



# Work-Life Balance Strategies and Job Satisfaction among Female Academics in Universities in Katsina State, Nigeria: A Review of Literature with Mediation of Work-Family Conflict

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## Abstract

The increasing participation of women in academia has intensified concerns regarding work-life balance (WLB), particularly in socio-cultural contexts where domestic responsibilities disproportionately affect women. In Nigerian universities, female academics experience multiple role demands arising from teaching, research, administrative tasks, and family obligations. Despite growing attention to WLB in organizational studies, limited research has focused on female academics in Northern Nigeria. This study employs a systematic and critical literature review to examine the relationship between work-life balance strategies and job satisfaction among female academics in universities in Katsina State, Nigeria, with work-family conflict as a mediating variable. The review synthesizes evidence on key dimensions of WLB, including flexible work arrangements, maternity leave policies, and perceived organizational support positively influence job satisfaction both directly and indirectly through reduced work-family conflict. The study provides theoretical and policy implications for university administrators and contributes to gender-sensitive human resource management in higher education.

**Keywords:** *Work-life balance, job satisfaction, female academics, work-family conflict*

## 1. Introduction

The global academic environment has become increasingly performance-oriented, emphasizing publication productivity, grant acquisition, postgraduate supervision, and international collaboration. While these pressures affect all academics, research consistently shows that women experience disproportionate work-family strain due to persistent gendered caregiving expectations (Chung et al., 2022; Shockley et al., 2021).

In developing contexts, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, structural constraints, limited institutional flexibility, and socio-cultural norms amplify these pressures (Adisa et al., 2021; Aina & Oyetunji, 2023). In Nigeria, female academics must navigate institutional performance demands alongside expectations of domestic and extended family responsibilities. Studies in south-western Nigeria have documented elevated levels of work-family conflict among female lecturers (Oladejo, 2021), yet Northern Nigerian contexts remain significantly underexplored.

Universities such as Umaru Musa Yar'adua University and Federal University Dutsin-Ma operate within socio-cultural environments where traditional gender norms remain influential. However, there is limited empirical evidence examining how institutional work-life balance (WLB) strategies influence female academics' job satisfaction in these institutions.

Recent global meta-analyses demonstrate that organizational flexibility and support significantly reduce work-family conflict and improve job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020; Lapierre et al., 2022). Yet, contextual validation in African higher education is scarce.

This study addresses this gap by proposing a mediation model in which work-life balance strategies influence job satisfaction directly and indirectly through work-family conflict.

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to critically review existing literature on work-life balance strategies and job satisfaction among female academics and to develop a comprehensive framework relevant to universities in Katsina State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the effect of flexible work arrangements on job satisfaction among female academics.

- ii. Examine the effect of maternity leave policies on job satisfaction among female academics.
- iii. Examine the effect of perceived organizational support on job satisfaction among female academics.
- iv. Analyze the effect of work–family conflict on job satisfaction among female academics.
- v. Assess the mediating role of work-family conflict on the relationship between flexible work arrangements and job satisfaction among female academics.
- vi. Assess the mediating role of work-family conflict on the relationship between maternity leave policies and job satisfaction among female academics
- vii. Assess the mediating role of work-family conflict on the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction among female academics

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is commonly defined as an individual's overall evaluative judgment about their job experiences, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to work (Baxi & Atre, 2024). It represents the degree to which employees feel contentment, fulfillment, and positive affect toward their job roles and work environment. This definition aligns with earlier foundational perspectives but extends them by recognizing that satisfaction is not merely an emotional reaction but also a cognitive appraisal of job conditions relative to personal expectations.

Within academic settings, job satisfaction encompasses satisfaction with teaching environment, research opportunities, institutional support, work autonomy, and work-life balance (Saiti et al., 2022). Recent studies reveal that work-life balance is an antecedent of job satisfaction, particularly for women in higher education (Chung & van der Lippe, 2023; Uwannah et al., 2022).

Shoss et al. (2023) further argue that job satisfaction in the post-pandemic era is heavily shaped by organizational adaptability and inclusive policies that recognize the blending of personal and professional life. This highlights why constructs like POS and WLB strategies are essential determinants in contemporary job satisfaction models.

### **2.2 Work-Life Balance Strategies in Higher Education**

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the degree to which individuals are able to fulfil both work and non-work responsibilities with minimal conflict and enhanced well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Scholars emphasize organizational strategies that help employees manage multiple role demands as central to WLB outcomes (Allen et al., 2020). Within academia, these strategies often include flexible teaching schedules, research workload distribution, remote work options, sabbaticals, and formalized leave policies (Chung et al., 2022).

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have been associated with reduced role conflict and improved work outcomes across industries (Allen et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2022). For example, FWAs allow academics to schedule lectures, grading, and research activities in ways that better align with personal demands, thereby reducing time-based conflict (Shockley et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work and virtual meetings became

normalized in many universities, highlighting that flexibility is not only feasible but also beneficial for balancing competing demands (Shoss et al., 2023).

However, the adoption and effectiveness of these strategies vary by context. In sub-Saharan African higher education, Adisa et al. (2021) observed that institutional adoption of formal WLB policies is often inconsistent, leading female academics to rely on informal adjustments rather than systematic support. This underscores both the potential and limitations of WLB strategies in resource-constrained university environments.

### **2.2 Maternity Leave Policies and Career Continuity**

Maternity leave is a critical element of work-life balance, especially for professional women whose careers depend heavily on continuous research productivity and academic output (Williams et al., 2021). In higher education, gaps in maternity support can lead to prolonged career disruptions and may disproportionately disadvantage early-career female scholars (Aina & Oyetunji, 2023).

Contemporary research argues that the value of maternity leave extends beyond duration — to include reintegration support, childcare facilitation, and flexibility in research expectations after leave (Kossek & Lee, 2020). For example, Williams et al. (2021) demonstrated in a multinational study that generous maternity policies coupled with structured reintegration support significantly enhance job satisfaction and reduce attrition among female academics. Okeke and Ezeanyim (2023) explores the disconnect between formal maternity policies and actual implementation in Nigerian universities. Alemu and Biyazen (2021) show significant positive effects of flexible policies on job satisfaction among university lecturers in Ethiopia. Agyemang et al. (2022) show that flexible scheduling improves job satisfaction and reduces burnout. Despite policy existence, enforcement mechanisms and cultural acceptance vary widely. In some Nigerian contexts, women reported feeling compelled to rush back to academic duties due to performance evaluation timelines, negatively affecting satisfaction and psychological well-being (Aina & Oyetunji, 2023). Thus, maternity leave is not only a policy artefact but also a lived experience shaped by institutional culture and evaluation practices.

### **2.3 Perceived Organizational Support (POS)**

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) reflects employees' beliefs regarding how much the organization values them and cares about their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In modern organizational psychology, POS is a robust predictor of employee attitudes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Meta-analytic evidence confirms that POS buffers psychological strain and enhances employee engagement across cultures (Caesens et al., 2022). This is especially pertinent for female academics facing distinct work-family tensions (Lapierre et al., 2022). For instance, family-supportive supervisory behaviors, a component of POS has been shown to mitigate strain and foster satisfaction even in high-pressure academic contexts (Lapierre et al., 2022; Chung & van der Lippe, 2023).

In Nigerian academia, research by Uwannah et al. (2022) found that organizational support was one of the strongest predictors of job satisfaction among female faculty. The study suggested that when female academics perceive their institutions as supportive especially in managing work and family demands, overall satisfaction significantly increases.

#### 2.4 Work-Family Conflict as a Mediating Mechanism

Work-family conflict refers to inter-role tension where responsibilities in one domain (work or family) interfere with ability to fulfil demands in the other (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Under contemporary work conditions, conflict often manifests as: *Time-based conflict*: insufficient time to meet both work and family roles *Strain-based conflict*: emotional or psychological exhaustion from one domain hindering performance in the other *Behavior-based conflict*: incompatible behaviors required by the two roles

Recent global research indicates that work-family conflict remains a pervasive issue post-COVID-19, especially for women due to persistent caregiving roles and societal expectations (Shockley et al., 2021; Shoss et al., 2023). In academia, the pressure to publish, secure funding, and attend meetings often conflicts with familial responsibilities, leading to chronic stress and reduced job satisfaction (Chung et al., 2022).

Olorunsola and Ajayi (2021) finds strong negative relationships between work-family conflict and academic performance indicators among women lecturers in Southwest Nigeria. African studies further suggest that extended family obligations compound work-family strain, making female professionals especially vulnerable to conflict (Adisa et al., 2021; Aina & Oyetunji, 2023). These interdependencies justify its inclusion as a mediator in understanding how work-life balance strategies ultimately influence job satisfaction. Thus:

#### 2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory, which explains the psychological mechanism through which work-life balance strategies translate into job satisfaction (Blau, 1964). The theory posits that relationships between employees and organizations are governed by reciprocal exchanges. When employees perceive that their institution values their well-being through flexible schedules, maternity protections, and supportive leadership, they feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors. Perceived Organizational Support (POS), derived from this theoretical tradition (Eisenberger et al., 1986), serves as a mediating cognitive evaluation in the model. Contemporary evidence shows that POS significantly predicts job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions, particularly among women managing dual roles (Chung & van der Lippe, 2023; Kurtessis et al., 2017). In this study, WLB strategies signal institutional care, enhancing POS, which in turn strengthens job satisfaction among female academics.

#### 2.6. Conceptual Model

The proposed model suggests that Work-Family Conflict mediates the relationship between work life balance strategies (flexible work arrangements, maternity leave policies, and perceived organizational support) and job satisfaction. The dimensions of the work life balance are

the independent variables (IV), work family conflict is the mediator (MV), while job satisfaction is captured as the dependent variable (DV). The proposed research model is depicted in figure 1.

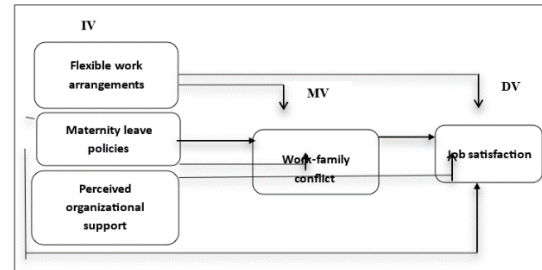


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model

Source: Developed by the Researcher based on Literature (2026)

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic and critical literature review approach to synthesize existing empirical and theoretical evidence on work-life balance strategies and job satisfaction among female academics, particularly in Katsina State, Nigeria.

The study employs a systematic literature review design with narrative and thematic synthesis. Data were sourced from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, Research Gate, and Academia.edu using relevant keyword

### 4. Conclusion

This study proposes a mediation model linking work-life balance strategies to job satisfaction among female academics in Katsina State. The study provides a structured pathway for empirical validation and policy reform in Nigerian universities.

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