FROM OFFICE TO HOME: HOW AI-POWERED HOUSEHOLD MONITORING IS RESHAPING WORK–LIFE BALANCE FOR WORKING PARENTS

MRS. DEEPA NAYAK P. (RESEARCH SCHOLAR)
(CORRESPONDING AUTHOR)

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

SDM COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT POST GRADUATE CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDIES & RESEARCH, KODIALBAIL, MG ROAD,
MANGALURU – 575003.

EMAIL ID:
deepa.nayak@sdmmba.ac.in

DR. SEEMA S. SHENOY (RESEARCH GUIDE)

DIRECTOR

SDM COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT POST GRADUATE CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDIES & RESEARCH, KODIALBAIL, MG ROAD,
MANGALURU – 575003.

EMAIL ID:
directorseema@sdmmba.ac.in

*Mrs. Deepa Nayak P. **Dr. Seema S. Shenoy

ABSTRACT:

Over the past two decades, rising female workforce participation and the growth of dual-income households have significantly reshaped family and caregiving structures. Working parents today are required to navigate simultaneous professional and domestic responsibilities, often experiencing persistent tension between workplace demands and childcare obligations. This has never been harder. Digital tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) are becoming a normal part of how we work, but most conversations about AI focus on productivity and automation rather than people. This research paper tries to explore a different angle – the human resource angle of AI. This researcher tries to analyse how advances in AI-enabled home monitoring technologies, particularly smart cameras and sensor systems designed for childcare supervision, are emerging as a practical response to this tension and reduce anxiety during working hours, enabling more focused professional engagement. This is an earnest attempt to look at how AI can reduce the clash between work and family responsibilities, offer smarter flexibility and support mental wellbeing. Through this research paper, a balanced framework is proposed to guide responsible adoption, with implications for HR leaders, and families themselves.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Work–Life Balance, Working Parents, Employee Wellbeing.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented changes in family structures and employment patterns globally. One of the most significant changes has been the substantial increase in women's workforce participation, altering traditional household dynamics and giving rise to dual-earner families. This shift represents not merely a demographic change, but a profound social transformation that challenges conventional notions of gender roles, family responsibilities and work organization. Over the past few decades, the number of dual-income families has grown steadily across the world. More women are choosing to continue their careers after marriage and childbirth; economic pressures in many households make two incomes not just desirable but necessary.

This shift has been largely positive - for gender equality, for financial security and for professional fulfilment. But it has also created a new kind of everyday tension: how does a parent show up fully at work when a significant part of their heart and mind is at home?

If we try to perceive the image of a working parent in today's technology driven world, more often, it is someone mentally divided - one part of their mind concentrating at work, another at home, wondering if their child is safe, if the caretaker is looking after the child with care and if everything is alright behind a door they cannot see through. This worry is quite common among mothers, sometimes even fathers. It is a very human response to an increasingly common situation.

As the English proverb goes: Need is the mother of invention. Technological advancement has historically emerged in response to evolving social needs. AI is providing solutions to this working parent problem too. We are now presented with an array of AI-powered home monitoring systems - smart cameras, motion sensors, audio alerts and intelligent detection tools, that are increasingly being used by families to stay connected to their homes and children during the working day. These are genuinely useful tools that help reduce anxiety and maintain a connect for parents working in offices to their children back home. A parent can glance at a phone and see their toddler napping peacefully. They can receive an alert if something seems wrong. They can, for a brief moment, close the gap between their professional world and their family world.

Yet this technology is not without its complications. Questions of privacy, the dignity of caregivers, the psychological effects of constant monitoring, and the security of sensitive data all demand serious attention. This paper explores both the promise and the responsibility that comes with AI-powered home monitoring in the context of working parents. It does so not from a purely technical standpoint, but from a human one - asking what this technology means for real people with real families, trying to navigate and balance work and childcare.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. **Objectives:**
   - To understand the work–home tension experienced by working parents.
   - To examine how AI-powered home monitoring technologies support childcare supervision.
   - To propose a balanced framework for the responsible adoption of AI home monitoring tools.
2. **Scope of the Study:**
   This study focuses on dual-income families, who are using AI based monitoring devices to supervise childcare during their working hours. The emphasis of this research focuses on the domestic environment and the dynamics of private caregiver arrangements. It is an attempt to focus particularly on working parents with young children in Mangalore city and tries to examine AI-powered home monitoring technologies such as smart cameras and sensor-based childcare systems.

3. **Research Design:**

   The present study is descriptive in nature. This research paper is conceptual in approach, based on review and synthesis of existing literature, theoretical perspectives and current technological trends related to AI, work–life balance and employee wellbeing. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected working parents to understand their lived experiences with AI-based monitoring tools.

4. **Data Collection:**

   Data used for this study is collected through personal interview with 20 working parents (10 couples) in Mangalore city, in order to get an understanding of the technologies used and challenges faced by working parents in childcare. The study is majorly based on secondary data, including academic journals, research articles, industry reports and credible online sources.

5. **Limitations:**

   i. **Limited Participant Scope:** The views presented in this study are based on discussions with a relatively small group of working parents. As a result, the experiences shared may not fully represent the wide diversity of parenting situations, especially across different socio-economic or cultural settings.

   ii. **Context-Specific Insights:** Many of the perspectives discussed emerged from parents navigating urban, dual-income lifestyles. Families living in joint-family arrangements or with strong extended support systems may experience AI-based home monitoring differently.

   iii. **Technology Familiarity Bias:** Parents who participated were already somewhat familiar or comfortable with digital tools. Those with limited access to or confidence in technology may perceive AI monitoring in a less positive or entirely different way.

III.   LITERATURE REVIEW:

Various studies over the last decade have elaborated on the rise of dual-income families. The traditional Indian family structure, characterized by clear gender-based role divisions where men were primary breadwinners and women were responsible for domestic duties, has undergone significant transformation. The bread winner – homemaker structure prevalent in India is also affected as the boundaries have blurred due to more women joining the workforce. The rise of nuclear families, urbanization and changing aspirations have contributed to the emergence of dual-earner households as an increasingly common family arrangement (Baporikar, 2013). This shift has been particularly notable among educated, urban couples who view that both partners working for financial gain is essential for achieving desired living standards and professional fulfilment.

This phenomenon has tilted the work-family gender roles. This study builds on key ideas about how work and family life intersect and influence each other, particularly focusing on work-family conflict. Work-family conflict happens when the demands of our jobs clash with what our families need from us. It is that tension or incessant thought that one gets when at work, when staying late at the office or on official trips- which is so familiar to most employed parents. Because it means missing your child's school day or not being able to guide for an important assignment or even when family emergencies pull you away from important meetings, deadlines, presentations and sometimes even appraisals and promotions. This conflict creates real stress, especially for couples where both partners are working and trying to juggle multiple responsibilities at once. This experience reflects what scholars describe as *work–family conflict*, where role pressures from work and family domains become mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). However, literature on these aspects are well provided. What we need to address is the anxiety and stress that is created when you leave your child at home under supervision of an extended family member or that of a maid. The traditional set up of Indian household where either grandparents or extended family or friends support in child care is also changing due to more families migrating to cities looking for better job opportunities. This is where AI interventions come to our rescue and offer potential support.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a game changer for several reasons. Many working parents found themselves dealing with both parenting and working in the same environment, without either receiving the attention it deserves. During the same period, AI enabled cameras and such other props and apps entered the Indian markets. A significant acceleration was seen in its usage within a short span of 2-4 years. The systems that were initially meant for home security purposes also attained a new avatar - that of prompt care giving. Increasingly, working parents are adopting AI-enabled monitoring tools not only for safety but also for maintaining emotional reassurance during work hours.

Studies such as Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) highlight that AI-enabled parenting technologies are increasingly becoming part of everyday family life. One of the most prominent applications is AI-based child monitoring through smart cameras and vision-enabled systems that allow real-time observation of children's safety and behaviour. Various evidence-based research conducted to analyse how intelligent baby monitoring systems utilised with the help of AI can detect sleep posture, movement and distress signals, enabling timely parental intervention even from a distance (Khan, 2021). Similarly, smart home monitoring systems using computer vision technologies have shown the potential to enhance early childhood safety through continuous behavioural tracking and risk detection (Zainab et al., 2025). Many interviewed parents expressed that being able to visually check on their child during work hours reduced constant mental distraction.

Beyond safety, AI is also being used to supplement parental presence through learning support. Research on AI-enabled educational companions highlights how such systems assist children with homework, personalized instruction and routine academic engagement when parents are unavailable due to work commitments (Holmes et al., 2019). In addition to these facilities, recent trends in AI interventions have introduced AI supported wellbeing systems that help parents understand the emotional wellbeing of their children on the basis of their behavioural patterns; this is a great help to working parents who are constantly worrying about inability to spend quality time with their children and also when they are unable to understand the emotional requirements. (Viswanathan et al., 2024). Such tools may help working parents manage anxiety and improve their sense of oversight while away from home.

However, experts in the field are of different opinions on the matter. Some experts caution that while AI can function as an assistive "digital co-parent," its role should be taken as a complimentary one rather than replace human interaction and emotional bonding within families (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). There is ample literature on the uses of Ai in providing security measures and parenting assistance and also at the same time cautioning overdependence on the same as it does not and cannot replace human touch. However, we have to agree on the aspect that AI is gradually redefining parenting within dual-income households by extending caregiving beyond physical presence. In doing so, AI enables working parents to manage role conflicts more effectively, thereby contributing to improved work–life balance in contemporary environments.

IV. THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS:

i. *What AI Home Monitoring Offer Working Parents?:* For many working parents, especially in dual-income families, AI-based home monitoring has quietly become a way of staying emotionally connected to their children even when work keeps them physically away. Many parents were of the opinion that systems-whether in the form of smart cameras, motion alerts or activity notifications-offer reassurance during the workday. Being able to quickly check in and know that everything is alright at home often reduces the constant background worry that many parents experience. In simple terms, these tools help bridge the distance between the office and the home. Instead of wondering throughout the day whether their child is safe or comfortable, parents gain a sense of visibility into the domestic space they cannot physically access. This, in turn, allows them to focus better on professional responsibilities without feeling

emotionally disconnected from their caregiving role. AI, in this context, does not replace parenting-it simply supports it by offering a sense of presence in moments of absence.

ii.   *The risks that cannot be ignored:* At the same time, it is important to recognize that this technology is not without its challenges. Continuous monitoring inside the home raises important questions about privacy and trust. Caregivers may feel uncomfortable being constantly observed, and children growing up in such environments may develop a different understanding of personal space and independence. There are also concerns about how securely the captured data is stored and who might have access to it. While these systems are meant to ease parental anxiety, excessive dependence on them could create new kinds of stress—where parents feel compelled to monitor rather than simply trust. Over time, this may shift the focus from relationships to surveillance. Therefore, while AI-based monitoring can be helpful, it must be used thoughtfully, with awareness of its possible emotional and ethical implications.

iii.   *Finding the Balance:* The real value of AI in the home lies in using it as a support rather than a substitute for human connection. When used in moderation, AI monitoring tools can help working parents manage the uncertainty that often comes with being away from young children during the day. However, maintaining balance is essential. Most parents felt technology should assist parenting, although views differed on how much monitoring felt comfortable. Clear boundaries around when and how monitoring is used can help ensure that it remains a source of reassurance rather than control. Ultimately, the aim should not be to create a constantly watched household, but to create a supportive environment where technology quietly complements trust, communication, and care. When approached in this way, AI can help working parents feel more at ease in their professional roles without weakening the emotional fabric of family life.

V.   PROPOSED FRAMEWORK:

i.   *The Reassurance Support:* This framework views AI home monitoring primarily as an emotional support mechanism rather than a control tool. It proposes that the role of AI in working parents' lives is to reduce uncertainty during physical absence from home. By offering occasional updates and visibility into home routines, AI helps parents remain mentally at ease while attending to professional responsibilities. The framework assumes that reduced worry enhances psychological availability at work, thereby improving both role balance and task engagement. Here, AI does not replace caregiving but serves as a stabilizing presence that allows parents to remain connected without constant intervention. This view was particularly given by working parents in nuclear households without extended family support.

ii.   *The Responsible Use:* This framework emphasizes mindful and limited use of AI monitoring technologies within domestic spaces. It acknowledges that while such tools can provide reassurance, excessive dependence may unintentionally shift parenting from trust-based relationships to observation-based interactions. The framework therefore proposes that parents establish clear boundaries around when and why monitoring is used. Responsible use ensures that AI remains a supportive aid rather than an intrusive presence. In this approach, technology complements caregiving practices while respecting privacy, autonomy, and the emotional climate of the household.

iii.   *The Balance Integration:* This focuses on integrating AI into family life in a way that preserves relational harmony. It suggests that the value of AI lies in its ability to quietly assist rather than dominate everyday parenting practices. By balancing technological reassurance with interpersonal trust and communication, working parents can maintain both emotional connection and professional focus. The framework highlights that sustainable use of AI depends on treating it as a background support system rather than a substitute for human judgment. In doing so, it supports a family environment where technology IJSY enhances confidence without redefining relationships.

VI.   IMPLICATIONS:

a. *For HR Leaders:* Conversations with working parents suggest that the presence of AI within the home is slowly influencing how they experience their workdays. Many shared that knowing they could occasionally check in on their children reduced the lingering anxiety that often accompanies long hours away from home. For HR leaders, such experiences highlight the importance of recognizing the changing ways in which employees are managing their dual roles. While organizations need not promote technological solutions, understanding that employees draw reassurance from these tools can inform more empathetic approaches to flexibility and wellbeing. Supportive policies and open dialogue can help ensure that technology remains a personal aid rather than an unspoken expectation of constant connectedness. In this way, HR practices can evolve to reflect lived realities rather than abstract ideals of balance.

b. *For Working Parents & their families:* Discussions with working parents reveal that AI-enabled monitoring is often viewed less as a control mechanism and more as a quiet source of comfort during the workday. Several parents described it as a way of easing worry rather than replacing caregiving. At the same time, many acknowledged the need to use such tools sparingly to avoid creating an atmosphere of constant observation at home. One couple infact, was extremely cautious about its use and refused to recommend it as an enabling tool for working parents. Families may therefore benefit from openly discussing when and how these technologies are used, ensuring that reassurance does not come at the cost of trust or privacy. When approached thoughtfully, AI can support everyday routines without altering the emotional tone of family relationships.

VII.   CONCLUSION:

Reflections emerging from conversations with working parents suggest that AI-based home monitoring is slowly influencing how they manage their sense of presence across both work and family roles. Many parents expressed that the ability to occasionally check on their child's wellbeing offers a quiet sense of relief during the workday. This reassurance allows them to remain engaged in their professional responsibilities without the persistent distraction of worry about what might be happening at home. Some parents described feeling less distracted during work hours. In this way, AI is not experienced as a dramatic shift in parenting practice, but rather as a gentle support that helps ease the emotional tension created by physical distance. However, it cannot be said that this is the overall view of all parents. A few parents also mentioned that constant access to updates sometimes made them check more often than necessary.

At the same time, these discussions highlighted a shared awareness about the need for moderation. Parents consistently noted that technology should remain an aid to caregiving rather than a defining feature of it. There was little interest in constant surveillance; instead, what they valued was the option of occasional reassurance that could support, rather than replace, trust in their home environment and caregiving arrangements. This perspective reflects a conscious effort to ensure that technology does not overshadow interpersonal relationships within the family.

Ultimately, what is realised, in many cases, balance seemed to depend less on the technology itself and more on how families chose to use it in everyday situations. When used with intention and supported by open communication, AI can function as a quiet background presence. In doing so, it enables working parents to feel emotionally connected across spaces, without replacing the trust that continues to define family relationships.

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