



**WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN POLICE OFFICERS: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES– A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VIRUDHUNAGAR TOWN, TAMIL NADU**

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of women working in a conventional Indian workplace has been a challenging one always. Policing is a demanding and high-stress profession and this holds especially true for women officers who navigate the complex terrain of law enforcement. The challenge of striking a balance between one's professional and family life is a longstanding issue. Work-life balance is described as an individual's capacity to fulfill their work and family obligations, in addition to other non-work responsibilities and engagements. This study attempts to investigate the challenges that women police officers confront in managing the equilibrium between their personal and occupational life. It also provides insights into the factors affecting the work-life balance of women police officers and the strategies they adopt to manage this balance. The findings of this study emphasize the need for proactive measures to enhance work-life balance and overall well-being of women police officers, with particular attention to the distinct challenges faced by them.

**Key Words:** Family-work conflict, Stress, Work-life balance, Women police.

**INTRODUCTION**

Work and life are intertwined throughout an individual's lifetime. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the balance between work and life remains uneven. Women have embarked on a remarkable journey, efficiently fulfilling various roles, including managing their families and

dedicating equal time to their professional responsibilities. Work-life balance is a critical aspect of overall well-being and job satisfaction. An emerging trend is the growing inclination of individuals to give precedence to their professional commitments over personal aspects

of life. In the context of law enforcement, achieving work-life balance can be particularly challenging due to the demands and stress inherent in the profession. Generally, police department employees face higher family-work conflicts, resulting in decreased satisfaction with family and work life and elevated levels of psychological distress (Ashtankar, 2016). Job satisfaction among police officers is influenced by personal, social and organizational factors (Weerasinghe and Abeykoon, 2017), where as dissatisfaction of the job among women police officers is attributed to a stressful job, inadequate salary, uncertain working hours, and increased harassment (Anita Kumari Panigrahi, 2018). Thasneem *et al.*, (2019) recorded that stress in the lives of women police personnel primarily stems from the workplace. Ramesh Kumar Miryala (2019) studied the fact that significant variables influencing the work-life balance of women police officers include age, gender, spouse's occupation and working hours. The reasons being physical demands, the risk of personal injury, environmental conditions and on-the-job hazards. Establishing supportive working conditions, implementing employee wellness programs and adopting timely promotion and transfer policies are suggested strategies to enhance work-life balance for women in the police department (Bhuvanewari and Thirumoorthi, 2019). The challenges faced by women police officers in Tamil Nadu and across India encompass insufficient facilities,

harassment, limited career development opportunities, discrimination, and a lack of access to training, contributing to an imbalance between their personal and professional lives (Devamaindhan and Vidhya Arumugam, 2023). Study Finds about the Most Stressful Careers in 2023, the experts opine that the Police profession has become more stress-filled in the last few years and has occupied the second place. Hence, the objectives of the present study are to study the profile characteristics of women police officers in Virudhunagar, to identify the factors affecting the work-life balance of women police, to find out their overall job satisfaction level and to provide relevant strategies for women police officers for maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive study approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire administered through a survey. The sample of 70 women police officers were selected using a Convenience sampling method. Additionally, secondary data was sourced from different research articles and websites. The primary data was subsequently subjected to analysis and conclusions were drawn using a range of statistical tools. The profile characteristics of the women police officers are represented in Table 1.

**Table-1 Profile characteristics of the Respondents**

| Characteristics           | Category              | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Age                       | Less than 25 years    | 8                  | 11.43          |
|                           | 26 to 35 years        | 33                 | 47.14          |
|                           | 36 to 45 years        | 24                 | 34.29          |
|                           | Above 45 years        | 5                  | 7.14           |
| Educational qualification | Higher Secondary      | 2                  | 2.86           |
|                           | Graduate              | 51                 | 72.86          |
|                           | Post Graduate         | 14                 | 20.00          |
|                           | Others                | 3                  | 4.28           |
| Marital status            | Single                | 28                 | 40.00          |
|                           | Married               | 39                 | 55.71          |
|                           | Widow                 | 2                  | 2.86           |
|                           | Divorcee              | 1                  | 1.43           |
| Designation               | Constable             | 44                 | 62.85          |
|                           | Head Constable        | 17                 | 24.29          |
|                           | Sub-Inspector         | 7                  | 10.00          |
|                           | Inspector             | 2                  | 2.86           |
| Family structure          | Joint family          | 48                 | 68.57          |
|                           | Nuclear family        | 22                 | 31.43          |
| No. of children           | 0                     | 30                 | 42.86          |
|                           | 1                     | 13                 | 18.57          |
|                           | 2                     | 19                 | 27.14%         |
|                           | 3                     | 8                  | 11.43%         |
| Monthly income            | Less than Rs.15,000   | 11                 | 15.71%         |
|                           | Rs.15,001 – Rs.20,000 | 33                 | 47.14%         |
|                           | Rs.20,001 – Rs.30,000 | 17                 | 24.29%         |
|                           | Above Rs.30,000       | 9                  | 12.86%         |
| Work experience           | Less than 5 years     | 21                 | 30.00%         |
|                           | 6 – 10 years          | 32                 | 45.72%         |
|                           | 11 – 15 years         | 7                  | 10.00%         |
|                           | More than 15 years    | 10                 | 14.28%         |
| Pattern of stay           | Single                | 6                  | 8.57%          |
|                           | With family           | 64                 | 91.43%         |

Source: Primary Data, 2023

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 provides a profile overview of the respondents participated in the study.

It is inferred that out of 70 respondents, a majority of 47.14% of the respondents fall under the age category of 26 – 35 years. A significant number of respondents are graduates (72.86%). Most of the respondents are married (55.71%). The largest group of respondents are working as Constables (62.85%). A vast majority of

respondents belong to joint family system (68.57%). Majority of the respondents has no children (42.86%). The highest proportion (47.14%) of respondents earn between Rs.15,001 and Rs.20,000 per month. A notable percentage (45.72%) of the respondents have 6 – 10 years of service. Majority of 91.43% of the respondents stay with their families.

**Table 2 Reasons for choosing or joining police service by the respondents**

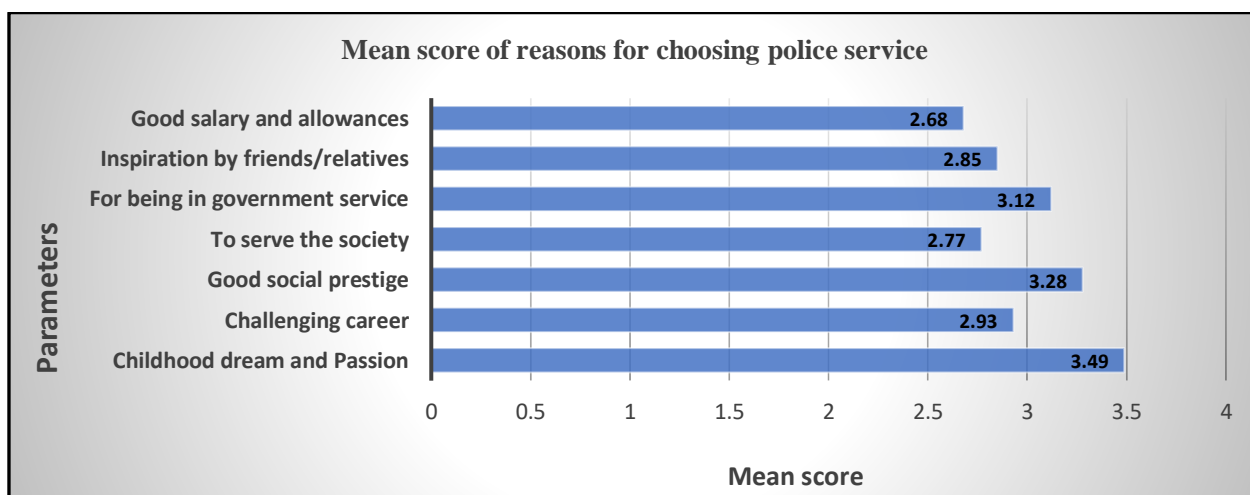
| S. No. | Reasons                          | Mean | Standard Deviation (S.D) |
|--------|----------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| 1      | Childhood dream and Passion      | 3.49 | 1.340                    |
| 2      | Challenging career               | 2.93 | 1.458                    |
| 3      | Good social prestige             | 3.28 | 1.367                    |
| 4      | To serve the society             | 2.77 | 1.467                    |
| 5      | For being in government service  | 3.12 | 1.459                    |
| 6      | Inspiration by friends/relatives | 2.85 | 1.328                    |
| 7      | Good salary and allowances       | 2.68 | 1.456                    |

Source: Primary data, 2023

It is noted from the table 2 that a highest mean score of 3.49 and 3.28 are assigned to the reasons ‘Childhood dream and Passion’ and ‘Good social prestige’ which mean that the respondents considered these

reasons as quite important in their decision to join the police service. A lowest mean score of 2.68 is assigned to the reason ‘Good salary and allowances’ which shows that this reason is considered moderately important.

**Figure 1 showing mean score of reasons for choosing or joining police service by respondents**



**Table-3 Number of working hours of the respondents**

| S. No.       | Working hours      | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1            | Upto 8 hours       | 9                  | 12.86          |
| 2            | 8 – 10 hours       | 49                 | 70.00          |
| 3            | More than 10 hours | 12                 | 17.14          |
| <b>Total</b> |                    | <b>70</b>          | <b>100.00</b>  |

Source: Primary data, 2023

The above table 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their working hours. It depicts that 70.00% a majority of the respondents work for 8 to 10 hours a day, while 17.14% a smaller proportion of respondents and 12.86% of the respondents work for upto 8 hours or more than 10 hours a day respectively. This information is crucial for understanding the working hours of women police officers and its potential impact on their work-life balance.

**Table 4 Challenging factors affecting the work-life balance of respondents**

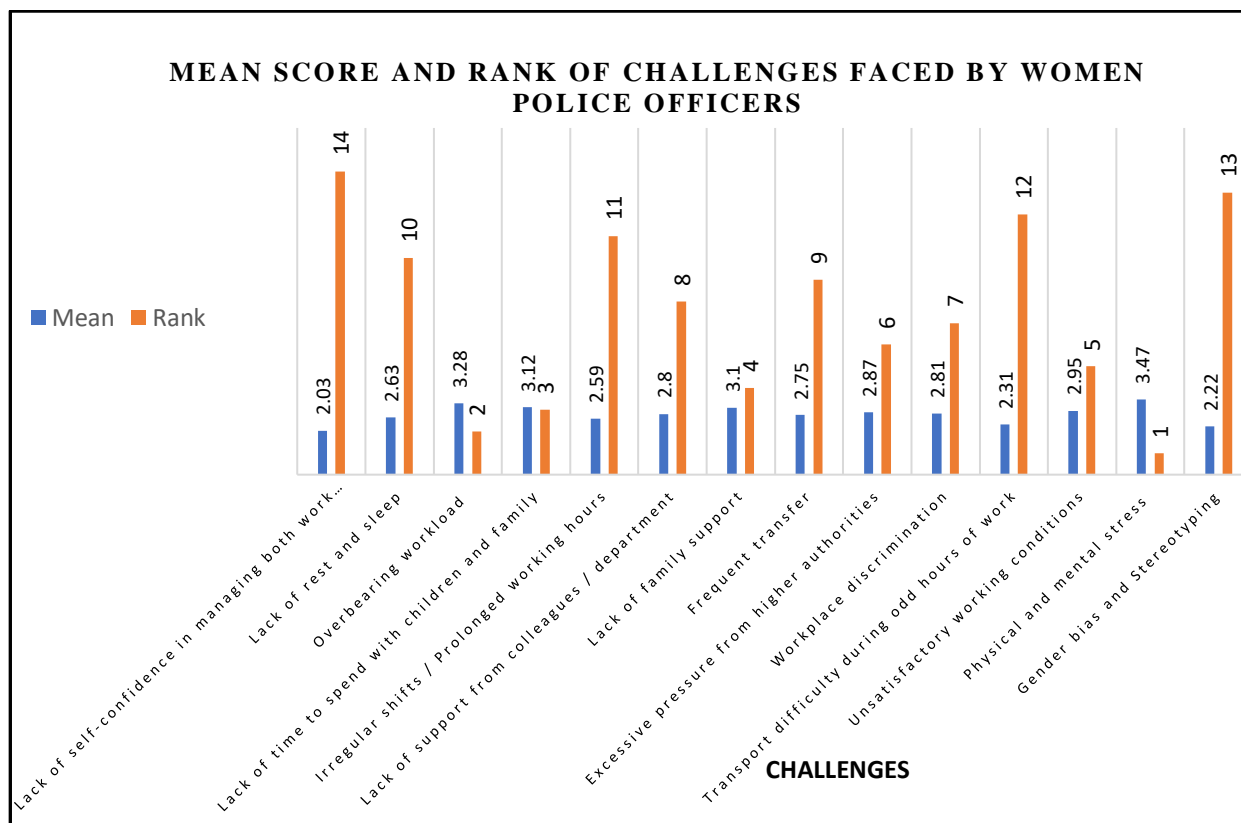
| Challenges                                             | Mean | Rank |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Lack of self-confidence in managing both work and life | 2.03 | 14   |
| Lack of rest and sleep                                 | 2.63 | 10   |
| Overbearing workload                                   | 3.28 | 2    |
| Lack of time to spend with children and family         | 3.12 | 3    |
| Irregular shifts / Prolonged working hours             | 2.59 | 11   |
| Lack of support from colleagues / department           | 2.80 | 8    |
| Lack of family support                                 | 3.10 | 4    |
| Frequent transfer                                      | 2.75 | 9    |
| Excessive pressure from higher authorities             | 2.87 | 6    |
| Workplace discrimination                               | 2.81 | 7    |
| Transport difficulty during odd hours of work          | 2.31 | 12   |
| Unsatisfactory working conditions                      | 2.95 | 5    |
| Physical and mental stress                             | 3.47 | 1    |
| Gender bias and Stereotyping                           | 2.22 | 13   |

**Source: Primary data, 2023**

Table 4 presents the data on various challenges faced by the women police officers, including the mean ratings and their respective ranks. The most significant and severe challenge perceived by the respondents is ‘Physical and mental stress’ which has a mean score of 3.47 and is ranked as first, followed by ‘Overbearing workload’ with a mean score of 3.28 and is given rank 2 and ‘Lack of time to spend with children and family’ is also considered as a significant issue with a mean score of 3.12 and is ranked 3. Other noteworthy challenges faced by the respondents are ‘Lack of family support’ (mean score 3.10, rank 4), ‘Unsatisfactory working conditions’ (mean score 2.95, rank 5),

‘Excessive pressure from higher authorities’ (mean score 2.87, rank 6), ‘Workplace discrimination’ (mean score 2.81, rank 7) and ‘Lack of support from colleagues/department’ (mean score 2.80, rank 8). The other challenges which the respondents feel as less challenging than the others are ‘Frequent transfer’ (mean score 2.75, rank 9), ‘Lack of rest and sleep’ (mean score 2.63, rank 10), ‘Irregular shifts/Prolonged working hours’ (mean score 2.59, rank 11), ‘Transport difficulty during odd hours of work’ (mean score 2.31, rank 12), ‘Gender bias and Stereotyping’ (mean score 2.22, rank 13) and ‘Lack of self-confidence in managing both work and life’ (mean score 2.03, rank 14).

**Figure 2: Mean score and rank of different challenges faced by women police officers**



**Table 5 Overall job satisfaction level of respondents**

| S. No.       | Job Satisfaction level             | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1            | Highly satisfied                   | 19                 | 27.14          |
| 2            | Satisfied                          | 24                 | 34.29          |
| 3            | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 13                 | 18.57          |
| 4            | Dissatisfied                       | 9                  | 12.86          |
| 5            | Highly dissatisfied                | 5                  | 7.14           |
| <b>Total</b> |                                    | <b>70</b>          | <b>100.00</b>  |

Source: Primary data, 2023

From the above table 5, it is clear that a majority of 34.29% and 27.14% of the respondents are satisfied and highly satisfied respectively with their job, while 18.57% of the respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their job, and the remaining 12.86% and 7.14% of the respondents are dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied respectively with their jobs.

The study findings show that among the 70 respondents included in the study, a majority of respondents fall in the age group of 26-35 serve in the Constable cadre and

maintain a joint family system. The most significant factor impacting the work-life balance of women police officers is identified as ‘Physical and mental stress’, followed by ‘Overbearing workload’ and ‘Lack of time to spend with children and family’. Despite these challenges, women police officers express satisfaction with their jobs, driven by the pursuit of a childhood dream and passion for being a police officer.

To enhance the work-life balance of women police officers, various strategies can be considered, including flexible work

schedules, improved maternity leave policies, and on-site childcare facilities. Stress management training should be conducted regularly, and additional measures such as mentorship programmes, fair treatment, fixed work hours, and the provision of clean and hygienic facilities can be contributed to maintain a balance between work and personal life for women police officers. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the issue is crucial, as it impacts job satisfaction, mental health, and overall well-being. The Police department should actively address these challenges by implementing flexible policies, providing support services, and fostering a more inclusive work environment.

Acknowledging the unique needs of women police officers in law enforcement is essential for ensuring a harmonious work-life balance. Such needs not only benefit the officers themselves but also extends to their families and the communities they serve.

A comprehensive study on the work-life balance of women police officers has the potential to bring about positive changes, promoting gender equality, women leadership, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of law enforcement agencies.

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