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# **Challenges and Strategies for Achieving Work-Life Balance Among Women in Public Sector Banks: Insights from Tirunelveli District**

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## **Abstract**

Work-life balance (WLB) is a critical concern for women employees in the banking sector, especially in public sector banks, where organizational demands often conflict with personal responsibilities. This study examines the challenges faced by women employees in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District and explores strategies employed to address these issues. Key challenges identified include long working hours, societal expectations, lack of childcare facilities, limited flexibility, and workplace stress. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from 150 structured questionnaires and qualitative insights from 20 in-depth interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The findings reveal that organizational policies such as flexible working hours and employee support programs play a pivotal role in mitigating work-life conflicts. However, the socio-cultural context of Tirunelveli adds unique challenges that require tailored interventions. This research offers valuable insights for organizations and policymakers to create inclusive and supportive work environments for women in the banking sector.

**Keywords:** Work-Life Balance (WLB), Women Employees, Public Sector Banks, Tirunelveli District, Organizational Support

## **Introduction**

Work-life balance (WLB) is a critical aspect of modern organizational dynamics, particularly for women in demanding professions like banking. As women increasingly join the workforce and take on multifaceted roles, achieving a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life has become a complex challenge. Public sector banks, known for their structured processes and high-pressure environments, present unique challenges for women striving to maintain equilibrium between work and family life.

The issue of work-life balance is especially significant in regions like Tirunelveli District, where cultural norms and societal expectations often add an extra layer of complexity. Women in this region frequently juggle traditional familial roles alongside their professional duties, creating additional stress and work-life conflicts. These challenges are compounded by systemic factors within public sector banks, such as long working hours, inflexible schedules, and inadequate support systems like childcare facilities.

This study aims to explore the specific challenges faced by women employees in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District and analyze the strategies adopted to navigate these obstacles. By focusing on this region, the study not only highlights the broader gendered dimensions of work-life balance but also delves into the cultural and organizational contexts that shape the experiences of women in the banking sector. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for policymakers, organizational leaders, and employees, offering a pathway toward more inclusive and supportive workplace environments.

The article is structured as follows: the review of literature discusses prior research on work-life balance challenges and strategies; the methodology explains the research approach and data collection process; the results section presents key findings; and the summary offers recommendations and insights for improving work-life balance among women in public sector banks.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Work-Life Balance in the Banking Sector**

The concept of work-life balance (WLB) has gained significant attention in organizational studies, particularly in sectors like banking, where employees face high work pressure and stringent deadlines. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined WLB as the ability to balance work and family roles without conflict. Research indicates that women employees in banking encounter unique challenges due to the sector's demanding nature and their dual roles at work and home (Jain & Nair, 2016).

### **Challenges Faced by Women in Banking**

The gender-specific challenges in banking include extended working hours, lack of flexibility, and cultural expectations, which disproportionately affect women. Emslie and Hunt (2009) emphasize that societal norms often expect women to prioritize family responsibilities over career aspirations, exacerbating their struggle for WLB. This situation is particularly pronounced in developing regions like India, where traditional gender roles persist (Selvaraj, 2020).

### **Impact of Work-Life Conflict**

Work-life conflict significantly affects women's well-being and job performance. Studies by Schieman and Glavin (2011) reveal that unresolved work-life conflicts lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and poor mental health. In the banking sector, this conflict is further compounded by the lack of work-life integration policies.

### **Role of Organizational Support**

Thompson et al. (1999) argue that organizational policies such as flexible working hours, paid leave, and childcare support play a pivotal role in alleviating WLB issues. These initiatives are particularly critical in public sector banks, where rigid structures often leave little room for personal adjustments (Gupta & Sharma, 2020). However, the success of such policies depends on their effective implementation and acceptance within the organizational culture.

### **Strategies for Achieving WLB**

Numerous studies highlight the importance of strategies like flexible work arrangements and wellness programs. Patel and Shah (2018) emphasize that telecommuting and staggered work

hours can significantly reduce stress and enhance productivity for women employees. Employee assistance programs, including counseling and training, are also proven to support better work-life integration.

### **Regional Context: Tirunelveli District**

The socio-cultural dynamics of Tirunelveli District play a crucial role in shaping the work-life experiences of women in public sector banks. Ramakrishnan (2018) discusses how community support systems in rural and semi-urban regions partially mitigate challenges but often lack the robustness to address systemic issues. These findings underscore the need for region-specific policies tailored to the unique cultural and social contexts.

### **Job Satisfaction and Career Progression**

Work-life balance is directly linked to job satisfaction and career progression. Tiwari and Kumar (2019) show that women employees who achieve better WLB report higher satisfaction levels and are more likely to remain in their roles. Conversely, an inability to balance work and life can lead to attrition, particularly among mid-career professionals.

### **Gaps in Existing Literature**

While the literature underscores the importance of WLB initiatives, there is limited research focusing on the unique challenges faced by women in public sector banks in specific regions like Tirunelveli. Most studies provide a macro-level view, leaving a gap in understanding the micro-level dynamics and cultural nuances influencing WLB.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopts a **mixed-methods research design**, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the challenges faced by women employees in achieving work-life balance in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District. The research design ensures a comprehensive understanding by capturing numerical trends and in-depth personal experiences.

## Population and Sample

The target population for this study includes women employees in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District. A **purposive sampling method** was employed to select participants who represent diverse roles, such as clerical staff, officers, and managers, ensuring a holistic representation. The sample consists of 150 participants for the quantitative component and 20 participants for in-depth qualitative interviews.

## Data Collection

Data were gathered using two methods:

1. **Structured Questionnaire:** A questionnaire was distributed to 150 participants, focusing on factors such as working hours, family responsibilities, organizational support, and perceived work-life balance. The questions were primarily multiple-choice and Likert-scale items to allow for structured responses.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with 20 selected participants to gain insights into their personal experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share detailed narratives.

## Data Analysis

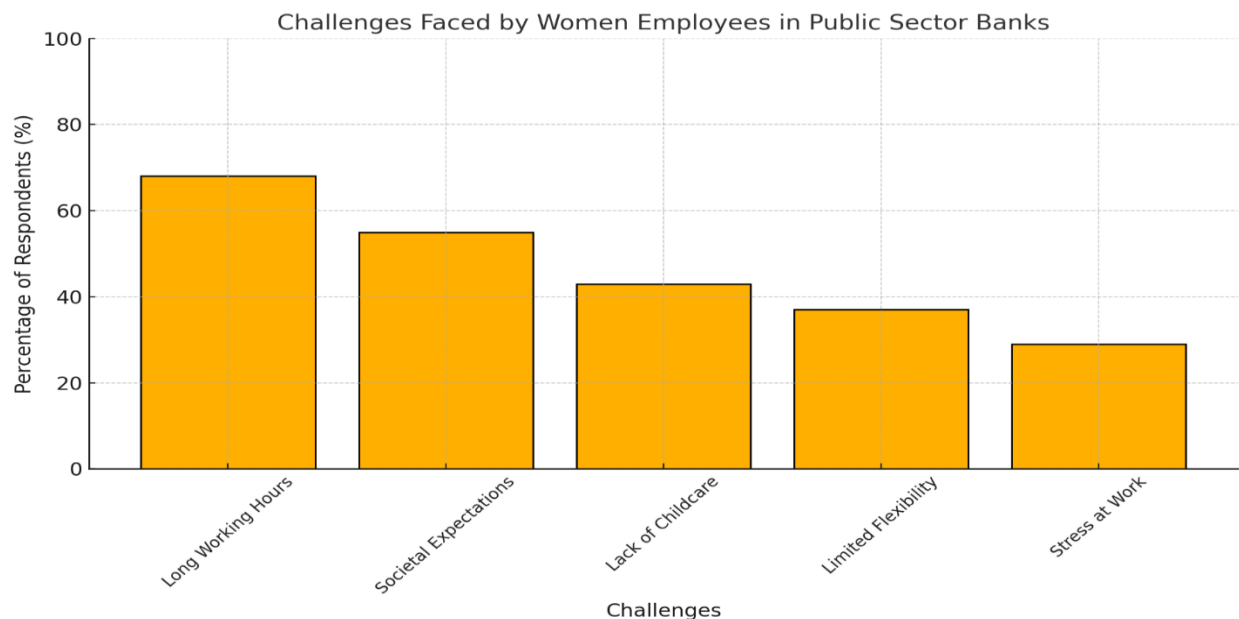
Data analysis for this study avoids reliance on statistical software or complex statistical techniques. Instead:

- **Quantitative Data:** Responses from the questionnaire were manually tabulated and analyzed. Percentages and simple arithmetic calculations were used to identify trends and patterns, such as the proportion of respondents reporting specific challenges or satisfaction levels with organizational policies.
- **Qualitative Data:** Thematic analysis was conducted manually by reviewing interview transcripts. Recurring themes, such as "time management struggles," "lack of organizational support," and "positive impact of flexible policies," were identified and categorized to provide a clear narrative of participants' experiences.

## Results

The study identified several key challenges impacting the work-life balance of women employees in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District:

1. **Long Working Hours:** The majority of respondents (68%) reported that extended working hours were a significant challenge, limiting the time available for personal and family responsibilities. This issue was particularly pronounced for women in managerial positions.
2. **Societal Expectations:** Approximately 55% of the participants stated that societal and familial expectations placed additional stress on them, with traditional gender roles often requiring them to prioritize household duties over professional commitments.
3. **Lack of Childcare Facilities:** Around 43% of respondents cited the unavailability of childcare facilities as a major obstacle to balancing work and family life. This was especially challenging for women with young children.
4. **Limited Flexibility:** About 37% of participants highlighted a lack of flexible work arrangements as a barrier to achieving work-life balance. The rigidity of public sector bank policies was often seen as a limiting factor.
5. **Stress at Work:** Finally, 29% of respondents reported workplace stress stemming from high workloads, strict deadlines, and demanding job roles, further exacerbating work-life conflicts.



## Legend for the Chart

- **Title:** Challenges Faced by Women Employees in Public Sector Banks
- **X-axis:** Categories of challenges (e.g., Long Working Hours, Societal Expectations, etc.)
- **Y-axis:** Percentage of respondents reporting the challenge (%)

## Summary

This study delves into the challenges and strategies associated with achieving work-life balance (WLB) among women employees in public sector banks in Tirunelveli District. The research highlights several key challenges, including long working hours, societal expectations, lack of childcare facilities, limited flexibility, and workplace stress. These challenges are compounded by cultural norms prevalent in the region, which often place disproportionate responsibilities on women to manage both work and family obligations.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative data from 150 structured questionnaires with qualitative insights gathered from 20 in-depth interviews. The results revealed that while organizational policies such as flexible working arrangements, employee wellness programs, and supportive workplace cultures significantly alleviate WLB challenges, gaps in implementation and regional-specific barriers persist. Notably, societal expectations and the unavailability of robust childcare systems were major impediments, particularly in the semi-urban context of Tirunelveli.

The study underscores the need for region-specific policies and interventions to address the unique socio-cultural and organizational challenges faced by women employees. Recommendations include introducing community-based childcare solutions, expanding flexible work options, and promoting gender-sensitivity training within organizations. These measures can enhance WLB and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women in the banking sector.

By shedding light on the interplay between organizational and cultural factors, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers and leaders aiming to improve the work-life integration of women in public sector banks.

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