

# A Study on Achieving Work – Life Balance Among Women Teachers in Private Montessori Schools in Chennai City

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## Abstract:

Work–life balance has emerged as a significant area of concern in contemporary educational settings due to increasing professional demands and evolving family responsibilities. In the teaching profession, particularly at the early childhood level, educators are expected to perform multiple academic, administrative, and emotional roles that often extend beyond formal working hours. Women teachers in Montessori schools play a crucial role in fostering holistic child development through individualized instruction, continuous observation, and emotional engagement. However, these expectations frequently intensify work pressure and challenge their ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

This review paper adopts a narrative review methodology to examine existing literature on work–life balance among women teachers, with specific reference to private Montessori schools. Scholarly articles, books, and research reports published between 2014 and 2024 were sourced from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and peer-reviewed journals. Keywords including *work–life balance*, *women teachers*, *private schools*, and *Montessori education* were used to identify relevant studies.

The review identifies key themes such as workload intensity, extended working hours, role conflict, family responsibilities, institutional support, stress, burnout, and job satisfaction as major determinants of work–life balance. The findings indicate that inadequate organizational support and limited flexibility significantly contribute to work–life imbalance among women teachers.

The paper concludes that promoting work–life balance requires gender-sensitive institutional policies, supportive leadership, and flexible work practices. These measures are essential for enhancing teacher wellbeing, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of early childhood education.

## Keywords:

Work–Life Balance, Women Teachers, Montessori Schools, Private Schools, Teaching Profession, Chennai

## Introduction:

Work–life balance refers to the ability of individuals to effectively manage professional responsibilities alongside personal and family commitments in a manner that promotes wellbeing and sustained performance. In recent decades, the concept has gained prominence due to increasing work intensity, technological connectivity, and changing social structures. In the education sector, work–life balance is particularly critical, as teaching demands not only intellectual effort but also significant emotional and interpersonal engagement, often extending beyond formal working hours.

The participation of women in the education sector has grown substantially, with teaching emerging as one of the most preferred professions due to its perceived compatibility with family life. Women constitute a significant proportion of educators, especially in early childhood and primary education. However, despite increased participation, women teachers continue to experience disproportionate work–family conflict due to traditional gender roles, caregiving responsibilities, and limited institutional flexibility. Balancing professional expectations with domestic obligations remains a persistent challenge, affecting their wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Montessori education represents a distinctive pedagogical approach that emphasizes child-centered learning, individualized instruction, and holistic development. Teachers in Montessori schools are required to engage in continuous observation, maintain detailed developmental records, prepare customized learning materials, and collaborate closely with parents. While these practices enhance learning outcomes, they significantly intensify teachers' workload and emotional involvement, thereby influencing their work–life balance.

Private schools, including Montessori institutions, often operate with extended working hours, performance-driven expectations, and limited formal support systems compared to public schools. The absence of standardized policies related to workload regulation, leave provisions, and employee welfare increases the risk of work–life imbalance among teachers. This challenge is particularly pronounced for women teachers who must navigate multiple professional and personal roles.

A review of existing literature reveals limited scholarly attention to work–life balance among women teachers in private Montessori schools. Most studies focus on general teaching populations or public-sector institutions, with minimal emphasis on early childhood education and gender-specific concerns. This review is therefore undertaken to address this research gap by synthesizing existing studies, identifying key determinants of work–life balance, and offering insights to inform institutional practices and future research.

### Objectives of the Study:

- To review literature on work–life balance among women teachers
- To identify key factors affecting work–life balance
- To examine challenges faced by women Montessori teachers
- To suggest strategies for achieving better work–life balance

### Concept and Models of Work–Life Balance:

- **Work–Life Balance among Women Employees:**

Research on women employees consistently indicates that women experience greater work–life imbalance compared to men due to socially prescribed gender roles and caregiving responsibilities. Women are often expected to fulfill professional duties while simultaneously managing household tasks, childcare, and elder care. The literature highlights that rigid work schedules, lack of supportive organizational policies, and limited access to flexible work arrangements intensify role overload among women employees. Studies further suggest that supportive workplace cultures, family-friendly policies, and social support systems play a significant role in reducing work–family conflict and enhancing women’s wellbeing.

- **Work–Life Balance in the Teaching Profession:**

The teaching profession is widely recognized as emotionally demanding and time-intensive. Literature reveals that teachers engage in extensive non-instructional work such as lesson planning, assessment, documentation, and student mentoring beyond classroom hours. The increasing emphasis on performance evaluation, accountability, and administrative reporting has further expanded teachers’ workloads. Studies consistently report that excessive workload and extended working hours negatively affect teachers’ work–life balance, leading to emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and professional burnout.

- **Challenges Faced by Women Teachers in Private Schools:**

Women teachers employed in private schools encounter unique challenges related to job insecurity, performance pressure, extended working hours, and limited decision-making autonomy. Unlike public-sector institutions, private schools often lack standardized employment policies and formal grievance mechanisms. The literature indicates that women teachers in private schools experience higher levels of work–family conflict due to inflexible schedules and limited institutional support. These challenges are further compounded by societal expectations that women prioritize family responsibilities over professional commitments.

- **Stress, Workload, Role Conflict, and Job Satisfaction:**

A substantial body of literature establishes a strong relationship between workload, stress, role conflict, and job satisfaction. High workload and unclear role expectations increase occupational stress, which in turn negatively affects job satisfaction and work–life balance. Role conflict arises when professional demands interfere with

personal and family responsibilities, leading to psychological strain and emotional fatigue. Conversely, studies show that manageable workload, role clarity, and supportive leadership enhance job satisfaction and contribute to improved work–life balance among employees.

- **Montessori Teaching Environment and Professional Expectations:**

Montessori education is characterized by child-centered pedagogy, individualized learning plans, and continuous observation of student development. Teachers are expected to design customized learning materials, maintain detailed records, and engage in ongoing communication with parents. The literature suggests that while this teaching approach fosters holistic child development, it significantly increases teachers' emotional involvement and professional responsibilities. The absence of clear boundaries between instructional and non-instructional roles often results in extended working hours, thereby influencing work–life balance. These challenges are particularly pronounced for women teachers who must balance professional expectations with family obligations.

- **Conceptual Framework:**

The conceptual framework of the present review is developed to explain the relationship between work-related, family-related, and organizational factors influencing work–life balance among women teachers in private Montessori schools. The framework is grounded in work–family conflict theory and occupational stress models, which emphasize the interaction between professional demands, personal responsibilities, and psychological outcomes.

- **Workload:**

Workload refers to the volume and intensity of academic, administrative, and non-instructional responsibilities assigned to teachers. In Montessori schools, workload often includes lesson preparation, continuous observation, documentation, parental communication, and extracurricular duties. Excessive workload increases time pressure and emotional exhaustion, thereby negatively affecting teachers' ability to balance work and personal life.

- **Working Hours:**

Working hours include both formal school hours and additional time spent on school-related tasks outside regular schedules. Extended working hours, lack of clear time boundaries, and expectations of availability beyond school premises contribute significantly to work–life imbalance. Prolonged working hours reduce time available for family, rest, and personal wellbeing.

- **Family Responsibilities:**

Family responsibilities encompass childcare, household management, elder care, and emotional support roles traditionally undertaken by women. When family demands overlap with professional obligations, role conflict emerges. The inability to adequately meet family responsibilities due to work pressure intensifies stress and negatively influences work–life balance.

- **Institutional Support:**

Institutional support refers to organizational policies and practices that assist teachers in managing work demands. These include flexible scheduling, supportive leadership, leave policies, workload regulation, and wellbeing initiatives. Adequate institutional support acts as a buffering factor by reducing stress and facilitating better integration of work and personal roles.

- **Stress and Burnout:**

Stress arises when teachers perceive an imbalance between job demands and available resources. Prolonged stress without adequate coping mechanisms leads to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion,

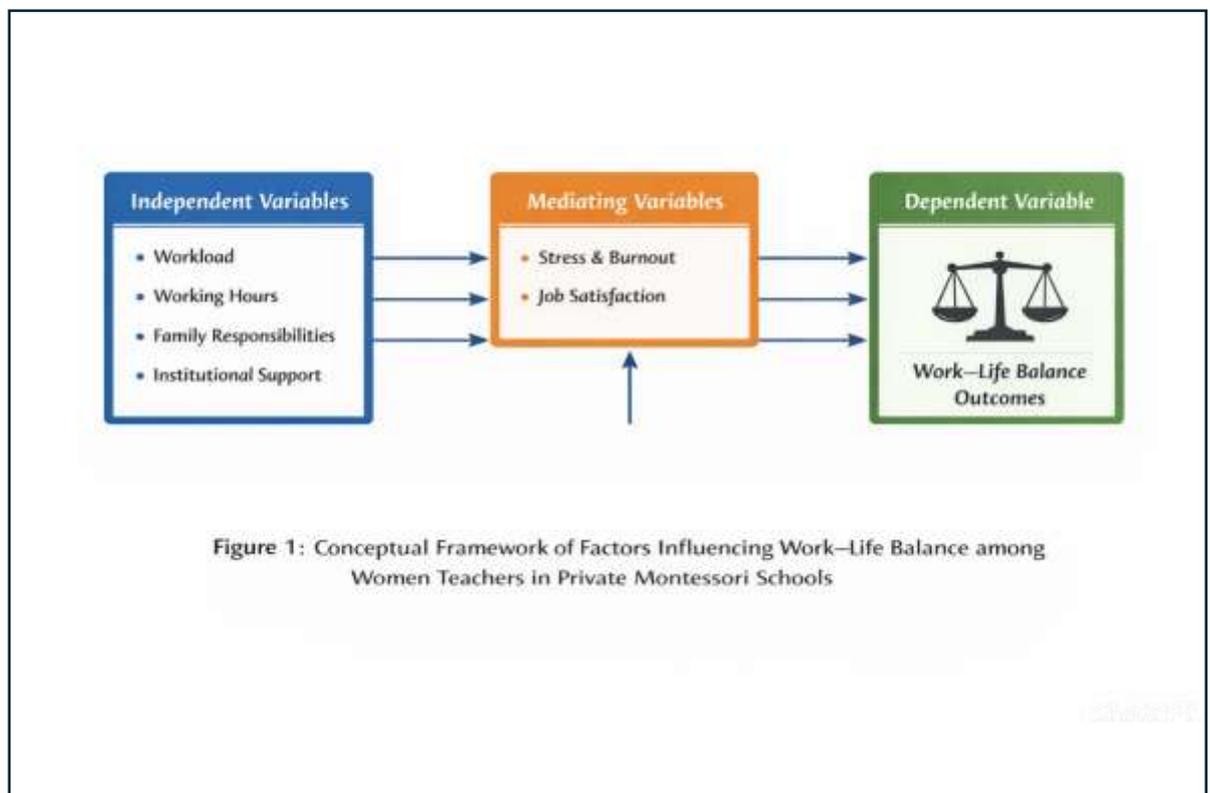
depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy. Stress and burnout function as mediating variables that explain how work-related pressures affect overall work–life balance.

- **Job Satisfaction:**

Job satisfaction represents teachers' emotional and cognitive evaluation of their professional experiences. Positive job satisfaction is associated with supportive work environments, manageable workload, and role clarity. Higher job satisfaction mitigates the negative effects of stress and enhances teachers' capacity to manage work and family responsibilities effectively.

- **Work–Life Balance Outcomes**

Work–life balance outcomes reflect the extent to which women teachers can harmonize professional and personal roles with minimal conflict and adequate wellbeing. Positive outcomes include psychological wellbeing, job commitment, teaching effectiveness, and personal satisfaction, while negative outcomes may lead to burnout, absenteeism, and turnover intentions.



### Research Gap Identified:

A critical review of existing literature on work–life balance reveals several significant gaps that warrant focused scholarly attention. First, although work–life balance has been widely studied among employees in general and teachers in particular, **women teachers in Montessori schools remain largely under-represented** in academic research. Most studies aggregate early childhood educators with primary or secondary school teachers, thereby overlooking the unique pedagogical demands and emotional labor associated with Montessori education.

Second, there is a **notable lack of city-specific reviews**, especially in metropolitan contexts such as **Chennai**, where private educational institutions are rapidly expanding. Regional variations in institutional culture, cost of living, commuting patterns, and socio-cultural expectations significantly influence work–life balance experiences. However, existing literature largely adopts national or state-level perspectives, limiting contextual relevance and policy applicability.

Third, the **private early childhood education sector** has received comparatively less scholarly focus than public or higher educational institutions. Private Montessori schools often operate without standardized regulatory frameworks governing workload, working hours, or welfare measures. The absence of systematic investigation into these institutional structures results in an incomplete understanding of the challenges faced by women teachers in such settings.

Finally, despite the gendered nature of work–life balance challenges, there is an **insufficient emphasis on gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms** within educational institutions. Existing studies seldom integrate gender perspectives into organizational practices or policy recommendations. This gap underscores the need for a focused review that synthesizes existing evidence to inform inclusive, supportive, and sustainable work–life balance strategies tailored to women Montessori teachers in private schools.

### Findings from the Review:

The review of existing literature highlights that women teachers, particularly those working in Montessori and early childhood education settings, experience **high emotional, cognitive, and time-related demands**. The child-centered nature of Montessori pedagogy requires continuous observation, individualized instruction, documentation, and sustained emotional engagement with young learners. These responsibilities often extend beyond classroom hours, resulting in prolonged working time and reduced opportunities for personal recovery, thereby affecting work–life balance.

Another key finding indicates that **private school policies frequently lack flexibility** in terms of working hours, leave provisions, and workload distribution. Unlike public institutions, many private Montessori schools operate without formalized employee welfare frameworks. The absence of flexible scheduling, job-sharing options, or institutional childcare support intensifies work–family conflict, especially for women teachers managing household and caregiving responsibilities.

The review further reveals that **family–work conflict significantly influences job satisfaction** among women teachers. Competing demands between professional obligations and family roles often lead to stress, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy in both domains. Persistent imbalance contributes to reduced motivation, lower organizational commitment, and an increased intention to leave the profession.

Importantly, the literature consistently demonstrates that **supportive management practices play a crucial role in enhancing work–life balance and job performance**. Institutions that provide emotional support, reasonable workload expectations, recognition, and participative decision-making foster higher job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. Such supportive environments not only improve teachers' wellbeing but also positively influence instructional quality and organizational effectiveness.

### Suggestions:

Based on the findings of the review, several strategic measures are recommended to enhance work–life balance among women teachers in private Montessori schools. **Flexible scheduling practices** should be introduced to accommodate the diverse personal and family responsibilities of women educators. Options such as staggered working hours, part-time arrangements, and flexibility in reporting and departure times can significantly reduce time-related stress and improve overall wellbeing.

Educational institutions should also consider providing **institutional childcare support**, either through on-campus childcare facilities or partnerships with nearby childcare centers. Such initiatives would be particularly beneficial for women teachers with young children, enabling them to balance professional responsibilities without compromising family care. Childcare support has been shown to reduce absenteeism, enhance job commitment, and improve retention of skilled teachers.

Another important suggestion involves the **reduction of non-teaching workload**. Administrative tasks, extensive documentation, and extracurricular responsibilities often consume substantial time outside instructional hours. Delegating clerical duties, streamlining documentation processes, and integrating digital tools can allow teachers to focus primarily on teaching and pedagogical development, thereby reducing work overload.

The review also emphasizes the need for **stress management and wellbeing programs** within private schools. Regular workshops on stress coping strategies, time management, mindfulness, and emotional resilience can help teachers manage occupational stress more effectively. Access to counseling services and peer support groups can further contribute to psychological wellbeing.

Finally, there is a strong need to implement **gender-sensitive human resource policies**. School management should recognize the gendered nature of work–life challenges and incorporate supportive measures such as extended maternity leave, return-to-work assistance, health benefits, and family-friendly leave policies. Adopting inclusive and supportive HR practices will not only improve work–life balance but also enhance job satisfaction, performance, and long-term organizational sustainability.

### Conclusion:

Work–life balance is a critical determinant of wellbeing, job satisfaction, and professional effectiveness among women teachers, particularly in early childhood education settings. The findings of this review emphasize that the demanding nature of Montessori teaching—characterized by intensive emotional involvement, extended working hours, and multiple role expectations—places women educators at heightened risk of stress and work–family conflict. Ensuring a healthy balance between professional and personal life is therefore essential not only for teacher wellbeing but also for sustaining instructional quality and student development.

The review highlights the pressing need for Montessori institutions, especially in the private sector, to adopt **supportive organizational practices**. Flexible work arrangements, manageable workloads, institutional support mechanisms, and gender-sensitive human resource policies are vital in creating a conducive working environment for women teachers. Such practices can significantly reduce occupational stress, enhance job satisfaction, and improve teacher retention, ultimately contributing to institutional effectiveness.

Furthermore, this review makes a meaningful contribution to existing literature by synthesizing fragmented research on work–life balance among women teachers in private Montessori schools. It provides valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational planners to design inclusive and sustainable work–life balance strategies. The review also identifies critical gaps and sets a foundation for future empirical research, particularly context-specific and gender-focused studies, thereby advancing both academic understanding and practical interventions in the field of education.

### Scope for Future Research:

While the present review provides comprehensive insights into work–life balance among women teachers in private Montessori schools, several avenues remain open for future investigation. First, there is a need for **empirical studies based on primary data** to validate the relationships identified in the conceptual framework. Quantitative studies using surveys and standardized scales, as well as qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus group discussions, can offer deeper and more context-specific understanding of women teachers' work–life experiences.

Second, **comparative studies between government and private schools** would provide valuable insights into institutional differences in workload, policy support, job security, and work–life balance outcomes. Such comparative analyses can help identify best practices and structural advantages across different types of educational institutions, thereby informing policy formulation and institutional reforms.

Third, **longitudinal studies focusing on teacher wellbeing** are essential to examine changes in work–life balance over time. Tracking teachers across different career stages can reveal the long-term effects of workload, institutional support, and family responsibilities on stress, job satisfaction, and retention. Longitudinal research would also help assess the effectiveness of organizational interventions aimed at improving work–life balance.

Overall, future research adopting diverse methodological approaches and broader institutional perspectives can significantly enhance understanding of work–life balance and contribute to the development of sustainable and gender-responsive educational policies.

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