



WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A MODERN CHALLENGE FOR EMPLOYEES IN GUJARAT

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has become a significant concern in the modern professional world, particularly for employees in rapidly growing economies such as Gujarat. The state's industrial expansion, urbanization, and technological advancements have created numerous employment opportunities; however, they have also intensified professional demands, leading to stress, burnout, and challenges in managing personal responsibilities. This article examines the concept of work-life balance, its relevance in the contemporary workplace, and the specific challenges faced by employees in Gujarat. It highlights the adverse consequences of poor work-life balance on individual well-being, organizational productivity, and social cohesion. The discussion emphasizes the importance of maintaining equilibrium between professional commitments and personal life, illustrating how imbalance can lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced efficiency, and emotional strain. Furthermore, the article explores practical strategies for improving work-life balance, including organizational initiatives such as flexible work arrangements and wellness programs, government policies promoting job security and family-friendly practices, and individual measures such as time management and boundary-setting. By adopting a holistic approach, both employers and employees can foster a supportive work environment that promotes mental health, career growth, and overall life satisfaction. Achieving work-life balance is not merely a personal goal but a strategic necessity for sustainable professional and social development in Gujarat.

KEYWORDS: Work-Life Balance, Employee Well-Being, Stress Management, Burnout, Organizational Productivity, Flexible Work Policies, Gujarat, Time Management, Work-Life Integration, Job Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance has emerged as one of the most significant aspects of modern professional life, reflecting the need to harmonize the competing demands of work responsibilities and personal well-being. In today's fast-paced world, employees face growing challenges in managing their professional obligations alongside family, social, and personal needs. The traditional notion of working fixed hours and leaving work-related concerns at the office has gradually disappeared, replaced by an "always-on" culture driven by technological advancement and global competition. As a result, the line between work and personal life has blurred, leading to a greater emphasis on creating equilibrium between the two domains.

In the modern professional environment, achieving work-life balance is not merely about dividing time equally between work and personal life; it is about maintaining satisfaction and effectiveness in both spheres. Professionals today seek flexibility, autonomy, and meaningful engagement rather than simply financial compensation. However, with organizations expecting higher levels of productivity, innovation, and adaptability, employees often find themselves overworked, overstressed, and struggling to disconnect from their professional roles. This imbalance can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and adverse effects on mental and physical health, which ultimately affect organizational performance as well.

The rise of digital technology has further transformed the concept

of work-life balance. While remote working tools and digital communication have increased convenience and flexibility, they have also created an environment where employees are expected to be available beyond traditional working hours. The pandemic era accelerated this transformation, as remote and hybrid work models became common across industries. Though these models offered flexibility, they also brought challenges such as increased working hours, lack of separation between personal and professional spaces, and constant digital engagement, contributing to fatigue and stress.

Work-life balance is now viewed as a shared responsibility between organizations and employees. Modern organizations recognize that fostering a supportive work culture enhances employee well-being and productivity. Progressive companies across sectors are adopting employee-friendly policies such as flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, paid leaves, and mental health initiatives. Employees, on their part, are becoming more conscious of the need to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and pursue activities outside of work that contribute to overall life satisfaction.

In essence, work-life balance in the modern professional world represents an evolving paradigm—one that extends beyond time management to encompass emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is about creating a sustainable professional lifestyle where individuals can pursue career growth while nurturing their personal relationships and health. As workplaces

continue to evolve with globalization and digitalization, the pursuit of work-life balance remains central to building happier employees and healthier organizations.

2. UNDERSTANDING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

2.1 Rising concerns of stress, burnout, and time management among working professionals.

In the contemporary professional world, stress, burnout, and time management issues have become pressing concerns affecting employees across all levels of organizations. The rapid pace of work, increasing competitiveness, and constant pressure to achieve targets have made professional life more demanding than ever before. Employees today often find themselves juggling multiple roles and responsibilities, leading to physical exhaustion, mental fatigue, and emotional strain. The traditional boundaries between work and personal life have become increasingly blurred, especially with the advent of remote work and digital communication tools, which keep professionals connected to their work round the clock.

Stress among working professionals often stems from excessive workload, unrealistic deadlines, and performance expectations. In many organizations, the culture of long working hours is still considered a sign of commitment and productivity, whereas, in reality, it often leads to diminished efficiency and poor health outcomes. Chronic workplace stress not only hampers individual performance but also affects interpersonal relationships and overall job satisfaction. Employees who are constantly under pressure may experience anxiety, irritability, sleep disturbances, and even physical ailments such as hypertension and fatigue, reflecting how professional stress extends beyond the workplace into personal life.

Burnout, a more severe form of prolonged work-related stress, has become a widespread phenomenon in recent years. Characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, burnout is now recognized by the World Health Organization as an occupational phenomenon. Many professionals, especially those in demanding sectors such as healthcare, education, information technology, and finance, are vulnerable to burnout due to excessive workloads, limited control over work, and lack of organizational support. Burnout not only affects individual employees but also results in high turnover rates, absenteeism, and declining organizational performance.

Another major challenge closely linked to stress and burnout is the issue of time management. The increasing complexity of work roles requires employees to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, often with little time for rest or reflection. Poor time management results in constant feelings of being overwhelmed, missed deadlines, and decreased work quality. Moreover, the rise of multitasking and digital distractions, such as constant emails and meetings, has reduced employees' ability to focus deeply on a single task, leading to decreased productivity and greater frustration.

Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on creating supportive work environments,

promoting employee well-being, and encouraging better self-management practices. Effective time management, adequate rest, delegation of work, and mindfulness techniques can significantly help in reducing stress and preventing burnout. Organizations, on the other hand, must prioritize mental health initiatives, provide realistic workloads, and foster a culture that values balance over overwork. In the long run, tackling the rising concerns of stress, burnout, and time mismanagement is essential not only for individual well-being but also for ensuring organizational sustainability and long-term success.

2.2 Importance of maintaining equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life

Maintaining equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life is essential for achieving both individual well-being and organizational success in the modern era. As professional commitments increasingly demand time, energy, and mental focus, employees often find it difficult to devote adequate attention to their personal lives, family, health, and social relationships. Striking a balance between these two domains ensures that individuals remain productive and satisfied at work while also leading fulfilling personal lives. This balance is not just about managing time efficiently but about maintaining harmony between work obligations and the emotional, physical, and social aspects of life.

From an individual perspective, achieving a healthy work-life balance contributes significantly to physical health, mental stability, and emotional happiness. Professionals who manage their time effectively between work and personal commitments tend to experience less stress, better focus, and a stronger sense of purpose. They can dedicate quality time to their families, pursue hobbies, and engage in self-care, which collectively foster a sense of fulfilment. When employees feel that their personal lives are respected and supported, their motivation, creativity, and overall job satisfaction improve. Conversely, an imbalance often leads to fatigue, anxiety, irritability, and even burnout, which not only harm the individual but also diminish their capacity to perform effectively at work.

From an organizational standpoint, work-life balance plays a critical role in enhancing employee performance and retention. Companies that encourage flexible working hours, remote work options, and wellness programs often witness higher levels of employee engagement and loyalty. A supportive work environment that respects personal boundaries reduces absenteeism, turnover, and workplace conflicts. Moreover, employees who feel trusted to manage their work schedules responsibly are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward their organization, contributing to higher morale and productivity. Thus, promoting work-life balance is not merely a welfare initiative but a strategic business decision that fosters long-term success.

In a broader societal sense, maintaining equilibrium between work and life contributes to healthier families and communities. When individuals are not overwhelmed by professional stress, they can engage more meaningfully in family life, social relationships, and civic activities. This balance helps

create a more compassionate and stable social fabric where individuals thrive both personally and professionally. Ultimately, maintaining equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life is about creating a sustainable lifestyle that nurtures all dimensions of human existence—career growth, personal happiness, and social well-being. In today's competitive and interconnected world, true success lies not in overworking but in achieving harmony that allows individuals to grow, contribute, and live meaningfully without compromising their health or personal happiness.

3. THE EMPLOYMENT SCENARIO IN GUJARAT

Gujarat has long been one of India's fastest growing states in terms of industrial output. Its strength in manufacturing, gems & jewellery, textiles, automobiles, petrochemicals, and ports has made it a major employment hub. The state has also pushed policies to strengthen the IT/ITeS sector (for example, the Gujarat IT/ITeS Policy 2022–2027) which aims to generate significant direct jobs and increase IT exports. Large infrastructural projects, special economic zones, industrial parks, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have formed an important part of Gujarat's job creation strategy. These have helped in creating both direct employment (in factories, construction, services) and indirect jobs (logistics, supply chains, services around industries).

Recent Job-Creation Initiatives & Government Schemes

- The government has launched several programs to formalize unorganized work, expand employment in growing sectors, and provide incentives to both employers and employees. One of the more recent programs is the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, under which Gujarat is targeting the creation of 35–40 lakh (3.5 to 4 million) new jobs. The scheme provides incentives like a one-time benefit for first-time employees and monthly subsidies for employers. It aims especially to formalize jobs in sectors such as manufacturing, textiles, construction, real estate, services, and IT.
- Employment exchanges and job fairs also remain active tools. Over the last few years, thousands of recruitment fairs have been conducted in Gujarat, helping tens of thousands of youth secure employment. The “Anubandham” web portal has been launched to better connect job-seekers with vacancies, improving access to information.
- Also, apprenticeship programs have been expanded. For example, in a recent period, tens of thousands of apprenticeships were provided, helping bridge skill gaps while offering on-job training.

Gaps, Challenges & Unemployment Issues

Despite the efforts and growth, Gujarat faces several serious challenges in its employment scenario:

- Educated Unemployment & Intense Competition for Government Jobs: There's a large number of educated people applying for very few government posts. For instance, over 5 lakh people applied for fewer than 2,400 “Talati” Class-3 posts, showing a very high demand vs supply gap.
- Skill Mismatch / Youth Employability: Reports indicate

that despite investments in skill development, Gujarat is lagging in youth employability. The India Skill Report 2025 placed Gujarat outside the top five in terms of employability, suggesting that many youth struggle to convert their education into quality jobs.

- MSME Shutdowns & Weak Uptake of Schemes: Small and Medium Enterprises are under stress. MSME closures have been substantial, leading to thousands of job losses. Also, important schemes intended to support employment (like PMEGP – Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme) have recorded very low or zero uptake in some districts. This indicates issues in awareness, access, or implementation.
- Fluctuating Unemployment Rates: In urban Gujarat, unemployment rates have shown considerable volatility. For example, there was a spike in one period followed by a sharp decline in others. Such instability adds uncertainty for workers.
- Gender and Automation Impacts: There are early signs that automation in some sectors (construction, manufacturing) is reducing certain labour-intensive roles, often disproportionately affecting women. This heightens risk of job loss or displacement without adequate reskilling or alternative pathways.

Strengths & Positive Indicators

Despite challenges, Gujarat also shows many strengths which shape a fairly robust employment picture:

- Through employment exchanges, job fairs, and state initiatives, Gujarat has placed over 1.5 million candidates over 5 years via organized processes.
- The state has a relatively high labour force participation rate (LFPR), especially among males. There is also policy attention on bringing more women and youth into formal employment.
- The drive to formalize unorganized sector work shows promise. Many workers who were previously informal are being registered (for instance via the e-Shram portal), which can increase access to benefits, social security, and better regulation.

Implications & Trends

The employment landscape in Gujarat is shifting. Formalization, automation, skills-based hiring, and digital connection (job portals, apprenticeships) are becoming more prominent. Meanwhile, there is growing pressure to deliver not just “jobs,” but sustainable, well-paid, and suitably skilled work.

Youth expectations are changing: younger professionals now increasingly expect reasonable work-life balance, growth opportunities, good compensation, and stability—not simply any job. This shifts the challenge for employers: to provide jobs that don't only exist but also satisfy these evolving criteria.

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES IN GUJARAT

Employees in Gujarat face a diverse range of challenges that affect their professional lives and overall well-being, despite the state's rapid economic and industrial growth. Gujarat's

economy is one of the most dynamic in India, driven by industries such as textiles, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and information technology. However, the same industrial intensity and competitive work environment often create high expectations, long working hours, and performance pressure among employees. Many professionals, particularly in private companies and manufacturing units, report difficulties in maintaining a healthy balance between their work commitments and personal responsibilities. This imbalance often leads to physical exhaustion, psychological stress, and a gradual decline in work satisfaction.

One of the major challenges faced by employees in Gujarat is job insecurity, particularly in the private and unorganized sectors. As industries continue to adopt automation, contract-based employment, and outsourcing practices, many workers face uncertainty about the stability of their jobs. This insecurity contributes to anxiety and impacts long-term career planning. While Gujarat has a large number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that provide significant employment opportunities, these enterprises often lack structured human resource policies, regular salaries, or adequate benefits such as health insurance and paid leave. Consequently, employees working in such sectors experience limited job protection and little work-life flexibility.

Another major concern among employees is work overload and stress due to increasing competition and performance demands. Organizations are constantly seeking higher productivity and efficiency, often expecting employees to extend their working hours beyond standard limits. Professionals in sectors like finance, IT, and manufacturing face tight deadlines, multitasking, and constant digital engagement, leaving little room for rest or recreation. The culture of “presenteeism”—where employees feel pressured to remain available and active even outside office hours—has become more prevalent, especially with the growing use of smartphones and work-from-home arrangements. This culture not only diminishes personal time but also leads to burnout and deteriorating mental health.

Gender-based challenges continue to persist, especially for working women in Gujarat. Women employees often face the dual burden of professional responsibilities and household duties. Despite increased female participation in the workforce, traditional societal expectations continue to place domestic responsibilities primarily on women. As a result, many women struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and in some cases, opt out of the workforce due to lack of support systems such as childcare facilities or flexible work policies. Moreover, in several industries, women face wage disparities, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate workplace safety measures, further aggravating their challenges.

Commuting and infrastructure-related issues also pose difficulties for employees, particularly in major urban centers like Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, and Rajkot. The rapid urbanization and expansion of industrial zones have led to long commuting hours and traffic congestion, which add to daily fatigue. For employees working in industrial belts or special

economic zones located far from residential areas, commuting time reduces personal and family time, worsening their work-life imbalance. Additionally, the high cost of living in cities and the rising cost of housing near industrial hubs further strain employees' financial stability.

Lastly, lack of organizational support for employee well-being remains a significant issue in many workplaces across Gujarat. While large corporations and multinational firms are increasingly adopting employee-friendly policies, small and medium-sized companies often overlook initiatives related to mental health, counselling, or stress management. The absence of structured wellness programs, limited awareness of psychological health, and reluctance to discuss mental well-being at work further intensify the pressures faced by employees.

In essence, while Gujarat continues to be a hub of economic opportunity, the human side of employment still requires attention. Employees in the state are navigating a fast-changing professional landscape where job demands, personal responsibilities, and societal expectations frequently collide. Addressing these challenges requires a combined effort from employers, policymakers, and employees themselves to create a supportive, equitable, and flexible work culture that values both productivity and personal well-being.

5. IMPACT OF POOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The impact of poor work-life balance is profound and multifaceted, affecting employees, organizations, and society as a whole. When individuals are unable to maintain harmony between their professional and personal lives, it leads to a cascade of negative consequences that diminish overall well-being and productivity. In the modern workplace, where competition, technological intrusion, and performance expectations are constantly rising, poor work-life balance has become a silent epidemic that threatens not only individual health but also organizational effectiveness and social stability.

For employees, the most immediate and visible consequence of poor work-life balance is chronic stress. When work demands consistently exceed an individual's capacity or when personal time is compromised due to professional obligations, employees experience physical and emotional exhaustion. This ongoing stress often manifests in symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia, irritability, anxiety, and depression. Over time, it can contribute to serious health problems, including cardiovascular diseases, weakened immunity, and burnout. Mental health issues have become increasingly common in high-pressure work environments, where employees are expected to meet deadlines and maintain constant availability, leaving little room for relaxation or self-care. Moreover, strained personal relationships are another consequence, as employees who are overwhelmed by work tend to withdraw from family and social interactions, leading to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction.

From an organizational perspective, poor work-life balance translates into reduced productivity and performance. Employees who are overworked or stressed often show declining efficiency, lower concentration, and reduced creativity.

They may also engage in absenteeism, presenteeism (being physically present but mentally disengaged), and eventually, turnover. High employee turnover increases recruitment and training costs, disrupting organizational stability. Moreover, employees who lack balance are less likely to be motivated, loyal, or innovative — qualities essential for long-term success. Organizations that neglect the importance of work-life balance risk cultivating a toxic work culture that prioritizes short-term output over sustainable growth and employee well-being.

The social consequences of poor work-life balance are equally concerning. When individuals consistently prioritize work over personal life, families and communities are affected. Parents struggling with work stress may have less time for their children, leading to weakened family bonds and emotional disconnect. The lack of social engagement and recreation diminishes community cohesion and contributes to a sense of social alienation. In the long run, this imbalance can lead to broader societal problems such as declining mental health, reduced quality of life, and loss of collective well-being. The phenomenon also disproportionately affects women, who often bear the dual responsibility of professional and household duties, thereby amplifying gender-based inequalities.

Poor work-life balance also stifles personal growth and fulfilment. Employees who are unable to dedicate time to hobbies, education, or leisure activities often feel a lack of purpose and diminished life satisfaction. Overemphasis on work can create a narrow identity centered solely on professional success, leaving individuals vulnerable to emotional crises when career setbacks occur. On the other hand, those who achieve a balanced life tend to display higher emotional resilience, better interpersonal relationships, and greater career satisfaction.

Ultimately, poor work-life balance creates a vicious cycle where personal well-being, professional efficiency, and social health all suffer simultaneously. Recognizing and addressing this issue is not only a matter of individual choice but also an organizational and societal responsibility. Encouraging flexible work schedules, promoting mental health awareness, and fostering a supportive work culture are vital steps toward breaking this cycle. A balanced life empowers individuals to perform better, sustain meaningful relationships, and contribute positively to both their workplace and society — making work-life harmony an essential foundation for holistic and sustainable growth.

6. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Improving work-life balance requires a conscious and collective effort from employees, employers, and policymakers. In today's competitive and technology-driven environment, where the boundaries between work and personal life are increasingly blurred, it has become essential to adopt strategies that promote both professional productivity and personal well-being. The goal is not simply to divide time equally between work and home but to create a sense of harmony and satisfaction across all spheres of life. Sustainable work-life balance strategies must focus on structural changes within organizations, supportive

public policies, and proactive self-management by individuals.

At the organizational level, employers play a critical role in helping employees achieve a healthier work-life balance. Introducing flexible working arrangements, such as flexible hours, compressed workweeks, and remote work options, allows employees to manage their time according to their personal and family needs. Many progressive organizations have realized that productivity depends more on outcomes than on the number of hours spent in the office. Encouraging a results-oriented culture rather than a time-bound one can significantly reduce stress and improve morale. Additionally, promoting wellness and employee assistance programs—including mental health counselling, stress management workshops, and recreational activities—can help employees manage pressure effectively. Companies should also ensure that workloads are reasonable, and managers are trained to identify early signs of burnout among their team members. Providing sufficient paid leave, maternity and paternity benefits, and encouraging employees to take vacations are practical measures that reinforce the value of balance.

Government policies also play a vital role in shaping the work-life ecosystem. Policymakers in Gujarat and across India can support balance by implementing labour laws that ensure fair working hours, minimum rest periods, and job security. The introduction of family-friendly policies such as childcare support, parental leave, and flexible employment options for working parents can help employees maintain stability between personal and professional commitments. Public awareness campaigns on mental health, gender equality, and workplace rights can also strengthen the foundation for a more humane and balanced working culture. Skill development initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and time management can further empower employees to handle modern workplace demands efficiently.

From an individual perspective, achieving work-life balance requires self-discipline, awareness, and proactive time management. Employees must learn to prioritize their tasks, set realistic goals, and delegate responsibilities when necessary. Practicing time management techniques, such as creating daily schedules, setting deadlines, and avoiding unnecessary multitasking, helps in maintaining focus and reducing work overload. Establishing clear boundaries between professional and personal life is equally important—this includes disconnecting from work-related emails or calls after working hours and reserving time exclusively for family, hobbies, and relaxation. Maintaining physical health through regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and adequate sleep also strengthens resilience against stress and fatigue. Moreover, mindfulness and meditation practices can enhance concentration and emotional stability, helping individuals cope with professional pressures more effectively.

Cultural transformation within workplaces is another key aspect of improving work-life balance. Organizations must shift away from the traditional culture of glorifying long working hours and instead emphasize the importance of rest, creativity, and

holistic well-being. Recognizing and rewarding employees not only for performance but also for teamwork, innovation, and positive attitudes fosters a supportive environment. Encouraging open communication between employees and management allows workers to voice their challenges without fear of judgment, paving the way for realistic solutions and empathetic leadership.

In conclusion, improving work-life balance is a shared responsibility that requires alignment between organizational practices, government initiatives, and individual behaviour. When organizations respect personal boundaries, governments ensure equitable labour rights, and individuals practice conscious time management, the overall productivity and happiness of the workforce improve significantly. For employees in Gujarat and elsewhere, work-life balance is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity for sustaining mental health, career satisfaction, and long-term success in an increasingly demanding professional world.

7. CONCLUSION

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical factor in determining the well-being, productivity, and overall satisfaction of employees in today's fast-paced professional environment. For employees in Gujarat, the rapid industrial growth, competitive work culture, and increasing technological demands have intensified the challenges of managing professional responsibilities alongside personal and family commitments. Poor work-life balance can lead to stress, burnout, reduced efficiency, and strained personal relationships, highlighting its significance not only for individuals but also for organizations and society at large.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach. Organizations must implement employee-friendly policies such as flexible working hours, wellness programs, and supportive management practices that recognize the importance of personal time. Government initiatives that promote job security, gender equality, and family-friendly workplace regulations further strengthen the framework for achieving balance. At the same time, employees themselves must adopt proactive strategies such as effective time management, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care to navigate professional demands without compromising their personal lives.

Ultimately, work-life balance is not just a matter of managing time but creating a sustainable and fulfilling lifestyle where professional growth and personal well-being coexist harmoniously. For Gujarat's workforce, fostering such equilibrium is essential to ensure healthier employees, more productive organizations, and a socially resilient community. By prioritizing balance, stakeholders across sectors can contribute to a work culture that values human well-being as much as organizational success, paving the way for long-term prosperity and satisfaction.

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