. Thus, these regulations improve JS by facilitating employees' ability to manage family duties stress-free.

WLB can also be significantly impacted by cultural differences in views on family and support networks. Stronger support networks are typically seen in societies that place a high value on family unity and shared responsibility. Employers will need to take a more proactive approach in order to encourage their employees' WLB if this isn't the case in a culture that values individualism. To provide a supportive environment where workers can effectively manage their personal and professional lives, the dynamics must be evaluated (Russo *et al.*, 2016).

1.11.3 Social Expectations and Pressures

Social constraints and expectations have a significant impact on the WLB that an individual exhibits in terms of setting priorities and juggling personal and professional responsibilities. The pressure originates from the job, society, and individual goals that have an impact on how people live their life. Social norms specify the roles and behaviors that are acceptable in the community as well as the conduct that is expected of each individual in terms of their personal and professional lives. Career success is highly valued in many cultures, and these societies

are known to place a lot of pressure on employees to work long hours and prioritize their careers above their personal well-being. It is well recognized that these conventions encourage unrealistic expectations about what it actually takes to strike a healthy WLB.

One of the main factors contributing to problems with WLB is professional demands. Stressful work environments, long workdays, and constant availability requirements place a great deal of strain on staff members. Expanding one's career means taking on more duties and responsibilities, which increases the risk of burnout or stress. These problems are exacerbated by social pressure to achieve professionally, which forces people to sacrifice their personal lives and families. Gender norms play a role in work-life equilibrium. According to traditional gender norms, men should concentrate on their work while women are expected to handle the majority of caregiving and home duties. Working parents primarily women are under additional stress as a result of these expectations since they must balance their obligations to their families with their careers (Pasamar & Alegre, 2015).

An imbalance between work and life is sometimes caused by self-imposed tensions and personal expectations. One may feel obligated to uphold high standards in both their personal and professional lives if they want to thrive in their business or career, have the ideal family, or lead a particular kind of lifestyle. If such obligations are not appropriately managed, one may find themselves under constant stress and strain from trying to meet them. Social media has contributed to these pressures by disseminating perfectionist standards of achievement and living. The pressure to meet these standards adds to the already high levels of stress and inflated expectations around WLB. To create a better and healthier balance between work and personal duties, supportive initiatives and policies that acknowledge the influence of social expectations and demands on people's lives might be implemented (Robak, 2017).

1.12 Economic Factors Influencing Work-Life Balance

Economic issues have a huge impact on WLB because they emphasize how much time employees devote to their working lives versus their personal lives. The attainment of balance is directly influenced by income. Higher earners have more options for effortlessly juggling work and personal obligations, such as being able to pay for daycare, employing domestic help, or using wellness and health centers. Conversely, it would imply that individuals in lower income brackets would have to work longer hours or hold more jobs in order to make ends meet, potentially at the expense of their personal lives and families.

The impact of job stability on WLB is significant. Stress levels may rise in individuals with insecure employment circumstances, and they may find themselves working longer hours in an attempt to save their jobs. Employees who experience job instability are typically forced to prioritize their work above their personal lives because doing otherwise could jeopardize their career. The amount that a person must make in order to maintain a particular standard of living is determined by the cost of living in a given area, which has an impact on WLB. This is due to the possibility that employees may feel more pressure to work longer hours or take on more jobs in order to pay for basic needs, which could leave them with less time for personal and family activities in high-cost places (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2017).

Economic factors and regulations that affect WLB, such as minimum wage rules, taxes, and social benefits, are covered by the same legal doctrine. Worker pressures could be somewhat reduced and a better WLB could be achieved with the support of policies that provide health benefits, reasonably priced child care, and paid leave. Without them, these difficulties can worsen and force employees to make difficult choices between work and personal time. WLB is also impacted by labor market developments and economic growth. People can work more flexible hours and receive better pay packages in an expanding economy, for example, which promotes a healthy WLB. However, a lackluster economy forces people to work longer hours for less money out of a fear of losing their employment, which throws off WLB. When developing WLB plans and policies, it is crucial to consider these economic aspects in order to help individuals strike a balance between their personal obligations and professional obligations (Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015).

1.12.1 Economic Development and Employment Opportunities

This shows a direct correlation between economic growth and improved job prospects and, consequently, how people manage work and personal life. For instance, when economies grow, so does the number of jobs created, opening up additional job prospects and perhaps even better working circumstances. In contrast, firms and sectors typically expand and provide a greater range of work opportunities during periods of economic growth. Because there will be a greater variety and flexibility in job options, people will be able to select roles that better meet their needs both personally and professionally. This will further enhance their capacity to achieve a better WLB.

There is a widespread belief that economic development encourages the transition of industries from primary ones, like manufacturing or agriculture, to tertiary and quaternary

sectors, like technology and services. Increased flexibility and diversity in terms of job profiles will almost certainly result from this. In contrast to manufacturing jobs, which had set work hours and required attendance at the factory, jobs related to technology or services, for example, often offer telecommuting or flexible working hours. This makes life easier to balance. In addition, higher wages and employee perks like health insurance, paid time off, retirement, etc. will follow stronger economic growth. Reductions in financial strain brought about by higher pay enable employees to better balance their personal and professional lives. Better perks also help them with personal obligations like childcare, healthcare, etc., which helps them maintain a better WLB (Guerrina, 2015).

Investing in education and skill development is boosted by economic growth, as well. Workers now have the necessary training to take advantage of higher-paying, more flexible jobs thanks to this investment. Thirdly, a person might seek a career that offers a better WLB by taking advantage of the different job chances that arise with training and education. Unfortunately, regional inequities may get wider as a result of economic progress. Others may fall behind and hence have unequal access to employment, even while some may profit from increased employment and better working conditions. Especially in less affluent locations, this might have an impact on a person's ability to work in a profession that truly helps them balance work and life. Taking note of this regional inequality and attempting to devise a plan that provides equal opportunities to everybody would be the key to true WLB (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015).

1.12.2 Income Levels and Financial Independence

People's WLB is heavily influenced by their income level and financial freedom. Higher income typically provides more security and may assist to reduce overall stress levels, hence enhancing WLB. Higher incomes provide more adequate coverage for essential needs such as housing, healthcare, and education. This financial buffer alleviates anxiety and allows people to focus more on their personal and professional aspirations. Increased income also provides more access to supportive resources such as improved childcare, health care, and domestic assistance. High-income individuals, for example, may be able to afford domestic help or premium childcare services, alleviating some of the difficulties associated with balancing work and family commitments (Bouget *et al.*, 2016).

Financial freedom allows for a variety of options, including working part-time, freelancing, or even engaging in entrepreneurial ventures that give people more control over their time. This flexibility often leads to better work-life integration and, ultimately, greater equilibration.

On the other hand, lower income levels are typically associated with high levels of stress, which can have a negative impact on WLB. This causes chronic stress, an emotionally and physically draining state that makes it difficult to maintain a healthy WLB. On the other hand, financial stability will result in no or minimal stress, thereby improving your OWB.

Financial freedom also helps one to advance economically, creating opportunity for most people to advance to occupations with excellent living standards or to transition from profit-driven careers to consultancies or other more balanced employment. More revenue supports more investment in education and skill development, expanding individuals' options to live a balanced life. Addressing economic disparities and supporting financial independence is therefore critical to improving a person's overall WLB (Perrone *et al.*, 2015).

1.13. Technological Impact on Work-Life Balance

However, technology has a significant impact on employees' WLB. In other words, technology, notably laptops, smartphones, and other gadgets, allows people to work from anywhere in the world while remaining linked to their central office. Flexibility in work arrangements can promote WLB by allowing an individual to better manage personal and professional duties. However, increased use of technology, particularly when work intrudes into personal life, may raise workers' anxiety. Organizations should strike a balance between the use of technology for productive purposes and the requirement for employees to set appropriate boundaries for WLB. Furthermore, with automation and robots replacing human labor, there is the possibility of creating a two-class society: those who have the luxury of spending time pursuing creative aspirations, and those who are plagued by instability and no future at all.

Improved employee satisfaction	Efficiency	Security	Better customer service
Communication	Working remotely	Increase productivity	Increased collaboration
Streamline processes	Automation	Competitive advantage	Maintain organization
AI ethics	Computational accuracy	Enhanced data management	Improved cost management
Industry efficient	Mitigating disruptions	Fostering communication	Make your business more competitive
Improved communication	Innovative technology allows more workplace flexibility	Customization	Flexibility

Figure 1.2: Technology in the Workplace (**Source:** Author’s work)

The impact of technology on WLB has been so significant (Figure 1.2) that it now presents both opportunities and difficulties to people and businesses. Technology has had a significant impact on many elements of work and life, including how individuals manage their time and obligations. The needs for remote work or flexible working arrangements are also easily met by technical advancements such as high-speed internet, video conferencing, and collaborative tools. This flexibility can help employees better fit their job into their personal life, saving them time commuting and providing them with the option of working from multiple locations.

Remote employment allows for a better WLB by giving employees greater choice over their work schedules and environments.

While technology facilitates telework, it also contribute to the blurring of the lines between work and personal life. If there is ongoing communication via e-mails, messaging apps, and mobile devices, it can raise expectations about availability outside of normal business hours. This could result in an "always-on" culture with greater stress and difficulty disengaging from work, harming WLB.

There are technology tools and software that improve productivity by allowing workers to monitor and manage their duties effectively. Project management software, time-tracking apps, and automation tools improve workflows and save time spent on repetitive chores, allowing more time for personal pursuits. Technology allows for flexible work arrangements that best meet different human demands and preferences, such as staggered hours and job sharing. This flexibility may also contribute to a healthier WLB by allowing employees to change their working schedules based on their circumstances. Technology itself offers a variety of mental health and well-being resources, such as stress management apps, virtual counseling, and wellness platforms that provide support and strategies for dealing with work-related stress and maintaining a much healthier WLB. In other words, the technology used to improve flexibility in modern work practices raises issues of ongoing connectivity and boundary management. The problem is to strike an appropriate balance between the good and the bad, both of which are the result of technological innovation in maintaining WLB among today's workforce (Adisa *et al.*, 2017).

1.13.1 Role of Technology in Work Environments

As we progress through the twenty-first century, technology continues to profoundly transform workplace situations. It is no longer an option in terms of integration into daily corporate activities, but rather a strict requirement that determines how tasks are completed, communication is managed, and productivity is monitored. Technology has had a significant impact on the change of commercial work models. Staff no longer need to be desk-bound, thanks to advances in remote work tools and cloud computing. This kind of freedom enables individuals to work from any location, whether at home or on the go. Video conferencing, instant messaging, and collaborative platforms all facilitate communication and cooperation, allowing for a more flexible workplace.

The importance that technology plays in increasing productivity is nearly immeasurable. Sophisticated, automated productivity tools and software bring order to the workflow, allowing staff to focus on more important activities. For example, project management software assists teams in tracking progress, deadlines, and collaboration. Data analysis tools also provide valuable insights, allowing organizations to make educated decisions, streamline operations, and improve. Technology, the all-pervasive component, also introduces obstacles. Dependency is a serious concern. Too much reliance on technology indicates that if something in the system goes wrong or fails, operations can come to a halt, resulting in lost productivity. The constant requirement for updating is also time-consuming and expensive for a corporation. Furthermore, because to the quick change in technology, employees are always required to learn new systems and adapt to them, affecting productivity for a short period of time (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016).

The other problem is having an impact on interpersonal interactions. Face-to-face engagement declines as the number of digital communication channels grows. Weakened workplace relationships may have a negative impact on team cohesion. Technology facilitates communication, but it also depersonalizes the work environment, leading to feelings of isolation or detachment among employees. Despite these disadvantages, the benefits of technology in the workplace are immense. Various communication tools are now changing the way teams communicate. Several types of virtual communication can help teams collaborate and be more efficient. Cloud storage technologies and file-sharing systems keep information safe and easy to access, encouraging seamless and productive work flow.

Technological advancements provide workplace flexibility in a variety of ways. BYOD, or Bring Your Own Device, allows employees to use their own devices for work, which adds convenience while potentially increasing productivity. The flexibility extends beyond working hours and places; employees are free to manage their time schedules and working environment most appropriately. The meteoric emergence of mobile technology and cloud computing has also fueled a preference for remote and hybrid work methods. More workers than ever before are telecommuting, forcing businesses to adapt to these new working arrangements. Cloud-based collaboration tools and mobile apps increase worker productivity by providing real-time communication and project management regardless of physical location. In the workplace, technology may be a double-edged sword. Though it offers numerous advantages, such as higher efficacy, improved communication, and greater flexibility, it also has negatives, such as reliance on systems and potential repercussions on human relationships. Only by harnessing

the beneficial aspects of technology and ironing out the negative ones can a workplace stay effective and optimistic. The capacity to remain flexible while being proactive in incorporating new technologies will define success in today's workplace, where technology is rapidly evolving (Tushman & Anderson, 2018).

1.13.2 Challenges of Digital Connectivity

The rise of digital connectivity has transformed the way we work, communicate, and live. While it offers significant benefits, such as enhanced collaboration and access to information, it also presents several challenges that organizations and individuals must navigate. One of the primary challenges is the issue of information overload. With constant access to emails, messages, and notifications, employees can become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information they receive daily. This can lead to reduced productivity, increased stress levels, and difficulties in prioritizing tasks. The constant influx of digital communications can make it challenging for individuals to focus on critical work and can result in a fragmented workflow (Muyingo *et al.*, 2020).

Another significant challenge is digital distraction. The presence of numerous apps and social media platforms can divert attention away from work tasks, leading to decreased efficiency and productivity. Employees might find themselves spending excessive time on non-work-related activities, which can impact overall performance and contribute to time management issues. Security and privacy are also major concerns in a digitally connected environment. The increased reliance on digital tools and platforms raises the risk of data breaches, cyberattacks, and unauthorized access to sensitive information. Ensuring robust security measures and protecting personal and organizational data is a constant challenge for businesses and individuals alike.

WLB can be compromised by digital connectivity. The boundary between work and personal life becomes increasingly blurred, with employees often feeling pressured to be available around the clock. This "always-on" culture can lead to burnout and decreased JS, as the expectation to respond to work communications outside of regular hours can interfere with personal time and well-being. Lastly, digital inequality presents a challenge, as not everyone has equal access to high-speed internet or advanced technology. This disparity can lead to uneven opportunities and productivity levels among employees, particularly in regions with limited digital infrastructure. Overall, while digital connectivity enhances efficiency and

communication, addressing these challenges is essential for maintaining a balanced and secure work environment (Foster *et al.*, 2018).

1.14 Health and Well-Being of Women Employees

The health and well-being of women employees are critical factors that significantly influence workplace productivity and overall JS. Addressing these aspects is not only a matter of promoting individual wellness but also of fostering a positive and supportive work environment.

Physical health is a major concern for women in the workforce. Many women juggle work responsibilities with personal health issues, such as pregnancy, menopause, or chronic conditions, which can impact their performance and JS. Employers can support physical health by offering health benefits that cover a range of medical needs, providing access to wellness programs, and ensuring that the workplace is ergonomically designed to prevent injuries and promote comfort.

Mental health is equally important. Women often face unique stressors, such as balancing career and family responsibilities or dealing with workplace discrimination. High levels of stress can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression, affecting both job performance and personal well-being. Providing mental health resources, such as counseling services, stress management workshops, and a supportive work culture, can help mitigate these issues. Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health without fear of stigma is essential.

WLB also plays a crucial role in the well-being of women employees. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options or adjustable hours, can help women better manage their personal and professional responsibilities. Additionally, paid family leave and childcare support can relieve some of the pressures associated with balancing work and family life.

Career development opportunities are vital for maintaining engagement and JS. Offering mentorship programs, professional development, and equal opportunities for advancement helps ensure that women feel valued and can progress in their careers. Ultimately, prioritizing the health and well-being of women employees leads to a more motivated, productive, and loyal workforce. Organizations that actively support their employees' physical, mental, and

emotional health are likely to see improved overall performance and reduced turnover (Moen *et al.*, 2016).

1.14.1 Physical Health Implications

The physical health of women employees is a critical aspect of their OWB and productivity in the workplace. Various factors influence their physical health, including work environment, job demands, and personal health conditions.

- ❖ **Work Environment:** An ergonomically designed workspace can significantly impact the physical health of women employees. Poor ergonomics can lead to musculoskeletal disorders such as back pain, neck strain, and repetitive stress injuries. Employers can mitigate these issues by providing adjustable chairs, desks, and proper equipment to promote better posture and reduce strain.
- ❖ **Health Conditions:** Women may experience unique health conditions that affect their work. For instance, during pregnancy, women may face fatigue, nausea, and other physical challenges. Providing flexible work arrangements and adequate maternity leave can help women manage these conditions more effectively. Additionally, menopause can bring about symptoms such as hot flashes and fatigue, which may affect concentration and comfort at work.
- ❖ **Preventive Health Measures:** Access to preventive healthcare services is essential for maintaining physical health. Employers can support this by offering comprehensive health insurance plans that cover regular check-ups, screenings, and vaccinations. Health and wellness programs that include fitness classes, healthy eating workshops, and mental health resources can further promote overall physical health.
- ❖ **Job Demands:** The physical demands of certain jobs can also impact health. Jobs that require prolonged standing, lifting heavy objects, or repetitive motions can increase the risk of physical ailments. Implementing job rotation, providing adequate breaks, and ensuring proper training for physical tasks can help reduce these risks.
- ❖ **Work-Life Balance:** Striking a balance between work and personal life is crucial for physical health. Long working hours and high-stress levels can lead to poor lifestyle choices, such as lack of exercise and inadequate sleep. Encouraging a balanced work schedule and promoting wellness initiatives can help women maintain healthier lifestyles.

By addressing these factors, employers can help ensure that women employees remain physically healthy, which in turn enhances their productivity and JS (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

1.14.2 Mental Health and Stress Management

The mental health and stress management of women employees are crucial for maintaining a productive and positive work environment. Given the multifaceted roles many women juggle, including professional responsibilities and personal obligations, addressing mental health concerns is essential for their OWB and job performance.

- ❖ **Workplace Stress:** Women often experience high levels of workplace stress due to factors such as heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and balancing work with family responsibilities. Stress can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. Employers can help mitigate these stressors by providing supportive work environments, realistic expectations, and manageable workloads.
- ❖ **Mental Health Support:** Access to mental health resources is essential. Employers should provide EAPs, which offer confidential counseling and support services. Providing mental health days or flexible leave choices might also assist employees better manage their mental health.
- ❖ **Work-Life Balance:** Achieving a WLB is critical for stress relief. Flexible work alternatives, such as remote work or flexible hours, can assist women balance their personal and professional duties. Encouraging staff to take regular breaks and maximize their vacation time is also beneficial in reducing burnout.
- ❖ **Stress Management Programs:** Implementing stress management programs, such as mindfulness training, meditation sessions, and stress-relief workshops, can provide employees with tools to cope with stress. Creating a culture that prioritizes mental well-being, including reducing stigma around mental health issues, can also make employees feel more supported.
- ❖ **Organizational Culture:** A positive, inclusive company culture can have a significant impact on mental health. Fostering an environment in which employees feel appreciated, respected, and heard helps to improve mental health outcomes. Open communication and opportunity for professional growth and development can also help to minimize stress.

By addressing these areas, employers can support the mental health and stress management of women employees, leading to a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce (Hsu *et al.*, 2019).

1.14.3 Work-Life Balance and Overall Well-Being

WLB is integral to OWB, influencing various aspects of personal and professional life. Achieving a balance between work demands and personal responsibilities is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental health.

- * **Mental Health:** Effective WLB helps mitigate stress and reduces the risk of burnout, which can arise from excessive work demands or a lack of personal time. When employees can manage their work and personal lives effectively, they experience lower levels of anxiety and depression. This balance fosters emotional stability and enhances overall JS.
- * **Physical Health:** Chronic stress due to poor WLB often leads to physical health issues such as fatigue, headaches, and cardiovascular problems. Conversely, a balanced lifestyle allows individuals to prioritize self-care, including regular exercise, proper nutrition, and sufficient sleep. This promotes better physical health and reduces the likelihood of stress-related ailments.
- * **Productivity:** Employees who maintain a good WLB are generally more productive. They can concentrate better on their tasks, leading to higher efficiency and performance. Additionally, they are less likely to experience absenteeism or presenteeism, where employees are physically present but mentally disengaged.
- * **Family and Social Relationships:** A balanced approach allows individuals to invest time in personal relationships and family life, which are crucial for emotional support and well-being. Strong personal connections contribute to a supportive social network, enhancing resilience and reducing feelings of isolation.
- * **Job Satisfaction:** WLB contributes to greater JS by providing employees with a sense of control over their work and personal lives. Flexible work arrangements and supportive policies enhance employee morale and loyalty, leading to a more positive work environment.

In summary, maintaining WLB is essential for OWB, positively affecting mental and physical health, productivity, and personal relationships. It fosters a healthier, more satisfied, and engaged workforce (Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015).

1.15 Organizational Policies and Practices

There are a variety of WLB and flexible work options. They are a clear policy statement that declares the organization's commitment to creating a flexible, responsive work environment that allows all workers to combine work and family/personal responsibilities while adhering to policy requirements. Some of the significant policies and activities implemented in the study are discussed below:

Policies in the originations regarding leave arrangements:

WLB policies are among the regulations that assist individuals in balancing their professional and personal lives. Careers leave enables employees to take time off to care for an ill family member or household member, allowing them to provide the necessary help without risking their careers. Staff may also be entitled to leave if care arrangements for their child or other dependents fail. For example, if a caregiver becomes unwell, parents may have to take time off work to care for their children. Study or training leave allows employees to take time off work to study or train for other courses to improve their abilities and advance their careers. A career break is a set length of time away from employment for personal study, with the expectation of returning to work. Cultural or religious breaks allow employees to take a leave of absence for major cultural or religious observances other than public holidays. Bereavement leave is at least two days off work following the loss of a family or household member to enable time for grieving and other related activities. Finally, pooling leave entitlements enables employees to combine several types of leave, such as sick leave and career leave, into a greater number of days that can be used flexibly for family purposes. All of these rules help to achieve a better WLB by meeting a variety of individual needs.

Policies in the organization regarding Parenting and Pregnancy Policies:

- * Unpaid maternity/paternity and adoption leave
- * Paid Maternity leave Paid paternity leave
- * Paid adoption leave

Opportunity to return to the same job after maternity/paternity and adoption leave.

WLB policies on pregnancy and childcare are critical for working women so that they are not burdened by their dual commitments. Workplace safety during pregnancy takes into account pregnant workers' demands by preventing long periods of standing or lifting heavy things

through task changes. Pre-natal leave is available to pregnant women and their partners, who may utilize supplementary leave or sick leave to attend medical appointments during working hours. A gradual return-to-work policy following pregnancy allows for a short reduction in work hours, which helps to ease the transition back into the workplace. Providing a designated expressing or breastfeeding private area with refrigerated facilities allows employees to express or breastfeed in total privacy. Lactation breaks allow an employee to take time off work to express milk or provide breast milk to babies as needed. Furthermore, a careers room or simply keeping one's children at work in an emergency might provide a safe environment in which workers can care for dependents while continuing to work, at least until other arrangements can be made. Employer-sponsored child care, which includes payment for or reservation of a spot in an existing or on-site child-care facility, goes a step further in assisting employees by removing the stress of obtaining adequate childcare. Overall, these policies contribute to a healthier work environment for employees with pregnancy and childcare responsibilities.

Policies in the organization: regarding flexible work arrangements:

Flexible working arrangements are rules that address a wide range of employee needs while also emphasizing the importance of WLB. Job sharing is a part-time work pattern in which two or more persons share the tasks of a full-time position; compensation and benefits are based on hours worked. Flexitime systems are those that bank extra hours to allow employees to leave work early, come late, or take longer leave as agreed upon by their boss. Part-time employment refers to any arrangement in which employees work fewer hours than the full-time equivalent of their job. Compressed hours are those worked in fewer and/or longer blocks per week than usual, with employees earning an additional day or half off when extra hours accumulate.

Shift work is a pattern in which one person takes the place of another for 24 hours; it is typically arranged in crews. Annualized hours provide freedom on a daily and weekly basis while fixing the overall number of hours to be worked in a year. Home working arrangements allow employees to do all or part of their activities from home, either on specific days or on a full-time basis. Mobile working is an arrangement in which an employee works either part-time or full-time away from the employer's premises, getting instructions via phone or computer.

When it comes to hot desks, there are no assigned desks; each employee uses whatever desk is available in their allotted area while in the office. Gradual retirement makes the retirement process easier for employees by reducing the amount of hours worked or duties completed over time. These diverse solutions meet the needs of employees at various phases of their lives, such as shift work, annualized hours, home working, mobile working, hot desking, and gradual retirement. This improves productivity and job satisfaction by allowing for a better balance between work and personal life. Flexible work arrangements like this provide an opportunity for more flexible and supportive working conditions, which improves morale and, as a result, retention of an organization's personnel.

Additional Work Provisions

Various supportive services are offered to help workers maintain their well-being and WLB. Organizations provide cell phones for personal use as well as counseling services to assist employee mental health. Health programs and exercise facilities encourage physical well-being. There is equal opportunity for promotion, training, and development. Referral services are made accessible to address personal needs and provide advice on a variety of topics. Parenting or family support programs offer formal parenting education, whereas relocation or placement aid assists employees and their families in adjusting to a job change. Examples of such initiatives include a list of programs that can help create a supportive and balanced work environment (Pooja *et al.*, 2016).

1.15.1 Work-Life Balance Programs and Initiatives

Programs and initiatives aimed at establishing WLB become a vital element of a healthy and productive workplace, assisting employees in properly balancing professional and personal responsibilities. One of the most popular initiatives in this regard is work schedule flexibility, which includes things like flexible start and end times, a reduced workweek, and telecommuting. This flexibility allows individuals to organize work hours around personal needs and optimal productivity, making it easier to balance work and family commitments. Another important component of WLB programs is the thorough Paid Time Off policy. Leave policies for vacation days, personal days, and sick leave allow for ample time to recharge, attend to personal commitments, and maintain one's health without fear of losing compensation or job security. This, in turn, prevents burnout and promotes OWB (Oludayo *et al.*, 2018).

These parental leave programs help new parents balance family and work responsibilities. Only paid maternity and paternity leave, as well as prolonged absences and flexible return-to-work alternatives, can assist workers in navigating the challenges of parenthood without jeopardizing their professional careers. Employee assistance programs can help them maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives by providing confidential counseling and other support services for job-related or personal challenges. EAPs may contain resources for mental health support, financial advice, and stress management to allow employees to focus on various aspects of well-being.

Health and wellness initiatives are effective in creating WLB. Healthy living is supported through a variety of programs, including on-site exercise centers, wellness education workshops, and health screenings, which enable employees to take control of their health. Such initiatives will reduce stress and boost JS by encouraging healthy living habits. A friendly and inclusive work culture is a critical component of WLB. Employees might feel valued and understood if there is an open communication environment, encouragement, managerial support, and recognition of their efforts. Implementing such programs and initiatives results in a more motivated, productive, and contented workforce, which increases organizational success (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015).

1.15.2 Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements are an important component of today's WLB solutions. These are programs that help employees create schedules and work environments that are more suited to their requirements and responsibilities. These multiple varied options provide flexibility and help in various elements of employees' lives. Flexible hours are a popular type of flexible employment that allows for adjustments in starting and finishing the official work time within certain boundaries. Employees can choose to work from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. rather than the conventional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. timetable. This enables employees to schedule personal responsibilities, such as childcare or doctor appointments, around their work without jeopardizing productivity or performance.

Another popular option is the compressed workweek, in which employees work their full weekly hours on fewer than five days per week. Employees work four 10-hour days a week, which adds one day to their typical workweek, allowing them to take care of personal issues, relax, and interact with their families, thus contributing significantly to WLB. Telecommuting makes it easier to complete tasks away from the office, from home, or at another place.

Depending on the employment title and corporate policies, this labor may be full-time or part-time. Telecommuting is intended to remove the stress associated with daily commuting and make the workplace more comfortable for employees, thereby increasing the level of WLB (Shifrin & Michel, 2022).

Job sharing is another flexible work arrangement in which two people share a single full-time position. In this scenario, both employees work part-time, and one will cover the remaining hours of the professional employment. In this instance, job sharing is especially beneficial to individuals who want to reduce their hours while still working in a professional function and receiving a professional wage. The Results-Oriented Work Environment shifts the focus from hours to results and productivity. Employees can work from anywhere, at any time, as long as they meet performance criteria. Focusing on achievements rather than hours spent behind a desk may significantly improve motivation and JS. In a nutshell, flexible working makes it simpler to balance work and life, which typically results in enhanced JS, lower stress levels, and a higher quality of life (Timms *et al.*, 2015).

1.15.3 Supportive Workplace Culture and Management Practices

The development of a supportive workplace culture and the implementation of excellent management practices serve as the foundation for creating a better place to work and, as a result, promoting higher employee wellness. A supportive culture encourages communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Leaders at the top play a critical role in demonstrating these principles by respecting their employees' personal and professional requirements. Employees will feel heard and valued in an environment where input is readily given and actively listened to when it comes to their concerns. Initiatives such as diversity and inclusion initiatives, wellness activities, and team-building events help to cement this culture and appear to bring employees together. Effective management practice is also essential for helping employees in the workplace and maintaining good work health. Superiors must learn to recognize indicators of stress and burnout, and employees must be willing to communicate such difficulties and trust their superiors. Healthy feedback frequently will help workers understand their performance results and how to improve. It also allows them to identify areas where they performed well. Such an approach is not only necessary for professional development, but it will also increase workers' feelings of worth (Payne *et al.*, 2018).

The second most important aspect of excellent management is promoting WLB. Managers should respect their employees' time and prefer flexible working hours. Furthermore, they

should be entitled to require employees to take time off and go on vacation. All of these factors contribute to worker well-being and productivity. When the workload at work is manageable and the well-being is taken care of, it becomes a habit. Employee development is vital as the third component of an enabling work environment. Offering training, mentorship, and skill-upgrading programs is a guaranteed approach to visibly express concern for staff development and advancement. It demonstrates interest in the employee, making them feel appreciated and enthusiastic, and serves as a stepping stone to long-term pleasure and engagement.

This also helps to create a positive work environment through gratitude and awards. Organize an employee recognition program that will make them feel valued and motivated to do even better work. Essentially, a supportive work environment culture and solid management practices are the foundational ingredients in building an enabling work environment in which employees can thrive and progress toward JS, productivity, and well-being (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2017).