



1. Anjali Rani
2. Prof. Meena kumari

## Gender Burden: Exploring The Impact Of Gender On Work-Life Balance Among Nurses

1. Research Scholar, 2. Department of sociology, Kalicharan pg. college, Lucknow (U.P.) India

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E-mail : rs2022soc\_anjali@lkouniv.ac.in

**Abstract:** Balance between work and personal life, also known as work-life balance (WLB), is an essential component of occupational well-being, particularly in demanding professions like nursing. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence that gender has on the work-life balance of nurses by way of analyzing the ways in which social expectations, workplace rules, and personal obligations mould their experiences. This study used a mixed-methods approach to analyze the disparities in work-life balance that exist between male and female nurses. The study highlights obstacles that nurses face, including long working hours, emotional labor, caregiving responsibilities, and institutional support. According to the findings, female nurses frequently encounter larger work-life conflicts than male nurses do as a result of conventional gender roles and the expectations placed on them to provide care. On the other hand, male nurses may endure social bias regarding their occupation choice. The findings of this study highlight the need of implementing gender-sensitive policies, flexible work arrangements, and institutional interventions in order to achieve a more equitable work-life balance for all nurses.

**Key words:** Gender, Work-Life Balance, Nursing, Occupational Well-being, Workplace Policies.

**Introduction-** Work-life balance, also known as WLB, is an essential component of both professional and personal well-being, particularly in jobs that are characterized by high levels of stress, such as nursing. The nursing profession is an integral component of healthcare systems all around the world. Nurses frequently put in long hours of work in conditions that are both physically and emotionally taxing. In addition to being a challenge in and of itself, the challenge of striking a balance between one's personal life and one's professional responsibilities is further complicated by the gender-based expectations and societal norms that exist. The way in which individuals feel and effectively manage their work-life balance is substantially impacted by gender. Women in many communities are typically expected to take on larger duties in the areas of caring and domestic chores, which can result in increased stress and role conflict. In particular, female nurses frequently struggle to find a balance between the demands of shift work, emergency care, and emotional labor, as well as the responsibilities they have toward their families. On the other hand, male nurses, despite the fact that they are a smaller section of the nursing workforce, may face prejudices and misconceptions surrounding their position in a profession that is dominated by women. It is possible that their difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance are the result of differing social expectations, such as being viewed as major breadwinners or being subjected to discrimination in the workplace. The purpose of this research is to investigate the gendered burden of work-life balance among nurses by analyzing the different challenges that are faced by male and female professionals working in the professional field. This research aims to emphasize the differences in work-life balance by evaluating workplace rules, social expectations, and personal experiences. Additionally, it strives to propose solutions for the creation of a more fair work environment. When politicians, healthcare institutions, and nursing administrators have a better understanding of these gender-based inequalities, they are better able to implement supportive policies that will promote work satisfaction, minimize burnout, and boost overall well-being among nurses.

**Work-Life Balance-** According to Goel (2017) and Powell et al. (2019), a significant body of research produced in the field of social sciences has investigated the relationship that exists between the work and life domains. According to Adkins and Premeaux (2019) and Kakar et al. (2022), the concept of work-life balance refers to the degree to which an individual is regularly satisfied with the roles that they play in their personal life, their professional life, and their family life. Work-life inputs, which include things like demands, resources, and behaviors, have an effect on the linkages that individuals or organizations experience between their personal lives and their professional lives. The work-life balance is a social construct that frequently places an emphasis on a holistic viewpoint. Its primary objective is to address fundamental challenges pertaining to gender equality and the utilization of family-friendly policies that are encountered by individuals who are working toward achieving economic autonomy and establishing their own intrinsic value. As a result of the influence of contextual variables such as family, organization, community, and society, the cognition and priorities of a person or organization might vary. This is because beliefs and preferences are molded accordingly. According to Sharma and Vahini (2022), the idea of work-

life balance refers to a condition of equilibrium in which the demands of an individual's personal life and professional life are in equal proportion to one another. Having a healthy balance between work and personal life is widely recognized as an important emotional and psychological predictor of whether or not people continue to be engaged and motivated inside a business, despite the presence of global diversity and severe competition. In order to achieve work-life balance (WLB) it is not enough to just have more flexibility in terms of working hours; it is also necessary to balance the demands of work with those of personal and family duties, all the while recognizing the fleeting nature of life and the necessity of finding pleasure in it. Work-life balance is only achieved when the key expectations surrounding an employee's workplace and job are appropriately satisfied. This is the only way that an employee may get happiness from their professional life.

**Materials and methods-** To build an awareness of gender disparities in work-life balance, an analytical technique was utilized to assess research and generate a better understanding of these variances. The process consisted of doing a comprehensive search on every facet, following the examination of sixty-five theoretical and empirical research that focused on gender disparities and the influence they had on work-life balance. A number of scientific databases, including as Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and EBSCO, were employed in order to guarantee a comprehensive review of the existing literature. Using particular terms such as gender differences, gender bias, gender discrimination, gender gap, work-life interface, and work-life balance, a search string was utilized in order to select articles that were contained inside these databases. Thereafter, the information that had been gathered was assembled and examined.

**Gender Roles and WLB-** A large body of gender-related research in recent years has concentrated on how gender affects work-life balance. Whether men and women have equal or different levels of difficulty juggling work and home responsibilities has been the focus of these research. More and more women are joining the work force, however studies show that women still handle most of the housework and childcare responsibilities (Kundra et al., 2023). Additionally, there is some evidence that men's share in domestic labor has changed significantly over the past decade. One study found that women's health suffered when they felt there was a significant gender gap in the distribution of household tasks (Portela et al., 2014). Gender variations in family responsibilities and work-life balance satisfaction have been the subject of several studies. Disparities between the sexes persist in the workplace culture, as seen by issues like harassment, the gender pay gap, and the glass ceiling in upper-level positions. The statement was made by Ramos and García-deDiego in 2022. Data on gender disparities in work-life balance is still too sparse to make any firm conclusions. A number of studies have looked at Western and Eastern cultural contexts, such as Milkie and Peltola (1999) and Sav and Harris (2013). According to their research, there are no obvious differences between the sexes. The results show that men and women are equally correlated when it comes to the association between work-life balance and job and life happiness. On the other side, numerous cross-cultural studies show that gender is still a driving factor. Men are more likely to claim a good work-life balance than women, according to research by Morgenroth et al. (2021). However, Cerrato and Cifre (2018) discovered that women are more likely to have conflicting priorities between their work and family lives. Many women have voiced their frustration with the challenges they face while trying to juggle work and family responsibilities. Time constraints, inadequate marital support, societal expectations, and Tabvuma (2019) and Drummond et al. (2017) found conflicting findings about the impact of gender on the work-life interface in their research on work-life balance. There is some inconsistency among these results. Research suggests that biological sex alone is insufficient to capture the complexity of gender variety; instead, we need to look at other gender-related factors, such as gender role orientation. Reverberi et al. (2021) found that gender roles impact people's identities, actions, roles they choose to play, and how they act in those roles. Once societal norms on gender roles have been established and institutionalized, individuals will start to self-regulate in line with these expectations (Eagly and Wood, 2012). Thus, it's reasonable to assume that a person's sense of work-life balance may be influenced by their gender role identity

**Gender and Work-Life Balance in Nursing-** The influence of gender on work-life balance has been the subject of a great number of studies, which have revealed significant disparities between the ways in which male and female nurses feel the pressures of their professional and personal lives. When it comes to managing their employment while also performing their obligations as caregivers at home, female nurses frequently face challenges that are difficult to manage. According to Geerts and Demerouti (2003), traditional gender conventions inflict additional pressure on women to undertake unpaid home labor, which makes it more challenging for them to strike a balance between their professional and interpersonal lives. According to research conducted by Wang et al. (2017), a significant number of female nurse's report

increased levels of stress, burnout, and unhappiness with their jobs as a result of the combination of conflicting demands.

On the other hand, male nurses, although being a smaller population, confront a different set of issues in terms of their work-life balance. In light of the fact that nursing has historically been seen as a profession that is dominated by women, they frequently come into contact with social prejudices and professional preconceptions (Rajacich et al., 2013). Men who work in nursing may have feelings of pressure to demonstrate their competence or to adhere to the expectations other men, which can have a negative impact on their health. Furthermore, according to Simpson (2004), there are some researches that show that male nurses may have better access to workplace flexibility and career progression chances owing to perceived leadership ability. This further contributes to the gender gaps that exist in terms of work-life balance.

**Traditional Gender Roles-** Throughout the course of human history, men and women have frequently adopted different societal roles in relation to the distribution of time between their professional and family duties. Traditionally, males are seen to be working outside the home on a full-time basis, while women are normally responsible for domestic chores (Pace and Sciotto, 2021). Research conducted by Glick and Fiske in 1996 found that gender-based role distinctions are ingrained into the cultural framework of society. Females were often related with characteristics such as caring, empathy, and compassion, whereas men were associated with characteristics such as authority, assertiveness, dominance, and independence. According to Evans et al. (2013), men are typically expected to be the major financial providers for their families. These responsibilities may require them to work longer hours, which might lead to a feeling of being overburdened with responsibilities.

**Changes in Gender Role Overtime-** Changing cultural mores, new economic realities, and improved communication and technology have all contributed to a dramatic reshaping of traditional gender roles in contemporary society (Shah et al., 2018). A more fair allocation of tasks and responsibilities, as well as a growing acceptance of multiple identities, have led to a loosening of formerly strict gender divisions (Chung and Van der Horst, 2020). A striking shift is the rising number working women and dual-income households (Shah and Barker, 2022). Women used to be expected to stay at home and take care of the children, while males were supposed to work outside the home and earn a living wage (Makama, 2013). These days, you may find women in leadership roles throughout a wide range of industries and professions, including those that were traditionally male-dominated (Cortes, 2018). Legal safeguards against discrimination based on gender and increased educational opportunities for women have contributed to this change by giving them more agency in the workplace (Klasen et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, men's traditional roles are also changing. Fathers nowadays are more likely to pitch in around the house and help out with the kids than in years past (Chao, 2022). There has been a shift away from the conventional idea that men should prioritize their work above all else and toward a more equitable distribution of household duties (Tahir et al., 2022). Reasons for this shift include the increasing consensus that men and women alike benefit from a work-life balance and the value of fathers' active participation in their children's development (Abendroth, 2022). Several obstacles persist, however, including unequal remuneration between men and women for equal labor, a lack of mentoring, biased promotion procedures, ignorance, and networks that are skewed toward males (Khan et al., 2021). There are still obstacles to women's professional progress and minority participation in leadership roles (Katekhaye and Dhone, 2023). Uunk and Lersch (2019) note that people's professional and personal decisions are influenced by society expectations and prejudices that force them to comply to established gender norms.

**Factors Influencing WLB by Gender-** Job Demands: According to Claes et al. (2023), the work-life balance of individuals of different genders is greatly impacted by job demand, which encompasses the physical, mental, and emotional needs of a job. Despite the fact that both men and women are subject to the pressures of job demands, these pressures can emerge in various ways owing to the roles and expectations that are imposed by society. To establish methods that will promote work-life balance for all employees, it is essential to have a solid understanding of these variances.

In the case of males, traditional roles have frequently placed an emphasis on the significance of being the major earner, which has resulted in a greater acceptance of working long hours and meeting tough employment requirements. Many men struggle to find a balance between these obligations, which ultimately results in a compromised work-life balance (WLB) as the acceptance of shared duties in families continues to expand. On the other hand, women frequently have to deal with the concurrent pressure of professional demands and family responsibilities. The fact that women are expected to fulfill the requirements of their families as well as those of their employers might make the demands of their jobs even more difficult to

manage. Finding a way to meet all of these expectations may be a difficult task that can result in increased stress and a worse quality of life. In addition, women who work in occupations that are in great demand may be more likely to face more severe work-life balance problems (WLB) because they must handle the demands of career growth while also managing the duties of their households (Prithi and Vasumati, 2020).

**Occupational Segregation:** There is a worldwide phenomenon of gender-based occupational segregation, which is defined as "the separation of men and women into different occupations" (Maji, 2019). The "glass ceiling" has prevented women from climbing the corporate ladder and has narrowed the field of work that they may pursue horizontally. Vertical gender segregation has been shrinking as a result of women's rising educational attainment, but horizontal occupational segregation is still very much alive and well. When we compare fields that are predominantly male, like truck driving and engineering, to those that are predominantly female, like clerical work, teaching, and nursing, we can see the effects of horizontal segregation, which is the uneven representation of the sexes in certain jobs despite comparable educational requirements. Shorter work hours, more leeway in scheduling, and less severe consequences for work separation are some of the reasons why women choose to choose particular careers. In line with this reasoning is Hakim's (2002) 'preference' hypothesis, which states that women pick careers that allow them to maintain the lifestyle they like. This line of reasoning states that the majority of women would rather have a work-life balance and that they tend to pick careers that allow them to do just that. Women often choose careers that allow them to juggle both their professional and personal lives, as the amount of time and energy needed by various industries varies greatly. A worker's level of contentment with how effectively their employment satisfies their personal life requirements is one measure of work-life balance.

**Gender Pay Gap:** Research shows that women still face pay disparities even in executive positions compared to men. Despite equal effort, women only earn 56% of what men do (CII Scaling of Parity, 2018). According to the UN Women Report (2022), most women work in low-status jobs that pay less. This gender pay gap is a big problem that undermines women's value in the workplace. Women often get less money for the same job as men, even when their qualifications, experience, and skills are equal (Kumar et al., 2018).

**Social and Cultural Norms:** As a social standard outlining what is considered suitable conduct depending on one's gender, gender stereotypes have a significant impact on workplace values (Muskat & Reitsamer, 2019). Individuals' views on issues related to their jobs are shaped by deeply held assumptions about gender roles and cultural norms, which in turn give rise to differences in these work values. Due to their many responsibilities, women place a premium on maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Unequal distribution of caregiving obligations is a product of traditional gender roles that are reinforced by cultures. These roles favor women's domestic chores above their professional ambitions. It can be difficult for women to strike a balance between their professional endeavors and societal expectations, as these expectations sometimes lead to conflicts with home responsibilities. Traditional gender roles in India place more emphasis on men's responsibilities in the home and more on men's in the workplace (Rajadhyaksha & Bhatnagar, 2000).

**Workplace Policies and Institutional Support-** A significant factor in defining the work-life balance of nurses is the policies that are in place at their workplace. According to Kane (2009), hospitals and other healthcare organizations that have policies that are supportive of their employees, such as flexible scheduling, paid maternity leave, and assistance for mental health, would often have greater levels of work satisfaction among their nursing staff. On the other hand, research indicates that such regulations are frequently underutilized owing to the presence of strict institutional structures, stigma in the workplace, or fear of professional penalties (Kossek et al., 2010).

**Conclusion-** A healthy balance between work and personal life is an important component that plays a role in the well-being, job satisfaction, and retention of nurses. This study sheds attention on the major impact that gender plays in determining the work-life experiences of nursing professionals within the healthcare industry. It is common for female nurses to face more difficulties in combining their personal and professional commitments as a result of social expectations and the roles that they play in providing care. This can result in higher stress and burnout. Male nurses, on the other hand, are subjected to prejudices and preconceptions in the workplace, which can have an effect on their professional development and personal well-being. This is because the nursing profession is dominated by women. Institutional rules and the culture of the workplace are other significant factors that contribute to the formation of work-life balance. In spite of the fact that some policies, such as flexible work arrangements, maternity leave, and mental health assistance, have the potential to increase well-being, they are frequently neglected owing to the existence of structural impediments and cultural stigmas. In order to effectively address these concerns, a gender-





sensitive strategy is required, along with regulations that recognize the distinct difficulties that are experienced by both male and female nurses. Policies that encourage a healthy balance between work and personal life should be implemented by healthcare facilities in order to provide a more equal and supportive working environment for all nurses, regardless of their gender. This involves ensuring that individuals have access to flexible scheduling, developing leadership structures that are supportive, and questioning the old gender stereotypes that are prevalent in the field. Hospitals and other healthcare organizations can increase the overall quality of patient care, minimize the amount of burnout experienced by nurses, and improve the retention of nurses if they address these challenges. At the end of the day, attaining gender parity in work-life balance is not only advantageous for nurses, but it is also important for the continued existence of the healthcare system. Research in the future should continue to investigate novel approaches to promoting a healthy work-life balance, taking into account intersectional aspects such as age, marital status, and the stage of one's career. It is imperative that these gendered responsibilities be addressed in order to pave the road for a nursing profession that is more inclusive and resilient.

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