

**WORK - LIFE BALANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES:
EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN FACULTY IN SELF-FINANCING COLLEGES**

***Dr.P.Saravana Kumar, Assistant Professor,
PG and Research Department of Commerce,
Sri Vasavi College, Erode.**

****Mrs.M.Lalitha, Ph.d Research Scholar (Part Time),
PG and Research Department of Commerce,
Sri Vasavi College, Erode.**

ABSTRACT

Work–life balance has emerged as a critical concern in the higher education sector, particularly for women faculty members employed in self-financing colleges. These institutions, driven largely by market-oriented models and financial sustainability goals, often impose intensive workloads, performance pressures, and extended working hours on academic staff. Women faculty members, who simultaneously manage professional responsibilities and socio-cultural expectations related to family and caregiving roles, face compounded challenges in maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life. This article explores the experiences of women faculty in self-financing colleges, focusing on institutional pressures that influence their work–life balance. Drawing upon existing literature, contextual analysis, and experiential insights, the study examines key stressors such as workload intensification, job insecurity, administrative demands, gendered expectations, and limited institutional support mechanisms. The article concludes with policy recommendations aimed at fostering gender-sensitive institutional practices and promoting sustainable academic work environments.

Keywords: Work–life balance, women faculty, self-financing colleges, institutional pressures and higher education

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the expansion of self-financing colleges has significantly reshaped the landscape of higher education, particularly in developing countries such as India. These institutions play a crucial role in meeting the growing demand for higher education; however, their operational models are often characterized by cost-efficiency, performance accountability, and revenue-driven objectives. While such models have improved access to education, they have also intensified institutional pressures on faculty members. Among academic

professionals, women faculty members constitute a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to work–life balance. Balancing teaching, research, administrative duties, and student engagement alongside family responsibilities places women faculty under persistent strain. The situation is further exacerbated in self-financing colleges, where employment conditions are often less regulated compared to government or aided institutions. Work–life balance is not merely an individual concern but a critical organizational and social issue affecting job satisfaction, productivity, mental health, and institutional effectiveness. Understanding how institutional pressures shape the work–life experiences of women faculty is therefore essential for developing inclusive and sustainable higher education systems. This article aims to explore the nature of these pressures and their implications for women faculty working in self-financing colleges.

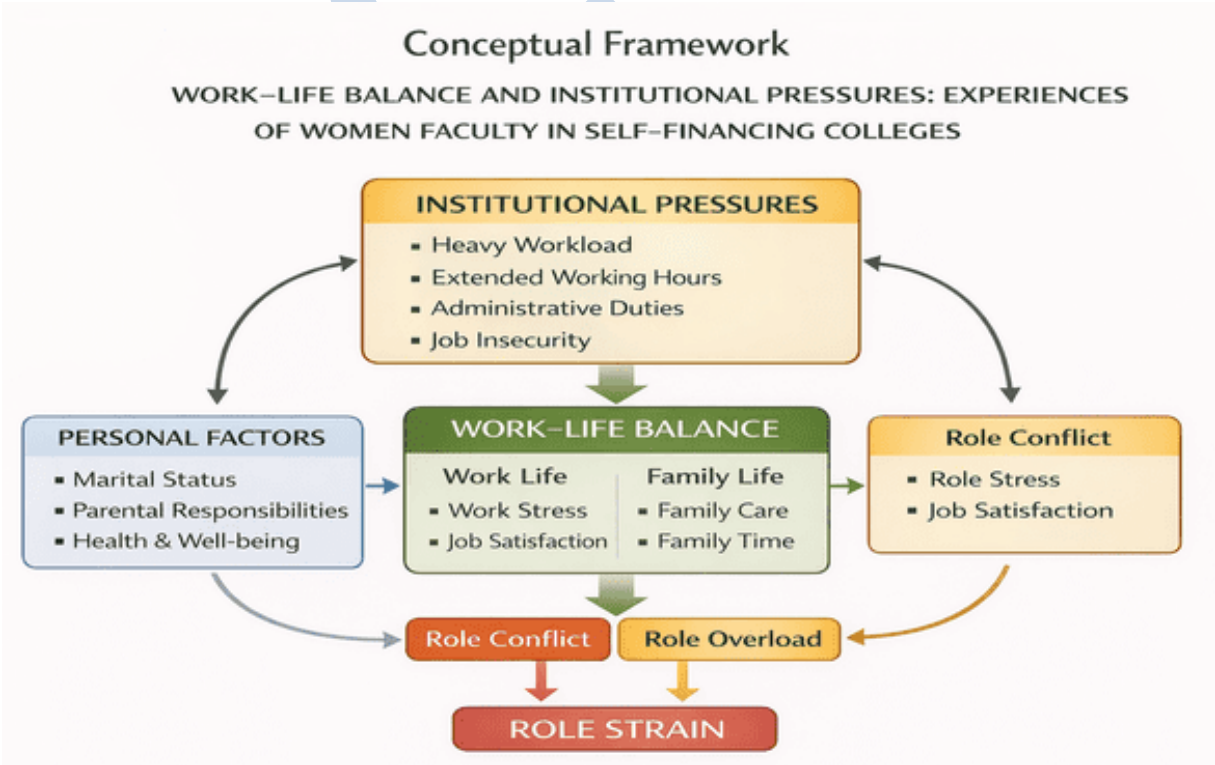
Conceptual Framework: Work–Life Balance

Work–life balance refers to an individual’s ability to effectively manage professional responsibilities while maintaining personal well-being, family relationships, and social life. In the academic context, work–life balance extends beyond fixed working hours to include intellectual labor, emotional engagement, and continuous professional development.

For women faculty, work–life balance is influenced by multiple intersecting factors, including gender roles, institutional culture, career stage, and family structure. Traditional expectations often position women as primary caregivers, regardless of their professional status. As a result, women faculty frequently experience role conflict, time pressure, and emotional exhaustion.

In self-financing colleges, where institutional demands are high and support systems are limited, achieving work–life balance becomes particularly challenging. The imbalance not only affects individual faculty members but also has broader consequences such as reduced teaching quality, increased turnover, and long-term disengagement from academic careers.

Figure: 1



Institutional Pressures in Self-Financing Colleges

Self-financing colleges operate within a competitive and market-driven environment. Unlike government-funded institutions, they rely heavily on student fees and performance indicators to sustain operations. This dependency generates several institutional pressures that directly impact faculty members.

1. **Workload Intensification:** One of the most significant pressures faced by women faculty in self-financing colleges is excessive workload. Faculty members are often required to handle large class sizes, teach multiple courses, and engage in continuous assessment and evaluation. In addition to teaching responsibilities, they are expected to participate in admission processes, accreditation activities, examination duties, and institutional marketing efforts. For women faculty, workload intensification often spills into personal time, reducing opportunities for rest, family interaction, and self-care. The absence of clear workload regulations further exacerbates the problem.
2. **Extended Working Hours:** Unlike traditional academic settings, self-financing colleges frequently demand extended working hours, including weekends and holidays. Faculty members are expected to remain accessible to students, management, and parents beyond formal working schedules. Women faculty members, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, find it difficult to accommodate such demands. The blurring of boundaries between work and personal life leads to chronic stress and work–family conflict.
3. **Job Insecurity and Contractual Employment:** Job insecurity is another defining feature of employment in self-financing colleges. Many women faculty members are appointed on temporary, contractual, or probationary terms, with limited job protection. Performance evaluations are often tied to student results, feedback, and administrative compliance. The fear of contract non-renewal compels women faculty to accept excessive workloads and suppress work–life concerns. This insecurity undermines psychological well-being and discourages long-term career planning.

Gendered Expectations and Social Responsibilities

Gender norms play a crucial role in shaping the work–life experiences of women faculty. Despite increased participation in higher education employment, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities.

Dual Role Burden: Women faculty in self-financing colleges commonly experience a dual role burden—managing professional duties while fulfilling expectations as mothers, spouses, and caregivers. Institutional schedules rarely account for maternity responsibilities, childcare needs, or elder care obligations. The lack of flexible work arrangements forces women to constantly negotiate between competing roles, often at the cost of personal well-being and career advancement.

Cultural Expectations and Emotional Labor: In addition to formal responsibilities, women faculty are often expected to perform emotional labor, such as mentoring students, addressing personal concerns, and maintaining harmonious relationships within the institution. While such roles are valuable, they are rarely acknowledged or rewarded. This invisible labor further contributes to work overload and emotional exhaustion, making work–life balance increasingly elusive.

Institutional Support Mechanisms: Gaps and Limitations

Support mechanisms play a critical role in enabling work–life balance. However, self-financing colleges often lack structured policies that address the specific needs of women faculty.

Limited Work–Life Policies: Policies such as flexible working hours, on-campus childcare facilities, sabbatical leave, and reduced teaching loads are rarely implemented in self-financing institutions. Even when such provisions exist, their application may be inconsistent or discretionary. Women faculty may hesitate to utilize available benefits due to fear of negative performance evaluations or perceived lack of commitment.

Absence of Gender-Sensitive Leadership: Institutional leadership in self-financing colleges is often focused on operational efficiency rather than employee well-being. The absence of gender-sensitive leadership limits opportunities for open dialogue on work–life challenges. Without supportive leadership, women faculty members are left to individually cope with systemic pressures, reinforcing inequality and dissatisfaction.

CONSEQUENCES OF POOR WORK–LIFE BALANCE

The inability to achieve work–life balance has far-reaching consequences for women faculty, institutions, and the higher education system as a whole.

1. **Health and Well-Being:** Chronic stress, fatigue, anxiety, and burnout are common outcomes of prolonged work–life imbalance. These health issues affect both physical and mental well-being, reducing overall quality of life.
2. **Professional Outcomes:** Poor work–life balance leads to reduced job satisfaction, lower engagement in research activities, and limited professional growth. Many women faculty may opt out of leadership roles or academic advancement opportunities due to time constraints.
3. **Institutional Impact:** High levels of stress and dissatisfaction contribute to increased turnover, absenteeism, and reduced teaching effectiveness. Institutions that fail to address work–life balance risk compromising academic quality and reputation.

OBJECTIVE

The first objective of the study is to examine the influence of institutional pressures—specifically recognition and reward, job insecurity and contractual employment, and work environment—on the work–life balance of women faculty members in self-financing colleges. This objective seeks to identify variations in perceptions of these factors across different educational qualifications and to understand how institutional practices contribute to professional stress, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. By analyzing these dimensions, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the organizational challenges faced by women faculty and their implications for achieving a balanced integration of professional and personal responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design to assess the work–life balance of women faculty members in self-financing colleges. A total sample of 200 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation and minimize selection bias. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering dimensions such as recognition and reward, job insecurity and contractual employment, and work environment. The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools including mean, standard deviation,

and ANOVA to examine differences among groups based on educational qualifications. The methodology ensured reliability, validity, and objectivity in examining institutional pressures affecting women faculty members

Factors		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Recognition and Reward	PG	32	17.9291	2.34806	9.219	.009
	M.Phil	29	16.7431	2.64016		
	Ph.D	46	18.8000	1.92354		
	Ph.D with SET/NET	43	18.0000	2.73861		
	Others	50	17.6800	2.45961		
Job Insecurity and Contractual Employment	PG	32	19.1312	3.04589	7.771	.013
	M.Phil	29	17.1651	3.98960		
	Ph.D	46	16.4000	4.97996		
	Ph.D with SET/NET	43	14.8000	5.71839		
	Others	50	18.6320	3.43922		8.006
Work Environment	PG	32	24.3097	2.75846		
	M.Phil	29	20.6514	2.96078		
	Ph.D	46	23.4000	1.51658		
	Ph.D with SET/NET	43	24.4000	.54772		
	Others	50	23.5040	3.16132		
	Total	200				

Recognition and reward, job insecurity and contractual employment, and work environment are critical organizational factors shaping the professional experiences of women faculty members in self-financing colleges. Recognition and reward systems influence motivation, job satisfaction, and professional commitment, while inadequate acknowledgment of academic efforts often leads to disengagement and stress. Job insecurity, commonly associated with contractual appointments, creates uncertainty and heightens psychological pressure, adversely affecting work-life balance. Additionally, the work environment—including institutional support, interpersonal relationships, and physical facilities—plays a significant role in determining well-being and productivity. Together, these factors strongly influence women faculty members' perceptions of stability, satisfaction, and balance between professional and personal responsibilities.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether there are significant differences in selected work-related factors influencing women faculty members across different educational qualifications in self-financing colleges.

Recognition and Reward

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions of Recognition and Reward among women faculty members based on their educational qualification ($F = 9.219$, $p = 0.009$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Among the groups, women faculty with a Ph.D qualification reported the highest mean score (Mean = 18.80), suggesting greater expectations or perceptions regarding recognition and rewards. In contrast, M.Phil holders reported comparatively lower mean scores (Mean = 16.74), indicating relatively lesser satisfaction or perceived recognition. This finding suggests that academic qualification plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of recognition and reward in self-financing colleges.

Job Insecurity and Contractual Employment

The ANOVA results reveal a significant difference in perceptions of Job Insecurity and Contractual Employment across educational qualifications ($F = 7.771$, $p = 0.013$). As the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Women faculty with PG qualifications reported the highest mean score (Mean = 19.13), indicating a stronger perception of job insecurity. Conversely, faculty with Ph.D with SET/NET qualifications recorded the lowest mean score (Mean = 14.80), suggesting relatively better perceived job stability. This implies that higher academic qualifications may reduce feelings of job insecurity among women faculty in self-financing institutions.

Work Environment

The findings also show a statistically significant difference in perceptions of the Work Environment among women faculty based on educational qualification ($F = 8.006$, $p = 0.001$). Since the p-value is well below 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at a high level of significance.

Faculty with Ph.D with SET/NET qualifications reported the highest mean score (Mean = 24.40), indicating a more positive perception of the work environment. In contrast, M.Phil holders had the lowest mean score (Mean = 20.65), reflecting comparatively less favorable work environment perceptions. This suggests that academic credentials influence how women faculty perceive institutional support, facilities, and overall work climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Addressing work–life balance among women faculty in self-financing colleges requires a multi-level approach involving institutional, policy, and cultural change.

1. **Implementation of Clear Workload Policies:** The implementation of clear and transparent workload policies is essential to improve work–life balance among women faculty members in self-financing colleges. Clearly defined norms regarding teaching hours, administrative responsibilities, examination duties, and extracurricular involvement help prevent workload overload and role ambiguity. In the absence of such policies, women faculty are often expected to undertake multiple roles simultaneously, leading to stress and burnout. Standardized workload allocation ensures fairness, accountability, and predictability in academic responsibilities. Furthermore, periodic workload audits can help institutions identify imbalances and redistribute tasks equitably. By establishing realistic workload expectations aligned with institutional goals, self-financing colleges can enhance job satisfaction, reduce work–family conflict, and promote a healthier academic environment for women faculty.

2. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Flexible work arrangements play a crucial role in enabling women faculty members to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively. Options such as flexible working hours, hybrid teaching models, adjusted schedules during maternity or caregiving phases, and provision for remote academic work can significantly reduce work–life conflict. In self-financing colleges, rigid schedules often intensify stress for women faculty, especially those with childcare or eldercare responsibilities. Introducing flexibility demonstrates institutional sensitivity to gender-specific challenges and enhances employee morale. Moreover, flexible arrangements can improve productivity and commitment, as faculty members are better able to balance their roles. Institutionalizing flexibility rather than treating it as an exception is vital for creating inclusive and sustainable academic workplaces.

3. **Gender-Sensitive Leadership Training:** Gender-sensitive leadership training is essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive institutional culture in self-financing colleges. Academic leaders and administrators play a critical role in shaping policies, workload distribution, and performance expectations. Training programs that emphasize gender awareness, work–life balance concerns, and unconscious bias can help leaders better understand the unique challenges faced by women faculty. Such training encourages empathetic decision-making, transparent communication, and equitable treatment. When leadership is sensitive to gender dynamics, women faculty feel more valued and supported, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention. Gender-responsive leadership also promotes fair evaluation practices and creates opportunities for women’s career advancement, contributing to overall institutional effectiveness and harmony.

4. **Support Infrastructure:** The availability of adequate support infrastructure significantly influences the work–life balance of women faculty in self-financing colleges. Facilities such as on-campus childcare centers, counseling services, wellness programs, and rest spaces can greatly reduce stress and improve well-being. In many self-financing institutions, the absence of such infrastructure places additional pressure on women faculty to manage personal responsibilities alongside professional duties. Support services act as enabling mechanisms that allow women faculty to remain engaged and productive at work without compromising family commitments. Investing in supportive infrastructure reflects an institution’s commitment to employee welfare and gender equity. Over

time, such initiatives can enhance institutional reputation, faculty loyalty, and academic performance.

5. Job Security Measures: Job security measures are critical for reducing anxiety and work-related stress among women faculty in self-financing colleges. Many faculty members are employed on temporary or contractual terms, leading to uncertainty regarding career continuity and financial stability. Transparent appointment procedures, fair performance appraisal systems, timely contract renewals, and opportunities for long-term employment can significantly enhance job security. When women faculty feel secure in their positions, they are more likely to invest in teaching quality, research activities, and institutional development. Job security also contributes positively to mental well-being and work-life balance. Therefore, strengthening employment stability should be a priority for self-financing institutions aiming to retain skilled and committed women faculty.

CONCLUSION

Work-life balance remains a critical yet under-addressed issue for women faculty members in self-financing colleges. Institutional pressures arising from workload intensification, job insecurity, and performance-driven cultures intersect with gendered social expectations to create significant challenges. While women faculty demonstrates resilience and commitment, sustained imbalance threatens their well-being and professional fulfillment.

Creating supportive and inclusive institutional environments is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for academic excellence. By adopting gender-sensitive policies and prioritizing faculty well-being, self-financing colleges can foster sustainable academic careers and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of higher education.

Overall, the results demonstrate that educational qualification significantly influences women faculty members' perceptions of recognition and reward, job insecurity, and work environment in self-financing colleges. Higher qualifications, particularly Ph.D and Ph.D with SET/NET, are associated with more favorable perceptions of institutional factors, while lower qualifications are linked to higher insecurity and lower satisfaction levels. These findings highlight the need for equitable institutional policies that address recognition, job stability, and work environment irrespective of academic qualification.

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