

## (IJ-12) Assessing Work-Life Balance of Indian Nursing Professionals During Covid-19 Crisis

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** –In this catastrophic crisis of COVID-19 pandemic, Indian nurses are facing overwhelming workload and psychosocial stress which suggests that their work-life balance (WLB) aspects have undergone tremendous changes. The purpose of this cross-sectional study is to investigate a theory-based model using conservation of resources theory (COR) to explain if supervisor support and family support could help nurses to accomplish WLB during ongoing pandemic.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Online questionnaire survey has been used to get the responses from nurses working in private hospitals in India during this pandemic. Online questionnaire survey was collected from 263 nurses and to carry out research analysis structural equation modeling (SEM) has been incorporated.

**Findings** – In this catastrophic and unparallel crisis, Indian nurses are fighting against an invisible enemy as frontline warriors while their biggest challenge is to diagnose and cure patients infected with this deadly virus. The findings of this study reveal that during such unprecedented situation, support of supervisor and family positively influences WLB of frontline nurses. Moreover, WLB mediated the association between supervisor support and job satisfaction, and also for family support and job satisfaction.

**Originality/value** – Knowing the magnitude of such pandemic, this cross-sectional study explored and examined the effect of two most important resources in facilitating nurses to attain balance which has been disrupted due to pandemic.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus, Covid-19, Work-Life Balance, Supervisor Support, Family Support,

Job satisfaction, India

## INTRODUCTION

The scathing explosion of coronavirus disease has resulted in global pandemic as several countries around the world are facing adverse health, well-being, and societal effects along with economic setbacks (World Health Organization, 2020). India, having a population of 1.36 billion has 20,638,281 confirmed cases and over 225,831 deaths respectively by May 05, 2021 (Worldometer, 2021). There has been rapid surge in the number of cases in India in past few months and this figure of cases has been changing on daily basis. It's been almost a year since the explosion of this disease in India and still this disease is spreading in the form of second wave at a rapid pace. This global health crisis has been profoundly impacting healthcare professionals such as frontline nurses' physical, mental, and emotional health and psychological well-being, leading to burnout, work-life imbalance, and psychosocial stress (Gorini et al., 2020; Humphries et al., 2020). Frontline nurses are finding it difficult and challenging to cope up in such an uncertain condition. They face the pressure to perform with under-resourced healthcare facilities such as inadequate staffing and infrastructure facilities to fulfill increased healthcare demand owing to a large number of patients in an unsafe environmental condition.

Clearly, COVID-19 pandemic has posed a new set of challenges and problems for Indian nurses as many were already finding it difficult to manage their precarious work-life balance issues. This unavoidable scenario has constrained them with few backups and support to strive to maintain their work-life balance (Graham et al., 2020). The nationwide lockdown that resulted in closures of school and childcare facilities had forced them not only to abruptly look after childcare responsibilities, family responsibilities but also to perform their duty at hospital which significantly impacted and altered their work-life balance arrangements. They are still juggling between work and home demands while striving to reduce their exposure to this infectious disease, by living away from their children and families to ensure their own safety and their loved ones (Morganstein et al., 2020).

One cannot underestimate the effect of these challenges as it results in conflict and interference in work and other areas of life. The inability to balance work and non-work demands not only effect individuals to underperform in both areas but also cause job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and stress. A study carried out during Covid-19 in Italy reported that nurses worked beyond 100 hours per week that resulted in highest levels of occupational stress, work-

life imbalance and burnout symptoms. (Neto., et al., 2020; Sampaio et al., 2020). These concerns have sustained that WLB among nursing workforce has become one of the challenging task as well as an important issue to address during this COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this empirical study is to investigate a theory-based model using conservation of resources theory (COR) to explain if supervisor support and family support could help nurses to restore their work-life balance during COVID-19 pandemic.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

We rely on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to conceptualize the structure of the present study. The theory describes the significance of receiving social support in work and non-work areas that could facilitate frontline nurses to restore work-life balance and thereby achieve satisfaction at work. We build our rationale using this theory which states that individuals attempts to utilize and conserve resources that supports them in the fulfillment of things that are valuable for them (Hobfoll, 1989). Supervisor support and family support would act as important resources that can facilitate nurses to attain things that are highly valuable such as balance (see Figure 1) in work and other aspects of life (Ferguson et al., 2012; Russo et al., 2015).

Figure 1: An application of COR's theory to WLB among Indian Nurses

### **Supervisor Support**

The support of a supervisor has been identified as a critical work domain resource that facilitates members to attain greater WLB, as supervisor portrays a vital role in alleviating work stress and strain of their employees (Haar et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2012). It is one of the significant factors in shaping the quintessence of employment relationships. Research study by Hong et al., (2020) and Yasir and Majid (2019) suggests that supervisor support not only help nurses to counter balance their job-related demands such as work overload, irregular working hours in hospitals but also assist them in managing their life domain issues.

Support from the supervisor help employees integrate their professional and personal activities by giving them instrumental and psychological aid (Bhargava and Baral, 2009; Talukder et al., 2018). Such kind of support from the supervisor's aid nurses to reduce psychological disturbances, decrease conflict in work and family domain. Therefore, it can be stated that nursing supervisor play a vital role in providing coping mechanism to nurses due to daily work challenges faced by them. In the current study we assume that during COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals where nursing supervisory support is perceived higher could facilitate nurses to better manage their work-life challenges. Based on these arguments we hypothesize that:

**H1:** There exists a positive connection between supervisor support and WLB.

### **Family Support**

Research studies in area of work-life integration shows that support of family members buffers the effects of work stress of employees and are at times are more effective than organizational support. Such kind of support generates emotions of love, care and responsibility which at times act as an extrinsic motivator and keep employees satisfied (Nicklin and McNall, 2013). It also offers assistance, advice and act as an affective resource which facilitates individuals to accomplish their activities. Such kind of support minimizes the conflicts arising in work-non work spheres of employees (Baral & Bhargava, 2011). It is a positive predictor that accounts for individuals personal accomplishments and affects their quality of life (Yuh and Choi, 2017).

Wayne, Randel, & Stevens (2006) explored that family support generated positive emotions among employees that created family to work enrichment (FWE). Furthermore, research study by Russo et al., (2015) have emphasized that family support amplifies an individual's competence to experience multiple role balance; since family provides invaluable aid to carry out professional and personal life related activities. Therefore, we can predict that those nurses who receive more support from family during COVID-19 pandemic would be capable of solving their problems and would be able to attain harmony in their work and other areas of life. Thus, we hypothesize that:

**H2:** There exists a positive connection between family support and WLB.

### **Work-life balance**

This research study emphasizes on WLB construct by emphasizing on professional sphere, family sphere and personal life sphere. WLB is a holistic notion which is different from conflict and enrichment (Haar et al., 2018). Broader perspective of WLB includes diverse range of activities such as friendship, leisure, sports, education, community service, relationships apart from professional and family roles (Haar et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2013). Moreover, rich literature in this area has given more preference to work-family conflict (WFC) term, which stated incompatibilities arising in work and family. Over the years, the cause and effect of WFC have been primarily interpreted in the form of antecedents and consequences (Haar, 2013; Haar et al., 2014; Rubel, Kee & Rimi, 2017).

Only in recent years, the literature has expanded its purview to look beyond the negative aspect of conflict and include positive aspects such as, enrichment, enhancement, positive spillover and work-life balance (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Bhargava & Baral, 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Greenhaus, Ziegert & Allen, 2012; Haar et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2014), Nonetheless, empirical research studies on WLB are still in less number to assert the findings so far (Haar et al., 2018; Russo et al., 2015). The ongoing pandemic has drastically exaggerated the level of job satisfaction among the frontline nurses owing to high level of fear, anxiety, conflict, depression and burnout (Hong et al., 2020; Sampaio, Sequeira, and Teixeira, 2020). We believe that attainment of balance in work and other areas of life would be beneficial for nurses to accomplish satisfaction in work areas during this ongoing pandemic. In view of limited empirical studies, we presume that:

**H3:** There exists a positive connection between WLB and job satisfaction.

### **Mediating role of Work-Life Balance**

In the area of WLB, empirical evidence on the potential mediating effect of WFC and WFE had been established in past research studies that examined linkages between organizational predictors and employee consequences (Anderson et al., 2002; Baral and Bhargava, 2010; Brough, O'Driscoll and Kalliath, 2005; Choi, 2008; Mansour and Tremblay, 2016; McNall, Masuda and Nicklin, 2010; Rashid et al., 2011). Baral and Bhargava (2010) investigated the role of organizational factors on various job attitudes among managerial employees in India and illustrated the mediating role of WFE while research work by Haines et al., (2008) emphasized on the role of shift work on depression and the mediating effect of WFC. Scrutiny of the literature suggests that there are ample research studies that have emphasized

either on predictors and outcomes of WFC or on WFE, instead of emphasizing towards WLB (Bhargava and Baral, 2009; Ghislieri et al., 2016; Yildirim and Aycan, 2008).

As stated earlier in this article we have emphasized that WLB is a broad concept which takes into consideration work and various other multiple activities of life, including family but not only limited to family. The research work by Haar (2013) suggests that WLB is a significant construct which is valuable for all individuals beyond conflict and enrichment perspectives. This study demonstrated on parent and non-parent employees of New Zealand revealed that WLB was a distinct construct and acted as an indirect mediator between conflict, enrichment and various outcomes. They further added that WLB is pertinent for all employees in spite of varied circumstances in life. In addition to this, Wu et al., (2013) research suggests that examination of WLB as a mediating variable is by so far an untouched area that needs attention. Based on these arguments, it is rational to hypothesize that:

**H4:** In the association between supervisor support and job satisfaction WLB would be mediating.

**H5:** In the association between family support and job satisfaction WLB would be mediating.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample and Procedure**

For validating the hypothesized model, this paper has adopted a cross-section design of research and has applied structural equation modeling (SEM) for analyzing data. In this study, the frontline nurses working in private hospitals in five major cities, namely: Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi, Jaipur and Ahmadabad have been targeted using purposive sampling. Online questionnaire survey was communicated to 420 nurses during Nov 2020-Jan 2021, out of which 300 filled results were received which yielded 71 percent responsiveness rate. From the filled responses only 263 were included for analysis as 37 responses were rejected based on inappropriate and incomplete information. Of the 263 nurses, 72 percent were female nurses' and 28 percent were male nurses. The highest professional among these nurses was B.Sc. in nursing that accounted 34 percent. The age of the nurses ranged between 20 years to more than 60 years, with about 34 percent falling in the bracket of 31-40 years.

## **Measures**

### **Supervisor Support**

The items of this construct have been adapted from Wu et al., (2013), which were validated in their research paper. It was assessed on a Likert scale having five-point with 1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree. An example of this item is “My supervisor supports me in difficult case situations”.

### ***Family Support***

We used 3-item scale to assess frontline nurses family support adapted from Bhargava and Baral (2009). A sample item of this construct is as follows: “How much your family members are willing to listen to your personal problems”.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

We used 3-item scale to assess nurses WLB developed by Haar (2013). For instance: “I manage to balance the demands of my work and personal/family life well”.

### ***Job Satisfaction***

We assessed job satisfaction using 8-item scale adapted from Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997) scale, which was assessed on a five-point Likert scale, such as “I feel good about working in this organization”.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data collected through online questionnaire survey was investigated through structural equation modeling (SEM) with the application of Smart PLS 3 (Partial Least Square). PLS path modeling is a two-step analytical procedure involving measurement and structural model.

### **Measurement Model**

In measurement model (outer model), the following criteria has been assessed: internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. In Table 1 we have reported Cronbach’s alpha, rho, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) to demonstrate the internal consistency and validity of the measures.

S. No.	Construct	Items	Item Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Rho_A	CR	AVE
1	Family Support	FS1	0.886	0.847	0.852	0.846	0.648
		FS2	0.771				
		FS3	0.752				
3	Supervisor Support	SS1	0.779	0.943	0.948	0.943	0.703
		SS2	0.753				
		SS3	0.922				
		SS4	0.871				
		SS5	0.938				
		SS6	0.696				
		SS7	0.880				
4	Work-Life Balance	WLB1	0.924	0.868	0.882	0.871	0.694
		WLB2	0.723				
		WLB3	0.841				
5	Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.857	0.937	0.939	0.936	0.677
		JS2	0.904				
		JS3	0.841				
		JS4	0.733				
		JS5	0.785				
		JS6	0.741				
		JS7	0.880				

Table 1 Evaluation of Measurement Model



As seen in this table all the items have factor loading above .50 while Alpha and CR values are above .70 which demonstrates a satisfactory internal consistency & reliability of the constructs (Hair et al., 2016). Additionally, convergent validity is accomplished when constructs converge to predict the variance of its items through AVE. AVE depicts the amount of variance accounted by the latent constructs (see Table 1) which should be above the limit values of .50 (Hair et al., 2010).

Next, the discriminant validity has been checked by examining that the measures of one construct are truly different from rest of the constructs (Ringle et al., 2019). It has been evaluated through Fornell and Larker's (1981) criterion depicted in Table 2. In this criterion discriminant validity exists when square roots of AVEs of all constructs surpassed the calculated values of its bivariate correlations (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Ringle et al., 2019). Prior to hypothesis testing, multi-collinearity of the items has been checked as presented in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Discriminant Validity of the Constructs

	<b>FS</b>	<b>JS</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>WLB</b>
<b>Family Support (FS)</b>	0.805			
<b>Job Satisfaction (JS)</b>	0.560	0.823		
<b>Supervisor Support (SS)</b>	0.628	0.592	0.838	
<b>Work-Life Balance (WLB)</b>	0.640	0.530	0.570	0.833

Note: Diagonals represent square root of AVE

Table 3: Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

## Outer VIF Values

<b>Construct</b>	<b>VIF</b>
FS1	1.967
FS2	2.590
FS3	1.965
JS1	3.340
JS2	2.250
JS3	4.411
JS4	3.196
JS5	2.269
JS7	4.193
JS8	3.148
SS1	2.659
SS2	3.894
SS3	3.489
SS4	3.937
SS5	3.817
SS6	2.445
SS7	3.382
WLB1	2.687
WLB2	2.079
WLB3	2.292

### Structural Model

The structural model which is also known as inner model has been used to know relationship between the constructs which has been framed in the research model (Rubel, Kee and Rimi, 2017). The path coefficients statistical significance has been examined through bootstrapping technique (5000 re-samplings). Below table is related to the outcomes of the structural model, whereby supervisor and family support were related with WLB significantly ( $\beta = 0.570$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.638$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and WLB was also found to be significantly related with job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.534$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4: Hypotheses-testing of the research model (Direct Paths)

Hypotheses	Relationship	$\beta$ (Path)	t-value	p-value	Direction	Decision
H1	SS→WLB	0.570	8.450	.000	Positive	Supported
H2	FS→WLB	0.638	10.284	.000	Positive	Supported
H3	WLB→JS	0.534	7.316	.000	Positive	Supported

Note: Significant at  $p < 0.001$

### Mediation Assessment

To investigate the mediating effect, we have adopted Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach. The bootstrapping of indirect path has been done to check the effect of mediator on the dependent variable (i.e. indirect effects). Table 5 presents the mediation effect for framed hypotheses and variance accounted for (VAF) has been examined to know whether there exists full mediation or partial mediation. In this study it was discovered that WLB partially mediates between the predictor and the criterion variables.

Table 5: Hypotheses-testing of the research model (Indirect Paths)

Hypotheses	Relationship	$\beta$ (Path)	t-value	p-value	Decision	VAF	Mediation Effect
H4	SS→WLB→JS	0.163	2.771	0.006	Supported	.28	Partial
H5	FS→WLB→JS	0.186	2.553	0.011	Supported	.33	Partial

Note: Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Moreover, to measure the overall model fit, SRMR (standard root mean square residual) has been calculated which is .051 (see Table 6). As per Bentler and Bonett, (1980 when NFI values are close to 1, the model fit is considered better, and in our case the NFI value is .825, and therefore the model is fit.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As we scrutinize the implications of this rapidly spreading deadly disease, it has been witnessed that the Indian nurses are proactively involved in combating the challenges of COVID-19 while at the same time they still are grappling with this disease. Health authorities in India are fully engaged in strategic preparedness to fight this disastrous disease. Frontline nurses are working round the clock to diagnose, test, treat, and provide care to COVID-19 patients. These frontline warriors are indeed providing preventive, curative, and rehabilitative healthcare services to the patients and the community at large. It's being witnessed that on one hand these unforeseen circumstances have made these professionals think, introspect, and make prompt decisions while on the other hand the continuous rise in the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 has put a tremendous constraint on healthcare professionals. With the surge in the cases of this infectious disease in India, there could also be an enormous amount of contagion among the country's nursing personnel.

In this research study, we investigated the ways in which nurses WLB mediates the linkages between supervisor and family support and their satisfaction level with the job during turbulent time of covid-19 pandemic. We found that increased amount of both kind of support had a greater positive link with nurses WLB, which in turn affected their job satisfaction. These findings are in line, confirming few preliminary empirical evidence (Kumar and Mokashi,

2020; Shrama, 2020). The results are novel, which reveals that there are rarely any studies in the Indian context that covered effect of such pandemic on nurses WLB. This empirical research has examined and explored a relationship of nurses who were compelled to forced work at the time of countrywide lockdown. This study also emphasizes that during such uncertain time assistance from supervisors and members of family could contribute towards restoring balance between work and others areas of life and through such a balance, dissatisfaction at work experienced by these professionals could be reduced to some extent. In other words, this empirical cross-sectional paper has also established that supervisor support and family support as eminent factors in predicting WLB even during such an uncertain time.

During this phase, the situation was very different from the usual scenario for frontline nurses working in hospitals. In addition to meeting personal life needs, most of these working frontline nurses had to concentrate not just on their professional demands but they also had to juggle to look after their children and take care of themselves due to high changes of getting transmissible infection and their busy work schedules at hospitals. Family support during such period was a crucial factor, particularly in context of providing affective support that helped female nurses to create a balance between both areas, when both areas required higher attention, efforts and demands. Study carried out by Drummond et al., (2017) also highlighted the significance of assistance from family in minimizing conflict and thereby reducing psychological strain experienced by working women. Support from supervisor's serves subordinates' mostly through job challenges and periods when they are required to accomplish organizational goals, helping workers cope with their official and non-official participation, thereby improving employees WLB (Kumar and Mokashi, 2020). This empirical research study illustrates that such that kind of associations would hold even during COVID-19 pandemic. The battle with COVID-19 is not yet over and the direction in which this crisis unfolds infers that the Indian healthcare system faces a set of new unprecedented challenges while seeking to meet the healthcare emergencies of our population. It has redefined the nurses' roles and responsibilities in India. Needless to say, in such an uncertain environment their capability to provide acute care has been elongated by the intensified workload and also presented them with learning opportunities.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research study tested the association among WLB, supervisor support, family support, and job satisfaction during the phase of COVID pandemic among frontline nurses in India. From this study it can be inferred that support of supervisors and family members are critical resources for overcoming work challenges, and strict schedules during critical time of pandemic. It would enable nurses to enhance their work-life balance aspects which in turn would facilitate them to attain job satisfaction. In our research analysis we found that there is a statistical relationship of independent variables with work-life balance. Moreover, we also found significant support for mediating effect of WLB on both the independent variable with the dependent variable.

Potential future researchers can replicate the current framework using longitudinal study for establishing more certain causality of the relationships between the constructs. Researchers are encouraged to explore other variables that might play a prominent role in WLB and job satisfaction of frontline nurses. The data for this research study was confined to only private hospitals in India and the investigation might not produce decisive outcomes and could require additional country-wide analysis including both public and private hospitals. More reliable and useful findings could be obtained from larger sample size to generalize the results. Lastly, our sample is drawn particularly from hospitals and future researchers could investigate whether results of this study could be generalized across other organizational settings.

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