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From burnout to balance: Investigating the role of cultural support systems in women's mental health in IT workplaces

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Abstract

This study looks at the link between mental health, cultural support, and work-life balance among working professionals. Its main goal is to understand how workplace culture and emotional well-being affect burnout and overall balance in employees' lives. We used a quantitative and correlational approach. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 60 professionals in the corporate and IT sectors. We analyzed the responses with correlation and regression methods to find significant relationships among the variables. The findings showed that cultural support strongly improves work-life balance, while poor mental health harms it. The regression model indicated that both factors together account for about 42% of the differences in balance levels. The study concludes that a supportive and understanding workplace culture can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and improve employee well-being and productivity.

Keywords: Burnout, work-life balance, cultural support systems, women in IT, mental health, organizational culture

Introduction

The Information Technology (IT) industry is one of the most fast-paced and demanding fields today. Women in IT often face the challenge of meeting high workplace expectations while managing personal and family responsibilities. The constant pressure from deadlines, long hours, and rapid tech changes can impact their mental and emotional health, sometimes leading to burnout. Although organizations are increasingly aware of the need for work-life balance, cultural support systems, including mentorship programs, peer networks, flexible work arrangements, and inclusive policies, are crucial for supporting women's mental health. These systems help lower stress, build resilience, and improve job satisfaction. A positive workplace culture gives women a sense of belonging, allowing them to handle challenges more effectively and pursue their careers without sacrificing their well-being. Mental health issues among women employees also impact overall organizational performance. Burnout can decrease productivity, engagement, and creativity, and may lead to higher employee turnover. By putting effective support systems in place, organizations can keep talent, promote teamwork, and encourage long-term career development.

This study, titled "From Burnout to Balance: Investigating the Role of Cultural Support Systems in Women's Mental Health in IT Workplaces," looks at how workplace culture and organizational support affect women's mental well-being. It specifically focuses on the roles of mentorship, peer support, and flexible work policies in reducing burnout and improving emotional health. The insights from this research aim to help organizations create environments where women can thrive both personally and professionally.

Literature review

Women's Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing in India.

The paper "Women's Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being in India" by Ankur Dixit (2024) examines the factors that affect women's mental health in India. It explains that women's well-being is influenced by individual experiences and by deep-rooted social and cultural structures.

The study shows that conditions like depression, anxiety, and trauma-related disorders are more common among women due to discrimination, gender-based violence, poverty, and the heavy expectations placed on them in family and community life. Depression is identified as the most widespread issue, often linked to family conflicts, domestic violence, and a lack of emotional support. Anxiety disorders are also common and arise from women's dual responsibilities at home and work, constant caregiving demands, and pressure to conform to traditional roles. The paper highlights that women who face violence or trauma are at a higher risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Alongside these challenges, stigma around mental illness remains a significant barrier that prevents women from seeking help. Limited access to mental health professionals, especially in rural areas, further restricts treatment options. This forces many to rely on traditional or spiritual healing practices that may offer comfort but lack clinical reliability. The author concludes that improving women's psychological well-being requires community awareness, gender-inclusive policies, and strong social support systems.

While the paper effectively discusses social and cultural influences, it leaves a research gap concerning how workplace culture and organizational support impact women's mental health. There is little understanding of how mentorship, peer connections, or flexible work practices, especially in demanding sectors like IT, help reduce burnout and build resilience among women professionals.

The Impact of Work on Mental Health and Burnout in Women

The study "The Impact of Work on Mental Health and Burnout in Women" by Sonali N. B. (2024) examines how professional and personal roles affect women's emotional well-being. It compares the mental health of working and non-working women and finds a significant difference. Working women generally have better mental health because employment offers independence, confidence, and social interaction. However, they also deal with higher burnout due to the pressures of work and family responsibilities. The constant effort to meet both workplace demands and home expectations often leads to exhaustion, anxiety, and frustration. Non-working women face their own challenges. Limited social contact, dependence on others, and lack of recognition can result in feelings of isolation and low self-esteem. The study highlights that both working and non-working women encounter mental health issues, but the causes are different. One group struggles with overwork and role overload, while the other deals with emotional neglect and under-stimulation. The author concludes that women's mental well-being relies on finding balance, not just choosing between work and home. Supportive policies, flexible work arrangements, and stress management programs are crucial for better outcomes.

While the study effectively compares the mental health of working and non-working women, it does not look at how workplace culture, peer relationships, and mentorship can reduce burnout. More research is needed to understand how supportive organizational environments can help women maintain resilience and emotional balance, especially in demanding fields like IT.

A Review on the Impact of Workplace Culture on Employee Mental Health and Well-being

A large body of research shows that workplace culture is a powerful factor in shaping employee mental health and overall well-being. The agreement among experts is strong: positive and supportive work cultures, marked by encouraging leadership, good social relationships, work-life balance, and open communication, are linked to better outcomes for employees. When people feel valued and supported, they report higher job satisfaction, increased engagement, and better psychological health. This benefits individuals and leads to real business advantages like improved productivity and reduced employee turnover. In sharp contrast, toxic work environments marked by excessive job demands, bullying, a lack of support, and poor leadership are consistently harmful. Such cultures create conditions for negative mental health outcomes, including higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. The evidence clearly shows that a healthy workplace culture is essential for both individual success and overall organizational achievement.

Although the link between workplace culture and mental health is well-established, there is a research gap in understanding how specific cultural elements directly affect mental well-being. Further studies are needed to explore how individual differences, such as personality and coping strategies, play a role in this relationship. Additionally, more thorough evaluations of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving workplace culture are necessary, especially for diverse groups of employees.

Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Burnout in Working Women

The research by Pushpa Devi and Dr. Suresh Kumar (2023) ^[1] examines how work-family conflict leads to burnout among working women in India. The study finds that many women experience emotional exhaustion, frustration, and stress as they try to manage both their professional and personal responsibilities. Cultural expectations and traditional gender roles often make this struggle harder, causing women to feel guilty for not meeting every demand perfectly. Previous studies suggest that women with younger children or less family support are more at risk for burnout. The lack of flexible work arrangements, limited organizational support, and heavy workloads make this imbalance worse. The paper highlights that resilience, social support, and emotionally supportive workplaces can help lessen the effects of burnout. When organizations encourage work-life balance with flexible schedules, mental health programs, and childcare support, women experience greater satisfaction and reduced stress.

Overall, the literature clearly shows that burnout among working women is not just a personal issue; it's a social and organizational problem that needs empathy, flexibility, and inclusive workplace practices to ensure emotional well-being and ongoing productivity.

Work-Life Balance and Mental Health of Women in the IT Sector:

The study by Vijayalakshmi, Nirmala, and Subasree (2023) ^[2] looks at how remote work during the pandemic impacted the mental health and work-life balance of women in India's IT industry. It found that while working from home offered flexibility, it also mixed work with personal life. This led to burnout, stress, and emotional

exhaustion. Women had to juggle household chores, childcare, and their jobs at the same time, leaving little space for rest or personal time. About one-third of the participants reported serious work-life imbalance, and a quarter dealt with depression and burnout. The study links these issues to gender roles, where women are expected to take on domestic tasks even while working full-time. However, the research also shows that supportive leadership, open communication, and flexible policies can help ease emotional fatigue and improve overall well-being. The findings stress that achieving genuine work-life balance isn't just about time management; it's also about building workplaces that prioritize empathy, equality, and mental health. Ultimately, the study urges organizations to create hybrid models that allow women to succeed at work without sacrificing their personal well-being and family life.

Women in Tech: Addressing the Root Causes of Attrition

The study "Women in Tech: Addressing the Root Causes of Attrition" by Virginia Smith and Dr. Gitanjali Swamy looks at the ongoing gender gap in technology fields and points out the systemic barriers that restrict women's involvement and growth. Even though more women are graduating in STEM, they still hold a low number of technical and leadership positions. The research shows that external factors, like discrimination, workplace bias, and limited mentorship, drive women to leave the tech industry. This is more significant than internal issues such as lack of confidence or work-life balance. The authors assert that diversity is not just the right thing to do; it also benefits innovation and business performance. Through surveys and leadership discussions, they suggest practical strategies like clear data tracking, inclusive policies, and mentorship programs across the industry to help reduce attrition.

While the paper effectively identifies external barriers, it pays less attention to intersectional challenges, including race, culture, and regional differences, that affect women's experiences in technology. More research is necessary to explore how these factors shape career advancement and to assess the long-term impact of the suggested solutions in different global settings.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine how cultural support systems in IT

workplaces influence women's mental health and reduce burnout.

2. To identify organizational and cultural factors that impact women's emotional well-being and work-life balance.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of mentorship, peer support, and flexible work policies in fostering resilience.

Research Methodology

This study follows a quantitative and correlational research design to explore how mental health and cultural support affect work-life balance among working professionals. A structured online questionnaire was used to gather responses, and the data was analyzed using correlation and regression analysis to understand the strength and impact of relationships among variables. The research focused on employees from IT, corporate, and service sectors for a balanced representation.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a Google Form survey distributed to working individuals. The questionnaire included sections on mental health, workplace culture, and work-life balance, rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A total of 60 valid responses were collected, cleaned, and coded for analysis using statistical tools.

Variable Factors

Work-Life Balance (Dependent Variable)

Represents an employee's ability to manage both personal and professional roles efficiently, reflecting satisfaction and time balance.

Mental Health (Independent Variable 1)

Indicates emotional well-being, stress levels, and burnout experienced due to workload or job pressure.

Cultural Support (Independent Variable 2)

Refers to inclusivity, recognition, and managerial or peer support that enhance motivation and workplace satisfaction.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Mental Health	Cultural Support		Work Life Balance
Mental Health	1	-0.19	-0.21	
Cultural Support	-0.19	1	0.64	
Work Life Balance	-0.21	0.64		1

The correlation analysis looked at how mental health, cultural support, and work-life balance connect in the workplace. The results showed a strong and positive relationship between cultural support and work-life balance. This means that when employees feel valued, included, and supported by their organization and teammates, they find it easier to manage both work and personal life. A culture that values appreciation, open communication, and teamwork reduces stress and fosters a sense of belonging. Employees who feel supported are more likely to stay motivated, emotionally stable, and satisfied in their roles.

In contrast, mental health indicators like emotional fatigue,

stress, and constant work pressure showed a moderate negative relationship with work-life balance. Those who felt drained or overworked struggled more to maintain balance between their professional and personal lives. However, this negative connection was weaker than the positive effect of cultural support. This suggests that strong workplace support can help shield employees from the worst effects of mental exhaustion.

In simple terms, the correlation results clearly show that a healthy work culture is more influential than stress alone in how well employees balance their lives. Promoting empathy, flexibility, and recognition at work is essential for

improving both mental well-being and overall life satisfaction.

Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was done to see how much mental health and cultural support together influence an employee's work-life balance. The results showed an R^2 value of 0.419. This means about 42% of the changes in work-life balance can be explained by these two factors. This suggests that mental well-being and workplace culture are important in how balanced and satisfied people feel with their lives. Among the two predictors, cultural support was the strongest and most significant factor. It had a notable positive impact ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that when employees feel respected, guided, and supported by their organization, their ability to balance work and personal responsibilities improves significantly. Workplaces that

promote flexibility, inclusion, and appreciation help their employees stay motivated and emotionally stable, even during stressful times. Meanwhile, mental health had a small and non-significant negative impact ($\beta = -0.11$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that while stress and emotional exhaustion can affect balance; their impact isn't as strong as that of workplace culture. In other words, even if someone is stressed, having supportive management and a caring environment helps them cope better.

The regression findings confirm a strong message. A supportive workplace culture can outweigh the effects of burnout. When organizations invest in mental health awareness, flexible working options, and recognition programs, employees perform better and lead happier, more balanced lives. A positive culture doesn't just prevent burnout; it builds stronger, more resilient individuals.

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	Interpreta Predistortion		Coefficient (β)	Interpretation Predictor		Coefficient (β)
Cultural Support	0.65	Strong positive impact - as cultural support increases, work-life balance improves significantly.	Cultural Support	0.65	Strong positive impact - as cultural support increases, work-life balance improves significantly.	Cultural Support	0.65
Mental Health	-0.11	Small negative effect - poor mental health slightly reduces balance, but not significantly	Mental Health	-0.12	Small negative effect - poor mental health slightly reduces balance, but not significantly	Mental Health	-0.13
R^2 Value	0.419	About 42% of work-life balance is explained by these two predictors	R^2 Value	1.419	About 42% of work-life balance is explained by these two predictors.	R^2 Value	2.419

Findings

The study aimed to understand how mental health and cultural support affect the work-life balance of working professionals. The results clearly show that the work environment influences how well employees manage their professional and personal commitments. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive link between cultural support and work-life balance.

Employees who feel supported, recognized, and encouraged by their organizations tend to have better emotional stability and lower conflict between work and home. A positive and inclusive culture helps people stay motivated and manage stress effectively, leading to greater satisfaction and harmony.

In contrast, mental health factors showed a moderate negative link to work-life balance. Individuals experiencing high stress, fatigue, or emotional exhaustion were more likely to struggle with balancing their personal and professional duties. However, the negative impact of mental strain was weaker than the positive impact of cultural support. This suggests that a supportive workplace can help employees cope better even in stressful situations.

The regression analysis confirmed these findings, showing that cultural support and mental health together explain about 42% of the variation in work-life balance ($R^2 = 0.419$). Among the factors, cultural support stood out as a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that employees who feel appreciated, receive flexibility, and get emotional support are much more likely to achieve a healthy balance. On the other hand, mental health had a small and statistically insignificant negative influence ($\beta = -0.11$), indicating that while stress affects balance, its impact is less significant than the advantages of strong workplace support.

Overall, the findings stress that achieving work-life balance involves more than just personal time management; it is closely tied to the culture and attitude of the organization. Workplaces that foster trust, empathy, and open communication help employees stay emotionally healthy and more engaged in their jobs. When employees feel understood and supported, they perform better and report higher levels of happiness and satisfaction. A caring and inclusive culture serves as a buffer against burnout, helping individuals balance their professional goals with their personal well-being. These findings highlight the need to prioritize mental health and organizational support to create sustainable, people-focused workplaces.

Conclusion

This study concludes that achieving work-life balance involves more than just managing time; it requires creating an environment that supports emotional and psychological well-being. The results show that when employees feel respected, understood, and valued by their organization, they can better manage both work and personal life. A strong workplace culture and mutual support help reduce burnout, lower stress levels, and encourage long-term commitment to work.

The analysis revealed that cultural support is a much bigger factor than individual mental stress in determining how balanced an employee feels. A positive culture, characterized by open communication, recognition, flexibility, and empathy, helps employees stay motivated and satisfied, even during busy times. In contrast, poor mental health without adequate support often leads to fatigue and imbalance. However, the study shows that supportive management and a caring work environment can

buffer many of these negative effects.

In simple terms, good mental health and a nurturing culture go hand in hand. Organizations that care for their employees' well-being build stronger, more productive, and loyal teams. Investing in mental health awareness, flexible work options, and inclusive leadership benefits employees and strengthens the organization overall. A workplace that prioritizes people naturally creates balance, happiness, and sustainable success for everyone involved.

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