

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Work-life balance is the harmony people attain between their personal and professional obligations. This is very important for health, joy in one's job and increased efficiency at work as well as in everyday life. It also helps people to balance work and personal life because it makes it easier to avoid stress and find better ways of living. Nonetheless, the balance that is required to achieve this is especially hard for women to accomplish because they are often faced with work responsibilities and family responsibilities as carers (Eby et al., 2005; Greenhaus & Powell 2006). Traditionally, women have been associated with caregiving and domestic roles. However, higher education and increased career opportunities are empowering them to enter professions historically dominated by men. Today, women drive buses, pilot planes, and manage logistics operations, reshaping industries and enriching talent pools. Despite these advancements, women in non-traditional roles like commercial driving face unique challenges. High-performance expectations, societal biases, and insufficient workplace affect their ability to achieve work-life balance. Key barriers include managing long working hours, navigating predominantly male work environments, and addressing systemic challenges that undermine their professional growth and personal well-being.

Traditional gender roles and culture that is, in countries like India, the challenge of achieving a work-life balance is even heightened. In particular, many women still receive social messages which make them to be more involved in caregiving thus they cannot fully devote their attention to the enhancement of their careers (Mathew & Panchanatham, 2011). However, the changing nature of work and family responsibilities with the overall growth of women's representation in the economic productivity push for work-life balance promotion interventions. Hence, work-life conflict research demonstrates poor work-life balance harms women's wellbeing, job satisfaction, and; therefore, such issues need to be addressed (Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). While research on work-life balance has extensively examined its impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being, it has often focused on corporate environments and specific professional groups. Self-employed women and those in non-traditional roles like female commercial drivers in the transport sector remain underexplored. These

disparities necessitate further investigation into how women navigate work-life balance in unconventional professions and its effects on work satisfaction and work performance.

It is also a collective responsibility to learn the factors that create facilitating and inhibiting conditions for work-life balance. Promoting work-life harmony is essential for sustainable economic growth, employee well-being, and gender equality. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on women engaged as self-employed female drivers. By examining the moderating roles of family and customer support, the research aims to provide new insights into the interplay between work-life balance, work satisfaction, and work performance. These findings are expected to inform policies and practices that support women in balancing work and personal life.

1.2 Concept of Work-Life Balance

The equilibrium between the time and effort spent on professional obligations and personal pursuits including family, hobbies, and other interests is known as work-life balance, or WLB. A healthy WLB is critical for mental, emotional, and physical well-being and fosters overall enjoyment, productivity, and contentment (Frone, 2003). The concept of WLB, first introduced in the late 1970s, initially emphasized balancing work aspirations with personal pursuits, including leisure and spiritual growth (Delecta, 2011). In contrast to the more restrictive "work-family balance," WLB includes a wider variety of non-work obligations, such as personal priorities and community service. The significance of WLB has grown in prominence as social standards change and more women enter the workforce, especially in demanding occupations like commercial driving. Policies that help working women in various cultural contexts are being discussed since women frequently experience multiple pressures from their duties as family members and professionals (Stoilova et al., 2020). To establish fair possibilities for professional advancement and well-being, feminist viewpoints place a strong emphasis on addressing the structural and value-based elements impacting WLB.

1.2.1 Importance of Work Life Balance

That is why having a healthy WLB is directly connected to increased work contentment, increased performance level and better mental health. On the other hand, the imbalance results to stress, emotional exhaustion and various health aspects such as depression and sleep disorders, which hampers productivity and satisfaction at the workplace (Kivimäki et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2010). In this study, nine solo-earner

professional women commercial drivers, WLB is difficult to achieve because of work hours, shift work, and physical exertion. Of these, workplace accidents, stress and burnout are high, making the females in such careers require supportive measures (Mearns and John 2007, Cinamon and Rich 2002). Consequently, research into WLB should take into consideration the formal and informal organizational environment in which it occurs, the implementation of supportive organizational policies and the employee's perspective of priorities (Den Dulk & Doorne-Huiskes, 2012). When work-family interface literature first emerged, work and family were postulated to be two separate independent entities, but later research showed that the two are intertwined. Modern theories, such as spillover, compensation, segmentation, and border theory, emphasize how personal and professional lives intersect and influence each other (Gragano & Andrea, 2020). For instance, specification of segmentation at the workplace, as in acknowledging task finish—may effectively halt work interference on personal time (Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

1.2.2 Determinants of Work-Life Balance

The backgrounds of work-life balance (WLB) have more recently emerged as focal interest because the literature suggests that work factors are mainly responsible for explaining differences in WLB. However, quantification of WLB still presents a problem because of the rather ambiguous terms 'life' referred to as 'home', 'housework', and 'family.' I have chosen these broad definitions as they enroll a certain vagueness to the concept, and appear not to capture the specific nature of the various sub-groups (Pichler, 2009). Other characteristics that have a significant relationship with WLB are leadership, managerial recognition, support for individual needs (Khatri, 2015), gender, career stage, level of resilience, and personality type. Sources of WLB pertain to the work-life interface and the home-life domain. On the work side, demands are expectations that are either conducive or not conducive to WLB depending on organizational culture which may provide for flexible working hours, leave and time off provisions or organizational culture which disapproves of regular irregular hours and blatant, lack of consideration for family breakdowns. On the home side, demands include obligations towards family, the neighborhood or leisure in the form of child care, and elder care, among others. These can be performed in-house or outsourced depending on the family Units' strengths and weaknesses. Achieving both these work and home responsibilities can make it possible to achieve a good work-life balance.

1.2.3 Work-Life Balance of Women in India

New studies show that female employees encounter many difficulties in balancing between work and family as well as care for their careers. In a 2024 report generated by Hero Vired it was shown that 70% women said work-family conflict, which is ironed out as the major cause of stress and poor health at the workplace, is the main and ultimate career challenge. This matter is supported by what was indicated in Deloitte Women @ Work 2024 report where half of the women interviewed had mental health concerns and most of them complained of inadequate support from their employers. These results underline the necessity for more appropriate strategies for women in maintaining the balance between the professional and personal sphere (India Today, 2024). Researching on WLB of women in India is getting importance day by day as this country is on the way to be a super power of economy. The World Health Organisation's survey shows that women in India suffer from nearly every anxiety attacks, working women have to manage both job and home We all know how demanding is. Extended discussion Female employees cannot manage work and family demands; the pressure of coming up with determinations affecting their children increases stress levels. These challenges have raised concern for which the International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted a career cycle framework majoring on promotion opportunities, obstacles to learning and training, employment place environment, and community support.

Any actions to resolve such concerns entail analyzing the critical factors that may affect women at the workplace as well as in the society. It should focus on the ways to establish reasonably equal career advancement and work-life opportunities. After being used, the Retention phase is highly important, which involves the Human resource development, working conditions, and proved work-life balance. However, there are so many women who experience career Interruption because of childbearing or family responsibilities thus causes career gaps. The Re-entry then means flexibility in working, retraining, and keeping seniority or status all of which assist the female personalities to re-enter the job market. Finally, the realization stage emphasizes the importance of quality employment, opportunities for progression, and the accumulation of experience and commitment in their roles.

1.3 Concept of Work Satisfaction

Work satisfaction is a comprehensive concept that encompasses job satisfaction but extends beyond it. It refers to the overall contentment and fulfillment an individual derives

from their entire work experience, including their job role, organizational culture, work-life balance, career trajectory, and alignment with personal values and goals (Judge & Watanabe, 1994). Job satisfaction targets specific aspects of the work, including task nature, level of responsibility, supervisor relationships, and compensation. Work satisfaction, on the other hand, examines the broader context. It includes factors both within and beyond the immediate job role, reflecting the holistic experience of being employed. In essence, job satisfaction is concerned with the immediate elements of the job, such as pay, opportunities for promotion, and the work environment. In contrast, work satisfaction encompasses the entirety of an individual's work experience, including aspects like work-life balance, career progression, relationships with colleagues, and how well the job aligns with personal values and long-term goals. Therefore, while job satisfaction centers on satisfaction within the confines of the job role, work satisfaction reflects an individual's overall fulfillment with their entire work experience.

1.3.1. Importance of Work Satisfaction

Work satisfaction is essential for an individual's overall well-being, influencing various aspects of personal and professional life. Understanding its importance from an individual perspective can provide insight into how it affects personal growth, happiness, and fulfillment. Work satisfaction plays a crucial role in enhancing personal performance, career commitment, mental health, relationships, and overall happiness. Research shows that satisfied individuals tend to be more engaged, motivated, and efficient, boosting their self-esteem and productivity (Judge et al., 2001). High work satisfaction also fosters a strong commitment to one's career, promoting stability, long-term development, and continuous learning (Griffeth et al., 2000). It is closely linked to better mental health, as satisfied individuals report lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, which contributes to improved quality of life (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). This positive work experience spills over into personal relationships, fostering stronger bonds with family and friends (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and supporting a balanced life. Additionally, work satisfaction enhances overall happiness and personal growth by providing meaning and purpose, leading to greater contentment (Diener et al., 1999). A fulfilling work environment also stimulates creativity and innovation, which benefits both career and personal life by encouraging risk-taking and excitement (Amabile, 1993). Prioritizing work satisfaction is essential for individuals as it directly impacts well-being, personal development, and a fulfilling life.

1.3.2 Factors Influencing Work Satisfaction

Several key factors influence work satisfaction shaping overall experience in the profession. Work satisfaction among self-employed women in commercial driving is influenced by various factors, including opportunities for skill development, the quality of work, and social recognition. While earnings are important, they are not the sole determinant, as intrinsic motivation, supported by Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, plays a significant role. Positive relationships and emotional support are crucial, as stress and isolation can diminish satisfaction (Hodson, 2002; NIOSH, 2014). Work-life balance, impacted by irregular hours and household responsibilities (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hochschild & Machung, 2012), also plays a key role. Financial instability, noted by the ILO (2021) and IFC (2021), adds strain, while unrealistic customer demands (Harris & Ogbonna, 2013) increase stress. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential for improving work satisfaction and supporting women's careers in the transport sector.

1.3.3 Work Satisfaction of Women in India

The interaction of the set factors that impact on the women has a determinant role in the work satisfaction of the women in India. One of them is an accumulation of gender wage disparity; thus, the gap makes women feel much more deprived and dissatisfied. Employed women receive less remuneration compared to their male counterparts despite performing similar tasks' this affects their revenues but more importantly their perception of equity and acknowledgement. This wage gap can lower their general job contentment and perceived worth in the work environment. Another issue is driving a work-family conflict which is often experienced by women. There is a primary caregiving assignment that is mostly carried out by females, thus adequate working and family balance cannot be achieved. This struggle can result in additional stress, burn, and dissatisfaction within the personal and professional aspects, all of which reduce their work satisfaction. Besides, women in Indian workplaces experience various challenges such as a lack of career mobility and promotion to top-level jobs and other career enhancement programs. This lack of upward mobility can contribute to a sense of stagnation and frustration, as women feel their careers are not progressing as they should. The absence of clear pathways to advancement can be demotivating and negatively impact their long-term career satisfaction. Workplace discrimination and harassment based on gender are also pervasive issues that create hostile work environments for many women. These experiences of

discrimination and exclusion can lead to significant dissatisfaction and a sense of alienation within their workplaces.

1.4 Concept of Work Performance

Work performance encompasses the execution and outcomes of job-related tasks, including task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive workplace behavior (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). For individuals, particularly women, work performance refers to the value their work contributes to their livelihood over time, encompassing behaviors and decisions that are assessed against outcomes such as income, customer satisfaction, and resource management (Motowidlo, 2003).

1.4.1 Importance of work performance

Regular self-assessment helps individuals identify strengths and areas for improvement, leading to better skill enhancement and service quality (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). This reflection is essential for business sustainability and personal growth. High performance can lead to financial stability. Consistently delivering quality service helps drivers build customer loyalty, secure positive ratings, and boost earnings through repeat business and tips (ILO, 2021). Managing work performance also involves balancing work with personal responsibilities. This is especially challenging for women who may have additional household and childcare duties. Successfully managing this balance is vital for long-term well-being (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Beyond completing tasks, strong work performance impacts income, customer satisfaction, and personal well-being. Ongoing reflection aids in identifying successful strategies and areas for development, crucial for skill enhancement (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). High work performance often results in better financial outcomes. Efficient service, positive customer interactions, and time management increase earnings and customer retention (ILO, 2021). Consistent performance ensures career longevity, adapting to market changes and maintaining steady income. Balancing work with personal life is particularly critical for self-employed women who face additional domestic responsibilities.

1.4.2 Work Performance of Women in India

The landscape for women's work performance in India is shaped by ongoing challenges and emerging positive trends. Issues like gender bias, work-family balance, and

limited opportunities persist (Economic Times, 2023). However, a shift is underway: a recent survey by We Ace revealed that 73% of Indian companies are now focused on professional development for women, up from 41% five years ago (Times of India, 2024). This emphasis on upskilling and leadership training enables women to compete more effectively and contribute strategically (Economic Times, 2024). Workplace cultures that support diversity, inclusion, and flexible work arrangements are essential for leveling the playing field. As women's education and skills advance, they become more competitive for leadership roles. In some sectors, women's performance, especially in accuracy and attention to detail, can surpass that of men (Weber & Blais, 2013). More research is needed to explore industry-specific dynamics, the impact of flexible work, and the long-term effectiveness of inclusion initiatives in India.

1.5 Inter-relationship of Work-life Balance, Work Satisfaction and Work Performance

Research on work-life balance, work satisfaction, and work performance underscores the strong interconnectedness of these factors across various sectors. Studies reveal a positive correlation between work-life balance and work satisfaction, with employees who effectively manage their work and personal lives reporting higher levels of satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). This heightened satisfaction is moderately linked to improved work performance, as satisfied workers are generally more productive and engaged (Judge et al., 2001). Moreover, flexible work arrangements further enhance work-life balance and work satisfaction, which in turn positively impacts overall performance (Hill et al., 2008).

Work satisfaction is intricately linked to work-life balance, with workers who maintain a healthy balance reporting higher satisfaction levels. Research by Indian institutions like IIM Bangalore and FICCI has found a strong correlation between good work-life balance and high work satisfaction.

1.6 Women in the Service Sector

Women have played an integral role in agriculture and rural economies, particularly in developing countries where their contributions are essential in subsistence farming. They are involved in every aspect of agriculture, from planting and weeding to harvesting and processing. However, despite these significant contributions, women in agriculture often face gender-based disparities, including limited access to land, credit, and

training. For instance, in India, women make up about 33% of cultivators and 47% of agricultural laborers, yet they own less than 13% of the land (Agarwal, 1994; FAO, 2011). Similarly, women have made substantial contributions to the healthcare sector, particularly as nurses, midwives, and caregivers. Historically, the nursing profession has been dominated by women, who have provided essential care and support in hospitals, clinics, and homes. Over time, women have increasingly taken on roles as doctors, researchers, and administrators. During global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, women in healthcare have been at the forefront, providing critical care and support. Despite their essential roles, women in healthcare often face challenges such as lower pay, limited leadership opportunities, and gender bias (Heidari, Babor, & De Castro, 2016).

In the field of education, women have been pivotal in shaping the sector, both as educators and as advocates for educational reforms. In many societies, female educators play an important role in enhancing literacy and education levels, particularly among girls. Women's involvement in education extends beyond teaching; they are also deeply involved in curriculum development, educational policy-making, and administration. The growth in girls' education has significantly impacted societal progress, leading to improved health outcomes, economic growth, and social equality (Nussbaum, 2000).

1.6.1 Women in the Transport Sector

The transportation industry, traditionally influenced by men, is now seeing an increasing presence of women in various roles, from commercial drivers to transportation management. For instance, in India, women have started working as commercial drivers, taxi drivers, and train operators to beat the stereotypes. Women on Wheels have been an important project to help women take up careers in driving; the project has trained and employed them (Pande, 2018). Still, despite these progressions, women working in the transportation sector face serious hurdles, such as threats to safety, gender discrimination, and the lack of resources and training opportunities. As widely accepted worldwide, the International Transport Forum fights for more female participation and influence in this industry (ITF, 2019). The recognition and competition of women in the commercial transport sector have been increasing gradually despite experiencing challenges. For example, the 2024 finalists for the Everywoman in Transport & Logistics Awards indicate the critical role played by women in this industry, where the percentage of female workers is only at 23% and is mostly found in jobs that are not transportation-related (Warehouse

News UK, 2024). Thus pioneers like the first female amputee to climb Mount Everest-Arunima Sinha-embellish tenacity and will of the Indian woman, juggling work and family obligations side by side (India Times, 2019). And despite such progressions, gender inequality still lingers, with many women holding lower status, lower-paying jobs and feeling more stressed and anxious than males.

Initiatives like the ILO career cycle approach would thus bridge the gaps in opportunities and support toward better conditions for women workers in the sector, and therefore would continue efforts to adjust the disparities and work-life balance measures for workers. There is still a huge shortage of women in the commercial transport sector because of numerous socioeconomic barriers. According to the World Economic Forum, if more women join the labor force, India's GDP may surge by 27%. On the contrary, the participation data of females in this sector shows that they account for less than 1% of the commercial driving licenses and also below 0.5% of the food delivery partners from apps such as Zomato and Swiggy. To bridge the gap, such initiatives as women-driven bike taxis in Tamil Nadu and "pink taxis" in Coimbatore have come up. This is a result of the various reasons behind this including attractive salaries that are usually higher than the average pay in many regions, and a high demand for drivers in the transportation sector. Organizations such as the International Road Transport Union have been supportive of the campaigns for better working conditions, the betterment of image, and women-friendly ease of entry into the field. Some campaigns include better parking lots that are safe and secure and licensing and training funds. The demand for diverse employees as well as more women getting into the labor market and regions such as US and a few parts of Europe, contributes to more and more females becoming commercial drivers. These job profiles now are seen more and more as a great career. The industry too has lately been working towards improving its diversified and friendly atmosphere in place of work.

1.6.2 Work Satisfaction of Women Commercial Drivers in the Transport Sector

Work satisfaction for women in the Indian transport sector is complex. While many value the autonomy of managing routes and schedules (Kabeer, 2016), challenges such as low, unpredictable income, limited benefits, and inconsistent work hours contribute to stress and dissatisfaction (Henly, Shaefer, & Waxman, 2006). Despite these issues, women drivers show a strong desire for career growth and increased earnings (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Regional differences in satisfaction, with Chennai drivers reporting higher

satisfaction than those in Mumbai, highlight the need for targeted improvements. Providing training opportunities, better healthcare access, and strategies for work-life balance (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) could enhance the work environment (Sharma & Kumari, 2023). Addressing these areas can create a more sustainable and fulfilling experience for drivers.

1.6.3 Challenges of Women Commercial Drivers

In India, achieving WLB is particularly challenging for women due to societal and cultural expectations. Women often experience anxiety and stress while balancing work and familial responsibilities, a dynamic amplified by the pressure to make critical decisions affecting their families' futures (India Today, 2024). The transportation sector is an excellent example of these challenges, as it is not traditional and also does not provide much opportunity to women. Long hours of work, physical labor, and irregular schedules are not suitable for women commercial drivers to maintain a healthy work-life balance, which ultimately decreases work satisfaction and obstructs career advancement (Hogan & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2002). The ILO would suggest a career cycle approach that tries to overcome these issues in various stages such as Attraction, Selection, Retention, Interruption, Re-entry, and Realization. For example, flexibility in working arrangements, training opportunities, and quality employment are vital for retention and promotion of women in the transport sector. Figure 2 illustrates that interventions at each stage can assist the female employee to conquer systemic barriers and achieve a sustainable career trajectory. Recent reports have established the urgent demand for workplace policies capable of resolving the challenges that women face in the attainment of WLB. A 2024 report by Hero Vired revealed that 70% of women said WLB as the main reason for being blocked from career advancement. Another report, Deloitte Women @ Work 2024, showed concerns with mental health and poor employer support. These calls necessitate holistic approaches to flexibility in work arrangements, work conditions, and specialized training to empower women and make them more active participants in various sectors (India Today, 2024).

Commercial drivers women have a host of stressors unique to the workplace and impact their WLB, job satisfaction, and even their performance at work. The size of such a problem is their emotional and financial supportlessness; the issues of gender discriminatory are highly increased in that. This state of being supportless often makes the

women keep working for extended periods and remain vulnerable to harassment from colleagues as well. Besides this, the working environment for women has its set of many conflicts with male colleagues, insecurity, and issues about safety, particularly when working under unfavorable weather conditions like during the rainy season or at night. Issues include work-life balance, although the main cause is because of a lack of support from both family and society, including little help with childcare responsibilities. This creates a lot of physical and mental stress, which increases the chance of depression and complicates problems concerning menstruation, as indicated by studies conducted by Siddiqui and Qureshi (2017) and Bhatt (2018). Communication with clients is another area where women drivers face tremendous challenges. There are many confrontations with drunk passengers, disputes over fares, and harassment, and the language barrier does not make things any easier. These tense experiences further fortify the observation of Kaur et al. (2019) and Sharma and Bansal (2020), as women are finding it hard to maintain participation in this still largely masculine profession.

A lot of underrepresentation of women in commercial transport arises due to deep-rooted gender bias and historical stereotypes. A woman is sometimes termed "poor driver," a factor that discourages a woman from pursuing a career in the field. Most driving is associated with manly independence and freedom and further strengthens the cultural conceptions that confine a woman. This has brought female participation in the transport industry globally alarming. For instance, in New York City, only 1% of yellow taxi drivers are female, while the percentage for black taxi drivers in England is 2%. In the ride-hailing industry, only 14% of Uber drivers are women (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2020; New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, 2020; International Transport Forum [ITF], 2019).

A multi-intervention approach to overcome these barriers will be focused on interventions at the workplace, family support networks, consumer contacts, and personal well-being. To make an environment more inclusive, exclusion based on social, economic, infrastructure, and occupation needs to be addressed. To reverse gender biases and to achieve gender balance in transport, more women need to be inducted as taxi operators, and their safety and empowerment need to be ensured.

1.7 Commercial Road Transport Sector in India and Tamil Nadu

Transportation always remains an important factor in human history because it allows the movement of products and people across far areas, which eventually promotes and promotes economic prosperity and advancements within society. Transportation infrastructures accompany human development: from original cartages powered by animals to their developments into modern vehicles, and their integration with railways, forming present-day transportation systems. All those modern infrastructures act today as the commercial infrastructure between producers and markets: goods, raw materials or in their finished commodity, together with services.

Commercial movement involves transportation of goods and persons with a commercial intention. This mostly tends to involve services. According to Shangliao Sun, in 2023, "A commercial motor vehicle means any self-propelled or towed vehicle used in interstate commerce to transport persons or property over the highways". From this definition, their contribution towards facilitating trade from one region to another is very prominent. It is supposed to be related to different types of transport forms, including land, railway, airways, as well as waterways and their exploitation for goods or products transportation and humans in professional life (Galkin et al., 2019; Li et al., 2022). This heading describes transporting people instead of goods. It is usually associated with scheduled and ticketed traveling on buses, trains, airlines, and so forth that takes people to work, to sightseeing, or to carry on some other commercial activity (Haeri, 2019; Tiwari & Gulati, 2012). In India, the commercial transport sector has undergone drastic change over the centuries that reflected the overall economic and technological growth of the country.

India's transport history dates to the 19th century when the British colonial government began building infrastructure for trade encouragement and exertion over this vast subcontinent. The establishment of railroads in 1853 changed transportation with the ability to shift people and goods over very long distances at speeds earlier unheard of. Railways soon became the lifeline of commercial transit, a means of market integration leading to further economic expansion. This was the time when roads were developed. Roads were developed, though only for military and administrative purposes. During the 19th century, tremendous strides in transportation took place in terms of the expansion of rail lines in Europe and North America and the development of steamships, which integrated world trade networks further (Chaudhuri, 1995; Kerr, 2007).

The 20th century saw diversification in India's transport sector with major developments in road, aviation, and maritime infrastructure. The introduction of motor vehicles in the early 1900s revolutionized road transport, and in mid-century, the building of national highways and the growth of road networks connected the remotest parts of the country and dramatically increased commercial transport by road. In India's case, investment also involved sectors of aviation. Domestic airlines were established together with developing airports and airports within the half of the 20th century. This half also presented the modernization of ports complemented by an increased pace in shipping infrastructure development which have placed maritime transport at par with India's commercial network of transport (Singh, 2005; Mukherjee, 2013). The 20th century witnessed a rapid growth in the automobile industry, the emergence of commercial aviation, and the growth of container shipping, transforming the way the world traded and conducted logistics (Rodrigue, Comtois, & Slack, 2017). The transport revolution that began in the 19th century and accelerated through the 20th century had deep impacts on the world. The invention of railways, the internal combustion engine, and aviation transformed the world economy and made it possible to move goods and people at a fast pace. This revolution played a huge role in the shaping of the modern world, which contributed to urbanization, globalization, and economic integration (Woytinsky & Woytinsky, 1953). Economic development, social integration, and technological innovation have been critical factors in the growth of transport systems. Efficient transport networks reduce costs of trade, improve accessibility and increase regional and international trade. Keeping economic growth with better connectivity and ability to move about in the very diversified geography of India, has required good transport infrastructure (Bannister & Berechman, 2000). The transport of freight occurs mainly by highway in India, thereby underlining the major role of commercial vehicles in the country's logistics and supply chain.

These are heavy vehicle requirements for freight, but even greater for public transport. Several states run public transport services. State governments are the largest users of passenger-carrying commercial vehicles and thus hold significant importance for both freight as well as for passenger transport. Domestic sales of three-wheelers, two-wheelers, passenger cars, and commercial vehicles increased in 2022 over the same period of 2021 according to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). The rise in growth is also highly related with the increase in the level of TNCs operating in India like

Uber and Ola. This is more evident in taxi service, which is further projected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 9.22% from 2019 to 2024, fueled by the growing urbanization and increased preference for app-based ride-hailing services for convenience offered by these platforms so as to become an integral part of the urban transport ecosystem. Over two million taxi rides every day in India; as of 2022, the market will reach above \$14 billion with 13.7 percent CAGR. Yet, there is a headwind like Goods and Services Tax that decreases the incentive for drivers, increase the ride price, and makes waiting longer. Taxi services are also currently under the pressure of increasing demand due to ride-sharing services SRide and Quick Ride.

India’s commercial road transport sector is broadly divided into public and private services. Public transport, which includes buses and railways, serves as the backbone of mass mobility. In contrast, private transportation encompasses commercial vehicles such as taxis, auto-rickshaws, and two-wheelers, catering primarily to individualized and shorter travel needs. Each category plays a distinct role within India’s road transport network, reflecting the diverse mobility requirements of its population. The structure of Indian commercial road transport sector depicted in Figure 1.

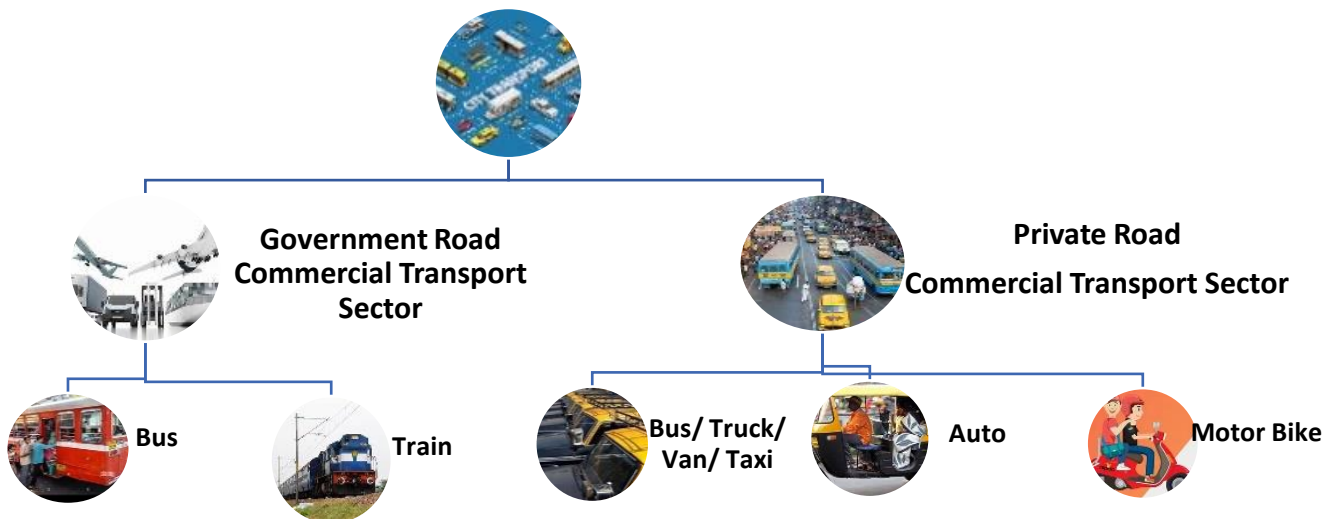


Figure 1 Structure of the Indian Commercial Road Transport Sector

1.7.1 The Transport Landscape in Coimbatore

Coimbatore, a prominent city in Tamil Nadu, boasts a dynamic and rapidly evolving transport sector. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of registered commercial and public-use vehicles in the district grew significantly, increasing from 0.7 million to 1.2

million, with an average annual growth rate of approximately 7%. This growth reflects the expanding demand for transportation services in the region. Coimbatore's transport infrastructure is well-developed, featuring major arterial routes that connect its five administrative zones East, West, North, South, and Central. The city has diverse transport networks, ranging from private buses, auto-rickshaws, call taxis, and fixed-rate tourist cabs, at major transport hubs like airports, bus terminals, and train stations. Coimbatore is an industrial city in Tamil Nadu, which has grown rapidly, with taxis being used significantly for corporate and market travel. However, challenges such as implementing GST have reduced the incentives of drivers, caused ride hikes, and increased waiting times. Not to mention, the increasing popularity of ride-sharing services such as SRide and Quick Ride is also very much taking a toll on taxi businesses. Despite these challenges, the taxies play an important and strong role in Coimbatore's urban transport fabric by broader trends in this transformation process. The Coimbatore District being one industrialized and commercially vibrant district suits its suitability in the study of understanding transportation dynamics in its workforce in its development path.

1.8 Need and Relevance of the Study

The rising figure of women in the industry of commercial driving has shed light on how the particular issues of work-life balance, work satisfaction, and overall work performance are special to women and therefore in need of more focus. Research on women self-employed as commercial drivers about specific difficulties they face has not been very extensive, despite the long-time dominance of women in this field. This study hopes to fill in that gap by exploring factors such as family and customer support influences on work-life balance, work satisfaction, and work performance. Commercial driving women who are self-employed most of the time juggle multiple responsibilities striving to strike a balance with their professional and personal obligations. It is going to lead to major stress and burnout; hence the challenges need to be understood to develop targeted interventions and support systems that will make these more efficient and healthier. This study contributes to the larger discourses on gender equality at work by identifying problems and offering actionable recommendations that might make a difference in the improvement of working conditions of women commercial drivers. This study is important and topical because it empowers women in historically male-dominated fields, fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

1.9 Statement of the Problem

It offers a different challenge for Indian labours in land transport concerning achieving a work-life balance. Generally, long hours and physical demand make it difficult for this group of workers to live out their work life harmoniously. Studies show that this conflict is experienced by close to a quarter of the workforce engaged in transport work. End. In the transport sector, a big gender gap can be noted. Few women get an employment or self-employed opportunity to get into such jobs in transport that can actually contribute meaningfully. There are specific transport jobs considered less for females. The promotion prospect in the job is limited too. A high growth in female workforce in commercial driving necessitates research work since this highlights factors and conditions for achieving work-life balance (WLB), working satisfaction, and performance on work. The added burden of traditional gender roles and societal expectations complicates the situation for women in trying to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. Work-life balance is important for working women, especially in the commercial driving sector. The research aims to contribute to supportive work environments that promote gender equality and empower women in their careers by identifying barriers and opportunities. The third is challenges uniquely facing female commercial drivers, focusing on WLB due to its influence on work satisfaction and work performance. Therefore, examining these elements in the Indian sociocultural context might offer important insights into the specific tactics and support networks needed to improve WLB for women in this industry. In addition to advancing gender equality and empowering women in this crucial area, improving job happiness, performance, and general well-being is a crucial part of overcoming such obstacles. This study is driven by the need to enhance women's quality of life in non-traditional occupations as their struggle with WLB directly affects their stability and general economic well-being. By contributing new insights into WLB challenges specific to the transport sector, this research support or challenge existing theories on WLB and work satisfaction, enhancing the understanding of these issues in the Indian context.

1.10 Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include:

1. What factors motivate women drivers to choose commercial driving as a career?
2. Are they able to balance their work and personal lives?

3. Are women commercial drivers satisfied with their profession?
4. How does work-life balance impact work satisfaction and work performance?
5. What challenges do women commercial drivers face?
6. How do customer support and family support affect women commercial drivers
WLB, WS, and WP?

1.11 Objectives of the Study

The following are the Objectives of the study:

1. To study the motivational factors of women commercial drivers for selecting driving as a profession.
2. To assess the Work-Life Balance, Work Satisfaction and Work Performance of women commercial drivers in the Road transport sector.
3. To analyze the effect of Work-life balance on Work Satisfaction and Work Performance of women commercial drivers.
4. To evaluate the effect of Work Satisfaction on Work Performance of women commercial drivers in the Road transport sector
5. To analyze the moderating effect of Customer support and Family Support on WLB, Work Satisfaction and Work Performance of women commercial drivers in the Road transport sector.
6. To examine the specific challenges encountered by women commercial drivers in the Road transport sector.

1.12 Hypotheses

The following Null and Alternative hypotheses were framed:

H_{a1}: There is a positive relationship between Work-life balance and Work Satisfaction of Women Commercial Drivers in the Road Transport Sector.

H_{a2}: There is a positive relationship between Work-life balance and Work Performance among Women Commercial Drivers in the Road Transport Sector

H_{a3}: There is a positive relationship between a linear combination of the Work-Life Balance, work satisfaction and Work Performance

H_a4: Work Satisfaction positively influences the Work Performance of Women Commercial Drivers in the Road Transport Sector.

H₀1: There is no significant difference exist in the work-life balance, Work Satisfaction and Work Performance among Age, Education, Marital status, Income, and experience variables.

H₀2: Family support and Customer support will not strengthen the positive effect between work-life balance and Work Satisfaction

H₀3: Family support and Customer support will not strengthen the positive effect between Work Satisfaction and Work Performance.

1.13 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses critical research gaps and provides actionable insights for the road transport industry, policymakers, and theoretical frameworks. The study addresses several aspects of the work-life balance (WLB), work satisfaction (WS), and work performance (WP) of female commercial drivers, a group not commonly featured in existing literature. On the basis of a predominantly male-centered profession, the study is one of its kind that beautifully traverses on this lesser studied demographic at the Coimbatore District (Tamil Nadu), capturing some of the important insights regarding women sharing a space in truck driving experience which is prevalent in rural areas. The need for this focus is especially pertinent now considering the increasing female labor force participation in India and the related battle for equality in the transport sector. The paper shows the significance of customer support (CS) and family support (FS) in work-life balance (WLB), work satisfaction (WS), and work performance (WP), exploring practical implications for evidence-based guidelines to make workplaces more supportive. Moreover, online articles can add to theory by extending the current knowledge of Social Exchange Theory (SET) with implications in this context as well as contributions to the understanding of repetitive reciprocal workplace relationships. The study adds significant value immediately and for future research on WLB, WS, and WP by mapping key variables and their interrelationships.

To some of the challenges faced by women commercial drivers, a detailed study is needed to find out their general difficulties in attaining to work and household work balance. By learning about these challenges and the effect they have on work satisfaction

and performance, practical solutions can be put in place that help for an empowering work-life balance for women. This could remain as a discussion over what should be done to get women back to work with good practices around the workplace, or close to family with flexible working conditions.

As more women enter the workforce, especially in sectors like road transport, this issue has become even more urgent. Inaction will see these challenges endure leading to dissatisfaction, burnout and ultimately reduced work performance for women drivers. Not only does it affect the health of the women but also hinders the growth and efficiency of the transportation industry. One such group that is at the forefront of these issues are the women commercial drivers in Coimbatore District which calls for specific and targeted research and intervention.

1.14 Limitations of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the work-life balance (WLB), work satisfaction (WS), and work performance (WP) of women commercial drivers in the road transportation sector, with a specific focus on the Coimbatore district. However, there are certain limitations:

- The study's sample size of self-employed women commercial drivers in the Coimbatore District is small, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions and populations.
- Exploratory study is the potential discomfort experienced by respondents when asked about sensitive questions on harassment from male customers and co-workers, and health issues, etc. This influenced their willingness to provide candid responses, affecting the accuracy of the data collected.

1.15 Chapter Scheme

The study is divided into five chapters: -

Chapter I consists of the introduction of the study, a brief description of the constructs, statement of the problem, significance of the study, scope of the study, research questions, objectives, hypotheses, limitations of the study and chapter divisions.

Chapter II provides the theoretical background of the study, review of the literature on the constructs: work-life balance, work satisfaction and work performance and the research gap.

Chapter III deals with the research methodology for the study and the conceptual framework of the research topic.

Chapter IV portrays the detailed data analysis and results and discussions

Chapter V presents the summary of findings, suggestions, scope for future research, theoretical implications and conclusion.