

# A STUDY ON ACADEMICIANS' WORK-LIFE BALANCE: DRIVING FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to know various factors contributing to the Work-life balance of academician and the difficulties they have been facing in maintaining a good quality WLB.

**Methodology:** This study is a consolidated review of literature on WLB of academician through various sources, including research papers, journals, reports, etc. All these referred papers, journal articles, etc. have been quoted in the reference section of the paper.

**Findings:** Various factors affecting the work-life balance of the academician employed in the educational sector have been identified along with the challenges being faced by them. It has been found that various work-related and non-work-related factors impact it. Also, it has been found that every factor is to some extent throwing a challenge at the academicians meanwhile.

**Practical Implication:** This comprehensive study will help the administrative department of colleges and universities to formulate policies in a way that ensures the WLB of the academicians.

**Keywords:** Work-life Balance, Academicians

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The academicians must achieve a sufficient level of Work-life Balance (WLB) to avoid burnout and other hazardous effects on their well-being so they can perform well. Researchers are trying to understand various aspects of WLB not only in the context of employees but also in the context of the academicians engaged in higher education.

During the 1970s and 80s, only leading corporations were aware of the concept of WLB. Those were the few organizations that showcased any sort of concern about the hurdles and issues their employees were facing while managing their work and family life [21]. However, the concept of Work-life balance is gaining momentum these days with researchers focusing on the area. The researchers have been conducting different empirical research for different purposes from gaining in-depth knowledge on various aspects of the topics to understanding the ways to achieve a good quality of Work-Life Balance among the employees.

In today's era of rush and technology, the concept of WLB is drawing the attention of employees as well as organizations. Though the awareness of the issues related to the concept is not very well known to all [50]. Modern organizations and employees are gradually being more concerned about having a balanced work and family life [46].

However, despite being one of the emerging and prominent topics for research among researchers, the concept is mainly discussed in the context of employees. However, the researchers are also drawing attention to the concept in the context of academicians of higher education [16;15].[10] have found that academicians are overburdened with workloads and often sacrifice their leisure time for publications and research. Thus, it is imperative to understand the hurdles and obstacles academicians are dealing with, to balance their personal and professional life. This review paper identifies different factors affecting the WLB of academicians and the difficulties being faced by them in maintaining a good quality of WLB.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify various factors affecting the WLB of academicians.
2. To know the difficulties being faced by academicians in maintaining a good level of WLB.

## III. TYPE OF RESEARCH

This study is a consolidated review of literature on WLB of academicians for which various sources, including research papers, journals, reports, etc have been used to prepare the paper.

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Work-Life Balance (WLB):** The term Work-Life Balance, here, is defined as the balance that an individual maintains in doing the chores of the two major domains of human life i.e. the work life and the personal life in a way that grants him enough gratification.

Various researchers have defined the concept of WLB in a distinctive manner. However, the concepts defined by [11] and [23] are the prominent ones. Work-life balance as defined by [11] is the satisfaction and smooth functioning at work as well as at home with minimum possible role conflict as people regularly walk in these two domains. [23] tells that work-life balance is satisfaction and better functioning in both work and non-work life with minimal potential role conflict. [46] defines Work-Life Balance as the arrangement of tasks in such a manner that it provides enough satisfaction for the sense of involvement in both the work and personal life of an individual. [20] define the term as the relation between the time and space between work and non-work. [14] defined WLB as the ability of one to meet his/her commitments relating to work and non-work activities and responsibilities. Thus, Work-life balance is the satisfaction, smooth functioning and engagement of an individual in both work and non-work/ personal life, with minimal potential social role conflict in these dimensions of the concept. [11; 44; 23].

Work-life balance can be achieved when an individual can manage both work and personal lives by taking out enough time to do his/ her activities and fulfil responsibilities in both domains of life. If the person can fulfil their work in both work and non-work life with no or minimal conflict of role, then he/ she is satisfied and said to achieve a good quality of work-life balance.

- 2. Importance of WLB:** Every individual is willing to have a life where one can give importance to both work and career. No one wants to compromise one for the other.

As found by [24] the time required to fulfil personal needs differs for each individual, and it affects their well-being/ eventually hampering their physical health and leading to various diseases [37; 48]. Thus, for organizations that are concerned for the well-being of their employees, it is necessary for them to take care of the quality of their work life.

Many hazardous effects like burnout [52], depression, etc., can be prevented by maintaining a good quality work-life balance for the employees in the organization while contributing to the job satisfaction level [39] of the employees. It can also affect their personal relationships [51]. And to the worse, it can even lead to the withdrawal of academicians from academia [29].

According to the research done by [7], the retention rate of employees is directly related to the Work-life balance culture of an organization along with the appointment rate of the employees. Besides, organizations that are able to provide one with a better work-life balance are admired by employees [8], and it has more chances of retaining them. Therefore, it becomes a necessity for organizations to give emphasis on the quality of the work-life balance of their employees.

- **Factors Impacting WLB of Academicians:** WLB is a concept that takes almost all the aspects of an individual's life. Therefore the exact and accurate number of factors affecting the quality of the WLB of an individual cannot be determined. However, many researchers have identified various factors or predictors of WLB. The factors that more or less affect the quality of the balance being enjoyed by the academicians

involved in higher education in their work life and personal life have been mentioned hereafter.

Some of the major aspects or elements of the work-life balance of academicians include the morale of the academicians, academic pressures, work stress [53] their work tenure [45] climate and culture of the campus, their working conditions, environment, support services available, collegial relationships, and appraisal systems [37]

Global competition, renewed interest in personal lives, aging workforce, [27] diverse culture, and climate [35], nationality, gender and location [1], and Emotional Intelligence (EI) [22] are some of the additional significant factors needed to be kept in mind while studying the work-life balance. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is one of the leading factors affecting the work-life balance of academicians. The better the EI of a faculty, the better quality of Work-Life Balance he/she is able to have and vice versa. It also affects their job performance and level of stress [49]. Besides this, the faculty's perception of how the institutions assures that they are having a good quality WLB also affects their WLB [47]. And as academicians are staying updated with technology and even using social media [34] for their work purposes, this factor is one of the important predictors of WLB of academicians as Social media has its pros and cons.

Besides, the characteristics/ traits [38] of faculty, the institution where they have been working, and their department, their satisfaction with their work and research projects, their rank, leave arrangements, and flexibility in work are also of utmost importance in predicting the WLB of the academicians [15; 36]. The organizational support that the institutions provide in terms of the work-life balance is a major predictor of having a good quality WLB. However, [6] found that the type of institution they are involved in does not affect much the WLB of academicians. For all professors, satisfaction with research time spent had a favourable relationship with work-life balance [15]. Also, the factors like whether they are married or single determine the quality of their work-life balance [15]. Single faculty members, especially women [12; 32] have been found to have inferior quality of work-life balance.

Therefore, it has been found that there are numerous factors that affect the quality of WLB being enjoyed by the academicians of which the type of institution they are working on, its support, their position and work, their contentment with their work, their department, gender, culture, obligations, emotional intelligence, their perception of work, level of work stress, age, marital status, appraisal methods of the organization, campus culture and climate, geographical location, technology are the major predictors of WLB of academicians involved in Higher Education.

Due to growing diversity in the workforce, competition, and workload, the aforementioned factors cannot be neglected for they contribute to the job satisfaction of the employees irrespective of the type of organization [14]. However, [5] suggest that job-related factors are not only enough predictors in understanding and measuring the quality of the work-life balance in academicians.

In terms of factors creating an imbalance in the work-life balance of the academicians which are not related to their work-life but are related to their personal lives including their personal life struggles with friends and family requiring attention, raising and bearing children, health issues [28], and their marital status [12].

All the predictors of WLB keep interacting with each other in a complicated way which is difficult to study. Therefore, further empirical researches need to be carried out in order to understand more predictors of WLB of academicians.

- **Barriers and Difficulties being faced by the Academicians in Maintaining WLB:** It has been stated before that academicians are often compelled to sacrifice their leisure time for work. This is clearly stating how much low-quality of Work-Life Balance is available in the academicians of higher education. [4] found in their survey that the academicians and lecturers have to work in the evenings and even during the weekends. Academicians are expected to do works more than teaching like administrative work, advisors for students, guide for projects, and interns, as well as work for summer placements [33]. Rarely does any faculty feel content with his/ her work [36]. This is a giveaway that the academicians are having a difficult time while maintaining a good quality Work-Life Balance.

As more and more numbers of students are enrolling in higher education which is changing the demographics of the learners away from 18-24 years to include even older and non-traditional learners [37] Due to this, the workload among academicians is increasing. They need to adopt different styles of teaching to teach the new demographic. This is increasing the workload on the academicians, and the increasing workload and expectations result in the worsening quality of WLB [29] and cumulates the stress on them [43;18], making it more difficult for them to maintain WLB.

With the changes in technology, the workload of the academicians has been increasing. According to [2;3], the number of students opting for online courses is increasing. At least one student has been enrolled in one of the online courses. This is leaving the academicians with no other option other than opting for online technologies and methods for imparting education. Also, after the pandemic, the academicians have been leaving, especially in the medical profession [31]. Online teaching is one of the major barriers to the academicians in attaining work-life balance. Due to the increasing demand for online education, teachers have to learn more and more new ways of teaching but they are not being provided with adequate training [42; 19; 9] leaving them to work on their own.

Every day something new is being added to the technology making it a necessity for the academicians to stay updated and thus eventually compromising their quality of work-life balance. As the world is dynamic, academicians need to stay updated and technology-oriented if they want to stay in the profession. However, this is eventually making it difficult for them to maintain a good quality of WLB. The research works as well as the ever-changing technology is not leaving enough space and time for the academicians to sit and enjoy their own time. These are becoming

one of the major hindrances and challenges in their way in maintaining a good quality Work-Life Balance.

## V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the study, it has been found that zillions of factors play different roles in predicting the WLB of the academicians. However, considering only work-related factors for predicting the WLB of the academicians is not enough to understand the quality of WLB being enjoyed by the academicians.

Some of the important work-related factors that must be considered while understanding the WLB of the academicians include the characteristics of the academicians as well as that of the organization they are working in along with the department in which they are positioned, their perception of their job and organization, the level of work stress, their commitment level, the organizational support, relationships, campus climate, their age, tenure, demographic, their emotional intelligence, their marital status and last but not least the ever-changing technological world. And some of the personal life-related factors include family obligations, marital status, friends circle, and health issues.

These are a few factors that affect the quality of WLB of the academicians. However, with the change in the demographic of the students and the diversity that come along leads the academicians to face trouble in their work-life balance. And due to the changes in technology, online education is becoming popular and the academicians are compelled to learn the new pedagogies to impart education, eventually leading them to have a worsening quality of WLB. Almost all these predictors stand out as a challenge for the academicians to some extent when it comes to maintaining their work-life balance.

**Findings for Objective 1:** From the study, it has been found that zillions of factors play different roles in predicting the WLB of the academicians. They can be broadly classified into work-related factors and factors related to the personal lives of the academicians.

The work-related factors which affect the WLB of academicians can be broadly classified into three, viz., factors related to academicians, factors related to the institutions in which academicians are employed, and other environmental factors.

Factors related to academicians include traits and characteristics of the academicians, their age and marital status, their emotional Intelligence and the level of work and work stress, their work tenure, their perception of work and the organization, and their rank, position and commitment level in the organization.

Factors related to the institutions they are employed at include the characteristics of the institution and department in which they are working, the institutional support they are receiving in regard to maintaining the WLB, the prevailing climate on the campus, and their tenure of work.

Other environmental factors include relationships on the campus which can be student and faculty relationships, demographics on the campus, and technological changes

The personal life factors vary from faculty to faculty from time to time. These factors generally include health issues, children, family obligations and friends circle and marital status.

**Findings for Objective 2:** Almost all the predictors of the WLB are posing a challenge for the academicians in maintaining their Work-life balance. As more and more numbers of students are enrolling in higher education which is changing the demographics of the learners away from 18-24 years to include even older and non-traditional learners [37]. This change in the demographic of the students brings along with it a student group from diverse fields. The dynamic changes in technology are leading to the popularity of online education which is also a challenge that the academicians have to face. Due to all these continuous changes, the academicians are compelled to learn the new pedagogies to impart education which hampers their work-life balance.

## VI. SCOPE OF STUDY

The study provides sufficient important data related to the topic so that further empirical research can be carried out. The aspects and challenges related to the WLB of the academicians involved in higher education need to be explored more by the researchers. And this study will provide basic theoretical knowledge about the topic to the researchers to carry further researches.

## VII. CONCLUSION

As academicians are the major assets for institutions, it is, therefore, vital for academic institutions to be concerned about their well-being. And as they are unable to avail good quality work-life balance, it leads to dissatisfaction and lack of engagement, which must be addressed by the institutions [13]. The performance of the academicians involved in higher education can be improved to some extent by the organizations practising spirituality and mindfulness [41]. The institutions can take measures and manage work practices in such a way as to facilitate the WLB of the academicians [1]. WLB among academicians can be maintained by drawing a good appearance of the work-life balance of the academicians in order to lessen the impact of imbalance and distress between the two domains of human life i.e. work life and personal life [17]. Academicians need to adjust to the changing environment constantly which must be facilitated by the institutions. They can design work programs in a way to help the academicians improve their work-life balance. Because if the institute wants its students to excel, it needs to take care of its academicians and their well-being which is linked to their work-life balance. A better quality of work-life balance among academicians increases their chances of staying in academia than opting for any other profession [30]. More research needs to be conducted to understand what are the difficulties that the academicians, involved in higher education, are facing, and subsequently, to design work programmes to help them maintain a good quality of Work-life Balance.

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