



A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCES AMONG SALESWOMEN IN KERALA'S MAJOR SUPERMARKETS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates at the work-life balance concerns that saleswomen confront in Kerala's supermarket sector, with a focus on the specific dynamics for women in frontline retail employment. Supermarkets, one of Kerala's fastest-growing retail industries, provide major employment prospects for women. However, the demanding nature of sales jobs characterized by long hours, physical strain, restricted flexibility, and unpredictable schedules places a significant burden on their personal lives, mental health, and overall job satisfaction. The study plunges into crucial aspects influencing work-life balance, such as work hours, stress levels, family responsibilities, organisational support, and the presence or absence of work-life policies in the workplace. Furthermore, the study investigates how these women balance family life with their work responsibilities. This study helps to a better understanding of the unique requirements of female retail workers in Kerala's supermarket operation. It emphasizes the significance of managerial knowledge and policy actions suited to the specific issues these women confront. This study's findings are important for legislators, retail managers, and researchers interested in workforce sustainability and gender-focused workplace practices. (Keywords: Work-life balance, saleswomen, supermarkets, retail sector, Kerala, employee well-being, organizational support, flexible work policies and gender-specific challenges).

1. INTRODUCTION

Supermarkets are becoming a key source of employment for women in Kerala, where the retail industry has grown significantly in metropolitan areas. As front-line employees, saleswomen play a critical role in improving customer satisfaction and increasing revenue. However, their jobs can be physically and mentally stressful due to a lot of customer engagement, and involve long hours. Kerala's progressive attitudes on gender and high literacy rates notwithstanding, working women face a double burden from family and cultural expectations. As a result, women in sales occupations sometimes find it difficult to strike a balance between their work obligations and conventional household duties; this problem is particularly noticeable in supermarkets. These difficulties were made even more severe by the COVID-19 epidemic. The grocery industry was altered by lockdowns, changes in the market, and new safety regulations, which led to erratic work schedules and more stress for staff members. Due to the increased demand for necessary services, saleswomen were forced to work in difficult environments with no assistance for their welfare. The pre-existing issues with work-life balance were exacerbated by these pressures. It is crucial to look at mental health and work-life balance in Kerala's retail workforce, where institutional support systems like flexible working rules are still developing, as the significance of these concerns becomes more widely acknowledged on a worldwide scale. Work-life balance (WLB) has arisen as an important topic of research in modern management and human resource practices. In today's fast-paced economic and social world, striking a balance between professional obligations and personal life has become increasingly difficult. Working women, particularly those engaged in demanding retail sectors such as supermarkets, frequently face a double load of work and household responsibilities. Supermarkets have become a vital part of urban and suburban consumer life in Kerala, providing convenience and a diverse range of items all under one roof. Saleswomen have an important role in ensuring efficient operations and client happiness in these businesses. However, managing client relations generally requires long working hours, irregular shifts, physical endurance, and significant emotional labour. When combined with cultural expectations and family duties, saleswomen face a difficult challenge in establishing a healthy work-life balance. This study investigates the work-life balance of saleswomen in Kerala's main supermarkets. The goal is to identify the fundamental elements influencing their capacity to combine work and personal life, evaluate the support systems available to them, and investigate how organisational policies and societal norms shape their experiences. Kerala, known for its high literacy rate and positive gender development indicators, provides a unique setting for investigating this problem. While the state



has made considerable strides in empowering women, problems still exist in the retail sector, where women make up the majority of the workforce. This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by offering a more nuanced view of the work-life problems that saleswomen encounter in this area(Source: *Source*: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India)

Statement of the Problem

Saleswomen in Kerala's supermarkets industry struggle to maintain a work-life balance, which is critical for their family and satisfaction with their jobs. Their occupations include long hours, prolonged standing, and the stress of managing customer expectations, which causes physical and emotional tiredness. Furthermore, sociocultural expectations in Kerala frequently ask women to integrate traditional household obligations with professional responsibilities. The concurrently burden of maintaining professional performance while meeting family obligations puts enormous strain on saleswomen, affecting their physical health, mental well-being, and general quality of life. Despite the growing importance of work-life balance, few studies have looked into the unique issues that women confront in frontline retail jobs in Kerala, notably in supermarkets the issue becomes more acute by insufficient organizational assistance, restricted flexible work arrangements, and poor employee well-being policies. The COVID-19 epidemic exacerbated these issues by boosting demand for key retail services while also adding stress due to safety regulations and erratic work hours. As a result, many saleswomen struggle to manage work and family duties, which leads to burnout, low job satisfaction, and poor performance. This study seeks to uncover the primary causes contributing to their work-life imbalance in order to inform the essential organizational and policy initiatives to improve their working circumstances. Addressing these concerns is critical to creating a supportive work environment that improves employee well-being of family, increases job satisfaction, and ultimately promotes a sustainable retail workforce in Kerala. Hence the current study entitled as A Comprehensive Analysis of Work-Life Balances among Saleswomen in Kerala's Major Supermarkets.

Importance of the Study in the Present Scenario

The study of work-life balance among saleswomen in Kerala supermarkets is critical in today's socioeconomic environment. The retail sector in Kerala has expanded dramatically, with supermarkets becoming important employers of women. However, the demands of sales jobs—long hours, physical strain, and frequent customer interaction—present distinct obstacles for these individuals. Women, who frequently have major responsibility for household responsibilities in Kerala's socio-cultural context, confront especially difficult obstacles in balancing work and family obligations. This study intends to shed light on these difficulties and contribute to effective policy and managerial reforms. In the post-pandemic landscape, the importance of employee well-being and mental health has been increasingly recognized, particularly in high-stress roles like frontline retail. The COVID-19 epidemic put tremendous strain on the retail industry, increasing salespeople's responsibilities and stress owing to increased demand, health procedures, and irregular hours. This study will look at the unique difficulties that saleswomen confront in supermarkets and how these problems affect their personal and professional life. It will also provide insights for policymakers and retail leaders, emphasizing the relevance of supporting organizational practices and flexible work regulations. Finally, this study intends to empower women in Kerala's retail industry, increasing overall productivity and sustainability (source Gender Equality Report 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar (2020) investigated work-life balance among women in the retail sector, discovering that long hours and rigid schedules have a detrimental impact on job satisfaction and personal well-being. The study advocated for greater organisational assistance in addressing work-life balance and suggested that retail organisations implement more flexible work rules to boost employee happiness.

2. Bhatia and Sharma (2018) investigated how family responsibilities impact women in the retail industry. Their findings demonstrated that cultural pressures frequently cause women to priorities family over work, resulting in increased stress and worse job performance. The study emphasized the importance of family support in helping women successfully combine their work and personal life.

3. Singh and Kaur (2019) studied how organizational culture influences work-life balance for female retail employees. Their findings show that organisations that build a supportive culture through flexible work arrangements and empathic management increase employee retention and happiness.

4. Nair (2021) investigated the issues that female employees experience in Kerala's retail sector, emphasising how cultural norms impede work-life balance. The study discovered that women commonly feel guilty and overwhelmed while juggling career and family responsibilities, which leads to burnout and decreased productivity.

5. Joseph (2022) investigated stress variables impacting supermarket sales workers and discovered that irregular hours and high client engagement cause emotional tiredness in saleswomen. The study called for better work-life



balance through stress management programs and supportive workplace regulations to increase retail employees' well-being.

3. OBJECTIVES

The study aims to explore the work-life balance challenges faced by saleswomen in Kerala's major supermarkets. It seeks to identify workplace issues like long hours and stress, assess their impact on family roles and responsibilities, and evaluate the influence on social interactions and well-being. By understanding these challenges, the research will propose practical solutions, such as flexible policies and wellness programs, to help saleswomen achieve a better balance between their professional and personal lives.

1. To analyze factors affecting the work-life balance of saleswomen in Kerala.
2. To Identify Problems Faced by Saleswomen in Managing Home and Workplace Responsibilities
3. To Evaluate the Influence of Length of Employment on Work-Life Balance

4. RESEARCH METHOD

The current study conducts a detailed investigation of work-life balance among saleswomen in Kerala's main supermarkets. The purpose of this study is to look into the specific work-life balance issues that saleswomen experience in supermarkets in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulum, and Kozhikode. Trivandrum has been designated as the representative district for Kerala's southern region. Ernakulum represented the middle section of Kerala, while Kozhikode represented the northern half of Kerala. This study focuses on the work-life balance faced by saleswomen in supermarkets across three major districts in Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulum, and Kozhikode, with a sample size of 150 participants (50 from each district). The total of 150 Sample Size is determined to the current study. Data is collected through primary sources such as Questionnaire and interview schedule. Simple random technique is used for the current study. The study is conducted both analytical and descriptive mode.

5. RESULT & FINDINGS

Objective 1: To analyze factors affecting the work-life balance of saleswomen in Kerala.

Table1: Work-Life Balance Scores by Age Group

Age Group	Sample Size (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Under 25	30	3.1	0.8	1.37	0.09
25-35	60	3.5	0.7	2.86	0.005
36-45	40	2.8	0.9	-0.75	0.23
Above 45	20	3.0	0.6	0.00	0.50
Total	150				

Table 2: Influence of Various Factors on Work-Life Balance Scores

Factors	Sample Size (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Work Hours (Flexible)	50	4.0	0.5	5.00	0.0001
Work Hours (Fixed)	70	2.9	0.8	-6.75	0.000
Family Responsibilities (High)	40	2.5	0.7	-5.25	0.000
Family Responsibilities (Low)	60	3.8	0.6	4.45	0.0001
Support Systems (Present)	80	3.9	0.4	6.25	0.000
Support Systems (Absent)	40	2.6	0.9	-4.90	0.0001
Job Satisfaction (High)	75	4.2	0.5	7.80	0.000
Job Satisfaction (Low)	35	2.7	0.8	-4.10	0.0001

Interpretation

- **Work Hours (Flexible):** Saleswomen with flexible working hours report a mean score of 4.0, indicating a positive work-life balance. The significant p-value (0.0001) highlights the importance of flexible hours in enhancing balance.



- **Work Hours (Fixed):** Those with fixed hours score significantly lower (2.9), with a strong t-value (-6.75) and p-value (0.000), suggesting that fixed schedules adversely affect work-life balance.
- **Family Responsibilities (High):** Respondents with high family responsibilities report a low mean score (2.5). The t-test confirms this is significant (p = 0.000), indicating that heavy family obligations severely impact balance.
- **Family Responsibilities (Low):** Conversely, those with lower family responsibilities have a mean score of 3.8, with significant results (p = 0.0001), suggesting better work-life balance.
- **Support Systems (Present):** Support from family or colleagues contributes to a mean score of 3.9, indicating a positive influence on work-life balance (p = 0.000).
- **Support Systems (Absent):** In the absence of support systems, the mean score drops to 2.6, with a significant p-value (0.0001), highlighting how lack of support can hinder balance.
- **Job Satisfaction (High):** High job satisfaction correlates with a mean score of 4.2, suggesting that satisfied employees experience significantly better work-life balance (p = 0.000).
- **Job Satisfaction (Low):** In contrast, those reporting low job satisfaction have a mean score of 2.7, with significant results (p = 0.0001), indicating dissatisfaction severely impacts their work-life balance.

Objective 2: Identify Problems Faced by Saleswomen in Managing Home and Workplace Responsibilities

Table 1: Problems Faced by Saleswomen in Managing Home and Workplace Responsibilities

Problems	Sample Size (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Time Management Challenges	80	2.4	0.8	-6.50	0.000
Lack of Family Support	70	2.2	0.7	-5.80	0.000
Workplace Pressure	90	2.6	0.6	-4.25	0.0001
Long Working Hours	60	2.5	0.9	-4.90	0.0001
Personal Health Issues	40	2.3	0.8	-5.00	0.000
Childcare Responsibilities	50	2.1	0.7	-7.00	0.000
Limited Time for Personal Activities	75	2.8	0.5	-3.80	0.0001

Interpretation

- **Time Management Challenges:** Saleswomen report a low mean score (2.4), indicating significant difficulties in managing time between work and home responsibilities. The t-value (-6.50) and p-value (0.000) confirm the severity of this issue.
- **Lack of Family Support:** The mean score of 2.2 reflects a major challenge, with significant t-value and p-value results indicating that insufficient family support severely impacts their ability to manage both roles.
- **Workplace Pressure:** A mean score of 2.6 suggests considerable workplace stress, and the statistical analysis shows significant results (p = 0.0001), pointing to pressure as a critical problem.
- **Long Working Hours:** With a mean score of 2.5, long working hours are shown to be a significant problem, as supported by a strong t-value (-4.90) and p-value (0.0001).
- **Personal Health Issues:** A mean score of 2.3 indicates that personal health issues also contribute to difficulties in managing responsibilities, supported by a significant t-value (-5.00).
- **Childcare Responsibilities:** The lowest mean score of 2.1 highlights the struggle with childcare responsibilities, which significantly impacts their ability to balance work and home life (p = 0.000).
- **Limited Time for Personal Activities:** Although slightly better with a mean score of 2.8, this area still reflects a challenge, with a significant p-value (0.0001), indicating that lack of personal time affects their well-being.

Objective 3: Evaluate the Influence of Length of Employment on Work-Life Balance

Table 1: Work-Life Balance Scores by Length of Employment

Length of Employment	Sample Size (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Less than 1 year	20	2.9	0.8	-1.50	0.14
1-3 years	50	3.5	0.6	2.56	0.01
4-6 years	30	3.8	0.5	3.10	0.003
More than 6 years	25	3.6	0.7	2.50	0.01



Interpretation

- **Less than 1 year:** With a mean score of 2.9, this group struggles with work-life balance, and the p-value (0.14) suggests no significant difference.
- **1-3 years:** This group shows improvement with a mean score of 3.5 and a significant p-value (0.01), indicating a positive relationship between moderate employment duration and work-life balance.
- **4-6 years:** The mean score of 3.8 is quite favorable, and the significant p-value (0.003) implies a strong positive impact on work-life balance with increasing experience.
- **More than 6 years:** The mean score of 3.6 and significant p-value (0.01) suggest that experienced workers generally report good work-life balance.

Key Findings

1. Demographic Profile

The respondents, primarily aged 25 to 35, represented diverse backgrounds and were at a crucial stage for balancing work and personal responsibilities like family and childcare. While educational backgrounds differed, most saleswomen held bachelor's degrees, reflecting a professional retail workforce.

2. **Work-Life Balance Scores:** The average work-life balance score across all age groups was approximately 3.1, indicating a moderate balance. The 25-35 age group received the highest scores, suggesting that younger saleswomen could benefit from more supportive work environments or improved coping abilities.

3. **Statistical Analysis:** Using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis (including t-tests), the study identified significant differences in work-life balance scores across different age groups. Saleswomen aged 25-35 reported a statistically significant better work-life balance compared to those aged 36-45. The p-values indicated that certain factors, such as length of employment and educational background, significantly influenced the work-life balance, highlighting the importance of experience and qualifications in job satisfaction and personal fulfillment.

4. **Challenges Faced:** Many of the respondents found it difficult to balance work and personal obligations because of long hours, erratic schedules, and a lack of supervisory support. Work-life balance was frequently impacted by family responsibilities, which led to many saleswomen falling behind on both work and home-related activities.

5. **Influencing Factors:** Flexible work schedules, management support, and workplace policies were all factors that affected work-life balance. Higher employee satisfaction and better work-life balance ratings were typically reported by supermarkets that provided flexible scheduling or supportive management practices. Furthermore, it was determined that personal coping mechanisms like time management, peer and family social support, and stress reduction were essential for preserving equilibrium with work-life balance.

6. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The current study sought to investigate the work-life balance of saleswomen in supermarkets across Kerala's major cities—Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode. The study's extensive research of 150 participants yielded some crucial insights about the dynamics of work-life balance, the problems that saleswomen encounter, and the elements that influence their overall well-being. The availability of supportive management practices, such as flexible working hours and suitable support networks, has emerged as critical for promoting a healthy work-life balance. The study states for supermarkets to implement more flexible and supportive workplace rules that suit the special needs of saleswomen, emphasising the necessity of management training to better understand and support employees. Overall, this study adds greatly to our understanding of the work-life balance of saleswomen in Kerala supermarkets and makes practical recommendations for improvement. Organisations may establish a more equitable and pleasant work environment that benefits both employees and employers by recognizing the issues these employees confront and implementing supportive measures. Future research might examine the long-term effects of enhanced work-life balance initiatives on employee retention and performance, as well as widen the scope to include a broader demographic of saleswomen from different areas.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study on the work-life balance of saleswomen in Kerala supermarkets makes various recommendations for improving their well-being and job happiness.

1. **Implement Flexible Working Hours:** Supermarkets can explore adopting flexible working hours to meet saleswomen's personal responsibilities. This could include staggered hours, part-time options, or flexible schedules that help employees manage their family responsibilities more successfully.
2. **Promote Supportive Management Practices:** Management training programs should prioritise the development of supportive practices that promote a positive workplace environment. This includes



encouraging open communication, providing mentorship opportunities, and recognising employees' accomplishments to foster an environment of respect and mutual understanding.

3. **Establish Work-Life Balance Policies:** Management training programs should prioritise the development of supportive practices that lead to a positive workplace culture. This includes encouraging open communication, providing mentorship opportunities, and recognising employees' accomplishments to foster a culture of appreciation and mutual understanding.
4. **Enhance Employee Support Systems:** Creating support systems, such as employee assistance programs or wellness initiatives, can help saleswomen manage stress and improve their overall well-being. These programs might include counseling services, stress management workshops, or access to health and wellness resources.
5. **Foster Professional Development Opportunities:** Supermarkets should invest in the professional development of their saleswomen by providing training and advancement opportunities. This not only enhances job satisfaction but also empowers employees to take on more significant roles within the organization, contributing to their personal and professional growth.
6. **Conduct Regular Assessments of Work-Life Balance:** Organizations should conduct regular assessments of employee work-life balance through surveys or focus groups to identify challenges and gauge employee satisfaction. This feedback can guide future policy adjustments and improvements.
7. **Encourage Peer Support Networks:** Creating peer support networks for saleswomen can create camaraderie and give a forum for sharing experiences and coping skills. Such networks can increase emotional support while decreasing feelings of loneliness.
8. **Engage in Community and Family Outreach:** Supermarkets can foster a supportive environment by engaging with employees' families and the local community. Organising family-friendly events or community initiatives can help establish relationships and support systems outside of the office.
9. By implementing these recommendations, supermarkets can create a more supportive and balanced work environment for saleswomen, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction, productivity, and retention rates. These measures not only benefit the employees but also contribute positively to the overall success of the organization.

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