



## **WHEN WORK NEVER ENDS: UNDERSTANDING WORK–FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG WOMEN IN GURUGRAM’S IT SECTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The expansion of the Information Technology (IT) sector in urban centres such as Gurugram has significantly enhanced women’s participation in the workforce, positioning the industry as a space of economic mobility and professional advancement. However, alongside these opportunities, the nature of IT work has introduced new challenges that complicate the balance between professional and personal responsibilities. This paper explores the dynamics of work–family conflict among women employed in the IT sector, focusing on how organisational structures intersect with gendered expectations within the household. The study aims to examine the extent to which factors such as extended working hours, global time-zone coordination, performance pressures, and expectations of constant availability contribute to role conflict. It is based on primary data collected from 168 women professionals in Gurugram using a structured questionnaire, supported by qualitative insights. The findings indicate that work–family conflict is largely shaped by structural and cultural features of the workplace rather than individual limitations. Long working hours, unpredictable schedules, and constant connectivity blur boundaries between work and home. These pressures, combined with persistent caregiving expectations, intensify strain among women. The paper highlights the need for organisational reforms that promote realistic workloads, boundary protection, and more inclusive definitions of professional commitment.

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## **1.Introduction**

Over the past few decades, the rapid expansion of the Information Technology (IT) sector in India has transformed urban labour markets and redefined the nature of professional employment. Cities such as Gurugram have emerged as major hubs of technological and corporate activity, attracting a highly skilled workforce and offering new avenues of employment for women. The IT sector, often described as a knowledge-based industry, is perceived to operate on principles of merit, skill, and technical competence, thereby creating the impression of gender-neutral opportunities. This has contributed to a steady rise in women's participation, particularly among educated, urban, middle-class groups seeking financial independence and professional identity (Upadhyya & Vasavi, 2006; Kelkar & Nathan, 2015).

However, beneath this narrative of opportunity lies a more complex reality shaped by the structural organisation of work and persistent gender norms. While the IT sector has enabled women's entry into formal employment, it has simultaneously intensified the demands placed upon them. The nature of IT work—characterised by extended working hours, tight project deadlines, global client coordination, and continuous digital connectivity—often blurs the boundaries between professional and personal life. These demands are embedded within what scholars describe as the “ideal worker” norm, which assumes uninterrupted availability and prioritisation of work above all other responsibilities (Acker, 2012). Such expectations tend to disadvantage women, who continue to bear a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities within the household.

The concept of work–family conflict provides a useful framework for understanding these tensions. Work–family conflict arises when the demands of professional roles interfere with family responsibilities, making it difficult to fulfil expectations in both domains simultaneously (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In the context of the IT sector, this conflict is often intensified by temporal and spatial overlaps between work and home, particularly in an era of globalised service delivery and remote connectivity. Women professionals frequently find themselves negotiating between organisational expectations of constant responsiveness and familial expectations of caregiving and emotional labour. As Hochschild (1989) conceptualises through the idea of the “second shift,” women's paid employment does not replace domestic responsibilities but instead adds to them, resulting in cumulative strain.

In Indian urban contexts, including Gurugram, these tensions are further shaped by socio-cultural expectations regarding women's roles within the family. Despite increased acceptance of women's employment, their work is often perceived as secondary to domestic responsibilities. This conditional acceptance creates a situation where women are expected to excel professionally without compromising their familial roles. Studies on gender and work in India have highlighted that even in dual-earner households, women remain primarily responsible for household management, childcare, and eldercare, thereby intensifying role conflict (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2016; Ramu, 1989). Consequently, the ability of women to fully engage with demanding professional roles is frequently constrained by these overlapping expectations.

Moreover, organisational cultures within the IT sector often reinforce these challenges through implicit norms and evaluation systems. Long working hours and constant availability are frequently interpreted as indicators of commitment and productivity, while career trajectories tend to favour uninterrupted work patterns. Such norms can inadvertently penalise women who require flexibility due to caregiving responsibilities. Blair-Loy (2003) argues that professional work environments often privilege an "ideal worker" who is free from domestic obligations, thereby marginalising those who cannot conform to such expectations. In this context, women's career progression becomes shaped not only by their skills and performance but also by their ability to navigate these structural constraints. The increasing digitisation of work has further complicated the work-life interface. Technologies that enable flexibility—such as remote work and hybrid models—also extend the reach of work into personal spaces, making it difficult for individuals to disengage. While such arrangements offer potential benefits, they do not necessarily reduce workload or expectations. Instead, they often reconfigure when and where work is performed, sometimes intensifying the overlap between professional and domestic roles (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). For women in the IT sector, this can result in a continuous negotiation of boundaries, where work responsibilities spill over into family time and vice versa.

Against this backdrop, it becomes important to examine work-family conflict not as an individual-level issue but as a structural and sociological phenomenon. The challenges faced by women in balancing work and family are not merely a reflection of personal choices or capabilities but are deeply embedded in organisational practices, cultural norms, and gendered divisions of labour. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing more inclusive and

sustainable work environments that support women's long-term participation and advancement in the IT sector.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the nature and determinants of work–family conflict among women working in the IT sector in Gurugram. By focusing on both organisational factors and socio-cultural contexts, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how work and family demands intersect in shaping women's everyday experiences. The analysis contributes to broader sociological debates on gender, work, and inequality by highlighting the structural conditions that continue to influence women's participation in contemporary professional sectors.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Understanding work–family conflict among women in the IT sector requires a multi-dimensional theoretical lens that captures the interaction between organisational structures, gender norms, and individual experiences. This study draws upon four key theoretical frameworks to explain how professional demands and domestic responsibilities intersect to shape women lived realities.

### **2.1 Work–Family Conflict Theory**

Work–Family Conflict Theory, as developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), provides the foundational framework for this study. It conceptualises conflict as arising when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible, making participation in one domain more difficult due to involvement in the other. In the IT sector, characterised by long working hours, global time-zone coordination, and constant connectivity, time-based and strain-based conflicts are particularly pronounced. Women, who continue to shoulder primary caregiving responsibilities, experience heightened pressure as professional expectations increasingly intrude into personal life. This framework helps explain how structural work demands translate into everyday role conflict.

### **2.2 Gendered Organisation Theory**

Acker's (2012) Gendered Organisation Theory offers critical insights into how organisational structures and cultures are not gender-neutral but are embedded with implicit biases. The notion of the “ideal worker”—one who is continuously available and free from domestic obligations—privileges male career patterns and marginalises women. In IT organisations, performance is often linked to long hours and uninterrupted career trajectories, thereby disadvantaging women

who require flexibility due to caregiving roles. This framework highlights how institutional norms reproduce gender inequality, even in sectors perceived as meritocratic.

### **2.3 Second Shift Theory**

Hochschild's (1989) concept of the "Second Shift" is central to understanding the dual burden experienced by working women. Despite increased participation in paid employment, women continue to perform a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic labour, including childcare and household management. In the context of the IT sector, this results in cumulative fatigue and emotional strain, as women navigate both professional and personal responsibilities without a corresponding redistribution of household work. The theory underscores that employment does not replace traditional roles but adds to them, intensifying work–life imbalance.

### **2.4 Boundary Theory**

Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000) explains how individuals manage the boundaries between work and family domains. In highly digitised work environments like the IT sector, these boundaries become increasingly porous due to constant connectivity and flexible work arrangements. While such flexibility offers autonomy, it also enables work to extend into personal spaces, making it difficult to disengage. For women, whose domestic roles are deeply embedded in everyday life, this permeability exacerbates role conflict. The theory is particularly useful in explaining how technological and organisational changes reshape the experience of work–life balance.

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

The present study seeks to examine the interplay between organisational demands and personal responsibilities in shaping the work–family experiences of women employed in the IT sector. By focusing on both structural and socio-cultural dimensions, the objectives aim to capture the underlying factors contributing to work–life imbalance and role conflict.

1. To analyse the organisational factors influencing work–family conflict among women in the IT sector.
2. To examine the role of family support and domestic responsibilities in shaping women's work–life balance.
3. To assess the impact of work–family conflict on women's well-being and professional engagement.

#### 4. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a quantitative research design to examine work–family conflict among women working in the IT sector in Gurugram. The study is based on primary data collected from a sample of 168 women professionals employed across various IT and IT-enabled service organisations. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure representation of respondents from different age groups, marital statuses, and levels of work experience. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising close-ended questions designed to capture key dimensions such as organisational work demands, family support, role conflict, and work–life balance. The questionnaire was administered both online and offline to ensure wider accessibility and response participation. In addition, a few qualitative responses were noted to provide contextual understanding of the issues faced by respondents. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency distribution and percentage analysis, to identify patterns and trends. This approach allowed for a systematic interpretation of the relationship between workplace conditions and personal life challenges. The methodology ensures that the findings are grounded in empirical evidence while capturing the lived experiences of women in the IT sector.

#### 5. Analysis of Data

The analysis of data is structured to examine the interplay between organisational demands, family dynamics, and their consequences for women’s work–life balance in the IT sector. Using descriptive statistical techniques, the study identifies key patterns and trends across variables that influence work–family conflict. The interpretation moves from structural workplace conditions to personal contexts and finally to their impact on well-being, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of women lived experiences.

**Table 1: Nature of Work Demands Among Women in the IT Sector**

Nature of Work Demand	Frequency	Percentage
Regular extended working hours (beyond standard schedule)	64	38.10
Frequent overtime during project deadlines	52	31.00
Occasional overtime with manageable workload	33	19.60
Fixed working hours with minimal overtime	19	11.30
Total	168	100.00

The table 1 indicates that a significant proportion of women experience demanding work schedules, with 38.1 per cent reporting regular extended working hours and 31.0 per cent facing frequent overtime during project deadlines. This reflects the project-driven nature of IT work,

where temporal pressures are embedded in organisational routines. Only a small proportion report stable working hour, suggesting that time-related demands constitute a primary structural factor contributing to work–family conflict among women professionals.

**Table 2: Major Disruptors of Work–Life Balance Among Women in the IT Sector**

Factor Disrupting Work–Life Balance	Frequency	Percentage
Extended project deadlines and prolonged work hours	63	37.50
Unpredictable schedules due to global clients/time zones	46	27.40
High workload intensity and performance pressure	39	23.20
Limited organisational support for caregiving responsibilities	20	11.90
Total	168	100.00

The findings highlight extended deadlines and prolonged work hours (37.5 per cent) as the most significant disruptor of work–life balance, underscoring the time-intensive nature of IT work. Unpredictable schedules and workload pressure further intensify strain. Notably, limited organisational support is less frequently reported but remains structurally important. Overall, the results indicate that work–life imbalance is primarily driven by temporal and workload demands rather than individual inefficiencies.

**Table 3: Organisational Culture and Expectations Affecting Work–Family Balance**

Organisational Expectation	Frequency	Percentage
Expectation of constant availability beyond work hours	61	36.30
Long working hours seen as commitment and dedication	48	28.60
High performance pressure with continuous monitoring	36	21.40
Flexible expectations with focus on output rather than hours	23	13.70
Total	168	100.00

The table reveals that expectations of constant availability (36.3 per cent) and long working hours as indicators of commitment (28.6 per cent) dominate organisational culture in the IT sector. These norms reinforce the “ideal worker” model, privileging uninterrupted engagement with work. Performance pressure further intensifies this environment, while relatively fewer respondents experience output-based flexibility. Overall, organisational culture emerges as a key factor institutionalising work–family conflict among women professionals.

**Table 4: Organisational Policies Supporting Work–Life Balance**

<b>Organisational Policy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Flexible scheduling with hybrid/remote work options	63	37.50
Right-to-disconnect policies limiting after-hours work	40	23.80
Workload planning to control overtime during peak phases	36	21.40
Structured leave and caregiving-support policies	29	17.30
Total	168	100.00

Flexible and hybrid work arrangements (37.5 per cent) emerge as the most significant organisational support for managing work–life balance, reflecting the importance of temporal autonomy. Policies such as right-to-disconnect and workload regulation also contribute meaningfully, though to a lesser extent. Caregiving-support measures remain relatively limited. The findings suggest that while organisations offer formal mechanisms, their effectiveness depends on how consistently they address time pressures and support caregiving responsibilities.

**Table 5: Family Perception of Women’s Employment in the IT Sector**

<b>Family Perception of Employment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent age</b>
Viewed as a positive and respectable career	82	48.80
Accepted mainly for economic reasons but secondary to family responsibilities	50	29.80
Seen as temporary or conditional based on family needs	25	14.90
Considered undesirable or conflicting with traditional expectations	11	6.50
Total	168	100.00

The findings indicate that while nearly half of the respondents (48.8 per cent) experience strong family approval of their employment, a significant proportion still encounter conditional acceptance. For many, work is supported primarily for financial reasons or remains contingent upon family needs. This reflects the persistence of gendered expectations, where women’s employment is valued but continues to be negotiated within the boundaries of traditional domestic roles.

**Table 6: Level of Family and Spousal Support Among Women in the IT Sector**

<b>Level of Support</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strong support from both spouse and family	69	41.10
Strong spousal support but moderate family support	47	28.00
Limited support from both spouse and family	32	19.00
Minimal or no support from spouse and family	20	11.90
Total	168	100.00

The table 6 shows that while 41.1 per cent of respondents receive strong support from both spouse and family, a notable proportion experiences uneven or limited support. Spousal support

appears relatively stronger compared to extended family support, indicating shifting marital dynamics in urban contexts. However, the presence of limited or minimal support highlights that domestic arrangements remain a critical factor shaping women’s ability to manage work–family responsibilities effectively.

**Table 7: Willingness for Career Mobility and Family Support for Relocation**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Willing to relocate with full family support	52	31.00
Willing to relocate but with conditional family support	46	27.40
Reluctant to relocate due to family responsibilities	40	23.80
Not willing to relocate due to lack of family support	30	17.80
Total	168	100.00

The table 7 reflects a nuanced pattern of mobility among women professionals, with only 31.0 per cent expressing willingness to relocate with full family support. A significant proportion either faces conditional support or reluctance due to domestic responsibilities. This suggests that career mobility is not solely an individual decision but is deeply embedded within family dynamics, thereby acting as a structural constraint on women’s career advancement in the IT sector.

**Table 8: Primary Support Systems Enabling Work–Life Balance Among Women in the IT Sector**

Primary Support System	Frequency	Percentage
Spousal support in household and childcare responsibilities	101	60.10
Support from parents/in-laws or extended family	29	17.30
Organisational support (flexibility, policies)	22	13.10
Self-adjustment and personal coping strategies	16	9.50
Total	168	100.00

The table 8 clearly shows that spousal support (60.1 per cent) is the most significant factor enabling women to maintain work–life balance, highlighting the importance of intra-household gender equity. Support from extended family and organisations plays a comparatively limited role, while reliance on individual coping remains minimal. These findings emphasise that effective work–life balance is shaped more by domestic arrangements than workplace provisions alone.

**Table 9: Signs of Work–Life Imbalance Among Women in the IT Sector**

Sign of Work–Life Imbalance	Frequency	Percentage
Persistent spillover of work stress into personal life	65	38.70

Chronic fatigue and emotional exhaustion	50	29.80
Reduced time for self-care and social life	33	19.60
Difficulty disengaging from work-related thoughts	20	11.90
Total	168	100.00

The findings indicate that psychological spillover of work stress (38.7 per cent) is the most prominent sign of imbalance, followed by fatigue and exhaustion. This suggests that the effects of work demand extend beyond physical time constraints into mental and emotional domains. Reduced self-care and difficulty in disengagement further highlight how work pressures permeate personal life, reinforcing the persistence of work–family conflict among women in the IT sector.

**Table 10: Outcomes of Work–Family Conflict Among Women in the IT Sector**

Outcome of Work–Family Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Increased stress and emotional exhaustion affecting well-being	63	37.50
Reduced capacity to manage both work and family responsibilities	44	26.20
Higher risk of burnout leading to disengagement from work	36	21.40
Deterioration in physical health and long-term resilience	25	14.90
Total	168	100.00

The table indicates that heightened stress and emotional exhaustion (37.5 per cent) is the most immediate outcome of work–family conflict. A considerable proportion also reports reduced capacity to manage dual roles and increased risk of burnout. Physical health impacts, though comparatively lower, remain significant. These findings suggest that prolonged work–family conflict not only affects daily functioning but also poses long-term risks to women’s well-being and professional sustainability.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has examined the complex and interrelated factors shaping work–family conflict among women working in the IT sector in Gurugram. The findings demonstrate that such conflict is not merely an outcome of individual limitations or time-management challenges but is deeply embedded in the structural organisation of work and the persistence of gendered expectations within the household. The analysis reveals that extended working hours, tight project deadlines, and expectations of constant availability are central features of the IT work environment that intensify role conflict. These organisational demands, reinforced by performance-oriented cultures, create conditions where professional responsibilities frequently spill over into personal life.

At the same time, the study highlights the continued significance of family dynamics in shaping women's work–life experiences. While there is growing acceptance of women's employment, support often remains conditional and negotiated within traditional gender roles. Spousal support emerges as a critical enabling factor; however, unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities continues to place a disproportionate burden on women. This dual pressure of professional expectations and caregiving responsibilities results in cumulative stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced opportunities for self-care. Importantly, the findings indicate that the consequences of work–family conflict extend beyond immediate discomfort, affecting women's long-term well-being, professional engagement, and career sustainability. Issues such as burnout, diminished productivity, and compromised health highlight the need for systemic intervention. The study underscores that organisational policies alone are insufficient unless supported by cultural change that redefines norms of productivity, commitment, and flexibility.

In conclusion, achieving meaningful work–life balance for women in the IT sector requires a dual approach: organisational restructuring to regulate work intensity and protect boundaries, alongside a broader social shift towards equitable distribution of unpaid care work. Only through such integrated efforts can women's participation in the IT sector become both sustainable and empowering.

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