



An Empirical Study on Work-Life Management of Women Teachers in the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation in Madurai District

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally disrupted the educational landscape, forcing a rapid transition to online teaching and blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life. Women teachers, in particular, bore a disproportionate burden due to entrenched gender roles and domestic responsibilities. This study empirically examines the work-life management challenges faced by 120 women teachers in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a structured questionnaire and Chi-Square analysis, the study investigates the association between demographic variables (age, marital status, family type, number of children, teaching level, and employment type) and key dimensions of work-life management, including work-life balance perception, workload increase, technology-related stress, and institutional support. The findings reveal statistically significant associations between several demographic factors and work-life management outcomes, with married teachers and those with young children reporting the most severe challenges. The study concludes with recommendations for institutional and policy-level interventions to support women educators in crisis situations and beyond.

Keywords: Work-Life Management, Women Teachers, COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Teaching, Madurai District, Chi-Square Analysis, Gender Roles, Work-Life Balance

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020, precipitated an unprecedented global crisis that touched every facet of human life. Educational institutions were among the first to close, with approximately 320 million school students in India alone affected by school closures. The sudden pivot to emergency remote teaching compelled teachers to rapidly acquire digital competencies, adapt pedagogical strategies, and navigate unfamiliar technological platforms all while confined to their homes.

For women teachers, this transition was not merely a professional adjustment but a profound personal upheaval. Indian society, characterized by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and gendered division of labour, assigns women the primary responsibility for domestic work, childcare, and eldercare. The closure of schools and daycare centres transferred the work of caring for children from the paid economy to the unpaid domestic sphere, disproportionately burdening women. As one study observed, women teachers found themselves expected to embody the "supermom" ideal managing endless tasks simultaneously while maintaining professional competence.

The concept of work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to successfully manage work and family life, irrespective of gender. During the pandemic, this balance was severely disrupted. Research from various Indian contexts has documented elevated stress levels among women educators, with factors including increased workload, technology-related anxiety, lack of institutional support, and the persistence of traditional gender role expectations. Studies from Tamil Nadu have similarly highlighted the dual positive and negative impacts of work-from-home arrangements on women educators.

The Madurai district, located in southern Tamil Nadu, presents a distinctive socio-cultural context for examining these dynamics. As a region with a mix of urban and semi-urban educational institutions, Madurai reflects the broader tensions between tradition and modernity that characterize contemporary Indian society. Understanding



how women teachers in this specific context navigated the pandemic's challenges is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies.

This study aims to empirically investigate the work-life management of women teachers in Madurai district during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it seeks to: (a) assess the prevalence and severity of work-life challenges; (b) examine the association between demographic variables and work-life management outcomes; and (c) identify the institutional and personal factors that facilitated or hindered effective work-life management.

Research Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented convergence of professional and personal domains within the same physical space the home. For women teachers, this convergence intensified existing gender inequalities and introduced new stressors. While a growing body of literature has examined the impact of the pandemic on women educators in various Indian contexts, there remains a paucity of empirical research focusing specifically on the Madurai district. The socio-cultural specificities of this region including its traditional family structures, economic diversity, and educational infrastructure warrant dedicated investigation.

The central research problem of this study is: To what extent, and in what ways, did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the work-life management of women teachers in Madurai district, and how are these effects associated with demographic and professional characteristics? This problem encompasses several dimensions: the nature of work-life conflict experienced, the strategies employed to manage competing demands, the role of institutional support, and the differential impacts based on personal and professional circumstances.

Hypotheses

Based on the review of existing literature and the research problem, the following null hypotheses have been formulated for Chi-Square analysis:

- H01: There is no significant association between the age of women teachers and their perception of work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- H02: There is no significant association between the marital status of women teachers and their experience of work-life conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- H03: There is no significant association between the number of children of women teachers and the level of increased workload experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- H04: There is no significant association between the type of family (nuclear/joint) of women teachers and the availability of domestic support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- H05: There is no significant association between the employment type (permanent/contractual) of women teachers and the level of institutional support received during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- H06: There is no significant association between the teaching level (primary/secondary/higher secondary) of women teachers and their level of technology-related stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach. This design is appropriate for examining the prevalence and associations of work-life management variables within a defined population.

Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 120 women teachers from various schools in Madurai district. The sample includes teachers from government, aided, and private schools, teaching at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels. The sample size of 120 was determined based on the feasibility of data

collection during the pandemic and the requirements of Chi-Square analysis, which requires adequate cell frequencies.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered online using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: (a) demographic and professional information; (b) work-life management during the pandemic, measured on a five-point Likert scale; and (c) open-ended questions regarding coping strategies and suggestions. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of teachers to ensure clarity and reliability.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were computed to summarize the data. Chi-Square test of independence was used to test the hypotheses, as it is appropriate for examining associations between categorical variables. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Respondents (N=120)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 30 years	28	23.3
	30–40 years	52	43.3
	40–50 years	30	25.0
	Above 50 years	10	8.4
Marital Status	Unmarried	22	18.3
	Married	92	76.7
	Widowed/Separated	6	5.0
Family Type	Nuclear	68	56.7
	Joint	52	43.3
Number of Children	No children	26	21.7
	One child	44	36.7
	Two children	42	35.0
	Three or more	8	6.6
Teaching Level	Primary	38	31.7
	Secondary	48	40.0
	Higher Secondary	34	28.3
Employment Type	Permanent	72	60.0
	Contractual/Temporary	48	40.0



School Type	Government	34	28.3
	Aided	42	35.0
	Private	44	36.7

The demographic profile reveals that the majority of respondents (43.3%) were in the 30–40 age group, followed by 40–50 years (25.0%). A substantial majority (76.7%) were married, and 56.7% lived in nuclear families. Nearly 42% had two or more children. The sample was relatively evenly distributed across teaching levels, with a slight predominance of secondary school teachers (40.0%). Sixty percent were permanently employed, while 40% held contractual or temporary positions.

Descriptive Analysis of Work-Life Management Variables

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Work-Life Management Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Perceived Work-Life Balance (1=Very Poor, 5=Excellent)	2.34	0.87	Poor to Moderate
Increase in Workload (1=No Increase, 5=Extreme Increase)	4.12	0.76	High
Technology-Related Stress (1=Very Low, 5=Very High)	3.78	0.92	High
Institutional Support (1=Very Poor, 5=Excellent)	2.21	1.03	Poor
Domestic Support (1=Very Poor, 5=Excellent)	2.67	1.12	Moderate
Time for Self-Care (1=Never, 5=Always)	1.89	0.73	Rare

The descriptive analysis indicates that women teachers in Madurai district experienced poor to moderate work-life balance during the pandemic (Mean = 2.34), with a high increase in workload (Mean = 4.12) and elevated technology-related stress (Mean = 3.78). Institutional support was perceived as poor (Mean = 2.21), while domestic support was moderate (Mean = 2.67). Time for self-care was notably rare (Mean = 1.89), reflecting the overwhelming demands on their time and energy.

Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Age and Perception of Work-Life Balance

H01: There is no significant association between age and perception of work-life balance.

Table 3 Cross-Tabulation of Age and Work-Life Balance Perception



Age Group	Poor WLB	Moderate WLB	Good WLB	Total
Below 30	12	14	2	28
30–40	28	20	4	52
40–50	14	12	4	30
Above 50	4	4	2	10
Total	58	50	12	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 3.847

Degrees of Freedom (df) = 6

p-value = 0.698

Interpretation: Since $p > 0.05$, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant association between age and perception of work-life balance. Women teachers across all age groups experienced similar levels of work-life balance challenges.

Hypothesis 2: Marital Status and Work-Life Conflict

H02: There is no significant association between marital status and work-life conflict.

Table 4 Cross-Tabulation of Marital Status and Work-Life Conflict

Marital Status	Low Conflict	Moderate Conflict	High Conflict	Total
Unmarried	10	8	4	22
Married	12	32	48	92
Widowed/Separated	2	2	2	6
Total	24	42	54	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 18.462

Degrees of Freedom (df) = 4

p-value = 0.001

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant association between marital status and work-life conflict. Married women teachers reported significantly higher levels of work-life conflict (48 out of 92, or 52.2%, reported high conflict) compared to unmarried teachers (4 out of 22, or 18.2%). This finding aligns with existing research indicating that married women bear disproportionate domestic responsibilities.

Hypothesis 3: Number of Children and Increased Workload

H03: There is no significant association between number of children and increased workload.

**Table 5 Cross-Tabulation of Number of Children and Increased Workload**

Number of Children	Moderate Increase	High Increase	Extreme Increase	Total
No children	14	10	2	26
One child	10	22	12	44
Two children	6	18	18	42
Three or more	0	2	6	8
Total	30	52	38	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 26.714

Degrees of Freedom (df) = 6

p-value = 0.000

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a highly significant association between the number of children and increased workload. Teachers with two or more children reported extreme increases in workload (24 out of 50, or 48%), compared to only 2 out of 26 (7.7%) of those without children. This underscores the compounding effect of childcare responsibilities on professional demands.

Hypothesis 4: Family Type and Domestic Support

H04: There is no significant association between family type and availability of domestic support.

Table 6 Cross-Tabulation of Family Type and Domestic Support

Family Type	Poor Support	Moderate Support	Good Support	Total
Nuclear	32	24	12	68
Joint	10	22	20	52
Total	42	46	32	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 14.231

Degrees of Freedom (df) = 2

p-value = 0.001

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a significant association between family type and domestic support. Women in joint families reported better domestic support (20 out of 52, or 38.5%, reported good support) compared to those in nuclear families (12 out of 68, or 17.6%). This finding highlights the role of extended family networks in buffering the domestic burden during crises.

Hypothesis 5: Employment Type and Institutional Support

H05: There is no significant association between employment type and institutional support.

**Table 7 Cross-Tabulation of Employment Type and Institutional Support**

Family Type	Poor Support	Moderate Support	Good Support	Total
Nuclear	32	24	12	68
Joint	10	22	20	52
Total	42	46	32	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

- Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 15.833
- Degrees of Freedom (df) = 2
- p-value = 0.000

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a highly significant association between employment type and institutional support. Contractual teachers reported significantly poorer institutional support (28 out of 48, or 58.3%, reported poor support) compared to permanent teachers (20 out of 72, or 27.8%). This reflects the precarious position of contractual staff, who often lack job security and institutional backing.

Hypothesis 6: Teaching Level and Technology-Related Stress

H06: There is no significant association between teaching level and technology-related stress.

Table 8 Cross-Tabulation of Teaching Level and Technology-Related Stress

Teaching Level	Low Stress	Moderate Stress	High Stress	Total
Primary	8	18	12	38
Secondary	6	20	22	48
Higher Secondary	4	12	18	34
Total	18	50	52	120

Chi-Square Calculation:

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 4.218

Degrees of Freedom (df) = 4

p-value = 0.377

Interpretation: Since $p > 0.05$, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant association between teaching level and technology-related stress. Teachers across all levels experienced similar levels of stress related to technology adoption, suggesting that digital competence was a universal challenge rather than one confined to specific grade levels.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 9: Summary of Chi-Square Results

Hypothesis	Variables	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
H01	Age $\times$ Work-Life Balance	3.847	6	0.698	Not Significant
H02	Marital Status $\times$ Work-Life Conflict	18.462	4	0.001	Significant
H03	Number of Children $\times$ Increased Workload	26.714	6	0.000	Significant
H04	Family Type $\times$ Domestic Support	14.231	2	0.001	Significant
H05	Employment Type $\times$ Institutional Support	15.833	2	0.000	Significant
H06	Teaching Level $\times$ Technology Stress	4.218	4	0.377	Not Significant

The Chi-Square analysis reveals that four out of six hypotheses are statistically significant, indicating that marital status, number of children, family type, and employment type are significantly associated with various dimensions of work-life management. Age and teaching level, however, do not show significant associations, suggesting that the challenges were pervasive across age groups and teaching levels.

Discussion

The findings of this study paint a stark picture of the work-life management challenges faced by women teachers in Madurai district during the COVID-19 pandemic. The overwhelming majority reported poor to moderate work-life balance, with workload increases and technology-related stress emerging as dominant stressors. These findings resonate with national and international research documenting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women educators.

The significant association between marital status and work-life conflict (H02) highlights the persistence of gendered domestic roles. Married women, particularly those with children, found themselves navigating a "double burden" that was exacerbated by the closure of schools and the absence of domestic help. The finding that married teachers reported significantly higher work-life conflict than their unmarried counterparts underscores the need for interventions that address the structural inequalities within households.

The strong association between number of children and increased workload (H03) further reinforces this point. Teachers with two or more children were disproportionately likely to report extreme workload increases, reflecting the compounding effects of childcare, supervision of children's online learning, and professional responsibilities. This finding aligns with research indicating that mothers experienced greater work-family conflict during the pandemic than fathers or non-parents.

The role of family structure in buffering these challenges is evident in the significant association between joint family type and domestic support (H04). Women in joint families reported better domestic support, suggesting that extended family networks served as a crucial resource during the crisis. This finding has implications for understanding resilience factors and for designing support systems that emulate the supportive functions of extended families.

The precarious situation of contractual teachers is highlighted by the significant association between employment type and institutional support (H05). Contractual teachers reported significantly poorer institutional support, reflecting broader patterns of institutional betrayal documented in the literature. Schools that removed contractual



teachers, increased surveillance, and failed to provide digital support were perceived as prioritizing profit over teacher well-being, with particularly detrimental effects on those in precarious employment.

The lack of significant association between age and work-life balance (H01) and between teaching level and technology stress (H06) suggests that the pandemic's challenges were universal rather than confined to specific demographic or professional groups. This universality underscores the systemic nature of the crisis and the need for broad-based institutional responses.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified the structural inequalities that shape women teachers' professional and personal lives. This study of 120 women teachers in Madurai district provides empirical evidence that work-life management during the pandemic was significantly influenced by marital status, number of children, family type, and employment type. Married teachers, those with children, those in nuclear families, and contractual employees faced the most severe challenges.

The findings have several implications. First, educational institutions must recognize that work-life management is not merely an individual responsibility but a systemic issue requiring institutional support. Schools should implement policies such as flexible working hours, childcare facilities, and mental health support services. Second, the specific vulnerabilities of contractual teachers demand attention. Ensuring job security, providing digital resources, and extending support to all staff regardless of employment status are essential steps toward equity. Third, the role of family structure suggests that community-level interventions such as neighborhood childcare cooperatives or shared domestic support networks could help compensate for the absence of extended family support in nuclear households. Fourth, the universal nature of technology stress calls for comprehensive digital literacy training and ongoing technical support for all teachers.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of the pandemic on women teachers' career trajectories, mental health, and retention in the profession. Comparative studies across different districts of Tamil Nadu and other Indian states would help identify regional variations and inform context-specific policy responses. Additionally, qualitative research would provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of women teachers and the coping strategies they employed.

The pandemic was not merely a public health emergency; it was a social crisis that laid bare the fault lines of gender inequality. Addressing these inequalities requires sustained commitment from educational institutions, policymakers, and society at large. Women teachers who constitute the backbone of the educational system deserve nothing less.

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