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**Work-Life Balance (WLB): a select study of women library professionals in an Indian Metropolitan city**

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**Abstract:**

*This research study was primarily designed to study the work-life balance of women library professionals in the metropolitan city of Pune in India from Maharashtra State. The primary purpose of the study is to explore the tough challenges faced by women librarians in maintaining a balance between their personal and professional life during the pre and post covid period. The study has examined various factors affecting the work-life balance of the respondents during the pre and post covid period using the quantitative research design. Further, the use of the survey research method and snowball sampling technique for the data collection purpose where the sample of 30 women librarians is been studied during the pre-covid period, the method of convenience sampling is utilized to get the responses of the respondents using the unstructured interview technique the virtual model.*

*The study concluded that there is a high level of stress (66%) among the women librarian respondents during the post covid period due to work and life balance factors, 70% of librarians mentioned the increased workload due to a changed focus for increased online subscriptions and more electronic media acquisitions, and the pressure for upgradation. The study has observed that about 46 % of women library professionals giving time for self-attention, and 43% of women librarians are exercising daily; indicating the need to give self-attention.*

**Keywords:** Work-Life Balance, Work-family balance, Librarian, India

## **Introduction:**

Work-life balance is increasingly an issue for any country on the globe. Presently employees have many methods, such as emails, computers, and cell phones, which enable them to accomplish their work beyond the physical boundaries of their office. Jobs, the workplace, and the workforce are changing as there is a tremendous use of ICT all over the world, and each and every work field and library is also not exceptional for the same.

Today, Libraries are using technology including the effective use of social networks as a means of effective and efficient communication as well as the use of technological devices like cell phones, tabs, and PCs, laptops have blurred the distinction between work and personal time. In this scenario balancing work and life has become very crucial for individuals.

## **Work-life balance (WLB): the concept**

According to Jim Bird, CEO of Worklifebalance.com, an international work-life balance, and consulting company, “Work-life balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life”, he also, believes that to achieve a better work-life balance, each individual needs to work smarter- to get more done in less time. Work-life balance is the quality relationship between paid work and unpaid responsibilities that is critical for success in today’s competitive world.

The issue of work-life balance has been developed in response to demographic, economic, and cultural changes. Due to demographic and workplace changes, such as a greater number of women in the workforce (dual-career couples), transformation in family structures (a rise in the number of single parents), a growing reluctance to accept the long hour’s culture, the rise of the 24 per 7 society, and technological advancements, the competition and the multi-faced demands at the work and home responsibilities are increased tremendously. Further, the fast-developing knowledge economy has given place for more women to be enlightened by higher education. Education has empowered them and also offered them robust careers.

## **Women Librarians & the WLB**

In the present knowledge era, instead of physical strength, brainpower is the predominant skill. It resulted in the place of women in every field and women’s librarianship is also not exceptional for that. Women librarians are trying to balance their leading role in their own academic institutional library with the varied challenges of effective use of ICT, skillful handling of library manpower and teamwork, financial crunch, and public relational activities on one front whereas family responsibilities on another. The attempt of working women to integrate, organize and balance the

two sides put them under tremendous pressure. Through this study, the work will be done to find out the various issues related to the topic and further will try to suggest strategic measures to overcome the same.

### **Elements of WLB**

According to the research conducted by the Quality of Work Life and Organizational Performance, work-life quality is related to the elements such as job satisfaction, Motivation, Productivity, Health, Job security, and Safety and well-being. Further, the paper suggested that elements such as a safe work environment, Occupational health care, Appropriate working time, and appropriate salary are also important areas for the Quality of Work Life and Organizational Performance.

Jeff Davidson a work-life balance thinker focused on the ability of an individual to remain productive and competitive at work as well as maintaining a happy healthy home to experience a sense of control and stay productive and competitive at work while maintaining a happy, healthy home life with sufficient leisure; further, mentioned 6 elements of work and life balance as Self-management, time management, stress management, managing change, managing technology, and managing leisure time.

### **Scope of the work:**

As mentioned earlier in the abstract; the overall objective of the study is to investigate the work-life balance practices of the respondent women librarians. The study has considered women librarians on the basis of the following criteria:

- Respondent must be working in an academic Institution/College recognized or affiliated by Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune India
- The study has considered only the approved & qualified women librarians (M. Lib.I.sc. & SET/NET – UGC norm) with at least 3 years of work experience

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the study were considered as follows:

1. To study the prevalence of the work-life balance (WLB) system among the women library professionals in the Pune region
2. To study the work-life balance problems of women library professionals in South Asia.

3. To study the effect of work-life balance on the quality of life of women library professionals.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study used the survey research method followed by the snowball sampling method for collecting the response of the women library professionals under the jurisdiction of Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, India located in the Pune region. The questionnaire was designed to study the relationship between two variables working and non-working and their impact on each other.

### **Review of Literature:**

The expression "work-life balance" was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986.

In 1996, Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, and Beutell identified work variables in their studies; these are 1) Job Involvement, 2) Work Role Conflict, 3) Work Time, and 4) Schedule Inflexibility. Similarly, the "non-work" variables are also identified and often used interchangeably with the word "family". Further Crouter (1996) mentioned that the effects of non-work or family life on the work setting are essential though they are often overlooked in many organizations.

Research by Kenexa Research Institute in 2007 shows that those employees who were more favorable toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction. Further, researchers have found that employees who consider their work roles to be an important component of their identities will be more likely to apply these communication technologies to work while in their non-work domain. The McCrindle Research study of 3000 Australians shows that work-life balance is the number one factor of job attraction & retention (even above salary) (Pleffer,2007). The most current study conducted by Mayer, April (2022), an exercise physiologist article on the countries with the best Work -lifer balances Sweden Portugal France Iran & Syria; the author mentioned that France has the least weekly minimum working hours in France for the workers,

whereas the most holidays at the national level are in Iran even though indicating the best work-life balance, thus suggesting that more time off does not have to imply decreased output.

Thus, the importance of work and life balance among individuals is un-debatable.

Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Benley, (University of Texas, 2005) reviewed 190 work-family studies. Researchers found that the challenges that can create work-family conflict are in meeting the (often) incompatible demands of work and family. Ballout (2008) proposed that non-work variables affect individuals' perceived career aspirations and success.

Work-life balance is increasingly an issue for any country. Jobs, the workplace, and the workforce are changing as there is a tremendous use of ICT in all over the world, and in each and every work field and library are also not exceptional for the same. Libraries like any other organization are not impervious to workplace stress and conflicts. It is estimated that 25% of workplace problems such as absenteeism, lower productivity, turnover, and excessive use of medical benefits are due to family violence (ALA, 1999). Among the contributing factors that lead to the significance of this issue are the social and demographic changes that have added to the diversity in work and family structures. Many have to struggle with work and family demands simultaneously in order to balance work and life responsibilities.

Today the Libraries are using technology including the effective use of social networks as a means of effective and efficient communication as well as the use of technological devices like cell phones, tabs, and PCs, laptops have blurred the distinction between work and personal time. Technology has changed the way of working tremendously. The margin between work time and personal time has become blurred now. Identified by Gordon (2004) that the ratio of female to male librarians remains roughly 4:1 as mentioned by ALA (2014), and the majority of librarians working in the U.S. are female.

De Stricker, Ulla. (2008) studied the work environment and employees of special libraries. He studied the characteristics and behaviors that set special libraries apart from other "intellectual" workplaces. He suggested that workplace culture, employee attitudes, and teamwork are fundamental to understanding workplace dynamics.

Galbraith, Quinn; Fry, Leanna; and Garrison, Melissa (2016), studied the impact of faculty status and gender on employee well-being in academic libraries. Researchers have measured the job satisfaction, personal fulfillment, work/life balance, and stress levels of male and female librarians. Researchers surveyed 719 librarians at ARL institutions that either offer faculty status and tenure or offer neither. Females at libraries offering faculty status indicated poor work/life balance and high levels of stress compared to male colleagues.

AnyaokuEble (2016) studied the demographic Determinants of Quality of Work Life of Librarians Working in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to measure the Quality of Work Life of librarians and to ascertain the relationship with some demographic characteristics. Respondents are 175 librarians working in various library types in Nigeria. The researcher observed that the Quality of work life of librarians in the study is relatively high in areas of opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, and social relevance of work. However, important areas such as fair remuneration, training, and retraining, provision for job performance, and equal rights issues were areas of dissatisfaction for the librarians. Findings also show a significant relationship between Quality of Work Life and gender, age, institution type, and years of work experience.

Delina and Raya (2013) conducted a work-life balance study of working women in India. The study is focused on the working women of Pondicherry from the academic, health, and IT sectors. It has explored the tough challenges faced by working women in maintaining a balance between their personal and professional life. The results of the paper indicated that the work-life balance of individuals affects their quality of life.

Kaur Rajawant(2013), studied the job satisfaction level of women library professionals in India. In her research work, she conducted a survey using the questionnaire technique of 200 women library professionals from the University and College Libraries of Punjab and Chandigarh. She concluded that for job satisfaction of women worker has to maintain a healthy and firm balance between their home and work.

Rani. J, Lisa Sheba and S., Ally Sornam and P., Yesudoss, (2016) studied impact Analysis of Working Culture and Working Environment in the Special Library. It has studied various parameters which affect and impact the work-life balance of this library personnel. The parameters chosen were work hours, time invested, career growth, work environment, work pressure, stress, motivation etc.

Pearson, Chad J (2015) has discussed the challenge of work-life balance for evening/night librarians, and the issue of sustaining and maintaining physical health under difficult scenarios in India .

### **Data Analysis:**

The present work is a select study of the work-life balance of the women librarians working under the jurisdiction of Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune in the Pune region. The has used the snowball sampling technique to collect the primary data from the respondents. Thus, a total of 32 questionnaires were circulated to the qualified college librarians through the physical visits before the Covid and also the post-Covid period to monitor the changes of the factors impacting the work Life Balance of the women librarians.

The study has got the response 94% (30) response.

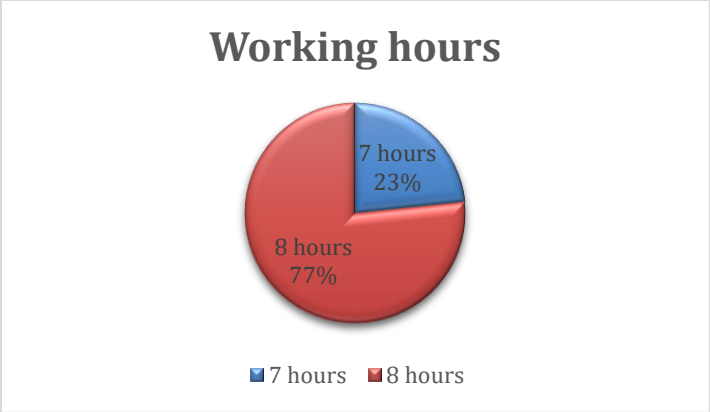
### **Pre Covid-Period**

#### **Working hours**

It was observed that the majority of the sample (77%) working for the 7 hours and 23% for the 8 hours daily further with the combination of 5 days and 6 days of the week to compensate the working hours of 40 hours a week during the pre-covid period.

#### **Graph 1: Working hours of the respondent Women Librarians in Pune City**

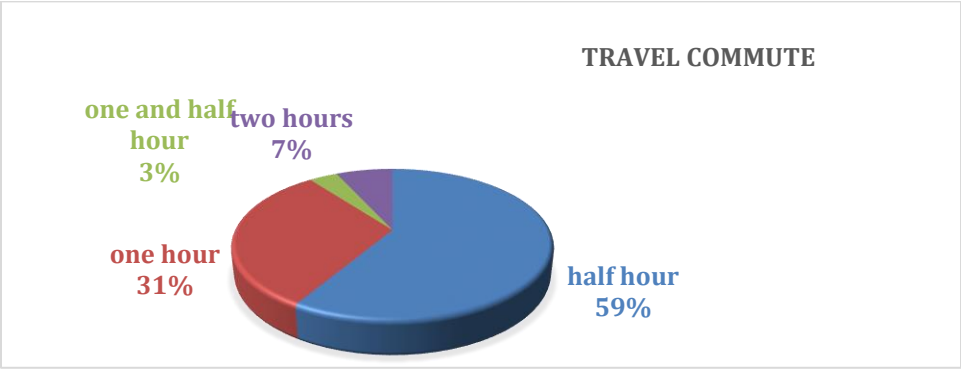




**Commuting time**

The majority of the energy and time the employees are investing on the travel to the destination; it is found that maximum commute time is for 2 hours (7%) and the minimum commute time is for a half-hour (59%) for the respondent women librarians before the pre covid period.

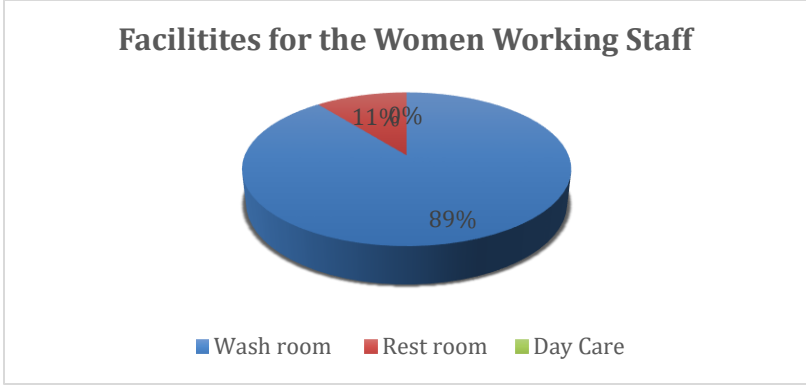
**Graph 2: Commuting time required for the respondent women Librarians in Pune City**



**Facilities in the College/Institutional Campus**

It is found that 89% of respondents mentioned the availability of the washroom at the workplace, while 11% mentioned the availability of the restroom as well along with the washrooms, whereas nobody indicated the existence of a day-care center at the workplace.

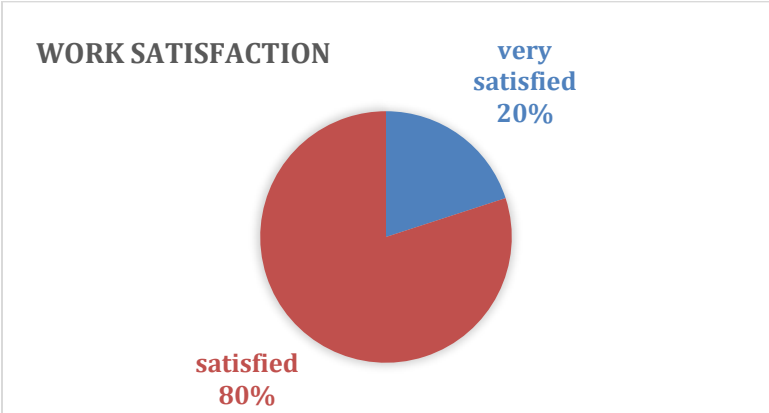
**Graph 3: Facilities for the Women working staff members in the respondents' organizations**



**Work satisfaction:**

It is interesting to note that the entire sample indicated work satisfaction, including 80% satisfied and 20% very satisfied.

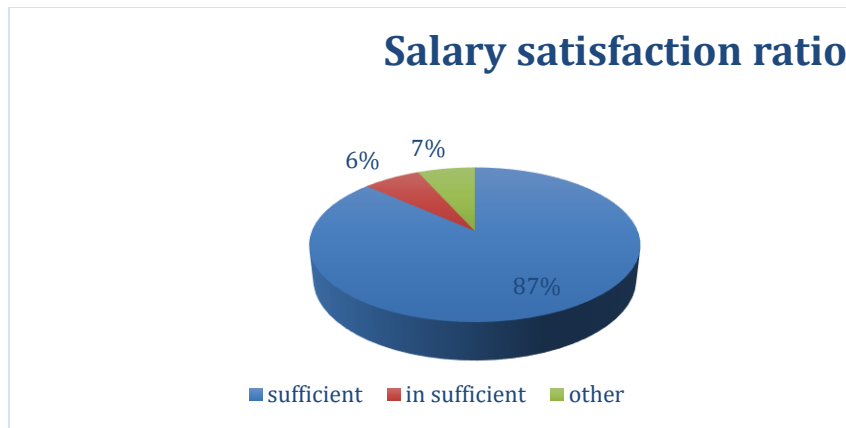
**Graph 4: Work satisfaction of the Women Librarians in Pune City**



**Salary satisfaction ratio**

Further, an effort has been done to find out the satisfaction ratio for the salary, whereas 87% mentioned the sufficiency of the salary, and 6% remained thinking the salary is insufficient, while another 7% has not answered.

**Graph 5: Satisfaction Ratio- Salary**



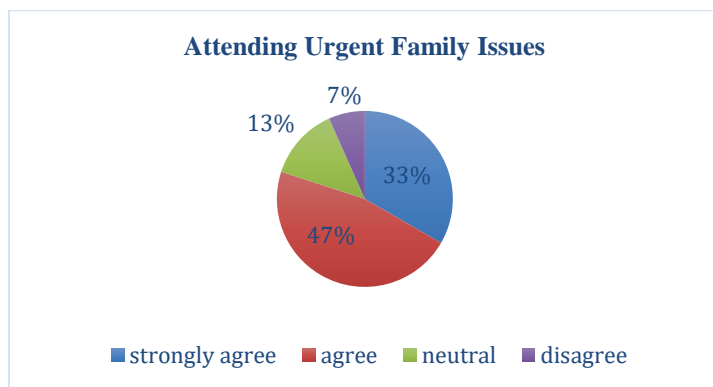
### Work and Family Balance

The researcher tried to find out the effort done by the respondent women librarians for balancing work and family issues using the following parameters

#### Attending urgent family issues

It is investigated that 80% agreed that they are having permission from the institution to attend the urgent family issues, whereas 13% disagree and 7% not answered

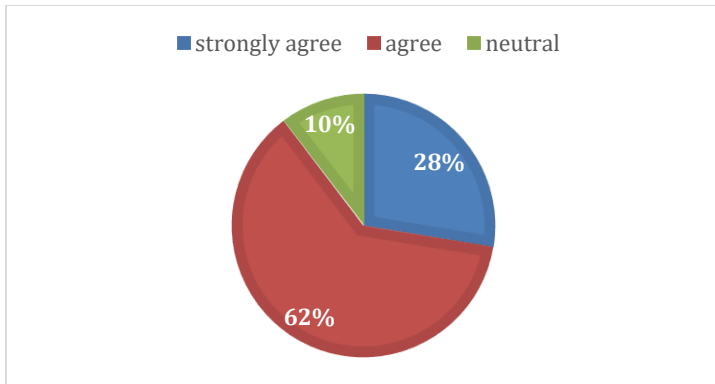
**Graph 6: Attendance for the Family issues**



### Understanding of the management expectations

An effort has been done to find out the clarity of the respondent librarians regarding the expectations of the management body from them, it is found that almost all the respondents (90%) mentioned that the organizational management is making a very clear expectation from them.

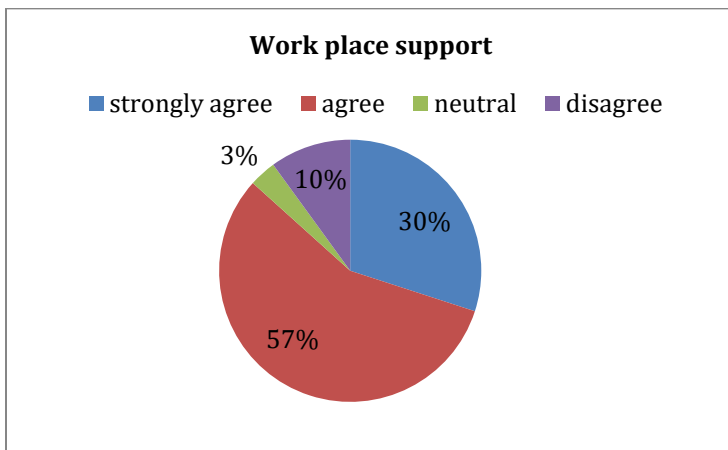
**Graph 7: Expectations of the Management from the Working Women Librarians**



**Workplace Support:**

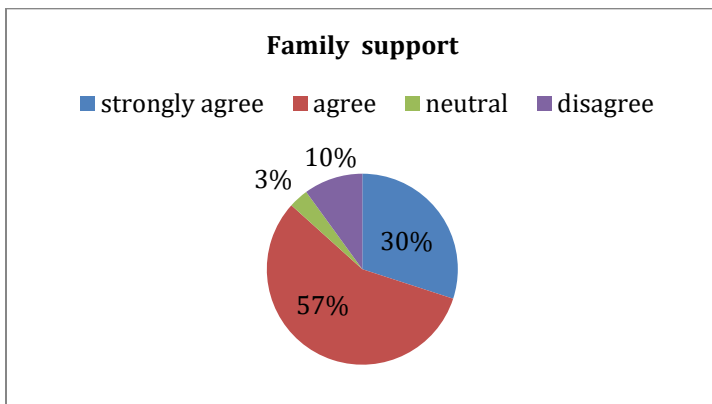
It is observed that 87% of women librarians indicated the support of the workplace whereas, 10% mentioned the absence of the workplace support

**Graph 8: Workplace Support**



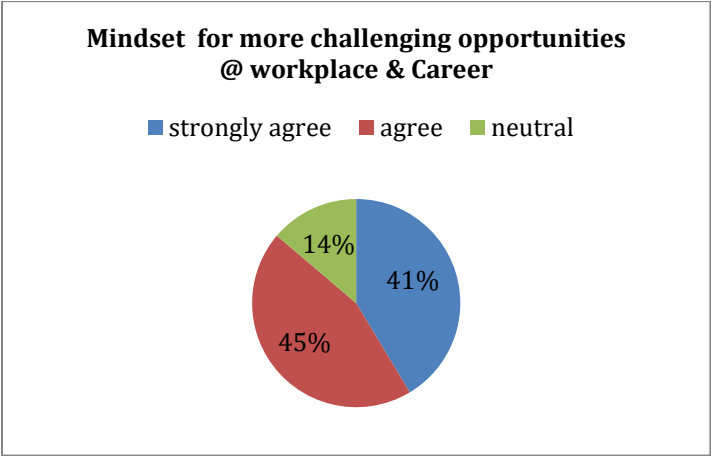
Further, family support is also indicated by 87% of the respondent women librarians

**Graph 9: Family Support**



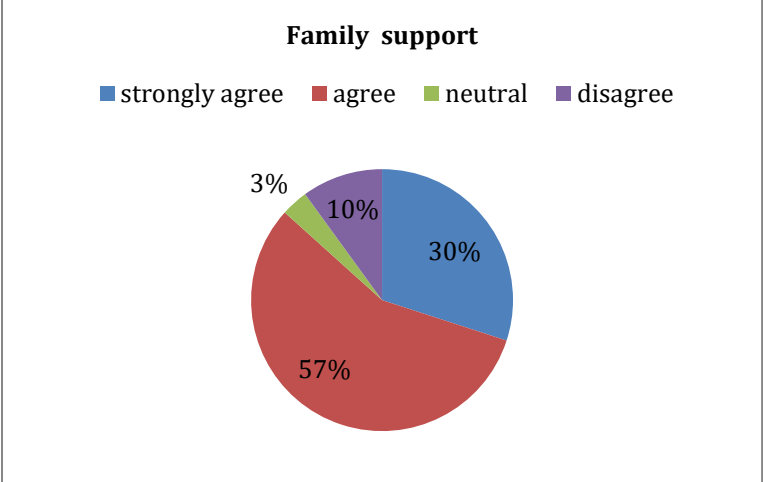
It is found that 45% of respondent women librarians showed a strong mindset for taking more challenging opportunities at the workplace and for their career, 41% agree the need for taking more challenges at the workplace and 14% of women respondents prefer to be neutral.

**Graph 10: Mindset of Women Librarians**



Out of the total respondents, 30% agreed strongly regarding the provided support by the family members during the work and family balancing process; whereas 57% agrees on the family support, 10% of respondents mentioned that the family is not supporting them in the work and family balance process and 3% prefers to be neutral.

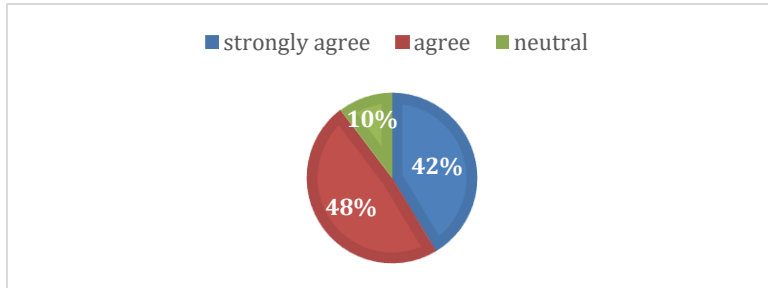
**Graph 11: Family support**



### Balancing family and work

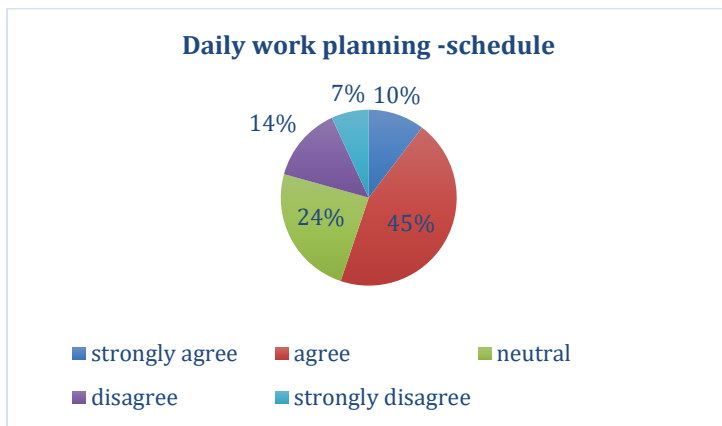
An effort has been done to find out the practices followed by the respondent women librarians for maintaining a good work and family balance. it is observed that 90% agreed that the Quality of work increases with the right work-life balance.

**Graph 12: Work and Family Balance**



It is found that a total of 55% of the respondent agreed and mentioned that the daily preparation of the work schedule is required to be maintained for the balancing of family and work-related issues.

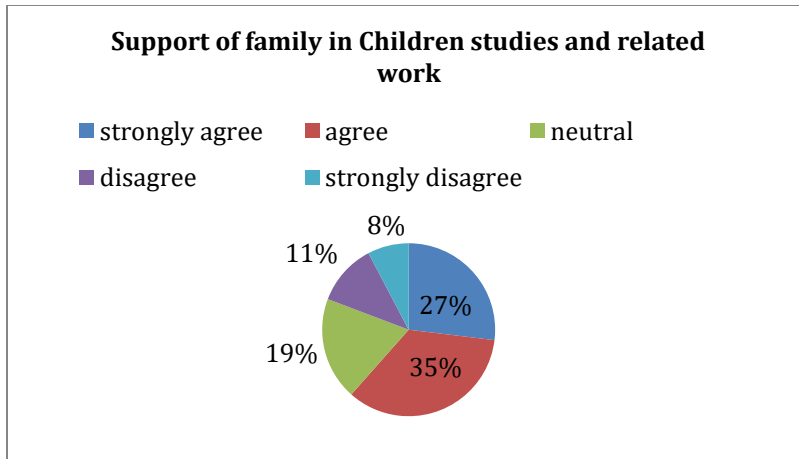
**Graph 13: Planning of the work schedule**



### Support of family in the child development

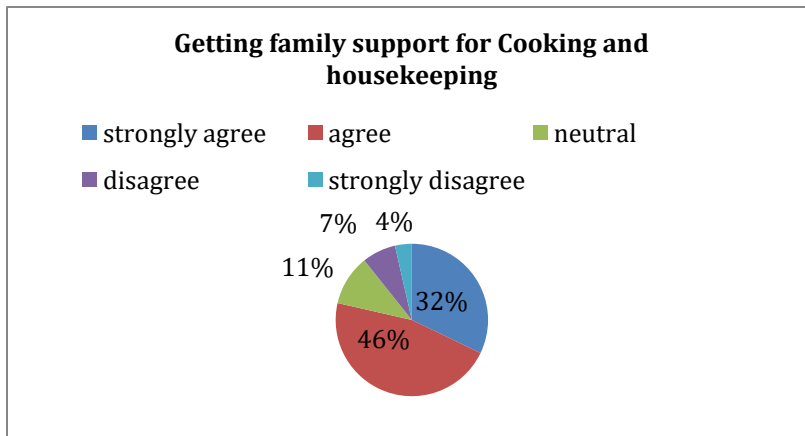
It is further observed that only 62% of respondent women librarians agreed that they are getting the required family support in the child developmental activities such as children studies attending school meetings and related work.

**Graph 14: Family support in the Child Development**



Further, 78% mentioned the positive support of the family members in the cooking and housekeeping activities

**Graph 15: Getting family support for Cooking & housekeeping**

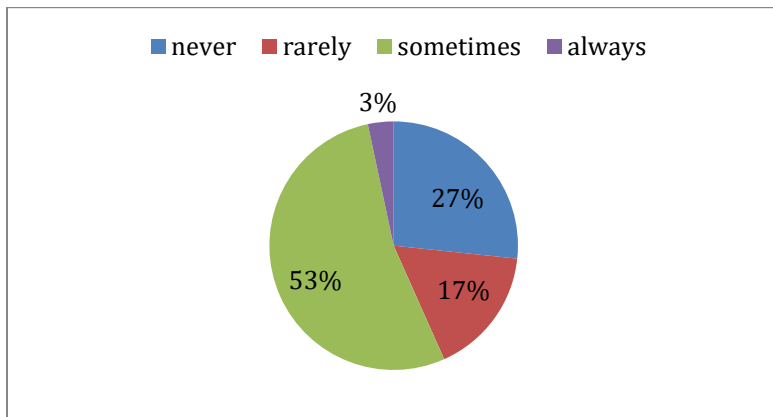


### Life stress factors

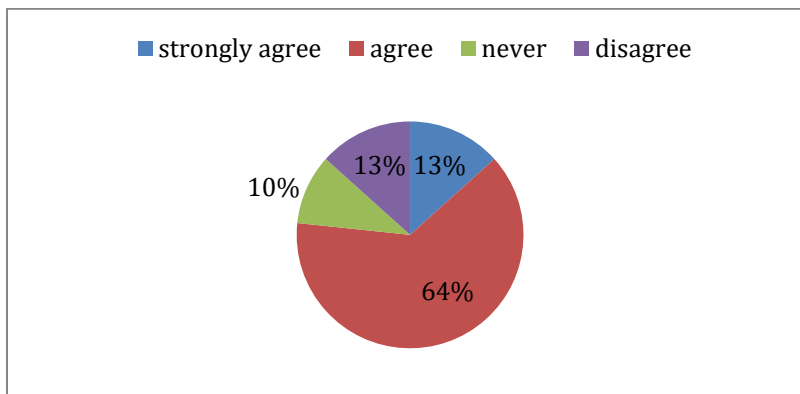
Researchers also studied the variables affecting the life of the women librarian respondents. It is found that work and family issues make the daily schedule very hectic for the respondents. Completion of the tasks during the stipulated time period with effective results at both ends through efficient service providers are the expectations at work and the family front is a tough challenge for them.

It is found that the depression is 3% of respondents are always experiencing depression, whereas a large percentage 53 experience it sometimes followed by 17% rarely.

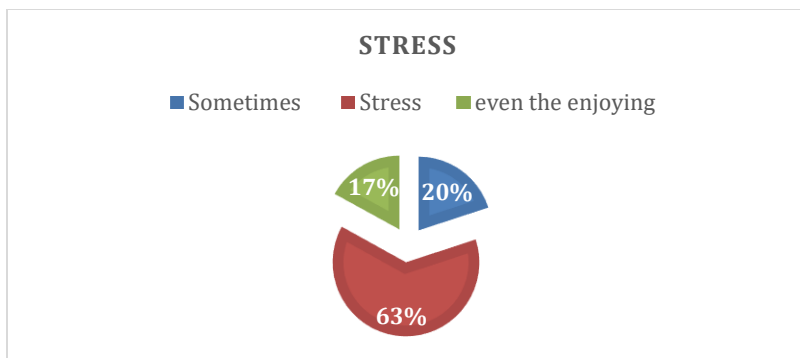
**Graph 16: Work & Life related Stress**



Further, 77% think that new ideas increase their work pressure



Thus work and family-related stress is experienced heavily by 63% of the respondent women librarians followed by 20% mentioning for sometimes, 17% interesting said that still, they are enjoying the stress.



It is further found that to maintain themselves only 43% are exercising daily, taking care of their diet and only 46% of respondent women librarians are giving time to self .



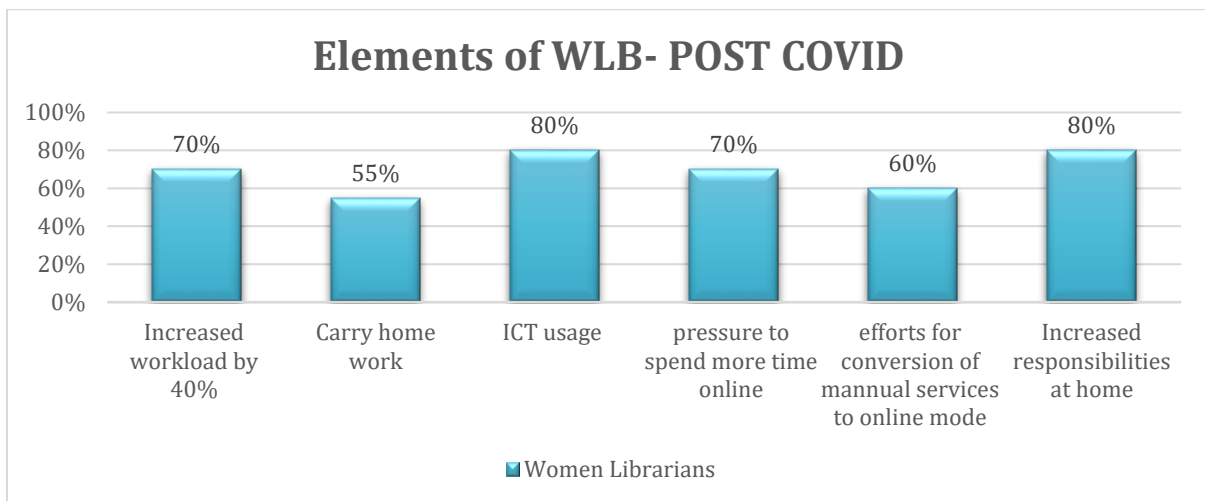
## WLB & Post-Covid Scenario

The data was collected through the telephonic unstructured interview technique after COVID Pandemic from the Women Librarians in Pune City through the sample of convenience as mentioned in the research methodology of the paper. Thus, the responses from the 15 respondents were collected.

Major elements affecting the work and life balance indicated by the respondent women librarians are as follows

70% mentioned the increased workload, 55% mentioned the need to carry the work home, 80% mentioned increased ICT usage, 70% mentioned the pressure to spend more time online, 60% efforts for the conversion of manual services to online mode, 80% mentioned increased responsibilities at home.

### Elements of work & life Balance – Post-COVID analysis



### Findings:

The researchers studied the work and life balancing pattern of the respondent women librarians during the before-COVID and After COVID scenarios and assess the major factors impacting the life of the women librarians.

The assessment showed that the qualified librarians working on the UGC scale are satisfied with the salary; whereas the dissatisfaction is indicated by the 13% of respondent women librarians working in self-financing educational institutions. Further, the facilities availability of the Ladies' rooms, Jim, restrooms, and a separate reading hall for ladies are indicated by the respondents, nobody indicated the day-care center on the institutional/college campus. About 30% of women librarians mentioned that they are not getting organizational support & 43% are not getting family support in housekeeping and family-related activities. Only 50% of women librarians prepare the daily work and family activity plan, and 63% are experiencing stress. 43% exercise daily, and 46% give time for themselves.

After the COVID pandemic, women librarians mentioned the increasing requirement of remote work from the workplace and the home as well, this has increased the work pressure to the pre-COVID scenario. The respondents also need to spend more time online working than during regular working hours. Anytime availability is becoming a need after the COVID pandemic. The respondents are now getting more autonomy to decide the work schedule than in the pre covid period but need to be more productive than in the pre-COVID scenario.

The researchers studied the work and life balancing pattern of the respondent women librarians in Pune city during the before-COVID and After COVID scenarios to assess the major factor impacting the life of the women librarians. The study was conducted using the snowball sampling method for locating the women librarian respondents working in Pune City. Further, the post-covid situational study was also conducted using an unstructured telephonic interview technique with convenience sampling.

The stress level is high during the pre-covid (63%) and the post-covid period (78%) as it is observed that the women librarians are working entirely for monitoring and executing the library schedule and the entire administration work along with the household routine and management on a day-to-day basis. The raised level of stress specifically in post covid period is observed because of the situational challenges regarding the provision of online services, extending the online scope of online subscriptions, demand for digital marketing through the creation of library blogs, webpage redesigning and current content delivery resources, etc. The stress level of the women

librarians indicates their willingness and effort for balancing their work and family situations. Further, it is also observed that very few women librarians are giving time to themselves, as the focus is only on work and family indicated by the majority of respondents.

### **Conclusion:**

Work-life balance is not always necessarily an equal balance, it's an activity for the maintenance of the right balance between the two elements of work and life. The concept of best individual work-life balance is very close to a comfortable feeling in handling the multiple aspects of home life and the work of an individual.

It is observed that women librarians in Pune city are indicating that the library professionals indicated high-stress levels during the post covid scenario because of the changing life pattern as well as the nature of work at the academic institutions. Stress is influencing the performance of professionals not only at the workplace but also on the domestic front. It is required for professionals to perform effectively on both fronts. The work environment and also the environment at home impacting on the performance of women professionals. Policies focused on the employee-driven attitude can give more benefits not only to the employees but also to the organizations.

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