

A study on Impact of work life balance challenges on social sustainability

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Abstract

Work-life balance challenges have significant implications for social sustainability, which encompasses the well-being and stability of individuals, families, and communities. This paper explores the impact of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability and highlights the various implications involved. The survey has conducted on 200 working women in an around Ballari city. Additionally, neglected work-life balance can hinder social cohesion, decrease community engagement, and erode social trust. Lastly, it can impact economic productivity, as overworked individuals experience decreased efficiency and innovation in the workplace. Addressing work-life balance challenges such as Cultural challenges, Work environment challenges, Work structure challenges and Social challenges is crucial for promoting social sustainability. Strategies such as flexible work arrangements, promoting a healthy work culture, and providing parental leave and childcare support can contribute to achieving a better work-life balance and enhancing social sustainability.

Keywords: Cultural challenges, Work environment challenges, Work structure challenges and Social challenges, Social sustainability

1. Introduction:

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical aspect of modern life, particularly in the context of evolving work environments and societal expectations. It refers to the equilibrium between an individual's personal and professional commitments, allowing them to effectively manage their time, energy, and resources. Achieving work-life balance is essential for the well-being and sustainability of individuals, families, and communities. The concept of social sustainability encompasses various factors such as health, relationships, equality, community engagement, and economic productivity. Therefore, the impact of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability is a topic of great importance and interest.

The global COVID19 pandemic has forced enormous changes and disruptions upon the working women of the world. Attaining a healthy work-life balance is one of the most difficult obstacles that professional women must overcome. Women face unique obstacles in striking a work-life balance because they are expected to do so much housework. Women and girls are responsible for 75 percent of all

housework, according to Moreira da Silva (2019). In addition, according to a research by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women spend an average of 4 hours and 25 minutes per day on housework and caregiving, while men spend only 1 hour and 23 minutes (Pozzan & Cattaneo, 2020). Working women face numerous difficulties in striking a balance between their professional and domestic responsibilities as a result of the gender pay gap. In addition, their professional advancement is hampered by the work-life imbalance that results from the unequal distribution of roles within the nuclear family. Furthermore, women have a plethora of other commitments that put them at greater risk of experiencing role conflict.

In recent years, the pursuit of work-life balance has become increasingly challenging due to several factors. The rise of globalization, technological advancements, and the demand for constant connectivity have blurred the boundaries between work and personal life. Individuals often find themselves struggling to balance the demands of their careers with the need for quality time with their families,

personal interests, and self-care. Moreover, societal expectations and traditional gender roles can exacerbate the imbalance, especially for women who face additional pressures and responsibilities.

In the subsequent sections, we will explore the specific implications of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability, providing a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between the two domains and highlighting the importance of prioritizing work-life balance for the overall well-being and sustainability of individuals and society as a whole. This paper aims to delve into the impact of work-life balance challenges on various aspects of social sustainability. By examining the effects on health and well-being, family dynamics, gender equality, social cohesion, and economic productivity, we can gain insights into the broader consequences of an imbalanced work-life dynamic.

2. Literature review

Since the emergence of COVID19, scholars in various countries have paid more attention to WLB issues due to the rapid transformation of traditional roles at home and in the workplace. Many people were quarantined at home due to the spread of COVID19, and they were compelled to rethink their daily routines to accommodate being inside. As a result, women will be called upon to play a more active part in society (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). Since this epidemic appears to have exacerbated traditional gender stereotypes and inequalities in families and societies, numerous studies (Alon et al. 2020; Carlson et al. 2020) and media reports (Ascher 2020; Manzo 2020; Topping 2020) have demonstrated the challenges to and difficulties of working women's WLB.

Although WLB is a relatively new concept, the idea it defines is quite ancient (Chandra, 2012). Scholars have argued that it is difficult to define WLB precisely (Felstead, Gallie, & Green, 2002). Clark (2000) defines WLB as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict" (p.751). It is defined as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in — and satisfied with — his or her

work role and family role" by Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003, p. 513). According to Clutterbuck (2003), most people believe it is a "choice" that everyone, including workers, has the freedom to choose. However, research on WLB from a variety of countries shows that making this "choice" is never without its challenges (Karatepe, 2010), and neither is striking a healthy work-life balance (Lewis et al., 2007). In this study, we use the term "work-life balance" to refer to the intersection of one's professional and personal responsibilities and their impact on one's dedication to one's career, happiness in one's position within the family unit, and outlook on social issues like "social sustainability."

The medical field in many African countries is a prime example of the changing nature of the modern workplace (Wise, Smith, Valsecchi, Mueller, & Gabe, 2007). It employs a highly skilled and professionalised workforce that is steeped in both western medical training and local values and work ethic (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). As a result, professionals, like Nigerian female medical physicians (Adisa et al., 2017; MWF, 2008), face difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance (WLB) and social support network. Female medical professionals in Nigeria face discrimination and other challenges due to institutional and cultural norms that are not shared by their male counterparts (McMurray, Linzer, Konrad, Douglas, Shugerman & Nelson, 2000). This is especially true in an industry where quality service is under constant scrutiny (Crompton & Lyonette, 2011). The medical field, as noted by McIntosh, McQuaid, and Munro (2015), is one that requires a high degree of work-life balance. For doctors, this means extra work. Sibert (2011) acknowledges the significance and usefulness of doctors' WLB, but he also acknowledges that the demand of physical and mental strain at the hospitals and the high intensity of the workplace in which working women operate appear incongruous with WLB precepts (Karatepe, 2009).

McIntosh et al. (2015) found that this condition puts working women at risk for burnout, excessive hours at work, and tensions at home.

Thielst (2005), for one, notes that doctors' dedication to their work keeps them away from their loved ones, including their families, relatives, spouses, and partners. This is because most working women consider their careers to be their "first love," which causes them to devote less time to their personal and family lives. Consequently, doctors' families suffer when their work isn't flexible, and working women themselves suffer from burnout, apathy, and depersonalization (McIntosh et al., 2015).

The stress, exhaustion, and other symptoms of WLB that are inherent to the nature of the labour performed by working women are considerable. Women face additional obstacles outside of the workplace, including those of a domestic and family nature (Verlander, 2004; Adisa et al., 2016). It has been found that having social and environmental support is one way to deal with stress and mitigate its negative effects (Beaumont, Hunter, & Sinclair, 1996). The majority of respondents highlighted the importance of social, family, and environmental support in overcoming WLB obstacles. Armstrong (2014) argues that the system of work, job design, working conditions, and the treatment of employees all contribute to what is known as the "work environment." The average Nigerian workplace presents difficulties in WLB and social sustainability due to the scarcity of employee voice, a supportive work environment, and employee involvement. Based on the literature review and study the work life balance challenges identified are:

Cultural Challenges:

Cultural challenges pose significant barriers to promoting social sustainability. Cultural norms and expectations surrounding work and family life can perpetuate work-life imbalance and hinder social progress. Traditional gender roles, for example, often assign primary caregiving responsibilities to women, limiting their career opportunities and reinforcing inequality. Overcoming these cultural challenges requires promoting cultural shifts that recognize the importance of work-life balance, challenge gender stereotypes, and foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

Work Environment Challenges:

The work environment plays a crucial role in determining work-life balance and overall well-being. Many workplaces struggle with challenges such as high workloads, long working hours, and a lack of supportive policies. These factors contribute to increased stress, burnout, and strained personal relationships. To promote social sustainability, organizations need to create work environments that prioritize employee well-being, implement flexible work arrangements, and provide support for work-life integration. By fostering a healthy and supportive work environment, organizations can enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and overall social well-being.

Work Structure Challenges:

The structure of work itself can present challenges to achieving work-life balance and social sustainability. Traditional work structures often emphasize rigid schedules, limited flexibility, and a focus on face time rather than productivity. These structures can hinder individuals from effectively managing their personal and professional commitments. Shifting work structures to embrace flexible hours, remote work options, and outcome-based performance evaluations can empower individuals to better balance their work and personal lives. By reevaluating and restructuring work practices, organizations can contribute to social sustainability by improving work-life balance and overall quality of life for employees.

Social Challenges:

Social challenges encompass broader societal factors that influence work-life balance and social sustainability. These challenges include inadequate social support systems, limited access to affordable childcare, and societal pressures that stigmatize work-life balance initiatives. Lack of social cohesion, community engagement, and support networks can also hinder individuals' ability to balance their work and personal lives. Addressing social challenges requires collective efforts from policymakers, communities, and individuals to create social support systems, foster community engagement, and promote a culture that values work-life

balance. By addressing these challenges, societies can enhance social sustainability by ensuring the well-being and resilience of individuals, families, and communities.

Research Objectives:

1. To understand the work life balance challenges faced by working women
2. To study the Impact of work life balance challenges on social sustainability

3. Research methodology

Quantitative information was collected using a survey. After completing the literature review, a questionnaire was developed using the aforementioned constructs from prior studies. Each statement was given a rating from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement, on a 5-point Likert scale. Social sustainability , challenges (such as Cultural challenges, Work environment challenges, Work structure challenges and Social challenges) items were adopted .

3.1. Sample and data collection

The research is backed by a thorough literature and theory review. After identifying the issue and developing the research question, the next step is to choose a research strategy. The next stage is to actually collect data utilising those strategies. The researcher has completed data analysis using predetermined hypotheses after collecting relevant information. Randomly 200 respondents has been selected from the working women of Ballari region.

This work makes use of a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach to its research. The research's primary data came from a survey of respondents, which was acquired through the development of a questionnaire. Secondary sources, such as previously published research, studies and the writings and blogs of renowned authors, have also contributed to the data set.

3.2 Data analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the study's analysis and presentation of findings. IBM SPSS version 24 was used to analyze the data, and descriptive statistics including the sample's mean, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency were calculated. In order to extrapolate from the sample to the population, we used inferential statistics like correlation and multiple regression. After obtaining 215 total replies, a data screening was undertaken, during which questionnaires with missing data were discarded and 200 responses were chosen for final study.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic characteristics: Below is a table displaying information technology workers' profiles. The data shows that 24% are aged 28 or younger, and 45.5% are aged 28-38. A total of 48% of those surveyed are undergraduates. 77.5% of the working women are unmarried.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of women respondents (N=200)

Measures	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	200	100
Marital Status	Married	45	22.5
	Unmarried	155	77.5
Education	PG	81	40.5
	Secondary board/ Equivalent degree	23	11.5
	UG	96	48
Age of the respondents	<28yrs	48	24
	29 to 38 yrs	91	45.5
	38 to 48 yrs	42	21
	Above 48 yrs	19	9.5

Source: Primary data

4.2 Descriptive statistics and scale reliability:

Responses were relatively concentrated in the middle of the scale, as indicated by the mean and standard deviation measures of central tendency. SS (M = 4.57, SD = 0.66) received the most favorable opinion followed by SC (M = 4.52, SD = 0.68), WSC (M = 4.40, SD = 0.70), WEC (M = 4.43, SD = 0.78) and CC (M = 4.24, SD = 0.69).

Cronbach's alpha was chosen as the preferred measure of reliability to assess the consistency of the constructs utilized in the data analysis process. According to Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) findings, criteria that meet or exceed a

value of 0.7 are considered to be the threshold for reliability. The alpha values reported in Table 2 indicate that the data is reliable, as all values fall within the specified criteria, ranging from 0.850 to 0.912.

The values of all variables' correlation coefficients were also listed in table 2. Correlational analysis establishes a link between two factors. As the p-values for the coefficients of correlation are all less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. When it comes to Social sustainability and WSC, R = 0.631 is the highest possible value.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha, Mean, Std. deviation and Correlation of the variables.

	CC	WEC	WSC	SC	SS
Reliability (Alpha value)	0.850	0.875	0.912	0.888	0.903
Mean	4.2413	4.4250	4.3987	4.5163	4.5650
Standard deviation	.69608	.78508	.69911	.68457	.66263
Cultural Challenges (CC)	1				
Work Environment Challenges (WEC)	0.429**	1			
Work structure Challenges (WSC)	0.558**	0.455**	1		
Social Challenges (SC)	0.578**	0.409**	0.580**	1	
Social Sustainability (SS)	0.593**	0.551**	0.631**	0.599**	1

Note: ** indicates Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Influence of Work life balance challenges on Social sustainability:

Multiple regression analysis was utilised to determine how four different factors affected the study's dependent variable. The role of WLB challenges in the Social sustainability: As the dependent variable, Social sustainability was

compared to the independent variables of Cultural challenges, Work environment challenges, Work structure challenges and Social challenges. Before running the regression test, researcher made sure the multicollinearity assumption held up. The outcomes were addressed in more detail below:

Table 3: Multi-collinearity Tests

Independent Variables	Tolerance	VIF	Durbin-Watson
Cultural challenges (CC)	0.573	1.746	2.123
Work environment challenges (WEC)	0.737	1.357	
Work structure Challenges (WSC)	0.559	1.788	
Social Challenges (SC)	0.561	1.781	

Source: Primary Survey

Note: VIF = variance inflation factor

Using the variance inflation factor (VIF) values and the tolerance value, we were able to determine if multicollinearity was present in the data. A lack of significant correlation between any two independent variables (predictors) was defined as a VIF value of less than four and a tolerance value of more than 0.02. Table 6's VIF and Tolerance values, both of which are below

the established cutoff, suggest that there are no multicollinearity problems in the data. Moreover, the Durbin-Watson statistic (DW = 2.123) indicates the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals within the range of 1.5 and 2.5 critical values.

Table 4: ANOVA

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.305	4	12.326	63.133	.000
	Residual	38.072	195	.195		
	Total	87.377	199			

(Source: Primary Survey)

As shown in Table 4 of the ANOVA, the F-test result for predicting Social sustainability (dependent variable) is =63.133, with a significance level of p less than 0.05 (p=0.000).

Table 5: Coefficients of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. (p)	Results
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	0.699	.246		2.840	.005	
Cultural challenges (CC)	0.196	0.059	0.206	3.295	.001	H1 supported
Work environment challenges (WEC)	0.209	0.046	0.248	4.498	.000	H2 supported
Work structure Challenges (WSC)	0.263	0.060	0.277	4.388	.000	H3 supported
Social Challenges (SC)	0.211	0.061	0.218	3.456	.001	H4 supported

(Source: Primary Survey)

Table 5 presents the coefficients of a multiple regression model that elucidates the influence of Work life balance challenges on achieving social sustainability. Unstandardized coefficients refer to the coefficients of a regression equation that

have not been standardized or transformed in any way. Coefficient B describes the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Changes in the B value of the dependent variable are proportional to changes

in the independent variable. The sign of the B value indicates whether the dependent variable will increase or decrease.

The standardized regression weights (β) indicate the strength of impact of predictor variable on dependent variables. The strength of impact increases with a higher β value. The criteria for selection of hypothesis are based on the path having p value less than 0.05 and T value above 1.96.

The findings of Table 5 indicate the effect of cultural challenges on social sustainability is positive and significant as the $\beta=0.206$ with $p=0.001$. Since p value is below 0.05 and T value (3.456) is above 1.96, hypothesis H1 was supported.

The balance of Work environment challenges (WEC) leads to significant improvement in challenges and cultural challenges.

social sustainability as the β value is 0.248 with p value less than 0.05, confirming the hypothesis of H2. Similarly, organizations balancing Work structure Challenges (WSC) significantly influence social sustainability. The path coefficient value is 0.277 with $p=0.000$, since p less than 0.05 and T above 1.96, supported H3.

Finally, balancing Social Challenges (SC) significantly and positively influenced the social sustainability as the $\beta=0.218$ with $p=0.001$. Since p value is below 0.05 and T value (3.456) is above 1.96, hypothesis H4 was supported.

All of the hypotheses were supported, and the significance level of p less than 0.05 demonstrated that Work life balance challenges have a substantial effect on social sustainability. The conventional regression weights confirm that the use of work structure challenges has the greatest effect on social sustainability, followed by work environment

Table 6: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.751	0.564	0.555	.44186

Table 6 displays a moderate amount of correlation, with a R value of 0.751 indicating this. The independent factors had an R2 of 0.564, which means they explained 56.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (social sustainability).

4. Discussion and Implications

The use of balancing work life balance challenges has been shown to improve social sustainability. The impact of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability can be significant. Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals to effectively manage their personal and professional lives, ensuring adequate time and attention to both spheres. When work-life balance is compromised, it can have various implications for social sustainability, which relates to the well-being and stability of individuals, families, and communities. When work-life balance is neglected, it can lead to a lack of social cohesion and community engagement. Overworked individuals may have limited time and energy to participate in social activities, volunteer work,

or community initiatives. This can hinder the development of strong social networks, decrease social trust, and impact the overall sense of belonging and well-being within communities. Addressing work-life balance challenges is crucial for promoting social sustainability. It requires a combination of supportive policies and practices from employers, government interventions, and cultural shifts. Implementing flexible work arrangements, promoting a healthy work culture, providing parental leave and childcare support, and fostering gender equality are some strategies that can contribute to achieving a better work-life balance and ultimately enhance social sustainability.

Organisational supports, such as increased incentives for being in the office and shorter workdays over the week, were also cited as major stimulants of participants' WLB. Furthermore, several participants emphasised that, in order to conform to the "new normal," firms are allowing employees choose their own hours and alternate working days; these

individuals felt that this is a tremendous benefit for working women. Participants identified significant work pressure, lack of cooperation from a partner in household tasks, sociocultural and family customs, and gendered concerns as obstacles that women confront on a daily basis. In addition, respondents noted that their primary domestic and family responsibilities outside of their professional roles push them to work harder for longer hours, which in turn lowers their overall wellbeing.

Respondents emphasised prioritising, figuring out how to work around others at home, streamlining work responsibilities, managing work platforms, scheduling downtime, managing the household, and setting up a dedicated workspace as key strategies for achieving WLB goals.

Understanding the implications of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability is crucial for creating supportive environments and policies that promote the well-being of individuals and communities. By identifying and analyzing these implications, policymakers, organizations, and individuals can develop strategies and interventions that foster a healthier work-life balance, leading to more sustainable and resilient societies. The findings can guide the formulation of policies that address the challenges faced by individuals, promote gender equality, strengthen family structures, enhance community engagement, and optimize economic productivity.

5. Suggestions for Addressing Cultural, Work Environment, Work Structure, and Social Challenges in Promoting Social Sustainability:

1. Raise awareness about the importance of work-life balance and challenge traditional gender roles through education campaigns, workshops, and diversity training programs.
2. Embrace diverse cultural perspectives and practices that support work-life balance and gender equality, ensuring inclusivity in policies and practices.

3. Develop and enforce policies that support work-life balance, including flexible working hours, parental leave, and support for caregiving responsibilities.
4. Highlight and celebrate employees who successfully manage their work and personal lives, showcasing them as role models and inspiring others to prioritize work-life balance.
5. Advocate for flexible work options such as remote work, compressed workweeks, or job sharing to allow individuals to better manage their personal and professional commitments.
6. Encourage employees to take regular breaks and utilize their vacation time to promote work-life balance, recharge, and prevent burnout.
7. Establish community support networks, such as parent groups, caregiver support groups, or employee resource groups, to provide social support and resources for individuals balancing work and personal life.
8. Encourage organizations to provide opportunities for employees to engage in community initiatives, volunteer work, and social activities, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

In summary, addressing cultural, work environment, work structure, and social challenges is crucial for promoting social sustainability. By implementing these suggestions, organizations, policymakers, and individuals can create a supportive ecosystem that values work-life balance, gender equality, and community engagement. Through collaborative efforts, we can foster social sustainability and enhance the overall well-being and resilience of individuals, families, and communities.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, cultural challenges, work environment challenges, work structure challenges, and social challenges all play crucial roles in promoting social sustainability. Overcoming these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves cultural shifts, supportive work environments, flexible

work structures, and robust social support systems. By addressing these challenges, societies can create environments that prioritize work-life balance, gender equality, community engagement, and overall well-being, ultimately contributing to a more socially sustainable future. By exploring the impact of work-life balance challenges on social sustainability, this research paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the interconnections between work, personal life, and broader societal well-being. It emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts from various stakeholders to create a work-life balance culture that supports individuals, strengthens families, fosters social cohesion, promotes gender equality, and enhances economic productivity for a more sustainable and resilient society.

7. Limitation and future studies

The research is limited to working women and the challenges they face in work life balance. This study has included only the perceptions of women. Further studies could undertake a comparative analysis of different sectors or men and women regarding WLB challenges for social sustainable work. Also, institutional theory could be combined with other concepts for more nuanced insights into WLB and Social sustainability.

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