

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG MARRIED WOMEN CONDUCTORS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of work-life balance among married women conductors in rural and urban areas, focusing on the interplay of occupational demands and personal life responsibilities. With the increasing participation of women in the transportation sector, particularly in conductor roles, understanding their work-life dynamics becomes crucial. The research aims to compare the levels of family and community support accessible to women conductors in rural and urban settings, assess how work-related stress influences their personal and family lives, and identify region-specific challenges that affect their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected through structured interviews and questionnaires administered to a representative sample of married women conductors in both rural and urban regions. The findings reveal significant disparities in support systems, stress levels, and environmental challenges. Urban women reported higher work stress but better institutional support, while rural women faced limited community resources and social support, intensifying their struggle to balance professional and personal responsibilities. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions, policy changes, and support mechanisms tailored to the unique circumstances of rural and urban women conductors.

Keywords: Work-life balance, married women conductors, rural vs urban, occupational stress, family support, community support, gender and employment, transportation sector, working women challenges, social support systems

1. Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) is an essential aspect of occupational well-being, particularly for working women employed in demanding sectors such as public transportation. Among them, married women conductors face significant challenges in balancing professional responsibilities with household duties. In the context of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), these challenges are compounded by rigid schedules, extended work hours, and a lack of institutional support. While previous research has focused primarily on women in corporate and educational sectors, there is limited exploration of WLB among women conductors, especially from a rural-urban comparative lens. This study addresses that gap by examining the differences in community and family support, the impact of work-related stress, and geographical-specific constraints affecting WLB. By understanding how rural and urban environments uniquely shape the experiences of these women, this research aims to provide data-driven insights to inform more inclusive workplace policies in the public transport sector.

Background

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical dimension of occupational well-being, especially for working women in demanding sectors like public transportation. Married women conductors in KSRTC juggle long working hours, unpredictable schedules, and domestic responsibilities, often without formal institutional support.

Research Gap/Problem

While several studies have examined WLB in corporate or education sectors, limited research addresses how public transport employees—particularly married women conductors—cope with balancing work and life in varying socio-geographical contexts.

Aims & Objectives

- To compare the level of family and community support available to rural and urban married women conductors.
- To assess the impact of work-related stress on personal and family life.
- To identify challenges specific to rural and urban environments that hinder WLB.

Research Questions

1. How does family and community support vary between rural and urban women conductors?
2. What is the nature of the work-related stress they face?
3. What are the rural-urban differences in barriers to achieving WLB?

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant difference in work-life balance among rural and urban married women conductors.

H1: There is a significant difference in work-life balance among rural and urban married women conductors.

2. Literature Review

Recent literature emphasizes the growing tension between work and personal roles for working women, particularly in male-dominated or time-demanding jobs.

- Kaur & Sandhu (2021) identified stress as a major WLB disruptor in public sector employees.
- Sharma (2020) focused on gendered occupational stress in urban transit roles.
- Jose & Thomas (2022) compared WLB in semi-urban and urban banking sectors, highlighting environmental support systems.
- Nair (2023) studied the socio-economic implications of flexible hours among women in rural Kerala.
- Mohammed et al. (2024) examined support structures in public transport systems and their impact on employee satisfaction.

Review Summary

The above studies collectively point to the need for a contextualized understanding of WLB, especially for women in challenging professions. The literature lacks focused comparisons between rural and urban conductors.

3. Research Methodology

Research Approach

Quantitative, cross-sectional design using survey methodology.

Population

Married women conductors working under the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) in rural and urban divisions.

Sample Size

250 respondents (125 from rural areas, 125 from urban areas).

Sampling Method

Stratified random sampling based on location (rural/urban) and years of service.

Data Collection

Primary data through a structured questionnaire; secondary data from KSRTC reports and prior studies.

Tools Used

- Descriptive statistics
- Independent sample t-test
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using SPSS
- Cronbach's Alpha for reliability testing ($\alpha > 0.7$ considered acceptable)

Variables Considered

- Work-related stress
- Family support
- Community support
- Infrastructure challenges
- Emotional well-being

4. Results and Discussion

Demographic Overview

- Age group: 28–50 years
- Average work experience: 8 years
- 76% reported dual burden of work and family responsibilities

Family and Community Support

Rural women reported higher support from extended families and local communities (Mean = 4.1) compared to urban peers (Mean = 3.3). This difference was statistically significant ($t = 3.82, p < 0.05$).

Work-related Stress

Urban women faced greater stress due to heavy traffic, longer routes, and safety issues, with 68% indicating spillover into family life. Rural women highlighted physical fatigue due to poor road conditions and long hours.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Three dominant factors emerged:

Institutional Support and Flexibility

(eigenvalue = 2.71)

Emotional & Mental Stressors

(eigenvalue = 2.19)

Community and Familial Role Expectations

(eigenvalue = 1.88)

Discussion

Findings confirm that geographical location significantly shapes WLB. Urban conductors need more flexible rosters and stress counseling, while rural counterparts require infrastructural and policy support. The results align with Kaur & Sandhu (2021) and Nair (2023) in highlighting the contextual nature of WLB.

5. Major Findings & Conclusion

- Rural married women conductors benefit from stronger informal support systems but lack access to formal resources.
- Urban conductors experience higher psychological stress and weaker familial integration.
- Socio-environmental factors (e.g., transport infrastructure, community expectations) significantly influence WLB.

Implications

- HR departments should design tailored interventions based on location-specific needs.
- Transport policy should address emotional well-being and job flexibility in public transport roles.
- Future research could integrate a qualitative component to explore lived experiences.

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