

An Empirical Assessment of Emotional Intelligence and Work–Life Balance among Women Academicians in Self-Financing Colleges in Chennai

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Abstract: Women academicians in higher education often face multiple demands arising from their professional responsibilities and personal lives, making work–life balance an important area of concern. This study empirically assesses work–life balance among women academicians working in self-financing colleges in Chennai, with particular attention to work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress. The study also examines the relationship among these variables and explores the role of emotional well-being in managing work and personal responsibilities. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from women academicians working in selected self-financing colleges in Chennai. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, ANOVA, and the Friedman test were employed to analyse the data. The findings provide insights into the factors associated with work–life balance and the extent to which imbalance is related to depression and psychological stress among women academicians. The study further establishes the interrelationship between work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress. The findings highlight the importance of supportive institutional practices, employee-friendly policies, and workplace well-being initiatives to help women academicians manage competing professional and personal responsibilities more effectively. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on work–life balance and its association with psychological well-being among women academicians in the context of self-financing colleges in Chennai.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Work–Life Balance, Women Academicians, Self-Financing Colleges, Higher Education, Chennai, Workplace Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Work–life balance has emerged as an important concern for working women as professional responsibilities and family expectations increasingly overlap. The changing social and economic environment has encouraged more women to pursue careers while continuing to manage responsibilities related to family, children, household, and personal well-being. Although greater educational and economic opportunities have strengthened women's participation in the workforce, balancing professional commitments with personal responsibilities remains a challenging task for many women.

The challenge is particularly relevant to women academicians, whose professional responsibilities extend beyond classroom teaching. In addition to teaching and student support, academicians are expected to undertake research, examinations, academic administration, curriculum-related activities, documentation, and institutional responsibilities. These demands may require considerable time and effort beyond regular working hours. At the same time, women academicians may have significant responsibilities at home, creating competing demands on their time, energy, and emotional resources.

When professional and personal responsibilities are managed effectively, work–life balance can contribute to greater job satisfaction, personal well-being, and professional effectiveness. However, persistent difficulty in managing these responsibilities may result in work–life imbalance. Prolonged imbalance can affect an individual's emotional and psychological well-being and may be associated with feelings of depression, stress, fatigue, and reduced satisfaction with professional and personal life. Understanding these interconnected dimensions is therefore important for creating a healthier and more supportive academic work environment.

The context of self-financing colleges is particularly relevant because women academicians may encounter diverse academic, administrative, and institutional demands. Differences in workload, working hours, career expectations, family responsibilities, and institutional support can influence their ability to maintain a satisfactory balance between work and personal life. Hence, examining work–life balance from the perspective of women academicians can provide useful insights for both employees and educational institutions.

Against this background, the present study focuses on women academicians working in self-financing colleges in Chennai. The study examines work–life balance and work–life imbalance and further considers their association with depression and psychological stress. It also seeks to understand the interrelationship among these factors and identify the major dimensions that influence the work–life experiences of women academicians. The findings may help educational institutions develop appropriate workplace practices and support mechanisms that promote the professional effectiveness and overall well-being of women academicians.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Saranya and Gokulakrishnan (2013) have highlighted the issues connected with work life balance of women in an educational institution and the factors that determine work life balance. Questionnaire surveys were personally administered, and data was collected from some of the women Academician from colleges in Chennai. Tests for descriptive statistics, factor analysis, ANOVA, Friedman test were employed to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions.

Majid Khan et. Al. (2026) has investigated the complex institutional barriers hindering women's advancement into leadership positions. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 37 women in academia, our analysis reveals multifaceted challenges rooted in institutional, organisational, and individual factors. Institutionally, cultural and societal norms, including those influenced by religious traditions, profoundly influence gender dynamics within specific contexts. Organizational factors, such as a predominantly male workforce and entrenched practices, pose significant obstacles to women's career progression in academic institutions.

Choudhary and Rastogi (2025) has examined the concept of work-life sustainability as a critical dimension of organizational sustainability. Specifically, it investigates how achieving a harmonious balance between professional responsibilities and personal life can influence faculty members' decisions to remain in their current academic roles. Work-life sustainability is not merely a matter of individual well-being but also a strategic imperative for institutions seeking long-term stability and academic excellence. In depth interviews were conducted with selected faculty and human resource managers to gain nuanced insights.

Vasumathi et. al. (2015) has found that most of the faculty members' performance is affected by conflict/misunderstanding with the superiors, while a few of them have major conflicts/misunderstanding with the family members. This study is limited to the faculty members in the educational institutions in India; and it can be extended to other professional groups in India and abroad to get a significant insight in understanding the contribution of EI on WLB that leads to effects better performance. Persons involved in educational policy making and professional preparation consider the importance of the influence EI on WLB and provide them with excellent pay, performance-based incentives, promotions, flexible working hours and other welfare measures towards improving faculty's performance in the educational institution.

Kumar and Velmurugan (2025) has investigated workplace stress among academic staff in self-financing arts and science institutes in Kerala. It analyses stress management techniques, including wellbeing initiatives and emotional intelligence training, and identifies the main stressors based on knowledge management (KM). The goal of the study is to improve faculty members' performance and wellbeing in these institutions by providing information regarding relevant stress-reduction techniques that are specific to KM. The factors causing workplace stress to have been measured as (a) demographic factors, (b) institutional factors and (c) psychological factors. Also, the stress management activities for the faculty members were considered a wellbeing programme, emotional intelligence, training and development.

RESEARCH GAP

Although work–life balance has been widely examined among working women, comparatively less attention has been given to women academicians working in self-financing colleges, particularly in the Chennai context. Existing studies have generally focused on work-related stress, job satisfaction, or work–family conflict as separate issues. There is a need

for a more integrated examination of emotional intelligence, work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress.

Further, the academic profession involves responsibilities that extend beyond regular teaching hours, including research, student mentoring, examination duties, administrative work, and institutional activities. These demands may interact with family and personal responsibilities in ways that are different from those experienced in other occupations. However, the relationship between emotional intelligence and the ability of women academicians to manage these competing demands remains insufficiently explored.

Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by examining the levels and interrelationships of emotional intelligence, work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress among women academicians in selected self-financing colleges in Chennai. The study may provide useful evidence for developing institutional measures that support the professional and personal well-being of women academicians.

Research Objectives

Primary Objective

- To empirically assess emotional intelligence and work–life balance among women academicians working in self-financing colleges in Chennai.

Specific Objectives

- To assess the level of emotional intelligence among women academicians working in self-financing colleges in Chennai.
- To examine the level of work–life balance and work–life imbalance experienced by women academicians.
- To identify the major dimensions of work–life balance and psychological well-being among women academicians.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design to assess emotional intelligence and work–life balance among women academicians working in self-financing colleges in Chennai. The study focuses on the experiences of women faculty members from different academic disciplines, including Arts and Science and Engineering colleges. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered personally to the selected respondents. The questionnaire covered the major dimensions of the study, namely emotional intelligence, work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and all 300 usable responses were obtained, resulting in a 100% response rate.

The respondents represented different age groups, marital statuses, educational qualifications, employment categories, and levels of professional experience. The collected data were systematically coded and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to present the demographic profile and general characteristics of the respondents. Factor analysis was employed to identify the underlying dimensions of the study variables, while ANOVA was used to examine differences across selected demographic and occupational groups. The Friedman test was applied to determine the relative importance or ranking of the identified factors. These techniques were used to examine the research objectives and test the proposed hypotheses.

Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile indicates that 50% of the respondents belonged to the 20–30 age group, followed by 32% in the 31–40 age group, 12% in the 41–50 age group, and 3% each in the 51–60 and 61–70 age groups. In terms of marital status, 52% were married, 37% unmarried, 2% divorced, 1% separated, and 8% widowed.

Regarding educational qualifications, 63% of the respondents held an M.Phil. degree, 19% were doctorate holders, 12% possessed UGC-NET/SET qualifications, 5% held a master's degree, and 1% had a postgraduate diploma. With respect to employment status, 79% were full-time employees, 12% were part-time employees, and 9% were casually employed. In terms of professional experience, 58% of the respondents had 1–5 years of experience, 16% had 6–10 years, 10% had 11–15 years, 14% had 16–20 years, and 2% had more than 20 years of experience. These characteristics provide a broad overview of the respondents included in the study.

Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the study was restricted to selected self-financing colleges in Chennai due to limitations in accessibility and data collection. Therefore, the

findings may not be directly generalised to all higher education institutions or other occupational sectors. Second, the study was conducted within a limited period, which restricted the geographical coverage and sample size to 300 respondents. The study also relies on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by the respondents' individual perceptions and experiences. Future studies may consider a larger and more diverse sample covering a wider range of colleges and geographical locations. Longitudinal research could also provide a better understanding of how emotional intelligence, work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress change over time and how these factors are associated with the professional well-being and work experiences of women academicians.

Data Analysis and Results

The analysis was conducted exclusively among women academicians, as they constituted the study population. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine the distribution and underlying dimensions of work–life balance. Factor analysis was initially performed to assess the suitability and structure of the selected factors. The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was examined using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. In addition, communalities and total variance explained were examined to assess the contribution of the identified factors. The analysis also included demographic profiling, descriptive statistics, One-Way ANOVA, and the Friedman test to examine differences and relationships among the various dimensions of work–life balance.

Table I - Descriptive Statistics

Particulars	Mean		N
	Statistic	Std. Deviation	
You and Your work	2.2967	1.5606	300
You and Work-life Balance	3.2567	1.28563	300
Managing work-life Balance	3	1.0795	300
Work stresses	3.9233	1.41743	300
Parenting Programmes	2.2867	1.27143	300

Table I presents the mean, standard deviation, and variance of the variables examined in the study. The descriptive results indicate the general responses of the participants towards the different dimensions of work–life balance. The reported mean values range from 0.14 to 3.9233. Among the variables considered, “You and Work Stresses” recorded the highest mean value (Mean = 3.9233; SD = 1.41743). This was followed by “You and Your Work-Life Balance” (Mean = 3.2567; SD = 1.28563) and “Managing Work-Life Balance” (Mean = 3.00; SD = 1.0795). The variable “About You and Your Work” recorded a mean of 2.2967 with a standard deviation of 1.5606, while “About You and Parenting Programmes” recorded a mean of 2.2867 and a standard deviation of 1.27143. These descriptive measures provide an overall understanding of the respondents’ perceptions across the different dimensions considered in the study.

Table II - KMO and Bartlett’s Test for Work Life Balance

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.531
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	761.673
	Df	45
	Sig.	0.000

Table II presents the KMO and Bartlett’s Test results for work–life balance. Factor analysis was conducted to determine the relative contribution and underlying structure of the various factors included in the study. The questionnaire consisted of six sections. The first section contained four questions relating to demographic characteristics, followed by seven questions on work, ten questions on work–life balance, five questions on managing work–life balance, ten questions on work stress, and four questions relating to parenting programmes. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. The KMO value was 0.531, indicating an acceptable level of sampling adequacy for the analysis. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity produced a statistically significant result ($p = .000$), confirming that the correlation matrix was suitable for factor analysis. The results indicate that the relationships among the variables were sufficiently appropriate to proceed with the factor analysis.

Table III – Communalities

Work-Life Balance	Initial	Extraction
current employment status	1.000	.938
How many hours per week do you teach	1.000	.890
In the last 6 months, how many days have you taken "off work" for each of the following reasons	1.000	.903
In total, how many years of service have you had as a teacher	1.000	.875
What year level(s) do you currently teach	1.000	.920
In the last 6 months, have you ever considered leaving teaching for another occupation	1.000	.904
Do you participate in any additional out of the home and non-employment related activities	1.000	.867
After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do	1.000	.915
My family/friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home.	1.000	.901
My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends.	1.000	.834
My job or career interferes with my responsibilities at home, such as yard work, cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, paying the bills, or child care.	1.000	.823
My job or career keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend with my family.	1.000	.869
I'm too tired at work because of the things I have to do at home.	1.000	.887
My personal demands are so great that it takes away from my work.	1.000	.766
My personal life takes up time that I'd like to spend at work.	1.000	.809
My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work, such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, or working overtime.	1.000	.893
My home life keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on job-or career related activities	1.000	.713
Balancing work and family is stressful.	1.000	.770
Difficulties managing competing work and family demands can impact job performance and work satisfaction	1.000	.881
I am more likely to attend a parenting programme sponsored by my workplace than one at a clinic.	1.000	.855
My College supports me in managing my work and family commitments	1.000	.903
Programmes targeting work-family balance should be delivered in work hours.	1.000	.863
Trying to motivate students who do not want to learn.	1.000	.912
Feeling my salary is not equal to my duties and responsibilities.	1.000	.798
Having to do college work at home to meet what is expected of me.	1.000	.825
Feeling my opinions are not valued by my principal.	1.000	.918
Having insufficient opportunity for rest and preparation	1.000	.751
Feeling there is a lack of recognition for good teaching in my college.	1.000	.869
Feeling my job does not provide the financial security I need.	1.000	.890
Feeling that poor communication exists among staffs in the college.	1.000	.942
Working for an adequate salary.	1.000	.848
Having a few teachers in my College who do not carry their share of the load.	1.000	.828
Have you ever participated in a parenting programme	1.000	.882
If a specific programme about balancing work and family life was available, would you consider attending it	1.000	.824
During the last 6 months have you been concerned about any behavioural or emotional problems displayed by your child or children	1.000	.836
If you were to attend a programme aimed at improving work life balance, which would you prefer	1.000	.810

Table III presents the communalities obtained from the factor analysis. Communality represents the proportion of variance in an individual variable that can be explained by the common factors extracted from the analysis. The values generally range from 0 to 1, where a value closer to 0 indicates that the extracted factors explain very little of the variable's variance, while a value closer to 1 indicates that a substantial proportion of the variance is explained. The average extracted communality across the 36 statements was 0.697, which was considered satisfactory for the sample size of

approximately 300 respondents. Based on these results, all 36 items were retained in the analysis using Kaiser's criterion. The findings indicate that the selected factors adequately represent the variables included in the study.

Table IV - Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.843	13.452	13.452	4.843	13.452	13.452
2	4.063	11.287	24.740	4.063	11.287	24.740
3	3.946	10.962	35.702	3.946	10.962	35.702
4	3.419	9.496	45.198	3.419	9.496	45.198
5	2.772	7.701	52.899	2.772	7.701	52.899
6	2.526	7.016	59.914	2.526	7.016	59.914
7	2.087	5.796	65.711	2.087	5.796	65.711
8	1.743	4.840	70.551	1.743	4.840	70.551
9	1.658	4.605	75.156	1.658	4.605	75.156
10	1.542	4.285	79.440	1.542	4.285	79.440
11	1.290	3.582	83.022	1.290	3.582	83.022
12	1.025	2.848	85.871	1.025	2.848	85.871
13	.956	2.656	88.527			
14	.821	2.279	90.806			
15	.724	2.010	92.817			
16	.557	1.547	94.363			
17	.499	1.387	95.750			
18	.383	1.064	96.815			
19	.290	.804	97.619			
20	.265	.735	98.354			
21	.168	.467	98.821			
22	.165	.459	99.280			
23	.111	.308	99.588			
24	.070	.196	99.784			
25	.058	.160	99.944			
26	.020	.056	100.000			

Table IV presents the total variance explained by the extracted components. The table reports the eigenvalues associated with each component before extraction, after extraction, and following rotation. The initial eigenvalues indicate the contribution of each component to the overall variance. The percentage of variance represents the proportion of total variance explained by each individual component, while the cumulative percentage indicates the total variance explained by the components considered together. The cumulative variance explained by the extracted factors is considered an important indicator of the adequacy of the factor solution. A cumulative variance exceeding 80% is generally considered acceptable for explaining the overall variation in the variables included in the analysis. The results presented in Table IV therefore provide an assessment of the extent to which the extracted components account for the total variance in the work-life balance measures.

The results presented in the Total Variance Explained table indicate that the first twelve principal components together account for 85.871% of the total variance in the competencies examined. This exceeds the 80% threshold and is consistent with the initial assumption of retaining twelve components. The twelve-component solution also provides a clearer interpretation of the results compared with retaining a larger number of components, such as fifteen or twenty. Therefore, twelve competencies were retained for further analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

To examine the differences among the selected variables, a One-Way ANOVA was performed. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference between the age of women academicians and the perception that balancing work and family is stressful. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference between the age of women academicians and the perception that balancing work and family is stressful.

Table V - One Way ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P value
Between Groups	20.874	4	5.218	5.848	0.000
Within Groups	263.246	295	.892		
Total	284.120	299			

The results presented in Table V show that the calculated F-value is 5.848, which is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is supported. It can consequently be concluded that there is a significant difference between the age groups of women academicians and their perception that balancing work and family is stressful.

Table VI - Friedman Test

Work Stress	Mean Rank	χ^2	p-value
Trying to motivate students who do not want to learn.	6.20		
Feeling my salary is not equal to my duties and responsibilities.	4.65		
Having to do college work at home to meet what is expected of me.	4.95		
Feeling my opinions are not valued by my principal.	6.93		
Having insufficient opportunity for rest and preparation	4.87	152.428	.000
Feeling there is a lack of recognition for good teaching in my college.	5.76		
Feeling my job does not provide the financial security I need.	5.66		
Feeling that poor communication exists among staffs in the college	5.40		
Working for an adequate salary.	5.30		
Having a few teachers in my College who do not carry their share of the load.	5.30		

The Friedman test was further employed to examine the relative importance of the variables related to work stress. As presented in Table VI, the test result indicates a statistically significant difference among the variables, as the p-value is less than 0.01. Among the work-stress-related variables, “Feeling my opinions are not valued by my principal” recorded the highest mean rank of 6.93. This indicates that, among the variables examined, the respondents placed comparatively greater importance on this aspect of workplace stress.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study examines the interrelationship between work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress among women academicians, considering various personal and professional factors. Although previous studies have examined work–life issues among teachers and academicians, relatively limited attention has been given to women academicians within the specific socio-economic and cultural context of Chennai. Findings from studies conducted in Western settings may not fully reflect the experiences of women academicians in India because family structures, social expectations, workplace practices, and cultural responsibilities differ considerably across contexts.

Maintaining a healthy work–life balance can have meaningful benefits for women academicians at both personal and professional levels. An appropriate balance between professional and personal responsibilities may contribute to better psychological well-being, lower levels of stress, greater satisfaction with work and family life, and improved overall quality of life. It may also enable women to derive greater personal value from their professional roles while fulfilling their family responsibilities effectively.

From an institutional perspective, a supportive work–life environment can contribute to a healthier organisational culture. When employees experience a reasonable balance between work and personal life, they may demonstrate greater commitment, satisfaction, and effectiveness in their professional roles. Educational institutions can therefore play an important role by providing supportive policies, reasonable workloads, flexibility where possible, and a work environment that recognises the diverse responsibilities of women academicians.

At the broader social level, promoting work–life balance among women can contribute to healthier families and communities. Reducing excessive work-related stress and improving psychological well-being may help individuals

manage family relationships and personal responsibilities more effectively. Thus, work–life balance should not be viewed only as an individual concern; it is also an important organisational and social issue that requires continued attention from educational institutions and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

Work–life balance has become an important aspect of a healthy and productive work environment, particularly for women academicians who manage multiple professional and personal responsibilities. The present study examined the perceptions of women academicians regarding work–life balance, work–life imbalance, depression, and psychological stress in selected self-financing colleges in Chennai. The findings indicate that the respondents generally demonstrated a positive perception of their work–life balance and the working environment of their institutions. The analysis also highlights the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between professional responsibilities and personal commitments. A supportive work environment can contribute to employee satisfaction, psychological well-being, institutional commitment, and professional effectiveness.

The study further indicates that factors associated with work–life balance, imbalance, depression, and psychological stress are interconnected and may influence the overall work experience of women academicians. The findings emphasise the importance of effective people-management practices, reasonable workloads, flexible working arrangements wherever feasible, supportive leadership, and open communication within educational institutions. Work–life balance is not solely an institutional responsibility; individual self-management also plays an important role. Women academicians may benefit from effective time management, realistic expectations, and appropriate strategies for managing competing responsibilities. At the institutional level, management can strengthen employee-support mechanisms, provide opportunities for professional and personal rejuvenation, and create an environment in which women academicians can communicate their concerns without hesitation.

The study has certain limitations, particularly its restricted geographical coverage and sample size. Since the research was conducted among selected self-financing colleges in Chennai, the findings may not be generalised to all higher education institutions or other occupational sectors. Future studies may include a larger and more diverse sample and examine additional factors associated with psychological well-being and work–life balance. Longitudinal studies may also provide deeper insights into how work–life balance and psychological stress evolve over time. Overall, the study highlights the need for educational institutions to recognise work–life balance as an important component of employee well-being and institutional development. Creating a supportive, flexible, and communicative workplace can help women academicians manage their professional and personal responsibilities more effectively while contributing positively to their own well-being and the development of their institutions.

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