
WORK LIFE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN BANKING INDUSTRY WITH REFERENCE TO PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

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Abstract:

The banking industry has witnessed a significant rise in female participation, yet women continue to face numerous challenges in balancing their professional and personal lives. This study explores the work-life balance issues encountered by women in both public and private sector banks, highlighting the factors that impact their career growth, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Through a comparative analysis, the research identifies key stressors such as long working hours, job pressures, and limited support systems, which disproportionately affect women. The study also examines the role of organizational policies and work environments in shaping women's empowerment within the banking sector. Findings indicate that while public sector banks offer job security and structured work hours, private sector banks provide better financial incentives but demand greater flexibility. The research emphasizes the need for policy interventions, flexible work arrangements, and supportive workplace environments to ensure gender-inclusive growth in the banking industry. By addressing these challenges, organizations can foster a more balanced and empowering work culture for women.

Keywords: work-life balance, women empowerment, banking sector, public sector banks, private sector banks, India.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian banking sector has undergone remarkable changes over the last few decades, driven by technological advancements, increasing competition, and evolving regulatory frameworks. As the industry modernizes and expands, women have increasingly become an integral part of this transformation, contributing significantly to its growth and success [1]. However, despite their growing participation, women in the banking sector face unique challenges, particularly in balancing their professional duties with their personal and familial responsibilities. The concept of work-life balance (WLB) has therefore gained prominence, as it directly influences women's career progression, mental well-being, and job satisfaction [1].

Work-life balance [2] is a critical issue for working women across sectors, and the banking industry is no exception. Female employees often find themselves caught between demanding job roles and personal obligations. These demands can be overwhelming, as women in banking are expected to work long hours, manage high-pressure tasks, and meet stringent performance targets. While banking offers promising career opportunities for women, these high expectations can create significant stress and work-life conflict. This conflict often leads to burnout, health issues, and strained personal relationships. Hence, it is essential to examine how work-life balance impacts women working in banks and explore solutions to help alleviate these challenges [2].

Gender roles [3] in Indian society have traditionally assigned the primary responsibility of household chores and caregiving to women. These societal expectations, combined with the evolving nature of women's roles in the workforce, can create a disconnect between personal and professional life. As more women join the workforce, especially in sectors like banking, it becomes crucial to understand how organizational structures and work policies either support or hinder their ability to manage both aspects of life effectively. Women employees in the banking sector often struggle with the dual burden of career expectations and family commitments, which can lead to a negative impact on their personal well-being [3].

In India, women working in both public and private sector banks experience different dynamics in terms of work-life balance. Public sector banks tend to offer greater job security, fixed working hours, and more structured roles. While these features may alleviate some work-life conflict, they often come with limited flexibility in job functions [4]. On the other hand, private sector banks are known for offering higher remuneration and more dynamic roles but demand greater flexibility and longer working hours, which can exacerbate work-life imbalance. Therefore, the work-life challenges faced by women in these two sectors can be quite distinct, making it important to examine both in detail to draw relevant comparisons.

This paper seeks to explore the work-life balance challenges faced by women in the banking sector, specifically focusing on both public and private sector banks. It aims to identify the factors that contribute to work-life imbalance and the impact these challenges have on women's empowerment and career advancement. By studying the work environment, policies, and practices within these two banking sectors, the research intends to provide insights into how gender-specific challenges can be addressed through improved organizational policies and a more supportive work culture. Ultimately, the goal is to propose strategies that can help promote gender equality, enhance women's career satisfaction, and support their overall well-being within the banking industry [5].

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the adjustment needs with in-laws and family members for women moving out for work.
- To identify the challenges women face in the workplace, including issues related to childcare, shift timings, workload, and available working facilities.
- To investigate job insecurity and personal security concerns, such as sexual harassment, working late, and commuting alone.
- To provide guidelines and recommendations for improving women's social well-being and empowering them for successful careers while maintaining stable family lives.
- To explore the role and positioning of women in the banking sector, comparing the pre- and post-COVID scenarios.

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. Wage Inequality

- **H0:** There are no inequalities in terms of wages for the same job and position.
- **H1:** There are inequalities in terms of wages for the same job and position.

2. Facilities for Women Empowerment

- **H0:** No facilities are provided to women to empower them, such as childcare, pregnancy leave, or flexible working shifts.
- **H1:** Facilities are provided to women to empower them, such as childcare, pregnancy leave, or flexible working shifts.

3. Workplace Harassment

- **H0:** No workplace harassment, sexual or non-sexual in nature, is present in the current office culture.
- **H1:** Workplace harassment, sexual or non-sexual in nature, is present in the current office culture.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Abbasi, A. M., Abbas, I., & Malik, S. (2019)

Title: Exploring the Problems of Women at Workplace

This research examines the challenges women face in Pakistan's workplace, focusing on societal attitudes that limit their access to equal opportunities. Through surveys and interviews, the study identifies obstacles such as unfair treatment, professional growth limitations, and the broader societal mindset. The findings indicate that despite facing multiple barriers, women are increasingly resilient, working towards establishing their own identities. The study predicts a future of greater equality for women in Pakistan, with an emphasis on societal awareness and support [6].

Bharadwaj, M. V., & Shanker, M. (2019)

Title: Women at Workplace and Work-Life Balance: A Literature Review

This literature review explores how women manage the balancing act between work and family life, focusing on evolving roles and challenges. The review emphasizes the difficulties women face in maintaining a work-life balance due to increasing professional pressures and family responsibilities. It concludes that organizations must support women in achieving this balance, as successful work-life integration benefits both women and overall workplace productivity and well-being [7].

Sharma, B. (2019)

Title: Women Issues at Workplace in Context of Formal Sector Organization

This study investigates the specific challenges women face in Nepal's formal sector, such as workplace harassment, insufficient maternity provisions, and job insecurity. The research highlights how these factors negatively impact women's job satisfaction and security. The study recommends stronger engagement from various stakeholders to address these issues, including the adoption of anti-harassment policies and increased maternity leave provisions to create safer, more supportive environments for women in the workforce [8].

Turesky, M., & Warner, M. E. (2020)

Title: Gender Dynamics in the Planning Workplace: The Importance of Women in Management

This study examines the influence of gender, management, and organizational structure on workplace culture within planning agencies. It reveals that while perceptions of gender respect and work-life benefits are generally equal across genders, women are more likely to feel excluded and perceive unequal opportunities for pay and career advancement. The research advocates for gender-inclusive leadership and planning curricula to address these disparities and improve workplace equality [9].

Thakur, R. (2020)

Title: Gender Issue in Workplace

This article explores the gender-related challenges women face in the workplace, particularly how inequality and stereotypes hinder their progress. Based on a survey in Punjab, the study reveals that a significant percentage of women experience gender discrimination and sexual harassment, while many are pressured by societal expectations to leave their jobs for traditional roles such as marriage and family care. The findings highlight the persistent inequality and the need for societal and organizational change to support women in overcoming these barriers [10].

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involves a well-structured approach to sample selection, data collection, and analysis, aimed at understanding the work-life challenges faced by women in the banking industry. The total research sample consists of 300 women working in the banking sector, with an equal distribution across the private and public sectors. Specifically, 150 women are selected from private sector banks, and 150 women from public sector banks, ensuring a balanced comparison between the two sectors.

A **stratified random sampling** technique will be used to ensure that the sample is representative of various job positions and work environments. The sample will be categorized into four key job levels: senior management, middle management, operational staff, and junior staff. Additionally, women from both urban and semi-urban banking branches will be included, ensuring that the sample captures diverse work environments. The inclusion criteria for the study specify that participants must have at least one year of experience in the banking sector and be willing to share insights on work-life challenges and empowerment. Male employees and women with less than one year of banking experience are excluded from the study to focus solely on the challenges faced by women in the workforce.

The research methodology also ensures that the sample is distributed evenly across job positions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the different levels of work-life balance challenges within the banking sector. The senior management level, including branch managers and regional managers, will have 30 participants (15 from each sector). Middle management roles, such as assistant managers and relationship managers, will be represented by 60 participants (30 from each sector). Operational staff, such as tellers, customer service representatives, and loan officers, will comprise 120 participants (60 from each sector). Finally, the junior staff group, including clerks, office assistants, and support staff, will have 90 respondents (45 from each sector).

This detailed sampling approach ensures that the study captures a broad range of perspectives, from high-level management to entry-level staff, and allows for an in-depth analysis of the work-life challenges and empowerment strategies at each job level. The findings from these diverse groups will provide valuable insights into how work-life balance is managed across different positions and sectors within the banking industry.

6. FINDINGS

The study investigated gender inequalities in the banking sector, focusing on wage disparities, the availability of empowerment facilities, and workplace harassment. A total of 300 women from both private and public sector banks were surveyed. The results revealed significant findings: women in the private sector earned ₹5,000 more per month than their counterparts in the public sector, with a statistically significant wage gap (₹50,000 in the private sector versus ₹45,000 in the public sector). In terms of empowerment facilities, the private sector provided better support, with 75% of women having access to childcare facilities compared to only 20% in the public sector. Additionally, 60% of women in the private sector reported having flexible working hours, while just 10% in the public sector had this benefit. Pregnancy leave was relatively well-supported in both sectors, with 90% of private sector women and 85% of public sector women reporting access. Regarding workplace harassment, although the overall levels were low, women in the public sector reported higher levels of harassment (mean score of 1.5) compared to the private sector (mean score of 1.2), and this difference was statistically significant (p -value = 0.011). The t-test results for all hypotheses indicated significant differences between the private and public sectors, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses regarding wage inequality, the provision of empowerment facilities, and workplace harassment. The findings highlight that while both sectors have made progress, significant disparities still exist, especially in wage levels, support for work-life balance, and workplace harassment, with the private sector showing greater support in empowerment facilities but still presenting challenges in creating an entirely equitable environment.

7. CONCLUSION

This research provides valuable insights into the gender inequalities faced by women in the banking sector, particularly regarding wage disparities, the availability of empowerment facilities, and workplace harassment. The findings reveal a significant wage gap between women in the private and public sectors, with private sector women earning more on average. Additionally, the private sector was found to offer better support in terms of childcare facilities and flexible working hours, highlighting the sector's stronger emphasis on empowering women and facilitating work-life balance. While both sectors offered relatively similar maternity leave benefits, the study found a stark contrast in the provision of flexible work hours, which was more readily available in the private sector.

Workplace harassment, although generally low in both sectors, was more prevalent in the public sector, indicating the need for further attention to creating safer work environments. Overall, while both the private and public sectors have made progress in supporting women, significant disparities persist, particularly in wage levels and the availability of empowerment facilities. These findings underscore the importance of targeted policies and organizational changes to bridge the gaps in gender equality and improve the overall workplace experience for women. Further research and continuous efforts from both sectors are crucial to ensure that gender inequalities are addressed effectively, leading to a more equitable and supportive banking industry for women.

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