



Work-Life Conflict of Women Employees in Organised Jewellery Retail Outlets across Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: *The jewellery retail industry in Tamil Nadu represents one of the most culturally embedded and economically significant industries within the retail industry in India. However, it is noteworthy that the jewellery retail industry is populated with female employees that encounter Work- Life Conflict (WLC) yet have not been empirically studied. Given this scenario, this review paper aims to investigate the phenomenon of WLC in this sector based on established theoretical constructs and empirical evidence. Based on the role theory, border theory, and resource conservation theory, the paper suggests that WLC in this sector is structurally produced, gender-specific, and cyclically exacerbated by festive demand in the South Indian socio-cultural setting. The paper concludes with managerial recommendations and suggestions for further empirical research. This paper investigates WLC and Well-Being of Women Employees in Organized Jewellery Retail.*

Keywords: *Work-Life Conflict, Women employees, Jewellery Retail, Tamil Nadu, Well-Being, Organized Retail, Gender, Role Conflict*

Introduction

The retail jewellery industry in Tamil Nadu belongs to one of the most... This review article will analyse the concept of Work-Life Conflict (WLC) along with the well-being of women working at organized jewellery retail stores in Tamil Nadu, which is known for its rich traditions and commerce in relation to gold. The extended festive working hours, rigid shift work, emotional labour, and high value product monitoring create an inherent work-life conflict. This is because the work-related requirements come up against gender role norms along with their domestic caregiver obligations – the dual burden. In addition, there have been no empirical studies conducted in India in regard to the impact of WLC in retail and service sectors with a focus on the retail jewellery in Tamil Nadu.

WorkLife Conflict (WLC)

Work-life conflict (WLC) results from the existence of contradictory requirements in regards to paid employment and personal or family life. This type of conflict works on two levels, namely Work Interfering with Family (WIF) and Family Interfering with Work (FIW). WIF plays a

particularly significant role for employed females (Belwal & Belwal, 2023; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992). Three key theories explain WLC among women in jewellery retail:

Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) frames conflict as arising from multiple, competing roles of Work–Family

Border Theory by Clark (2000) and Henly & Lambert (2014), points out that WLC is structurally caused by extended, festive-oriented hours of operation.

Conservation of Resources Theory by Hobfoll (1989), explains WLC to result from prolonged lack of time, energy, and emotional resources, causing women to have limited resources left for family and personal matters.

Objectives

1. To examine the work–life conflict (WLC) among women employees in Organized Jewellery Retail shops.
2. To analyse the structural and organizational features that systematically

produce WLC for women employees, including festive-driven schedules, emotional labour, and performance pressures of organized jewellery retail in Tamil Nadu.

3. To examine the dual burden of paid work and domestic caregiving in Tamil Nadu's socio-cultural context shape the intensity and experience of WLC among women in this sector.
4. To review empirical evidence on well-being outcomes (psychological, physical, and occupational) associated with WLC among women in jewellery retail.

Research Methodology

This review paper examines the methodological approaches used in studies on work–life conflict and well-being of women employees in organised jewellery retail outlets across Tamil Nadu. Existing studies primarily employ structured questionnaires administered to sample sizes of 96 to 200 respondents, typically from service and retail sectors. They use statistical tools such as simple linear regression, exploratory factor analysis, structural equation modelling, and univariate/bivariate analyses to explore links between WLC and employee outcomes. A Likert-scale format is commonly used to measure variables like job satisfaction, stress, role conflict, and organisational support. Secondary data are drawn from published journals, government reports, theses, and online databases to support descriptive and review-based analyses. Across the reviewed works, purposive and random sampling techniques are adopted to ensure representativeness of the target population, particularly women in customer-facing retail roles.

The Conflict–Enrichment Continuum

Modern research shows that work and family don't just cause problems; they can also help each other by sharing resources in a positive way (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Also, the enrichment pathway needs enough freedom, flexibility, and support from the organization, which are not usually present in frontline jewellery retail jobs (Rani & Prasad, 2018; Kumar & Sharma, 2019). Because of this, the conflict pathway is the most important part of the

work-family interface experience for this group of people.

Structural Characteristics of Organized Jewellery Retail Employment

Working Hours and Scheduling

This article was generated after reviewing the existing studies, Organized jewellery retail outlets in Tamil Nadu typically operate on extended schedules — commonly ten to twelve hours daily — with mandatory weekend and public holiday attendance. During peak seasons coinciding with major cultural celebrations, including Akshaya Tritiya, Diwali, Pongal, and the Tamil marriage season (April–June), working hours intensify further, with overtime becoming structurally compulsory rather than voluntary (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006).

Henly and Lambert (2014), in their landmark study of female retail workers, established that unpredictability in work scheduling — not merely long hours — is independently associated with elevated WLC across all three of Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conflict dimensions. The inability to plan family activities, manage childcare, or fulfil domestic obligations around unpredictable retail schedules generates persistent time-based and strain-based conflict.

Emotional Labour Demands

Selling jewellery is a unique type of emotional work. Salespeople must stay warm, enthusiastic, and attentive to each customer for long periods of time when they are making big purchases. Hochschild's (1983) idea of emotional labour, which is the management of feelings to create facial and bodily displays that can be seen by others, describes the ongoing emotional performance that jewellery store employees must do.

This constant need for emotional labour drains workers' mental resources during work hours, making it harder for them to be emotionally available for family roles when they get home. This is a key cause of strain-based WIF conflict (Frone et al., 1992; Netemeyer, Maxham & Pullig, 2005).

Target-Driven Sales Culture

Organized jewellery retail chains operate within rigorous target-driven performance frameworks,

with daily, weekly, and monthly sales targets creating persistent occupational pressure. Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) identified work overload and performance pressure as primary organizational antecedents of WLC. The target culture prevalent in jewellery retail amplifies strain-based conflict by extending the psychological presence of work concerns into employees' home environments — a form of cognitive boundary violation even when physical separation from the workplace is achieved.

High-Security Work Environment

Since jewellery items constitute valuable merchandise, security and safety become issues of utmost importance, thus requiring constant monitoring and containment of the employees working in such an environment. The employees work under constant supervision with restricted freedom to move about, take rest, or communicate with others. This adds up to the already existing strain and contributes to the depletion of resources model proposed by Hobfoll (1989).

The Dual Burden of Women Employees

Women employees in jewellery retail do not enter the domestic domain upon leaving the workplace — they transition into a second domain of unpaid labour. The theory formulated by Hochschild (1989), on the 'second shift', which refers to the housework and childcare done by working women along with their paid work, appears to be empirically valid in India, wherein the culturally established norms allocate primary household responsibility to women irrespective of whether they engage in paid activities or not (Bharat, 2003; Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004).

In accordance with the research findings of Duxbury and Higgins (1991), the results revealed that women who were engaged in paid employment experienced greater WLC compared to men because the latter was more evenly shared, as against the former who did most of the household work. This pattern appears more prevalent among the Tamil Nadu population, who culturally associate women with domestic chores (Anitha, 2011).

Role Salience and Psychological Cost

Cinamon and Rich (2002) demonstrated that women assign higher psychological salience to family roles

than men, meaning that work intrusion into family time carries a greater psychological cost for women employees. In the case where the time spent on jewellery retailing work duties, such as working long hours and being obligated to attend during holidays, reduces the time available for fulfilling family obligations, this creates additional stress since these family obligations carry significant importance within the minds of the women in question.

Care giving Obligations

In cases where women in jewellery retail chains have to cater for their young or elderly dependents, caregiving obligations become another unique source of conflict due to FIW. Since most retail jewellery chains do not offer or subsidize childcare services for their women workers, they are left with no other option than seeking alternatives which often prove to be expensive (Anitha, 2011; Kumar & Sharma, 2019).

High WLC in combination with low institutional support according to Noor (2004) negatively affects women's subjective well-being since organizations either provide infrastructure or lack thereof.

Outcomes of WLC on Well-Being

Psychological Well-Being

The following review paper summarizes one of the well-established relationships in organizational behaviour research. Frone Russell and Cooper (1992) established WLC as a robust predictor of anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and diminished life satisfaction. Their bidirectional model demonstrated that WIF conflict specifically undermines psychological health by preventing adequate recovery and restoration during non-work periods.

Noor (2004) took this research further by focusing on female workers and discovered that the greatest decline in well-being occurred when both WLC was high and family role salience was low, indicating that contextual and motivational influences mediate the link between work-family conflict and well-being, rather than taking a linear route.

Nevertheless, for female employees, whose commitment is also in question, when they do not have sufficient time to recuperate psychologically

because of the second shift, there is no opportunity for them to renew their resources because of psychological stress caused by aspects such as emotional labour, goal-oriented, and the requirement to work for long hours (Hobfoll, 1989; Sharma & Kapur, 2022).

Physical Well-Being

Physical well-being consequences of WLC are particularly salient in jewellery retail employment. The physical demands of the role — prolonged standing across ten-to-twelve-hour shifts, handling of heavy merchandise, sustained postural alertness in security-monitored environments — generate musculoskeletal strain and physical fatigue as baseline occupational hazards.

Netemeyer, Maxham and Pullig (2005) linked frontline service employees' WLC directly to physical health complaints and job stress, with downstream consequences for customer service performance. Physical fatigue accumulated across extended retail shifts reduces women employees' capacity to fulfil domestic and caregiving roles, intensifying the subjective experience of WLC and generating somatic health consequences, including chronic fatigue, sleep disruption, and musculoskeletal complaints (Pillai & Nair, 2023).

Job Satisfaction

As seen from the review article, Anderson, Coffey & Byerly (2002) found that WLC was negatively correlated with job satisfaction, while the role of organisational support in mediating this correlation was identified. In case of jewellery retail stores, where organisational support measures are weak or unavailable due to small size or franchising nature, the impact of WLC is further intensified.

In the specific context of Indian services industry, Namasivayam & Zhao (2007) found that organisational commitment played an important role in mediating WLC and its effects on employee job satisfaction; employees having higher organisational commitment were able to withstand WLC better. But then again, for female workers who are experiencing organisational commitment erosion themselves, due to constant WLC, mediation does not help much.

Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention

Organizational effects of WLC are associated with the consequences of not just personal but also organizational variables important in HRM in retail environments. According to Belwal (2023), WIF conflict is associated with the intention of leaving the organization, and organizational commitment mediates the relationship between them. Similarly, Pandu, Bhanu and Babu (2013) proved that WLC negatively correlates with organizational commitment among women in India.

In their analysis of WLC faced by women in hospitality – an industry comparable to jewellery retail, Liu et al. (2021) have proven that WLC negatively affects organizational commitment and raises attrition risks. High turnover rates among female employees due to unresolved work-life conflict is a significant cost for organized retail jewellery chains that invest heavily in training and education of personnel.

Saravanan and Vasantha (2012) showed that in their research conducted among women workers in the services sector in Tamil Nadu, work-life conflict was highly influential on both organizational commitment and general wellbeing.

Tamil Nadu Socio-Cultural Context

Gold Culture and Seasonal Demand Cycles

The jewellery retail industry in Tamil Nadu functions under the cultural context of demand. Gold has a unique place within Tamil culture, being not just jewellery, but also an investment, gift, and currency, all at once, with consumption focused on occasions such as weddings, temple festivals, and even specific dates on the calendar like Akshaya Tritiya, Pongal, and Karthigai Deepam. The result is that there are predictable but powerful cycles of demand, which automatically mean mandatory overtime for the retail workforce.

The overlap between periods of high work demands and periods of high family obligations, as seen in the overlap between the wedding season in Tamil Nadu (April–June), which happens to coincide with the highest intensity period of trading activity, causes a cyclic enhancement of WLC in this particular industry and region.

Socio-cultural Gender Expectations

Despite its overall modernization in many ways, Tamil Nadu's urban and semi-urban society still holds strong normative expectations regarding the traditional roles of women at home. According to Pradhan (2015), culture plays a crucial role in how people perceive and value WLC, as they tend to pay a greater psychological price for violating family-time boundaries in more conservative socio-cultural settings.

As Bharat (2003) noted, urban Indian women are often caught in an ongoing conflict between modern professional responsibilities and traditional domestic roles, especially when their profession requires them to be presentable and emotionally available in public spaces.

Future Directions

A gap exists in sectoral empirical studies that explore Work-Life Balance (WLC) and well-being among members of the jewellery retailing sector distinctively from those conducted among other retail sectors. The unique characteristics of the sector such as handling high value commodities, conducting operations in highly secure premises, and cultural-based demand cycles require unique empirical exploration.

Tamil Nadu has a very large population in the jewellery retail stores but does not have adequate research studies. Most of the studies that have been done on South India so far have been done in Kerala (Kumar, 2024; Mohan & Devi, 2021), and they don't show how Tamil Nadu's social and cultural dynamics are different.

The existing literature has not longitudinally examined or empirically quantified the effects of seasonal demand cycles on WLC, specifically during the surges of Akshaya Tritiya, Pongal, and the marriage season.

Conclusion

Women's experience of WLC in the context of organised jewellery retail in Tamil Nadu is a phenomenon that arises structurally, is gendered, and is made even more intense by contextual factors. The combination of the sectoral peculiarities of the industry, i.e., long and unstable working hours, increased pressure during holiday

seasons, constant emotional labour, performance-oriented culture, and high security, leads to the creation of antecedent conditions of WIF conflict within these establishments. Combined with persistent sociocultural gender norms in Tamil Nadu society that continue to consider women to be the major caregivers within the family, such WLC can have negative consequences on the psychological, physiological, professional, and organizational well-being of women workers.

Solutions to the problem under discussion should be considered at various levels – firstly, companies themselves need to establish WLB policies; secondly, HR professionals should design intervention frameworks specifically tailored to the peculiarities of this business sector; and finally, scholars need to conduct dedicated research to provide empirical data concerning the issue.

It needs to be stressed that the well-being of women working in the jewellery retail sector in Tamil Nadu should be of utmost importance to managers as an organisational strategy.

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