

**BALANCING WORK AND LIFE: HOUSEHOLD WORK,
PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND PROBLEMS OF EMPLOYED
WOMEN IN KATHMANDU**



A Thesis

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Submitted By

Geeta Rawat

Symbol No.: 705

TU Reg. No.: 6-2-364-266-2009

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DECLARATION

I, hereby, the research entitled, **“Balancing Work and Life: Household Work, Professional Career, and Problems of Employed Women in Kathmandu”** declare that to the best of my knowledge, in this thesis is my creation. No part of it was earlier published for the candidature of research degree to any university, college, or educational institution. The subject matter presented in this thesis report is the result of my work and original effort.

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Geeta Rawat

Date: 2025

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on married women's work-life balance in Kathmandu, Nepal, and how the gendered division of domestic work impacts their work-life. The support for this study arises from the fact that, in the past decades, a larger number of women have been coming to work due to factors like increased educational attainment, globalization, gender equality movements, and dual incomes. Despite times changing, there are still some traditional gender roles in which women do all the domestic work. This gender difference significantly affects their job chances, well-being, and satisfaction at work. A qualitative-descriptive design composed the core of the study, alongside applications of the narrative and exploratory methods, and in-depth interviews of 20 married women and case studies of five married women aged 20 to 45 years from mixed professional backgrounds.

The findings reveal that the gendered division of household labor creates a double load for women, leaving them with little time available for personal well-being or career growth. Despite their active involvement in professional careers, women are still largely tasked with domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and care for elderly. In order to meet their professional and domestic commitments, women adopt varied strategies, including hiring household help, calling upon extended family members, or seeking flexibility from their employers in modifying work schedules. However, the research points out the significant challenges, including physical exhaustion, mental stress, and barriers to career development due to the competing demands of work and family.

Societal norms and cultural expectations often discourage men from sharing domestic responsibilities equally, further exacerbating the imbalance. Despite these challenges, the study identifies coping mechanisms, such as prioritizing tasks, delegation of work, and adjusting schedules. The importance of shared domestic responsibilities, particularly with supportive family members, is emphasized as essential to the promotion of work-life balance and job satisfaction. The findings highlight the need for both organizational and societal systemic reforms. On the societal level, shifting traditional gender roles and promoting shared domestic responsibilities are crucial. At

the organizational level, implementing policies such as flexible working hours, remote work options (teleworking), and parental leave can significantly support women to achieve an improved work-life balance.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Household work, Professional career, balancing strategies, Challenges of women, Gender roles

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBS	:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW	:	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FWLD	:	Forum for Women, Law and Development
ILO	:	International Labor Organization
ITUC	:	International Trade Union Confederation
NAC	:	Nepal Affiliated Council
UN	:	United Nation
WLB	:	Work Life Balance

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the introduction of the study, entitled “Balancing Work and Life: Household Work, Professional Career and problems of Employed Women in Kathmandu”. The motivation for selecting this topic were formed from my personal experiences of managing various responsibilities and the challenges professionally and personally, alongside the understanding acquired from the review of literature, which guided me to select the issue and develop the problem statement. Following the introduction, the researcher aims to specify the problem statement and the research question, the researcher aims to specify the problem statement and the research question for the study in order to provide logical framework for the further investigation.

In recent years, work-life balance has become a major issue of concern for women. Women are taking up a variety of professions these days and are sharing household responsibility equally with men which has not only transformed their lives but improved families as well. As result, this has become a hot topic of discussion. Work-life balance has become increasingly important and received considerable attention from employers, workers, and researchers over the past thirty years because of the demand and the challenges faced by working women (Felstead et al., 2002).

Gender roles and responsibilities have historically been divided into two categories, which are male and female. In the past, women were in charge of running household and took care of the home by cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children while men were expected to work outside the home and provided financial support for the family (Singh & Singhal, 2016). While men were expected to fulfill the role of the primary breadwinner, working outside the home to support their families, where women tended to take on domestic responsibilities including child-rearing and cooking (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000; Singh & Singhal, 2016). Deeply rooted social norms and traditional views in Nepal were the source of the division of labor in Nepal, which limited women’s involvement in paid employment and other economic activities outside the household (Acharya & Bennett, 1983).

But as more women have joined the workforce over the past few decades, the traditional structure of labor has changed. Women's employment increased dramatically due to the factors like increased education, globalization, the promotion of gender equality, and the need for dual incomes due to economic reasons. Globalization supports in the spreading of progressive attitudes and norms, and improved educational opportunities enable women to acquire necessary skills. The trend has also been supported by laws that promote gender equality and the economic need for dual incomes has increased the representation of women in the workforce. As a result, women's lives have changed rapidly, giving them the chances to develop their identities and define themselves beyond domestic roles and pursue job outside the home (Revathy & Geetha, 2013). That is how women in Nepal, women have the opportunity to develop personally and professionally.

It resulted in the “Fastest Change on Life of Women” because Nepal was shifting from a developing to a growing economy. The term ‘fastest change of life cycles of women’ describe how rapidly and in what ways a woman's life phases and roles transform over time. This includes shifts in the socio-economic, cultural, and personal spheres of a woman's life. The reasons responsible for the “fastest change” of women in Nepal are changes in education and career prospects, economic changes, social expectations, and women's healthcare and reproductive decisions. To numerous factors such as globalization and education are seen as control mechanisms that rapidly change women's life cycle processes including schooling, employment, marriage, motherhood, and self-growth in career development (Acker 1990).

Similarly, the economy of Nepal is advancing and undergoing development, the stages and experiences that women go through these changes have changed. This includes changes in their social roles, levels of education and employment, and overall quality of life. This implies economic growth tends to offer greater opportunity and more changes to traditional roles in the life of women, thus influencing many areas of life as well as long-term strategies (Acharya & Bennett 1983).

The proportion of women in employment in Nepal has been increasing since 1990. In Nepal 2023, the female labour force participation rate is 28.7% and that of males is 53.9% for the population aged 15 and over by sex (ILO 2023). In the National Census

2021, the labour force participation rate was recorded 26.3% (CBS, 2021). Although it is not as high as that of male but the emerging trend is that women are increasingly participating in the labor force, which is encouraging. However, still the data shows that there is still significant room for improvement regarding women's employment opportunities.

Despite increased participation in paid employment over the last several decades, work-life balance still poses a significant challenge for women (Evertsson & Nermo, 2004). Women face unprecedented challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities due to modern society and women's greater participation in the labor force (Frone et al., 1992). As a result of the unequal division of family responsibilities, addressing both work and home, while challenging for men, becomes increasingly difficult for women (Bird, 2006). Unequal division of childcare and household responsibilities continues to remain as one of the gating factors in the progress women make in their careers (Cross & Linehan, 2006). The significant neglect of housework by men in comparison to the surge in women's employment further exacerbates this issue (Evertsson & Nermo, 2004). This inequality was recently highlighted by a UN Women report stating that in Nepal, women spend around 15.3% of their day engaging in unpaid caregiving and domestic work, while men only spend about 8.6% (UN Women, 2023). Such an unbalanced allocation of domestic duties has significant consequences for advancement in women's careers, as it reduces available time for work, leading to lower wages, and underrepresentation in leadership positions. In addition, the mental and physical load of handling work and home tasks most probably influences labor performance, professional satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

Work-life balance is the fundamental objective of maintaining balance between work and family duties and responsibilities (Kumari & Ramadevi, 2013). It illustrates how people choose priorities and achieve a balance between their duties in various aspects of life and achieving work-life balance is becoming as a major concern for people's personal well-being and is largely considered important to develop a healthy society (Halpern, 2005). However, juggling work and family obligations proves challenging in a variety of ways for working women. Longer work hours, lack of flexible work options, and inadequate access to reasonably priced childcare that meets family

needs are all common issues. Moreover, gender culture and norms expectations can also restrict women's career options and make it difficult for them to balance work and life.

Improving work-life balance problems is a significant measure to enhance women's general well-being, career advancement, and empowerment within the workplace. Revathy and Geetha (2013) contend that it improves mental health, raises job satisfaction, and organizational productivity. Therefore, the goal of this research focuses on to investigate how Nepali women balance their well-being and work-life balance. The study offers a detailed insight into work-life balance among Kathmandu urban married women through family segmentation, the coping mechanisms and the challenges they faced. The study focuses on urban married women between the ages of 20 and 45 years, which is when women generally reach the peak of their career life and acquire fully equipped domestic responsibilities. The study provides more information on women's experience from a diverse range of professional backgrounds (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The results are meant to further improve social perspectives on women's career goals in such global environments and further gender equality policy and practices supporting balance in Nepal.

1.1.1 Household Work

Most commonly known as domestic labor, work involves a wide range of activities required to keep a home and family life running smoothly. Cleaning, cooking, child care, handling family finances, and other caregiving tasks are some of these activities (Garey, 1999). Domestic work has long been observed as women's work, particularly in patriarchal societies (Coltrane, 2000). Conventional gender roles and social norms have determined this division of labor, positioning women to be in charge of household work while the male figures in most households are providers and breadwinners (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Over time, though, gender roles, social norms, and financial pressure have led to the reallocation of household work. As more and more women enter the labor market, the supposition that women would be able to balance the demands of work and family life have raised some serious challenges in achieving balance between home and work (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). As increased focus is being laid on the need for work-life balance in modern societies, there is

increased importance in understanding the mechanisms of domestic labor and its implications for the work and personal lives of women. This research attempts to explore the effect of domestic work on women's ability to maintain healthy work-life balance and the means by which women adjust strategies to deal with these challenges.

1.1.2 Professional Career of Women

Over the past few decades, the professional careers of women have made a significant change, especially as a result of increased educational chances, changing social norms, and gender equality developments. Previously, women's jobs in paid labor were constrained by conventional gender norms, which ascribed major domestic work responsibility to them, therefore limiting their professional careers (Acker, 1990). But these traditional barriers started to change with an increase in women joining the workforce, especially in developed nations (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Women are now actively working in a variety of professions in fields such as commerce, technology, education, medical, and law (Snyder, 2019). A number of factors, including feminist movements, the rise in the number of households' need for multiple incomes and rising higher education options for women, have made female workforce participation increases more possible. More women than ever have been going to college and pursuing careers in traditionally male fields, having more career options and professional development in recent decades (Carnevale et al., 2020). Facilitating increased gender diversity in the workplace requires some understanding of the complexities of women's working lives, including what they are up against and how they approach it in order to overcome them. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of women in the workplace, that is, how they juggle the demands of their work and their families, and the effects of this balancing.

In addition, women are usually required to balance their career and household duties including elder care, domestic work, and child care. Women's dedication to work could be compromised by the time and energy constraints generated by the cultural expectation that women are to perform the majority of housework (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Women are also usually subjected to harassment and workplace discrimination. They can face discriminatory treatment or outright harassment as a result of gender-based discrimination in the hiring process, promotions, and day to

day interactions (McLaughlin et al., 2017). In addition to hindering their career advancement, this also makes it a toxic working environment, and this may impact their emotional well-being and work satisfaction. Based on these challenges, there is a need to analyze the systemic barriers and the institutional practices that contribute to such challenges.

1.1.3 Work-Life Balance

The description and definition of the concept of work-life balance (WLB) have differed. The concept is typically described as a harmony between career aspiration and family, leisure, and personal development (Omar, 2010). The adoption of the "work-family balance" term was done to account for the broader range of non-work responsibilities such as childcare, education, leisure activities, and eldercare, which can apply to a majority of individuals, i.e., parents, singles, and couples (Vasumathi, 2018). WLB is not the equal division of time between paid work and non-paid work but one that is adequate to fulfill the achievement of a good fit between different jobs in one's life (Clark, 2004).

1.2 Research Problem

Societal norms and expectations along with traditional gender roles continue to place the most of the household work to Nepalese women even with the assurances of gender equality in the constitution and increasing employment opportunities for women. It places a "double burden" on women that impacts their physical and mental well-being as well as career advancement (Adhikary, 2021). There is evidence to show that Nepali women are occupied 15.3% of their time on domestic chores, while men occupy 8.6%, indicating that women are more involved in the home compared to men (UN Women, 2023). Also, during these years, career advancement for women is seriously compromised by cultural pressures, specifically due to marriage-related demands (Singh & Singhal, 2016). It is clear that women are ever more and more a part of the global labor force; in 2022, the female labor force participation rate aged 25-54 years was 61.4%, compared with 90.6% for males (ILO, 2023). Women still struggle with work-family balance, despite more women entering the formal, paid labor market, particularly in industries like media and technology, where women on boards increased from 30.8% in 2016 to 33.2% in 2022 (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Women still perform an unequal amount of unpaid household work, which helps to limit their ability to be successful in their careers (Ferrant et al., 2014). Similarly, Evertsson & Neramo (2004) point that the unequal division of household tasks continues unaddressed by Nepal's increasing urbanization, which keeps hindering the professional growth of women while increasing their access in education and employment access. There is limited work-life balance research conducted in Nepal, and what there is largely concerns farmers' support networks, or extended families, that do not address the particular issues of married, urban women. Based on the analyzing the issues and practices adopted by urban Nepali women to manage work and family responsibilities, and organizational policy and cultural norms that influencing their situation, this research tries to fill this gap.

Male dominances and the deeply rooted traditional gender beliefs in Kathmandu are the major key barriers to women's participation in the workforce. In order to overcome this, it is important to research the reasons behind the unequal distribution of household chores and look into how these tasks can be distributed more equally. This research will attempt to understand the roles of working women and how they manage their work and the problem that they faced while managing. The study has three particular objectives: first, to identify and study the kinds of activities performed by working women at home and in the office. Second, to understand how working women manage their responsibilities at home and in the workplace. Third, to identify the problem working women face in balancing work and personal life. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles continue to place the majority of household work to Nepalese women despite constitutional guarantees of equality between genders and increasing employment opportunities for women. This places a "double burden" on women, which impacts their mental and physical well-being and their ability to advance in their professions (Adhikary, 2021). There is evidence to show that Nepali women are occupied 15.3% of their time on domestic chores, while men occupy 8.6%, indicating that women are more involved in the home compared to men (UN Women, 2023). Also, during these years, career advancement for women is seriously compromised by cultural pressures, specifically due to marriage-related demands (Singh & Singh, 2016). It is clear that women are more and more a part of the global labor force; in 2022, the female labor force participation rate of women aged 25-54 years was 61.4%, compared with 90.6% for males (ILO, 2023). Women

still struggle to balance work and family duties, although growing numbers are entering in formal, paid employment, particularly in industries like media and technology, where the women directors increased from 30.8% in 2016 to 33.2% in 2022 (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Women still perform a too much household work, limiting their ability to realize and be successful in their career goals (Ferrant et al., 2014). The uneven allocation of household tasks persists unaddressed by Nepal's increasing urbanization, which hinders the professional growth of women while increasing their access to education and employment opportunities (Evertsson & Neramo, 2004). There is limited work-life balance research in Nepal, and most of it is concentrated on support networks among farmers or on extended families that do not address the particular issues of married, urban women. By analyzing the issues and coping mechanisms urban Nepali women use in balancing work and home responsibilities, and how organizational policies and cultural norms influence their experiences, this study hopes to fill this gap.

The major discrimination against women in employment takes the form of conventional gender assumptions and male dominance in Kathmandu. In order to overcome this, it is important to research the reasons behind the unequal distribution of household chores and look into how these tasks can be distributed more equally. This research will attempt to understand the roles of working women and how they manage their work and the problem that they faced while managing. The study has three particular objectives: first, to identify and study the kinds of activities performed by working women at home and in the office. Second, to understand how working women manage their responsibilities at home and in the workplace. Third, to identify the problem working women face in balancing work and personal life. There have been few reports about how married women, in specific, cannot manage work and life in Kathmandu. Therefore, the current study seeks to close this gap by providing an in-depth view of the unequal division of household works and its implications on the career development of women in Kathmandu. The research targets women with different professional backgrounds, aged 20-45 years, living in Kathmandu. By documenting their experiences, the research aims to inform policy to facilitate and promote more equal sharing of domestic chores, ultimately leading to increased gender equality and women's empowerment in urban Nepal and worldwide.

1.3 Research Questions

The overall aim of this study is to understand how working women in urban areas balance their work and family life, the strategies they adopt to achieve a better work-life balance, and the challenges they face. The research questions for my research study have been formulated as given below:

1. What type of activities do employed women do at home and at work?
2. How do employed women balance their home, work, and family life?
3. What problems do employed women face in balancing their work-life?

1.4 Research Objectives

This research tries to address gaps in research by investigating how urban married women in Kathmandu, Nepal, are handling their dual roles in office and domestic work, the role balancing strategies they use, and the challenges they face in achieving work-life balance. Although Kathmandu is urbanized, the traditional gender roles and unequal distribution of household work continue to limit women's career opportunities. By analyzing their daily schedules, balancing strategies, and the problems they face, this research try to find the ways on how women can be helped to achieve a more acceptable work-life balance. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify and analyze the types of activities employed women perform at home and in the workplace.
2. To explore how working women manage their responsibilities at home and work.
3. To identify the problem working women face in balancing work and personal life.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In recent years, roles and expectations for women changed vastly worldwide. In the past, women engaged in most house chores, while men were providers. However, as more and more women took their place within the labor sector, these gender roles have significantly been altered, especially in big cities like Kathmandu with high urbanization rates, enhancing lifestyles, and changing social beliefs which are

redesigning conventional feminine/masculine roles among members of families. The aim of this study is urban married women in Kathmandu and how the household work allocation has an impact on their careers. Women take on most of the household work and end up experiencing a "second shift" of work at home after their formal employment, which leads to weariness and decreased productivity at the workplace (Hochschild, 1989). Similarly, studies like Bianchi et al. (2012) on suggest the unequal division of household chores, which results in women experiencing burnout and stress. This research aims to find out how these dynamics are implemented in Kathmandu and identify the specific challenges women face in balancing work and family roles.

The study further examines the means through which women manage their work life, such as cohabiting with large families, having domestic servants, or by adopting flexible working hours. By identifying these strategies, the research tries to gain useful recommendations on how to improve work-life balance among Kathmandu's women. Based on a qualitative study utilizing in-depth interviews and case histories, the study focuses on highly educated women aged 20-45 and from professional backgrounds. This study assists in filling the gap in literature in the sense that the majority of work has already been conducted within Western contexts with fewer considerations given to South Asian urban environments. The findings attempt to guide policy development and organizational adjustments in women's work-life balance.

1.6 Organization of the Study

In the section, I briefly introduced the study's structure to make it clear and easily understandable. The study was divided into five chapters. First of all, in the first chapter, I have presented the background of the study by elaborating on the changes in society and the reasons that have given much attention to work-life balance presently with its present relevance to the working women population in urban areas like Kathmandu. Then, I outlined a statement of specific problems, comprising mainly issues and challenges which this study aimed at addressing. I explained the objectives in line with the research questions and the significance of the study.

In the second chapter, the researcher has reviewed available literature and prepares a model of work-life balance for working women, which demonstrates that balance could be reached while contributing different life aspects. The major sources that are discussed include global perspectives on challenges for women professionals, problems associated with work and family affecting balance, and the importance of work-life balance in career development among Nepalese women, coupled with international commitments and constitutional guarantees made for the women of Nepal. The third chapter focused on the methodology of data collection and analysis. It elaborated the qualitative, descriptive study design in detail, including site selection, persons involved in the research study, methods used in sampling these persons, methods of data collection, and various analysis. This section also covered ethical issues and limitations to the study design.

The fourth chapter presented and analyzed the findings on the project pertaining to work-life balance among urban married women in Kathmandu. In this regard, this chapter discussed how women's professional careers were interfered with by the gendered division of household labor and the problems women in particular faced in balancing work and family responsibilities, including strategies these women used in efficiently managing and maintaining work-life balance by analyzing personal experiences, perceptions, and narratives from the interviewees.

The final chapter summarized all the major findings and presented the overall conclusions that drawn from the study on work-life balance among urban married women in Kathmandu. Suggestions were made for informing policy decisions, organizational practices, academic research, and social support so that women's domestic and career responsibilities happening simultaneously could be more carefully handled. More specifically, these were recommendations for improving work-life balance strategies and support systems for women in similar urban environments.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Previous Studies

Employment and its relationship to life beyond the workplace have been and still are significantly impacted by changes in society's social, political, and economic institutions. The topic of work-life balance has received a lot of attention lately, in part because of changes in women's societal positions. Work-life balance is now seen as one of the most important issues facing contemporary society, particularly for women who have to juggle their obligations at home and at work (Greenhaus & - Powell, 2006).

This chapter offers a concise overview of the literature on the subject of "Work-Life Balance: Household Work, Problems, and Professional Careers of Women." This review of the literature aims to provide an overview of the current research on the relationships among women's careers, work-life balance, and home chores. By examining how educated women working in a variety of occupations in Kathmandu, Nepal, view and experience work-life balance, the current study adds to the expanding corpus of knowledge on the subject. We can better comprehend the dynamics that influence their lives by learning about the difficulties they encounter and the coping mechanisms they use. A number of theoretical models offer conceptual frameworks for comprehending work-life equilibrium.

The integration model is one such model that illustrates how various aspects of life are interrelated and impact one another in the quest for a well-rounded strategy for handling both personal and professional obligations (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990). A work-life balance model for working women is depicted in the accompanying picture, which shows how different facets of life combine to create a harmonic balance. The model's core circle symbolizes work-life balance, while the four ovals that surround it stand for important areas that affect this balance: Professional and Career Development, which covers job satisfaction and career advancement; Family and Private Life, which includes household duties and personal time; Health and Well-Being, which encompasses stress management and physical and mental health; and Social Support and Community, which encompasses social interaction and

community involvement. The lines linking these areas to the central circle signify the importance of managing and integrating these essential elements for overall well-being and satisfaction. This balance is especially critical for working women who simultaneously manage multiple roles and responsibilities.

This concept is in line with the research of Zedeck and Mosier (1990), who looked at work-life balance by examining the relationships and effects between work and non-work responsibilities. Their integration concept, which emphasizes the mutually reinforcing relationship between work and personal life, emphasizes the value of assistance and flexibility in managing both. The approach places a strong emphasis on fostering supportive environments both at work and at home, comprehending how roles and priorities interact, and giving people the flexibility they need to successfully manage their obligations (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Many elements must be in harmony and supportive of one another for there to be a healthy work-life balance. Women can get balance when these factors are in balance, which boosts their level of contentment and productivity in all facets of life. On the other hand, unbalance can lead to stress and prevent women from reaching their full potential in their personal and professional life. Effective time management is only one aspect of work-life balance; other elements include supportive workplace cultures, laws, and cultural perceptions that acknowledge the variety of women in the workforce. In this sense, families with equal domestic duties might relieve some of the strain on women and provide them more time for work-related pursuits. Supportive leadership, resource availability, and workplace flexibility are also essential for assisting both men and women.

2.1.1 Changing Definition of Work and Life (1993 to 2014)

The concept of work-life balance (WLB) has evolved over time, with various researchers offering distinct definitions that reflect their particular focus areas. Early perspectives, such as Kofodimos (1993), defined WLB as a holistic integration of work, social life, and personal relationships, emphasizing a satisfying and healthy life. Pittman (1994) expanded this by focusing on achieving satisfaction across all life domains, including work, leisure, and personal activities. Marks and MacDermid (1996) introduced the idea of "role balance," stressing the importance of being fully engaged in every life role.

Kirchmeyer (2000) highlighted the distribution of personal resources like time and energy, while Clark (2001) emphasized minimizing role conflict to ensure smooth functioning at work and home. Rapaport et al. (2002) introduced the concept of flexible work-personal life integration, where individuals allocate resources based on shifting priorities. Greenhaus et al. (2003) provided a structured approach, defining WLB through three dimensions: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. Frone (2003) focused on the interaction between work and family roles, emphasizing low conflict and positive synergies.

Later definitions became more flexible. Greenhaus and Allen (2006) emphasized that WLB is context-dependent, aligning with an individual's life priorities at a given time. Fleetwood (2007) highlighted the importance of personal control over work conditions, such as when, where, and how one works. Kalliath and Brough (2008) defined WLB as the perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth, underscoring its subjective nature. Parkes and Langford (2008) focused on the practical aspect of managing work, family, and other responsibilities.

Smith (2010) emphasized time allocation, ensuring enough time for work, family, friends, and hobbies. Pariyani (2014) acknowledged the complexity of balancing career, family, and personal development, defining WLB as the ability to manage multifaceted life demands.

In conclusion, over the time, the idea of work-life balance (WLB) has changed. Earlier, people focused on keeping work and life separate or managing time strictly. Now, WLB is seen as more flexible and personal, like a working parent who having flexibility in their workplace adjust their schedule to work from home, take care of their kids, and still meet work deadlines. Today it depends on what matters most to each person, their life situation, and how work and personal life mix together. This shows how balancing different roles in today's world has become more complex.

2.2 Global Perspectives on Work-Life Balance

Work-life conflict is prevalent in many societies, particularly among working women. While men also face challenges in balancing work with personal responsibilities, these issues are often more pronounced for women. This disparity arises largely

because women traditionally bear the primary responsibility for managing household tasks, childcare, care for elderly family members, and other dependents. These additional duties create a "second shift" for women, significantly increasing their overall workload and stress levels (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Several factors contribute to the increased work-family struggles for women. Traditional gender roles and cultural expectations commonly dictate that women are primarily responsible for household work, even when they work outside the home. This societal expectation places additional pressure on working women, as they are expected to balance professional and domestic responsibilities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Moreover, the lack of well-developed support systems, such as affordable childcare, resources for caring for elderly family members, and flexible work schedules, further exacerbates these challenges. Without such support, balancing job and family responsibilities becomes more difficult, leading to higher stress levels and a greater risk of burnout (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Furthermore, professional demands often fail to account for the additional responsibilities that women shoulder at home. Extended work hours, work-related meetings outside of office hours, and the expectation of constant availability can conflict with family obligations, creating tensions between career advancement and fulfilling family needs (Williams, 2010).

2.2.1 Case Studies and Regional Perspective

Australia and New Zealand

A review of work-life research in Australia and New Zealand by Bardeol et al. (2008) identified two key factors driving research in work-life issues: labor demographics and the changing nature of work. The review highlighted several major themes in work-life research, including the challenges posed by the evolving nature of work, such as increasing work hours, maternity and paternity leave policies, child care, legislation, and government policies related to child care. Additionally, the review discussed the impact of different family structures on work-life challenges and explored gender-related issues in work-family research. The study concluded that certain characteristics from research conducted in other developed countries, such as focusing on organizational interventions to reduce negative employee outcomes, were also adopted in work-family research in Australia and New Zealand.

Japan

Roberts (2005) discusses the challenges faced by women in urban Japan in achieving a work-life balance. Japan is experiencing a low birth rate, an aging population, and a rising trend of women struggling to balance their careers. In response, both the government and corporations have implemented policies aimed at promoting work-life balance and gender equality. However, drawing on evidence from a multinational corporation based in Tokyo, Roberts highlights the socially and institutionally grounded barriers that hinder the effectiveness of these work-life balance policies. Despite efforts towards gender equality and family-friendly policies in Japanese society, conservative attitudes toward traditional gender roles and the cultural expectation of long working hours seem to undermine these initiatives, relegating them to secondary importance.

Korea

In a study on Korean workers, the impact of work-life balance on their lives was examined, revealing an overlap between work and personal life due to the collectivist organizational climate. Workers did not perceive work and family as separate domains. In Korea, employees prioritized work over personal life to maintain the unity and harmony of their organizations, fearing that personal matters might disrupt their work performance. This integration of work and family life created an additional burden for employees, as they felt that their family responsibilities hindered their professional duties. The study also identified that the lack of organizational support and the prevailing social situation could hinder the work-life balance of Korean employees. Furthermore, the research found that work-life balance indirectly influenced employees' in-role performance through affective commitment. Affective commitment was found to mediate the relationship between work-life balance and in-role performance, reinforcing the positive effects of work-life balance. Economic and cultural changes, particularly the introduction of the five-day working week in 2004, brought significant shifts in work values, social attitudes, and increased interest in work-life balance in Korea. These changes created opportunities for employees to spend more time with family and focus on personal development (Kim, 2014).

Canada

A Canadian study established several important trends regarding work and family variables. It found that employees working for larger organizations experienced a gradual increase in working hours and overtime, which often extended into the weekends. Male employees working in the non-profit sector faced the heaviest work demands, while female employees and those with dependents experienced greater family demands. Overall, the demands of family life were found to exceed the work demands of employees (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). In a comparative study examining the relationship between work and family responsibilities among individuals employed in organizations and self-employed individuals, it was found that there was a significant interaction between gender and type of employment. Self-employed individuals generally had more control over their time and greater flexibility in their involvement, but they also faced higher work-family conflict and greater family role pressures, such as parental demands, compared to employees in organizations. This was due to the fact that self-employed individuals were solely responsible for their business, which required more time and commitment. The study also revealed that women, compared to men, had less work involvement, less autonomy, less work-family conflict, and less job satisfaction. However, women displayed more schedule flexibility, dedicated more time to the home, and had greater family commitment. Despite this, women experienced more life stress than men due to the multiple roles they played (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001).

Malaysia

Changes in the structure of the labor force in Malaysia have mirrored trends in Western countries, yet in a non-Western context where traditional gender roles remain dominant, particularly regarding the expectations placed on women. As a result, balancing work and family roles poses a significant challenge for Malaysian women (Noor, 1999). As more women have entered the workforce, their contributions to Malaysia's economic development have increased. Traditionally, women in Malaysia were expected to care for the home and raise children. However, contemporary society has seen women also take on paid work, while continuing to adhere to traditional gender roles, such as being primary caregivers and homemakers. This enduring expectation that women are responsible for domestic chores, while men are

seen as the breadwinners, reflects the persistent gender norms in Malaysian society (Westman, 2005). Most women in Malaysia do not expect equal participation from their husbands in household tasks, understanding that societal norms continue to uphold these distinct gender roles (Noor, 2006). This makes balancing multiple roles particularly for divorced or widowed women who are the sole breadwinners especially challenging.

Globally, the work-life balance challenges faced by women professionals highlight the pressures of balancing career and home life. Unlike men, women are often solely responsible for household duties, childcare, and eldercare, which contributes to what is referred to as the "second shift." These additional roles, combined with traditional gender expectations, significantly increase the stress and workload for women. The lack of supportive systems, such as affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements, further exacerbates work-family conflicts and increases the risk of burnout (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Research from countries such as Korea, China, Canada, and Malaysia reveal similar patterns regarding gender-specific work-life issues and underscores the need for supportive workplace policies and cultural shifts to help women navigate their dual roles and achieve a more manageable work-life balance.

This chapter examines these challenges under two main subheadings: work-related and family-related issues in achieving work-life balance. The "work-related problems" section explores how professional demands, such as long working hours, career advancement pressures, and workplace culture, contribute to work-life imbalance for women. It also reviews the impact of organizational policies and support systems, or the lack thereof, on women's ability to balance career aspirations with personal life. The "family-related problems" section focuses on the special responsibilities typically shouldered by women, including managing household chores, childcare, and caregiving for elderly family members. It also considers societal expectations, stereotypical gender roles, and the psychological and physical tolls of maintaining these responsibilities alongside a demanding career. By addressing these dimensions separately, this study aims to provide insights into the various challenges women face in achieving work-life balance and to identify strategies and policies that can help support women in managing their dual roles effectively.

In Asian countries such as India, the patriarchal societal structures encourage women's roles in family care, regardless of their employment status, often sidelining their professional careers. Pregnancy and maternity leave issues, along with challenges like sexual harassment and exploitation, hinder career advancement for Indian women professionals. These work-family balance challenges lead to role conflicts, which affect career progression and personal well-being. Discrimination in workplace practices and societal biases contribute to lower job commitment among women, maintaining gender inequality at senior management levels (Abraham, 2002; Mahajan, 1996).

For Malaysian women, balancing work and family is particularly difficult due to limited work arrangements. While most women work longer hours in line with their male counterparts, labor laws in Malaysia are still primarily based on traditional, fixed working hours from nine to five. Alternative work arrangements such as flexible hours are only beginning to gain traction. The government has introduced these policies to encourage women to join the workforce and help them balance work and family life (Aziz, 2011). However, there are still limited options for part-time employment, job sharing, or teleworking (Subramanian & Selvaratnam, 2010). Employed mothers in Malaysia experience significant conflict and work overload in managing both work and family responsibilities (Noor, 1999).

In Japan, the one-child policy and early retirement ages for men and women have led many working couples to depend on grandparents for child care. However, working hours in Japan remain among the highest compared to other developed countries, with Japanese men working an average of 46.6 hours per week and women working 40.4 hours per week (Bienek, 2014). These long working hours limit personal time and lead to feelings of imbalance and dissatisfaction. Women in Japan often leave their jobs after childbirth, and those who return to work do so part-time. There is a cultural reluctance to take maternity leave, as women fear it may negatively impact their careers and lead to a loss of technical expertise.

Similarly, in Bangladesh, despite the dominance of traditional family structures, many women actively participate in the workforce. The rising cost of living and changing attitudes have led to a shift towards dual-career families. A study on female teachers in Bangladesh revealed that work interfered with family life, and vice versa. The

study suggests that better work arrangements, such as flexible hours, transport facilities, child care, and reduced workloads, could help women balance work and family responsibilities more effectively (Uddin et al., 2013).

In India, a study of IT professionals found a direct relationship between working hours and work-life conflict. Women who worked longer hours experienced greater work-life conflict compared to those working shorter hours (Aishwarya & Ramasundaram, 2011). In conclusion, work-life balance remains one of the most significant challenges faced by women professionals worldwide. Patriarchal structures in countries like India and Malaysia exacerbate role conflicts and hinder career advancement. In Japan and China, long working hours and a lack of family-friendly policies contribute to work-life imbalance. These issues highlight the need for reforms in workplace policies and societal practices to ensure women have equal opportunities for career growth and a better work-life balance globally.

2.3 Work-Related Problems on Work-Life Balance

The complex dynamics of work-related issues faced by women professionals across the globe are shaped by patriarchal structures, long working hours, discriminatory practices, and inadequate policy reforms. These factors create a challenging landscape for achieving work-life balance. Blair-Loy (2003), in her article *Competing Devotions: Career and Family among Women Executives*, explores how family responsibilities make it difficult for elite women to meet their professional career goals. Through extensive interviews with 81 women in high-powered jobs, she highlights how societal expectations and workplace cultures block the ability of women to balance both work and personal life effectively. Blair-Loy advocates for institutional changes, such as flexible work policies and better support structures, to help women fulfill their dual roles.

Additionally, the International Labor Organization's (2001) report *Breaking through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management* compares the progress of women in the United States to those in other countries. Despite women holding a small percentage of executive positions, the report highlights changes in roles for women in business and government across more than 70 countries. It discusses gender equality issues, career development challenges, and glass ceilings that prevent women from reaching

top-level jobs. It also notes that women experience "glass walls," a barrier to training and mid-level positions, due to the predominance of male values and gender roles in the workplace. For instance, a 1999 survey of European Union bank managers revealed that male-centric values significantly influence the recruitment and promotion of women into managerial positions, with family commitments further exacerbating the problem.

In the legal profession, several studies have found that job-related factors such as work involvement, work-role stressors, and work context contribute to time-based and strain-based conflicts for both male and female lawyers. Work overload was identified as a primary stressor for both genders. However, additional family responsibilities disproportionately affect women, which reduce their ability to balance work and family life. Variables such as the working status of partners or the presence of preschool children can also influence this work-life conflict (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018).

Kossek and Lautsch's (2018) study provides a nuanced understanding of how work-life balance initiatives affect employees differently across various occupational levels. They observe that workers in higher-level positions have greater access to flexible work policies, while those in lower-level jobs face more constraints and receive less support. This disparity highlights the need for policies that promote work-life flexibility across all occupation status groups, ensuring equitable access for workers at all levels.

Research on employed women professionals, particularly counselors, has shown the emotionally challenging nature of their jobs. These women are often exposed to risks such as compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. A study by Martin (2012) investigates the relationship between multiple-role balancing, the number of dependents, professional experience, and overall wellness among counselors. The study underscores the need for integrating personal and professional factors to improve well-being, finding that women with high scores in multiple-role balancing report better capabilities in managing diverse responsibilities.

2.4 Family-Related Problems on Work-Life Balance

Family plays a central role in shaping women's professional lives, often acting both as a support system and as a challenge. The balancing of career aspirations with family responsibilities is a common issue faced by women across generations. In many societies, household dynamics directly influence career choices, advancement opportunities, and overall well-being. For example, in China, even when women are equally educated as their husbands, family responsibilities tend to take precedence over career goals, either voluntarily or due to societal expectations rooted in traditional Chinese culture. The traditional family norm in China has been that the husband earns a livelihood while the wife manages household chores, even if she also works outside the home (Cooke, 2007).

Long working hours and limited or no leisure time are major sources of work-family conflict for Chinese employees. Government organizations, in particular, have been criticized for lacking formal work-life balance policies, forcing employees to work overtime or attend meetings outside regular office hours. The heavy workload, along with pressure from competition and frequent business trips, disrupts family life. However, responses to these tensions vary. Some women, to stay fit and socialize, join sports clubs, while others delay or avoid motherhood to focus on their careers. The most common strategies employed by women to mitigate work-family conflict include relying on family support and outsourcing household tasks. Interestingly, few male employees ask their wives to quit their jobs to become full-time homemakers, and some women even withdraw from family and social life to reduce conflict (Xiao & Cooke, 2012).

In Kenya, research by Ojwala et al. (2024) reveals that women in ocean science education face significant challenges, such as gender bias and slower career progression due to the perception that women are unsuitable for technical roles. This results in discrimination, harassment, and work-family conflicts, all of which hinder their contributions to sustainable ocean management. Similarly, in Bangladesh, women are still primarily responsible for household chores, childcare, and other family duties. This traditional role expectation creates significant work-family balance challenges for women, despite their active participation in the workforce (Seshadri & Kar, 2012).

In Japan, work-family balance is also shaped by the traditional expectations of women as primary caregivers, particularly for children and elderly family members. With an aging population, many women struggle to fulfill caregiving roles while working full-time. The cultural emphasis on caregiving, combined with long working hours, limits women's ability to balance work, family, and personal life (Bienek, 2014). Similarly, in India, female medical practitioners experience significant stress due to role conflict, work overload, and a lack of support, which affect both their professional and family lives. This often results in bringing official work home or receiving work calls during family events, disrupting their personal time (Rout, 1995).

Gender discrimination and job segregation persist in India, despite women's increasing access to education and career opportunities. Women are still often relegated to lower-level positions, earning less for the same work, which perpetuates a gendered division of labor. Thomas (2007) discusses how this structural inequality continues to reinforce sexual divisions of labor and limits women's career advancement opportunities.

A study on work-life balance among dual-earner families in India found that policies facilitating flexible working hours were crucial in helping women balance work and family responsibilities. Time flexibility, including the ability to interrupt work for family matters, work from home, and access childcare and eldercare facilities, was identified as a key factor. Organizational support in the form of training programs and job opportunities was also found to be critical. While Participants expressed a preference for spending more time on family responsibilities, they also indicated a willingness to work hard to manage both work and family life (Seshadri & Kar, 2012).

The impact of emotional intelligence on work-life balance is particularly relevant in the IT sector. Research suggests that emotionally intelligent individuals are better able to manage the demands of both work and personal life, enhancing overall work-life balance (Kaur & Walia, 2010). However, a study conducted among IT professionals in Chennai and Coimbatore highlighted the high levels of organizational role stress experienced by women professionals, especially in dual-career families. Married women, in particular, face more role conflicts due to the conflicting expectations from family and work. These women often experience higher stress due to role overload, as they are expected to juggle multiple responsibilities (Kavitha et al., 2012).

Research by Cha (2020) further reveals the negative impact of unequal division of household labor on career advancement for women. When one spouse, typically the woman, works excessively long hours, she is more likely to reduce her work hours or exit the labor force altogether. This often results in a widening gender wage gap and a reduction in women's economic independence.

In conclusion, the challenges women professionals face in balancing work and family life are deeply influenced by cultural and societal norms across various countries. In China, traditional family expectations prioritize family commitments over career pursuit, which significantly shapes women's career choices. In Bangladesh and Japan, the cultural expectation for women to be primary caregivers creates additional challenges in balancing work and family. In India, gender discrimination and role conflicts persist, affecting women's careers and family lives. However, organizational support, including flexible work policies and the development of emotional intelligence, can help mitigate work-family conflicts. Ultimately, addressing these issues requires not only policy reforms but also a broader cultural shift towards gender equity and supportive family structures.

2.5 The Need for Work-Life Balance

The modern woman faces the dual challenge of balancing work and personal life. The constant shifting between home responsibilities and career goals can often overwhelm women, making it difficult to manage the demands of both spheres. This struggle frequently leads to increased pressure as women strive to meet the expectations of their professional roles while handling household duties. Such a delicate balancing act can negatively impact mental health, highlighting the importance of work-life balance for both personal well-being and professional success. Achieving a balance enables women to pursue their goals without having to compromise on either aspect of their lives.

In today's world, the need to achieve work-life balance has become more critical, especially for women who juggle both household responsibilities and career obligations. This dual responsibility often leads to conflicting demands, resulting in insufficient time and support to manage both work and personal commitments. The consequences of this imbalance can include fatigue, stress, decreased productivity, and absenteeism, all of which affect overall well-being and workplace performance.

Work-life balance is increasingly recognized as a state of well-being that allows individuals to manage various responsibilities effectively. It has evolved into a key factor contributing to both personal and organizational success. In this context, work and family life are viewed as mutually enriching, and organizations that support this balanced approach recognize the positive impact on both business and society. The growing acknowledgment that employees' family experiences can enhance their contributions to the workplace has led many businesses to adopt policies that support work-life balance (Gallos, 1989). Employees tend to work more effectively when they have sufficient time outside of work for personal interests and family obligations.

Supportive workplace policies, such as telecommuting and flexible working hours, as suggested by Kossek et al. (2011), can help mitigate work-life conflicts. However, Lupu and Castro (2021) argue that the mere availability of these policies is insufficient. For these policies to be effective, they must be supported by an organizational culture that fosters an enabling environment, allowing employees to make full use of work-life balance initiatives.

The challenges women face in balancing work and family responsibilities have led researchers to advocate for policy interventions that promote a more equitable distribution of domestic duties. These policies could include paid family leave, subsidized childcare services, and flexible work arrangements. Such measures would help create a more integrated approach to managing work and family life. Budig et al. (2012) provide an example of how well-designed parental leave and childcare policies can substantially increase female participation in the labor market, though the effectiveness of these policies can vary depending on the context. Similarly, organizational responses aimed at fostering an inclusive workplace culture, through gender equity programs and leadership development initiatives, can help bridge the gender gap in the workplace (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

From the employee's perspective, work-life balance involves finding a harmony between the demands of work and the needs of personal and family life. From the employer's viewpoint, creating a work-life balance-friendly culture is a challenge that involves supporting employees' family lives to ensure they are mentally focused and productive at work. Organizations that promote work-life balance are more likely to attract, retain, and develop talent, thereby gaining a competitive advantage in the labor market (Chalofsky, 2003).

Recent research suggests that employees are increasingly less willing to devote all their time to work, as they recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy life outside the workplace. Employers have begun to realize that attracting, retaining, and developing a strong workforce requires integrating work and life effectively. Studies indicate that employees today value the quality of their lives more than the amount of their salary, and they seek greater control over their work and a more meaningful work-life balance (Vloeberghs, 2002). People are no longer solely focused on financial rewards but are placing increasing importance on achieving a balanced and fulfilling life.

2.6 Work Life Balance and Career Development of Nepalese Women

Nepal has traditionally been a patriarchal society, where women have historically been seen as subordinate to men and have not been regarded as heads of households. Women's roles were largely confined to stereotypical tasks such as household chores, drawing water, caring for animals, and laboring on farms. Acharya and Bennett (1983) emphasized that despite these traditional roles, women have made substantial contributions to household income in the subsistence sector, with their work constituting a significant portion of agriculture and animal husbandry. However, gender roles in Nepal are gradually evolving, particularly in urban areas, where more women have begun to enter the workforce, traditionally dominated by men. This shift has brought about several challenges, particularly with regard to balancing work and family responsibilities. These challenges are further compounded by traditional gender roles, where men are expected to be the primary breadwinners while women are tasked with caring for the home.

The banking sector provides a clear example of the struggles women face in maintaining a work-life balance. Research highlights the ongoing gender inequalities in domestic responsibilities, where women are expected to handle household chores and childcare, even while working outside the home. Acharya and Padmavathy (2018) argue that individual, organizational, and social structures significantly affect the career growth of women, stressing the need for organizational initiatives to promote better work-life balance among employees.

Support systems, such as family and workplace support, are crucial in addressing work-life conflicts and improving career satisfaction. Adhikari (2016) conducted a study of 381 banking professionals in the Kathmandu Valley and found a significant positive correlation between family support and career satisfaction. However, workplace support did not appear to have a significant impact on work-life conflict. Similarly, Upadhya (2017) compared job satisfaction levels among employees in public and private banks. The study revealed that while lower-level employees in public banks showed lower levels of job satisfaction, higher-level employees in private banks reported higher job satisfaction.

The education sector also faces significant challenges in achieving work-life balance. Neupane (2023) examined the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among 150 faculty members in the Kathmandu Valley. The study found that long working hours and job pressure were negatively associated with work-life balance and job satisfaction, while support from colleagues and flexible working hours had a positive effect. Work-life balance has been shown to influence motivation and performance in the fields of commerce and insurance as well. Gnawali (2024) explored non-monetary rewards within Nepalese commercial banks and found that recognition, flexible working hours, career development opportunities, and job security positively impacted motivation.

In the insurance sector, factors such as supervisor support, a flexible working environment, job aids, and teamwork have been found to positively influence employee performance (Rawal et al., 2022). Kunwar et al. (2022) found that salary, flexible working hours, working environment, performance appraisal, location, and training all influence employee retention in insurance companies, reinforcing the link between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Bastola (2023) similarly found that reward and recognition, a supportive working environment, flexible working hours, and good job design positively influenced job satisfaction.

The health sector presents additional challenges for women in terms of career progression. Rijal and Wasti (2018) surveyed 110 working women and identified career preference, education investments, and personal effort as key factors affecting women's careers. However, challenges such as discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of mentorship were also highlighted, leading the authors to call for greater gender

balance and equal opportunities in the health sector. Paudel (2023) showed that job security and satisfaction significantly improve work-life balance for nurses, while job commitment did not have a significant impact.

In the teaching sector, Maharjan (2021) examined how individual and family obstacles impact the career development of female school teachers in Nepal. The study concluded that the dual burden of professional duties and household responsibilities creates considerable challenges. Family and spouse support were found to be significant in enabling work-life balance, as demonstrated by Manandhar (2017) in a study involving 90 full-time working mothers from the telecommunications and academic sectors in the Kathmandu Valley. The study found a positive relationship between family support and work-life balance, which facilitated career commitment and helped women manage both professional and personal responsibilities.

The gender gap in Nepal remains significant, creating challenges for career women in balancing family responsibilities and professional roles. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by working women in maintaining a work-life balance and examine the implications of work-life imbalance on the career development of these women.

2.6.1 International Commitments and Constitutional Guarantees to Nepalese Women

The Government of Nepal has made a number of international commitments aimed at protecting the rights and empowering women in the country. These commitments focus on enhancing gender equality in employment opportunities, safeguarding women's rights, and ending all forms of discrimination. Among the key international instruments Nepal is committed to are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

One of the significant international commitments is CEDAW, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and signed by Nepal in 1991. CEDAW seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination by urging states to implement measures that ensure equality in all aspects of life, including the workplace. The

Convention calls for the elimination of discrimination against women and mandates steps to provide equal job opportunities, free from sexual harassment and other forms of bias (National Women Commission, 2021). Furthermore, Nepal has ratified the ILO's Convention No. 100 (1951) on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value in 1976 which emphasizes the principle of equal pay for equal work (ITUC-NAC, 2019). In addition, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) calls for gender equality in sharing care work between men and women. Nepal's commitment to this declaration necessitates the implementation of gender-sensitive policies that promote gender equality in caregiving roles (Beijing Declaration, 1995).

The positive strides towards improving the status of women in Nepal are reflected in the country's Constitution. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) prohibits gender-based discrimination and guarantees equal protection under the law, along with equal rights and opportunities for both men and women (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Article 18). The Constitution also supports women's rights in employment, including the right to access employment and social security under Article 33, while further promoting workers' rights such as the right to form trade unions, protection from forced and child labor, reasonable remuneration, and safe working conditions under Article 34 (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). Additionally, the Constitution mandates a 33% reservation for women in the Constituent Assembly, ensuring women's participation in governance (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). This framework is reinforced by the Labour Act, 2017, which enshrines the principle of equal pay for work of equal value for men and women.

The Labour Act, 2017 also provides maternity leave benefits, including 98 days of maternity leave, of which 60 days are paid, supporting the Constitutional guarantee of reproductive health and safe motherhood (Labour Act, 2017). However, according to a report by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), nearly 70% of organizations in Nepal, particularly private institutions, either do not offer maternity leave or provide only one to two months of leave (FWLD, 2020, as cited in The Kathmandu Post, 2025).

Women's Rehabilitation Centre, highlights that in a patriarchal society like Nepal, mothers are traditionally expected to bear sole responsibility for raising children. While some employers provide flexible maternity leave and women-friendly work environments, the lack of support from partners during pregnancy and after childbirth

can often force women to leave their jobs (Shrestha, 2020). Despite these progressive legal provisions, patriarchal values and discriminatory practices continue to prevail in Nepalese society, affecting women's economic, social, and political participation. To achieve equitable and sustainable development, it is crucial for both men and women to actively engage in these efforts, challenging traditional gender roles and fostering inclusive growth (Shrestha, 2020).

2.7 Theoretical Review

A theoretical review is an in-depth look at the main theories related to a specific topic or research question. It helps build a strong understanding of the ideas and models that shape the subject. Unlike a literature review, which focuses on summarizing past research, a theoretical review highlights the concepts and theories that guide the study. It plays a crucial role in setting up the research by providing a clear framework and pointing out gaps or areas for further exploration.

2.7.1 Applied Theories

Modernization Theory and Gender Role Theory, offer important perspectives on women navigate their roles in household management and the workplace. Let's break down how these theories relate to women's household management and balancing work responsibilities:

2.7.2 Modernization Theory and Work-Life Balance

Modern societal changes have led to an increasing interest among women in participating in the workforce, including involvement in decision-making processes and various sectors such as business, education, and politics. Women are also contributing more to household income and improving their economic status by working outside the home. Modernization theory explains how societies change and develop over time, transitioning from traditional, rural agrarian societies to modern, urban, and industrial societies. This shift has significantly impacted economic structures, social norms, and cultural values, reshaping women's roles in both professional and domestic settings.

Modernization Theory and Household Role: Modernization theory provides a broad view of societal changes, focusing on how shifts from traditional agrarian to

modern industrial and post-industrial societies have affected women's roles. As societies modernize, women gain greater access to education, employment, and political representation. This shift encourages gender equality, with the understanding that empowering women leads to broader societal benefits, like improved economic growth and better health outcomes.

However, modernization also brings social inequality and challenges, particularly in balancing work and household responsibilities. The increasing participation of women in the workforce has led to a "dual burden," where women are expected to contribute to both household income and traditional caregiving roles. This work-life balance dilemma emerges from conflicting professional ambitions and societal expectations.

Redefinition of Gender Roles and Challenges: Modernization has facilitated the reshaping of gender roles, encouraging women to take on professional roles while maintaining domestic responsibilities. In *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World* (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), the authors explore the impact of modernization on gender roles. Their research indicates that as societies transition from agrarian to industrial and post-industrial stages, gender roles are challenged and reshaped.

Women are expected to participate more in the workforce while still managing traditional domestic responsibilities (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). This dual burden creates a conflict between professional and household roles, making it challenging for women to achieve work-life balance. Anthony Giddens' concept of reflexive modernization further explains how modern society is in a constant state of change, requiring individuals and institutions to continuously adapt. Women are actively redefining their roles, negotiating for equality both at home and at work, and leveraging modern technologies to better manage work-life balance.

The Need for Structural Support Systems: Modernization highlights the necessity for policies and systems that help women navigate their dual roles. This includes flexible work hours, parental leave, and equitable household task distribution. As women become more involved in the workforce, society must create structures that allow for better work-life integration, such as shared caregiving roles with men. While

modernization has provided greater economic independence and transformed gender roles, significant challenges remain. Overcoming these challenges requires an approach that integrates policy reforms, employer support, and societal mindset shifts. By fostering structural support systems such as flexible work policies and equitable household task distribution, societies can create a more equitable and supportive environment for women to thrive in both professional and personal spheres.

2.7.3 Gender Role Theory and Work-Life Balance

Gender Role Theory, as you mentioned, posits that society dictates certain behaviors and responsibilities based on gender. Traditionally, women were assigned domestic roles, while men were seen as the breadwinners. These roles are socially constructed rather than biologically determined, and they shape how men and women behave and are expected to behave in both the home and workplace. In the context of Work -Life Balance, Gender Role Theory:

Perpetuates Traditional Domestic Responsibilities: Despite modernization, traditional gender roles often persist. Women are still often expected to handle the majority of household chores, child-rearing, and caregiving responsibilities, even if they also work outside the home. This dual burden is a central issue, and women experience significant stress in trying to balance these competing demands. This aligns with Hochschild's concept of the "Second Shift," where women work a full day at their paid job but still come home to take on a "second shift" of household labor.

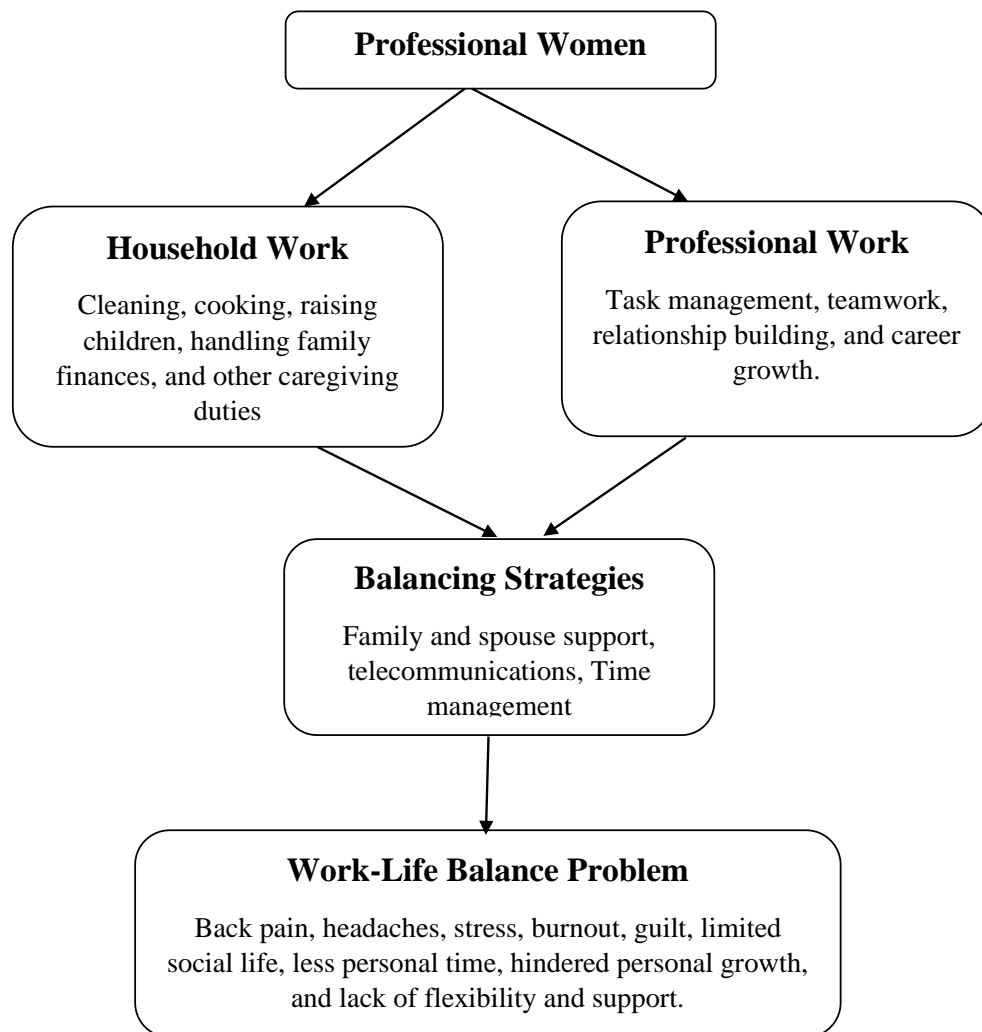
Influence of Social Norms on Women's Choices: According to the "Doing Gender" framework by West and Zimmerman, gender is not just something that people are born with; it is something they perform in everyday life. Women are socialized to embrace certain roles, and these expectations are reinforced through interactions with others. As a result, women often internalize the belief that they should be primarily responsible for household management, even when they are working full-time jobs.

Reinforcement of Gender Inequality: Gender Role Theory shows how societal norms can perpetuate gender inequality in both the home and workplace. Even when women are advancing professionally, they are often still expected to manage the home, leading to the "second shift" and contributing to the work-life balance

struggles. The unequal distribution of domestic tasks further perpetuates gender inequality in the household, as it leaves women with little time or energy to focus on their careers or personal goals.

Challenges in Shifting Gender Norms: While gender roles are not fixed and evolve over time, they do not always change at the same pace as women's professional participation. Modernization, while offering women new opportunities, also presents challenges in breaking free from traditional expectations. Men's roles in caregiving and household tasks have not always evolved at the same rate, which continues to reinforce the gendered division of labor in the home.

2.7.4 Theoretical Framework



2.8 Research Gaps

The research gaps in work-life balance for women, particularly in the urban context of Kathmandu, Nepal, and other South Asian regions, highlight several key areas needing further exploration. First, there is a lack of context-specific studies on how local cultural, familial, and societal structures influence women's work-life balance in urban South Asia, as most existing research has focused on Western contexts. Additionally, the impact of rapid urbanization and economic development in cities like Kathmandu on women's work-life dynamics requires further investigation. This includes exploring how urban women face unique challenges such as shifting family structures and evolving social values. Another gap is the role of support systems and organizational policies in South Asia, especially in terms of their availability, implementation, and effectiveness. There is also a need for research on intersectionality, considering how factors such as income, education, and marital status intersect with gender to shape work-life balance experiences. Further, the evolving gender norms and expectations in contemporary South Asia, particularly regarding caregiving and household roles, need deeper examination.

Additionally, there is a need for longitudinal studies to track how work-life balance challenges evolve over time, as most existing research provides only cross-sectional snapshots. Comparative studies across different urban centers in South Asia could provide insights into whether the challenges faced by women in Kathmandu are unique or part of broader regional trends. The role of technology in work-life balance, particularly regarding remote work and digital tools, is also an underexplored area, with little research on its impact on women's ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. Other important research gaps include the effectiveness of maternity leave and family support systems, the impact of organizational culture on work-life balance, and how regional differences within countries affect policy implementation. Finally, exploring how men can be more actively involved in work-life balance solutions, especially in dual-career households, could contribute to a more holistic understanding of the issue. Addressing these gaps would provide valuable insights into improving work-life balance for women, particularly in rapidly growing urban settings like Kathmandu.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a significant means of methodically addressing the research problem. It can be defined as a science of researching how research is done sociologically/ scientifically. In this chapter, I address research philosophy, research design, study location, respondent selection as sampling technique, nature and sources of data, data collection techniques, data presentation, and analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The study adopts an interpretive philosophy, which is interested in understanding how individuals make sense of their lived experiences in social situations. Unlike positivism, interpretivism views social realities as subjective and constructed from human interaction (Schwandt, 2014). Its primary focus is exploring employed women's individual experiences of managing household responsibility and careers, focusing on the meanings they assign to these challenges. Epistemological stance is subjectivist in the sense that knowledge is derived from between participant and researcher interaction. It stands against universal facts as implying individual contexts, experiences, and emotions constitute knowledge in terms of work-life balance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The subjective truths are obtained using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews where knowledge is conceived to be context-specific. The ontological position is relativist, wherein reality is constructed socially and manifests in different ways based on how one sees things (Bryman, 2016). Work-life balance is viewed as a pluralistic reality that is shaped by factors such as family, career, and culture. The study assumes that different women have different views on work-life balance based on their own circumstances. Axiologically, researcher values matter given the fact that personal beliefs influence data collection and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Reflexivity is applied whereby the researcher critically reflects on how their background influences the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical values of respect, confidentiality, and integrity guide the process; ensuring the voices of participants are represented well without breaching privacy. Together, these philosophical assumptions guide the research approach employed to understand women's work-life balance subjective realities in a context-specific way while being ethical in nature.

Philosophical Position: Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a qualitative research philosophy that emphasizes understanding social phenomena through individuals' subjective experiences. It is ideal for exploring the meaning and interpretation of lived experiences, as seen in this study on the challenges of balancing household work and professional careers among employed women. Interpretivism holds that reality is socially constructed and shaped by individual and collective perceptions (Schwandt, 2014). This approach focuses on understanding how employed women interpret their roles in the household and workplace, rather than treating work-life balance as an objective, quantifiable issue. It acknowledges that women's perceptions of work-life balance are influenced by their cultural, social, and personal contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study aims to gain deep insights into the personal and social factors affecting women's experiences, not to generalize results.

Interpretivism supports the idea that individuals interpret their experiences differently, influenced by broader social structures. The research, therefore, seeks to explore how women navigate the conflicting demands of work and home life using qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and focus groups (Bryman, 2016). In this approach, the researcher is seen as an active participant, co-constructing knowledge with participants and remaining reflexive about their biases (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This ensures findings are rooted in participants' perspectives, rather than imposed judgments.

By adopting interpretivism, this study aims to explore employed women's lived experiences of work-life balance, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges they face, shaped by their social and cultural contexts.

3.2 Research Design

This study focuses on urban women, specifically in Kathmandu, Nepal, where modern development intersects with traditional societal structures, creating unique challenges for women balancing dual roles. To better understand participants' lived experiences, a qualitative research approach was chosen. Qualitative methods provide rich insights into personal experiences, coping strategies, and perspectives on balancing household and professional duties (Goulding, 2005).

A review of existing literature highlights a gap in research on the work-life balance of Nepalese women, with few qualitative studies directly addressing this issue. For example, Coyle et al. (2014) explored the insecurities of working women in Nepal through interviews, while Huo (2013) combined surveys and interviews to examine the experiences of both male and female participants in China. Similarly, studies by Ferdoos (2005) and Rai (2015) used qualitative methods to investigate gender inequality and the social status of women in various countries. These studies emphasize the value of qualitative research in understanding the complexities of participants' experiences.

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach to gain in-depth insights into the challenges urban women face and the strategies they employ to balance both family and work responsibilities. While the primary research design is descriptive, the study also incorporates elements of narrative and exploratory research.

3.2.1 Descriptive Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to provide a detailed and accurate profile of urban married working women's dual roles and the unequal burden of household labor they face. This design systematically presents the lived experiences of employed women in Kathmandu, focusing on their daily roles, the tasks they perform both at home and at work, and the specific challenges they encounter while balancing the two. Both primary and secondary data were collected, with an emphasis on primary data. Primary data consisted of narratives from 20 informants gathered through in-depth interviews, including five case studies secondary data included books, journal articles, and websites that provided contextual background to inform the study.

3.2.2 Narrative Research Design

Although the primary design of this study is descriptive, narrative research elements were included to present the lived experiences of employed women in a way that captures the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of their challenges. Narrative research helps in understanding how participants interpret and give meaning to their experiences, offering deeper insights into the personal realities of balancing work and family life. This strengthens the depth and richness of the data, making it more meaningful and relatable to readers.

3.2.3 Exploratory Research Design

Exploratory research design was used to uncover new insights and patterns regarding how cultural norms, family structures, and employment practices affect women's work-life balance. While the primary design is descriptive, the exploratory elements aim to generate ideas for further research by investigating aspects that may not be fully understood or explored. This design uses qualitative methods such as interviews, case studies and observations to explore new dimensions of the topic.

In conclusion, this study uses a qualitative approach, combining descriptive, narrative, and exploratory research designs to examine the work-life balance of urban women in Kathmandu. The descriptive design outlines their daily roles, the narrative design highlights their emotional and social experiences, and the exploratory design uncovers insights into cultural and societal factors. Together, these approaches will provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges women face in balancing work and family life.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary data to address the research questions. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and case studies, which offered deeper insights into how women balance home and work responsibilities. Secondary data, derived from existing literature, helped contextualize the primary findings and provided additional perspectives on work-life balance, gender roles, and urban women's experiences.

3.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from participants, providing firsthand, unprocessed information that is considered more reliable and valid, as it has not been changed or interpreted by others. For this dissertation, I gathered primary field-based data during fieldwork conducted from June 18 to July 10, 2024, in the Kathmandu Valley. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and case studies with individuals who actively balance family and career responsibilities. Additionally, with people who face unique challenges in managing work and household duties. These data are purely primary in nature and were collected through various types of interviews.

3.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research papers, and online resources. These sources helped provide background information on gender roles, work-life balance, and the sociocultural factors influencing women's career choices. The secondary data enriched the analysis and offered a broader context, enhancing the overall depth and credibility of the study.

3.4 Rationale for Site Selection

In this research to select the Kathmandu Valley for location of the study, I have two reasons, First, Kathmandu Valley, as the capital city of Nepal, is highly populated and urbanized, making it an ideal location for conducting research. It is a unique combination of modern development and traditional societal norms, providing a rich context for exploring how women balance family and career responsibilities. As an ancient city and a center of new ideas and revolutions, Kathmandu is home to a diverse population in terms of ethnicity, language, region, and culture. Despite being more educated and empowered, women in Kathmandu often face deep-rooted cultural traditions and gender roles that contribute to the dual burden of household and professional work. Second reason is Kathmandu is my living place so my familiarity with the urban environment and the dynamic socio-cultural context of Kathmandu made it easier to find participants and gather meaningful insights.

3.5 Sampling Technique

In this qualitative study, purposive sampling was employed to select 20 urban married women aged 20 to 45 from Kathmandu, representing diverse professions such as small-scale entrepreneurs, nurses, bank employees, NGO workers, and teachers. Participants were chosen based on factors like age, marital status, education level, professional background, and family situation to ensure a broad range of experiences. Purposive sampling was chosen for its effectiveness in qualitative research to deliberately select individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the research topic, ensuring the collection of rich, relevant, and diverse data. The inclusion criteria were married women aged between 20 and 45 years, residing in urban areas of Kathmandu, and engaged in the specified professions. These criteria

were established to capture a demographic actively balancing professional and domestic roles, providing insights into their unique challenges and coping strategies. A sample size of 20 participants was deemed sufficient for achieving data saturation, where no new information emerges from additional interviews. This aligns with qualitative research standards, suggesting that smaller, focused samples can provide depth and detail in understanding participants' experiences.

In-depth Interviews: Open-ended, unstructured interviews were conducted with 20 purposefully selected Participants from diverse professions, such as business, nursing, banking, NGO, and teaching. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained. These interviews took place in private and comfortable settings, such as Participant s' offices or quiet cafés, enabling candid conversations about their personal experiences and strategies for managing both work and household responsibilities. Non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, were also observed to enhance the understanding of responses.

Case Studies: Five case studies were conducted, each focusing on a woman from a different profession. The case studies offered in-depth insights into how these women navigated the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities. Data were collected through interviews and observations, providing a rich, contextual understanding of each participant's experiences.

3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

In this qualitative study, data were collected through in-depth interviews and case studies to examine the work-life balance of urban women in Kathmandu. To analyzed this research, researcher employed a combination of descriptive, narrative and exploratory designs, utilizing narrative analysis to interpret the findings This method facilitated the identification of key themes and patterns related to the impact of domestic workload on women's careers in Kathmandu. Factors such as qualifications, time spent on housework, family size, career paths, social support, and coping strategies were considered during analysis. The findings were presented in narrative form, with direct quotes from participants illustrating common strategies for managing work and family responsibilities. Supporting tables were included when necessary to present demographic data or categorize strategies, but the primary focus remained on the participants' stories.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were crucial throughout this study; as qualitative research involves close engagement with participants. Key ethical principles included informed consent, confidentiality, minimizing harm, and respecting participants' rights. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methods, and their role, and consent was obtained prior to data collection. All information was kept confidential, and efforts were made to minimize discomfort during the interview process. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences freely, without fear of judgment. The researcher also respected cultural differences and maintained awareness of power dynamics throughout the study.

3.8 Limitation of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how household responsibilities affect women's careers, focusing on the challenges they face and the strategies they use to balance work and life in urban areas of Kathmandu. However, this study has certain limitations that should be taken into account.

Firstly, the research was based on a small sample of 20 women aged 20 to 45 from various professional backgrounds. While their experiences provide valuable insights, the limited sample size and its homogeneity may not fully represent the broader population of women in Kathmandu or other urban areas. As a result, the findings may not reflect the experiences of women from different regions, socioeconomic groups, or cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the study employed a qualitative research method, which enabled a deeper understanding of individual perspectives. However, this approach restricts the generalizability of the findings, as qualitative data is not intended to represent wider trends or statistical significance. A larger sample size or the use of quantitative or mixed methods could have added broader context and stronger generalizability to the results. Additionally, since the data is based on self-reported experiences, there is a possibility of response bias. Participants may have underreported or overemphasized certain aspects of their experiences due to social expectations or personal perceptions.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. Future research involving a larger, more diverse sample and incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods could offer a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of how household responsibilities impact women's work-life balance.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

In this chapter, I present the detailed profile of the respondents. The demographic information of the respondents, including age, level of education, number of children, occupation, family composition, and living arrangements, has been systematically documented. These details were carefully collected during the interview process to better understand their socio-demographic background.

During the fieldwork, I conducted interviews with 20 respondents. The study first provides the background information of the respondents, including age, education level, number of children, occupation, family composition, and living arrangements. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic, I purposefully selected a heterogeneous group of respondents with different levels of education and job types. This helped identify both common and unique experiences, giving a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

4.1 Age Group of Respondents

Age is an important factor that influences how people manage their responsibilities, both at home and at work. As individuals grow older, their physical and mental maturity changes, which affects the roles they take on in their family and society. For women, especially, balancing household duties and professional life can be challenging. These challenges often vary depending on their age, as younger women may face different pressures compared to older women. So, to better understand how age impacts this balance, I divided the respondents into five age groups. This helps in analyzing how responsibilities and challenges differ across various stages of life. The table below shows how many respondents fall into each group.

Table 1

Age Group of Respondents

Age Group (Years)	Number of Respondents
20-25	1
26-30	3
31-35	6
36-40	5
41-45	5
Total	20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

With age as a key factor, I planned to interview respondents aged between 20 and 45 years. This age group was chosen because individuals in this age group, in particular, often juggle multiple roles and challenges, such as building a career, managing household duties, and raising a family. This allows for an analysis of how these responsibilities are managed at different stages of adulthood. Among the 20 respondents, six are aged 31-35 (the largest group), five each are 36-40 and 41-45, three are 26-30, and one is 20-25. The study found that women aged 30-38 focus more on career growth, marriage, and parenting, requiring greater effort to balance work and family life. Women aged 39-45 handle responsibilities more maturely than other aged group, as their children grow older, but they still face increasing demands. Similarly, the respondent aged between 20-29 respond that they are starting their careers or education, and beginning to take on household and marriage responsibilities. The study also found that they are more depend on their in-laws for support in managing certain household activities, such as finances and daily household management compared to other respondents.

4.2 Level of Education of Respondents

Education plays a key role in an individual's development. For this study, I focused on respondents who are educated, but I did not specify or categorize them into particular educational levels. After collecting data from field survey (2024) I categorized the level of education in terms of their response and the number of respondents so, the table below shows the number of respondents at each educational level.

Table 2

Level of Education of Respondents

Level of Education	Number of Respondents
Bachelor's Degree	7
Master's Degree	10
Double Master's Degree	2
M. Phil	1
Total	20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Among the 20 respondents, the educational background shows that the majority, 10 respondents, have a Master's Degree, making it the largest group. This is followed by seven respondents with a Bachelor's Degree. A few have pursued higher education, with two holding a Double Master's Degree and one having an M.Phil. This indicates that most respondents are well-educated, with a significant portion possessing advanced academic qualifications.

4.3 Occupation Status of Respondents

For this study, I focused on employed women but did not initially categorize them by specific occupations. At first, I planned to interview respondents from the teaching profession. However, I realized that including women from different occupational backgrounds would provide a wider range of perspectives and results. So, I collected information from women working in various fields, such as teaching, banking, NGOs, nursing, and business ownership. So, based on that the respondents' occupations are divided into five groups to analyze the distribution effectively.

Table 3

Occupation Status of Respondents

Occupation	Number of Respondents
Teaching	4
Banking	4
Nursing	4
NGO	4
Business Owner	4
Total	20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

My research show that the respondents work in a variety of professions, including teaching, banking, NGO sector, nursing, and business ownership and this mix reflects diverse professional views, offering a wide range of perspectives. The study found that among the 20 respondents, those from a nursing background, especially those who have breastfeeding children, struggle the most with balancing work and life. This is due to their shift-based duties, including 24-hour shifts, which require extra effort to manage. Bankers face challenges because of their hectic schedules and competitive

office environments. In contrast, teachers and NGO workers have slightly fewer difficulties, while business owners enjoy some flexibility in managing their time. However, all respondents, regardless of profession, face challenges in balancing their work and household duties.

4.4 Family Structure of the Respondents

Based on the data collected from field survey (2024), the family structures of the respondents are categorized into three types: Joint Family, Nuclear Family, and Extended Family. The following table presents the distribution of respondents based on their family composition and living arrangements.

Table 4

Family Structure of the Respondents

Occupation	Number of Respondents
Joint Family	9
Nuclear Family	9
Extended Family	2
Total	20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Among the respondents, nine live in joint families, where they stay with extended relatives such as in-laws (father-in-law, mother-in-law), and sometimes siblings. Similarly, nine respondents live in nuclear families, which include husband, wife, and one or two children. These families are more self-contained and independent. Out of those nine respondents living in nuclear families, two live without their husbands, as one respondent's husband works outside the valley and the other works abroad. In their husbands' absence, their parents or a house helper stay with them temporarily to provide support.

Additionally, two respondents are part of extended families, where they live with broader family members, such as grandparents or other relatives. In such households, they receive additional caregiving support from extended family members.

4.5 Number of Children and Their Age Groups

As I think that the children and their age groups is a variable that may directly influence work-life balance by determining the level of care, supervision, and support needed. The table below shows the distribution of respondents based on the number of children they have.

Table 5

Number of Children

Number of Children	Number of Respondents
No Children	3
One Children	8
Two Children	9
Total	20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Among the data shows from 20 respondents, 9 have two children and this is followed by 8 respondents who have one child. A smaller group of 3 respondents reported having no children. This indicates that the majority of respondents (17 out of 20) have at least one child, suggesting that caregiving responsibilities are a significant factor influencing their work-life balance.

Table 6

Age Group of Children of Respondents

Age Group of Children of Respondents	Number of Children
Infants (0-1 year)	3
Early Childhood (2-5 years)	6
Middle Childhood (6-10 years)	7
Adolescents (11-18 years)	4
Adult Children (19+Years)	3
Total	23

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Above table shows the age group of children of the respondents. Out of 20 respondents, 17 have children. Most children are in the middle childhood group (6–10 years) with 7 children. The next largest group is early childhood (2–5 years) with 6 children. This is followed by adolescents (11–18 years) with 4 children. The fewest children are in the infant (0–1 year) and adult (19+ years) age groups, with 3 children in each. This distribution highlights that a significant number of respondents are managing the demands of parenting children in the early and middle childhood stages. The survey indicates that parents with younger children, especially infants and preschool-aged children, face greater challenges in balancing work and family life. These challenges stem from the need for constant care and supervision, including tasks such as breastfeeding, feeding, and ensuring overall health and development. In contrast, parents with older children tend to have more flexibility in managing their responsibilities, particularly in terms of childcare.

Interestingly, respondents without children reported having more flexible time and fewer caregiving demands. However, not having children can also come with its own challenges. Some women mentioned feeling pressured by family members to have children after being married for a while. One respondent, Khakda share her story, that, *"Even though I enjoy the freedom, it's hard to ignore the comments from relatives who keep asking when we'll have kids"* (M. Khakda, personal interview, 2024). This shows that while not having children may make it easier to balance work and personal life, it can still create emotional stress due to societal expectations. This data highlights that while women with children struggle with time management, support, and supervision challenges, those without children may face mental and emotional difficulties. Both situations, in different ways, influence work-life balance.

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter gives a detailed profile of the respondents, covering their age, education level, number of children, occupation, family structure, and living arrangements. The data was collected through interviews with 20 respondents to understand their socio-demographic background and how it impacts their work-life balance. The study included women from different age groups (20-45 years and reveals that age significantly impacts how women balance work and family responsibilities, with different challenges faced by younger and older women.

Education levels are generally high among respondents, with most holding advanced degrees and worked in professions like teaching, banking, nursing, NGOs, and business ownership. The findings reveal that woman in nursing and banking face more challenges balancing work and family due to demanding schedules.

Regarding family composition, most respondents lived in either joint or nuclear families, with only a few in extended families. The majority of respondents have children, with those having younger children, especially infants and preschoolers, faced greater challenges managing work and family life. In contrast, those with older children or without children had more flexibility but still experienced social pressure or emotional stress related to family expectations. Overall, the study highlights how age, education, occupation, family structure, and the number of children influence women's ability to balance work and personal life.

CHAPTER V
BALANCING WORK AND LIFE AMONG EMPLOYED WOMEN IN
KATHMANDU

Data presentation and analysis are essential parts of research, helping to communicate the depth and complexity of participants' experiences. This study focuses on how employed women in urban areas like Kathmandu balance their professional and personal lives, examining the strategies they use to achieve work-life balance, the challenges they face, and the societal factors influencing their experiences. Using a qualitative narrative analysis approach, as defined by Riesman (2008), the research explores the connection between household responsibilities and women's professional lives by analyzing participants' stories, allowing for multiple interpretations and insights based on their experiences.

For instance, as a married working woman, I have personally experienced the difficulties of juggling multiple roles as an employee, wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law. The constant stress and societal expectations often feel like a heavy burden. Before marriage, I grew up in a traditional family of 17, where women primarily focused on domestic chores and agricultural work, while men worked outside as breadwinners. Despite being the eldest daughter and receiving a good education, I was discouraged from working outside the home. My family insisted, "Why do you need a job? We will take care of you financially. Just focus on your studies." After completing my master's degree and starting my MPhil, I got married into a smaller family of three. Here, I was encouraged to work outside the home, which made me feel financially independent and empowered. However, the reality of balancing work and home life quickly became overwhelming. My daily routine like cooking, cleaning, commuting for hours, working a full-time job, and managing studies, somehow left me physically and mentally exhausted. There were moments when I considered quitting my job, but the need for financial independence kept me going. This personal struggle made me curious about does other women face similar challenges? How they manage similar challenges and does it impact in balancing their work and life.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 women from various professions, offering rich insights into their daily struggles, coping mechanisms, and

the impact on their well-being and career growth. The interviews were transcribed and grouped into common themes and sub-themes, allowing a structured examination of the data. The analysis is organized into three main themes: the types of activities women perform at home and work, how they manage their responsibilities, and the challenges they face in balancing work and personal life. Sub-themes provide additional depth to the analysis, revealing patterns and recurring insights that offer a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

The findings are presented clearly to ensure readers can easily grasp the key insights and conclusions. This approach highlights both the diversity and shared challenges of working women in urban settings, emphasizing the strategies they use to navigate their dual roles and the obstacles they encounter. Ultimately, the study aims to inform policies and interventions that support women's career advancement and work-life balance. By presenting the data systematically, the research provides a strong foundation for understanding the complexities of employed women's lives and offers practical solutions to address their challenges.

5.1 Dual Roles of Employed Women in Household and Workplace

Today many women juggle dual responsibilities, excelling in their careers while managing household duties. This "dual role" means handling morning routines, evening chores, and everything in between, all while working an 8-hour (or longer) office shift. For example, a teacher might spend her day leading meetings and making decisions, only to return home to help her kids with homework, cook dinner, and clean. Similarly, a nurse working long shifts might come home to care for her elderly parents or attend to her family's needs. To better understand the activities women handle at home and work, and how they manage both, I researched 20 women from different professions, including healthcare workers, teachers, and businesswomen. I explored their daily work responsibilities, how they handle household chores, and the strategies they use to balance the two. Based on their experiences, I analyzed their office tasks and home duties, shedding light on how they navigate their dual roles.

5.1.1 Household Work of the Respondents

Household work is a daily task and is important to keep a home clean, organized, and comfortable. It includes tasks like cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, grocery shopping, taking care of children, looking after elderly family members, and

managing the household. These tasks are necessary for maintaining a healthy and balanced life. The findings from interviews with 20 respondents and case studies among 5 respondents from various professions (teaching, banking, nursing, NGO services, and business) highlight the division of household responsibilities within families, who manage both careers and household duties, it was found that routine chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare, eldercare, and grocery shopping are typically done by women. In contrast, intermittent chores, such as handling technical maintenance inside the house, are more likely to be done by men. While managing finances in some households, are managed jointly by husband and wife, while in some, they are taken care of by in-laws. Based on this survey conducted with 20 respondents, it can be said that the household work of the participants varies based on family structure, traditional gender roles, and the support provided by other family members.

5.1.1.1 Cooking and Meal Preparation in Household Dynamics

Meal preparation is largely influenced by traditional gender roles and family dynamics. Six respondent reported handling all cooking and kitchen tasks alone, reflecting traditional norms where women are the primary cooks. Bhattarai the only adult female in her household, cooks daily despite her job. She explained, *“Since I’m the only woman, cooking falls on me. I cook early or late, depending on my work shifts”* (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). This highlights how traditional expectations often place the full burden of cooking on women, even when they have demanding jobs. Likewise, Sharma shares that she is primarily responsible for cooking, unlike many households where gender norms dictate domestic roles, her division of labor is more practical. Sharma explained, *“Due to a demanding job of my husband he not be able to help in cooking in time, So, I usually prefer to manage the cooking for them as I have my breastfeeding and school going child who need meals early in morning”* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024).

In contrast, ten women shared cooking responsibilities with family members, such as husbands, in-laws, or grown-up children, which helped reduce their workload. Panthi and Thapaliya shares cooking responsibilities with her husband. Thapaliya shares *“Meal preparation is adjusted according to my working shift as per my hospital shifts and husband and assists with kitchen work, reducing the burden on the couple.* (R.

Thapaliya, Personal Communication, 2024). Barsha has a different household arrangement, where her mother-in-law primarily handles cooking. She cooks occasionally when available, while her husband and father-in-law assist during emergencies or when female members are unable to enter the kitchen due to cultural restrictions (B. Mahat, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). However, the level of involvement often depended on work schedules and availability. Additionally, four respondent delegated cooking tasks to house helpers, relying on external support to manage their responsibilities. This shift toward shared or delegated tasks shows how some households are adapting to modern demands by redistributing domestic work.

Cultural practices play a significant role in shaping cooking responsibilities. Eight respondents mentioned that male family members or in-laws' step in to cook or bring food during menstruation, as cultural norms restrict women from kitchen work during this time. Bohora shared, "Male members take over kitchen tasks during menstruation" (B. Bohora, Personal Communication, 2024). Thapaliya, who has flexible arrangements in her household, shared, "My husband takes over kitchen tasks fully during menstruation." (R. Thapaliya, Personal Communication, 2024). However, 12 women reported facing no such restrictions, indicating that cultural practices vary across households.

5.1.1.2 Cleaning and Maintenance in Household Dynamics

Cleaning is predominantly managed by women, although levels of assistance vary. Two respondents handled all cleaning themselves, often working late at night to balance work and home duties. Sharma shared She is solely responsible for cleaning, completing tasks late at night after putting her children to bed. She expressed, "*By the time I finish cleaning, it's already past midnight, and I hardly get any rest. But there's no other choice—the work just has to get done*" (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024).

In 10 households, cleaning was a shared responsibility, but primary accountability remained with women. For example, Bhandari explained, "While my husband and daughters assist, they still see cleaning as my main duty." (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 2024), reflecting traditional expectations. Five respondents rely

on domestic helpers for support, which eases their burden. Mahat explained "We share the cleaning duties, and occasionally, we hire someone for the deep cleaning" (Mahat, Personal Communication, 2024).

Cultural norms also play a role in some households. Three respondents, like Bohora, mention that men assist with cleaning during menstruation due to cultural restrictions, but cleaning is otherwise seen as women's work. Women with young children's, such as Basnet, face extra challenges. Despite having a house helper, Basnet said, "*Even with help, I find myself cleaning multiple times because of my toddler, who constantly makes a mess. It feels like the household chores are never-ending, and no matter how much I do, there's always something more that needs attention*" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This highlight how parenting, especially with young children, significantly increases the cleaning burden on women, even when external help is available. For many mothers, the constant mess created by toddlers makes cleaning a never-ending task, adding to their daily responsibilities.

In terms of maintenance, these tasks, however, were largely handled by men, with 15 respondents stating that their husbands or fathers-in-law took care of technical repairs. Some women take the initiative to call technicians or experts when needed. One respondent mentions that her husband is often away for work, so she manages simple maintenance and if she can't do, she called technicians. Another, whose husband is abroad, also relies on technicians due to a lack of technical knowledge.

This data clearly shows that cleaning responsibilities mostly fall on women, while maintenance is primarily handled by men. While some households share tasks or use external help, traditional gender roles still influence how cleaning and maintenance are divided in many homes.

5.1.1.3 Laundry and Clothing Care Responsibilities and Household Dynamics

The advent of washing machines has reduced the physical burden of laundry but has not eliminated the need for manual effort. Among the respondents, 17 owned washing machines, yet drying, ironing, and organizing clothes remained time-consuming tasks. Five respondents managed all laundry duties alone, particularly those with young children, as they prioritize cleanliness and organization. Pradhan, a mother of two

toddlers, handles laundry daily to keep her children's clothes clean and well-maintained. She shares, *"Laundry is one of the many tasks I manage daily because I have two small children, and I need to ensure their clothes are always clean and well-maintained. Keeping things organized and tidy is essential, especially with young kids. However, my other family members take care of their own laundry"* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Similarly, respondents with toddlers often handle most laundry tasks themselves due to frequent clothing changes. Sharma, for instance, incorporates laundry into her nighttime routine after putting her children to bed. She says, *"Laundry is something I do after my kids go to sleep, but it's important to stay on top of it"* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024).

In contrast, 12 respondents share laundry duties with their spouses or family members. This collaborative approach is more common in households with grown-up children, where responsibilities are distributed. In some cases, grown-up children handle their own laundry, further reducing the load on parents. A small portion of respondents (3 out of 20) rely on external help for laundry tasks. These households employ house helpers to assist with laundry but still oversee the process to ensure quality and organization. In conclusion, while washing machines make laundry easier, tasks like drying, ironing, and organizing still need manual work. Households handle laundry differently, some do it alone, others share the work, and a few get external help to keep things clean and tidy.

5.1.1.4 Grocery/Essential Supplies Shopping in Household Responsibilities and Its Patterns

Grocery shopping is a critical household responsibility, ensuring families have access to food, hygiene products, and other essentials and this reflects the dynamics of household roles and responsibilities. Based on interviews with 20 respondents, 8 are solely responsible for grocery shopping in their households. Bhandari and Thapaliya share that they independently handle grocery shopping for their household. Bhandari mentioned, *"Managing everything on my own can be tiring, but it also gives me control over the quality and freshness of the products I buy"* (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, 2024).

In contrast, 12 out of 20 respondents share grocery shopping duties with family members and rely on house helper to assist with shopping, reflecting a collaborative

approach. For example, Mahat explained, *“Grocery shopping is a shared task. If something is needed urgently, whoever is free picks it up”* (B. Mahat, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, S Raut noted, *“We manage grocery shopping together, and our children also contribute by handling smaller purchases.”* (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024).

Gender dynamics also play a significant role in how grocery shopping is managed. 15 out of 20 respondents are women who primarily handle grocery shopping, underscoring the traditional association of this task with female family members. However, five respondents share men actively participate. Pradhan noted, *“Grocery shopping is mainly handled by the male members of my family, including my husband and father-in-law”* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Similarly, Bhattarai shared, *“My father-in-law and brother-in-law usually help me with grocery shopping, but I make sure to prepare a list of needed items in advance.”* (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024).

The frequency and approach to grocery shopping vary widely among respondents with six respondents preferring daily or as-needed basis, often purchasing fresh produce like vegetables. S Dhital, for instance, shared, *“While returning from home from office buying vegetables has become a daily habit.”* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024). On the other hand, 5 out of 20 respondents follow a weekly or bulk-shopping routine, ensuring the household is well stocked. Mulmi explained, *“My schedule is unpredictable, so I make sure to shop strategically, purchasing in majority, when possible, which saves time and ensures that essentials are always available, even for those with busy schedules.”* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024). Similarly, effective planning is a common theme among respondents, nine respondents prepared shopping lists in advance to ensure efficiency.

The data reveals that grocery shopping is a vital household task that varies significantly across families. While some individuals take full responsibility, others share duties with family members or rely on external help. Traditional gender roles still influence shopping responsibilities in many households, but there is a growing trend toward shared and gender-neutral approaches. Effective planning, flexibility, and collaboration are key to managing this essential task efficiently.

5.1.1.5 Childcare/ Elderly Care Responsibilities in Household Management

Childcare responsibilities were predominantly shouldered by women, with eight out of 17 respondents managing childcare alone. Among the 20 respondents interviewed, three reported having no children. Therefore, this section focuses on the 17 respondents with children, examining how family members support working parents in managing childcare responsibilities and among 17 respondents with children, experiences vary significantly. While some working mothers receive substantial family support, a significant majority (8 out of 17) are solely responsible for childcare. This burden often led to career sacrifices, as seen in Dhital's case, where she decided to resign to focus on her children and applied for resignation from his banking job to focus entirely on childcare. She shared, *"I feel rushed and struggle to balance my children's needs with my job, especially when they require extra attention. When I gave birth to my son, I put in every effort to spend time with him. However, to this day, I regret and feel guilty that he didn't receive my full attention, as I prioritized my office work after my maternity leave. His father often ignored him, using work fatigue as an excuse, preferring to use his mobile instead of spending time with him. With my second child, I sometimes feel like I am making the same mistake. When my one-year-old daughter sees me, cries, and tries to cling to me, I feel torn. That's when I decided to leave my job to care for my child, even submitting my resignation."* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024)

However, not all working parents manage childcare alone. Seven out of 17 respondents share childcare responsibilities equally with their spouses or partners. Bhattarai and her husband, both hospital workers, carefully plan their schedules to ensure one of them is always available for their children. She explained, *"As my husband and I both work at the hospital, we plan our schedules carefully so that one of us is always there for the kids."* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024). This level of coordination is particularly important in dual-career households, where both parents have demanding jobs and this shared approach not only lightens the load but also fosters a sense of partnership within the family. For two respondents, childcare is primarily managed with the help of extended family or hired assistance, highlighting the role of familial networks in easing caregiving demands. Basnet, for instance, receives strong support from her parents and brother. She shared, *"I'm grateful for my family's help as my parents handle the children's meals before and after school, while*

my brother helps with school pickups and drop-offs, which allows me to focus on work without constantly worrying about my kids” (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Similarly, Sharma manages all childcare duties for her two young children, as her husband’s job pattern doesn’t allow him to assist regularly. However, she relies on her mother to care for her younger child during the day, while extended family members, including her brother, uncle, and aunt, step in when she has overtime work. She explained, *“It’s challenging, but knowing my family has my back makes a huge difference”* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Despite these challenges, some respondents expressed resilience and adaptability in managing childcare. Thapa, for instance, adjusts her work schedule to prioritize her child’s needs, stating, *“I adjust my work around my child’s needs as much as possible”* (S. Thapa, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Singh emphasized the importance of prioritizing her children’s needs, no matter how busy she is. She shared, *“No matter how busy I am, my child’s needs always come first.”* (B. Singh, Personal Communication, 2024).

In addition to childcare, some respondents also manage elderly care responsibilities, adding another layer of complexity to their daily routines. Bhandari, for example, is responsible for caring for her two daughters and her elderly mother-in-law. She shared, *“It’s overwhelming at times, but I’ve learned to manage things on my own”* (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, 2024). This dual responsibility can be particularly challenging, as it requires balancing the needs of both children and elderly family members. Similarly, Bohora, who manages both childcare and elderly care, emphasized the importance of seeking help when needed. She stated, *“I don’t hesitate to ask for help when things get overwhelming—it’s important to take care of myself too.”* (B. Bohora, Personal Communication, 2024). Her experience highlights the need for caregivers to prioritize their own well-being to avoid burnout.

Childcare and elderly care are integral to household management, requiring significant time, effort, and emotional investment. While many caregivers take primary responsibility for these tasks, support from family members and external help plays a crucial role in managing the workload. The diverse experiences of respondents highlight the importance of flexible work arrangements and strong family support systems in enabling working parents to balance their professional and caregiving responsibilities effectively.

5.1.1.6 Household and Finance Management

Efficient household management is essential for maintaining a well-functioning home. It involves planning, organizing, budgeting, and ensuring that all household needs are met. Managing a household often comes with challenges, especially for working parents. Seven respondents reported handling household management independently, with occasional family support. Koirala, revealed, *"After my in-laws lost their financial stability, my husband and I had to take responsibility for a family of five. The financial pressure combined with household duties is mentally exhausting for me"* (N. Koirala, Personal Communication, 2024). Bhandari, for example, is responsible for planning and organizing household activities, she shared, *"I try to keep everything in order, but sometimes, I need to rely on my family when things get hectic"* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, other respondents handle all household management tasks, from organizing to planning daily activities. They emphasized, managing a home requires constant attention, but we do our best to keep everything organized. In these cases, financial management is often shared with husbands or other family members. These challenges are more pronounced for those living separately due to job demands, those without their husbands, or those living in nuclear families. Two respondents, who lived in nuclear families without their husbands, managed all household tasks alone but shared financial responsibilities with their spouses. One respondent, Mulmi, shared, *"Since my husband works abroad, I handle everything at home on my own, but we share financial decisions together"* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024).

Among 20 respondents, seven shared household management with their spouses, reflecting a collaborative approach. These respondents, mostly from nuclear families, coordinate with their husbands to organize activities together, ensuring everything runs smoothly. For 4 respondents, extended family plays a crucial role in managing household tasks. They rely on in-laws for budgeting and ensuring all household needs are met. Mahat stated that she receives significant support from her in-laws, sharing, *"We all work together to keep things running smoothly"* (B. Mahat, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). In most households, women lead household management with occasional family support. Some divide tasks collaboratively, while others rely on in-laws or hired help for assistance. Financial management often falls to

husbands or male family members. Support from family and external help ensures smooth functioning, highlighting the importance of teamwork and adaptability in managing household responsibilities effectively.

Conclusion

A study of 20 individuals from diverse professions reveals that household work is shaped by traditional gender roles, family structures, cultural beliefs, and modern work-life challenges. The findings highlight that those women predominantly shoulder household responsibilities including cooking, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, childcare, and elderly care even while managing demanding careers. However, variations exist based on family structure, cultural practices, and external support.

Traditional gender roles persist, with women handling routine tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, while men typically manage intermittent tasks like technical maintenance. This aligns with Hochschild (1989) concept of the "second shift," where working women juggle both professional and domestic responsibilities. Cultural practices, such as restrictions on women entering the kitchen during menstruation, reinforce these roles, though they vary across households. Some families share responsibilities among members or delegate tasks to domestic helpers, and technological advancements, like washing machines, have eased certain chores. However, manual tasks such as drying, ironing, and organizing remain primarily women's responsibility.

Childcare is a major burden for working mothers, with 8 out of 17 respondents (excluding 3 without children) managing it alone, often at the expense of their careers. Elderly care further compounds this responsibility, reaffirming traditional gender norms. This aligns with Bianchi et al. (2012), who note that women spend more time on caregiving and housework than men, even in dual-earner households. Financial responsibilities, however, tend to be shared, though some households see male family members taking the lead. Women in nuclear families or with absent husbands often manage both household and financial tasks independently, sometimes relying on domestic helpers for support.

Family structure significantly influences how responsibilities are distributed. While some nuclear families adapt by sharing tasks or seeking external assistance, the burden of domestic labor largely falls on women. This has critical implications for their well-being, career progression, and work-life balance, underscoring the need for more equitable household labor distribution.

5.1.2 Understanding Women's Professional Roles and Work-Related Activities

Women today are increasingly moving beyond traditional household roles and actively participating in diverse professional fields such as education, banking, healthcare, and more. However, despite their growing presence in the workforce, they continue to face challenges in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. According to Nepal's labor law, the standard working hours for an employee are eight hours per day or 48 hours per week (Labor Act 2017), requiring women to dedicate a significant portion of their day to their jobs. This commitment, coupled with household duties, often leads to difficulties in managing both work and family life. To better understand these challenges, this analysis examines insights from a survey of 20 women working in various office environments. It explores the nature of their work, their engagement in professional development, and the role of workplace relationships in shaping their experiences.

5.1.2.1 Nature of Their Work and Daily Tasks

Across various fields, women undertake multiple responsibilities requiring resilience, adaptability, and efficient time management. Their experiences reveal how structured workplaces, like banking and NGOs, provide clear guidelines, while professions like teaching, nursing, and entrepreneurship demand extensive multitasking. Teachers manage a wide range of duties, from lesson planning to administrative tasks and student engagement. Koirala stated, *"I start my day early. As a teacher, I plan lessons, teach students, keep records, review student progress, and ensure each child gets the attention they need."* (N. Koirala, Personal Communication, 2024) This reflects the high level of organization required in teaching. Similarly, vice principals like Bista handle additional responsibilities, she explained, *"As a Vice Principal, I prepare plans, organize meetings, supervise school events, and coordinate with teachers, management, and parents. Time management is a challenge, especially during exams"*

or school events.” It shows that it requires constant multitasking and supervision to meet educational standards while managing workload” (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This highlights the ongoing multitasking required to meet educational standards while managing workload expectations.

Similarly, four respondents from the banking sector, shows that banking jobs require efficiency and adherence to regulations. Employees assist customers with services such as opening accounts, processing transactions, and providing loans while managing customer inquiries and maintaining accurate records. Sharma, a junior officer, described her role: *“Every day brings different tasks and interactions, which can be stressful. I help with credit management, prepare loan files, process disbursements, follow up on interest, and manage recovery” (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Similar experiences were shared by customer service representatives Raut and Shrestha, who emphasized the pressure of managing customer inquiries while adhering to strict financial protocols. They explained, “Our day is filled with assisting customers. We answer questions, solve problems, process transactions, and ensure everything follows bank rules. It can get busy.” (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024, S. Shrestha, Personal Communication, 2024)). Likewise, S. Dhital, a senior assistant, highlighted the challenge of meeting deadlines: *“My job involves balancing accounts, managing staff, and preparing reports. The work can be intense, especially when deadlines approach.”* These responses reflect the structured yet demanding nature of banking, where professionals navigate tight deadlines, customer expectations, and financial responsibilities. (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024).*

In Contrast Nursing is one of the most demanding professions, requiring constant patient care, medication administration, and collaboration with doctors which present even greater challenges. Bhattarai explained, *“I give patients their medications, check vital signs, and ensure they are comfortable. My shifts change constantly, including morning, evening, night, or even 24-hour shifts.” (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). . Other respondents from the nursing sector shared similar experiences, emphasizing the unpredictable nature of healthcare work. Similarly, Panthi and Thapa outlined their daily routine, emphasizing teamwork with*

doctors: *“We check patient charts, work with doctors to monitor patient progress, and manage nursing teams. It’s a lot of work, and it can be tough, especially when a patient’s condition worsens.”* (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024, S. Thapa, Personal Communication, 2024). Panthi reinforced the demanding nature of the job: *“I work in shifts and focus on helping patients feel better. I check symptoms, conduct physical exams, and track progress. The job is stressful, especially with serious cases, but I work closely with doctors to provide proper care”* (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024). The recurring theme among healthcare professionals is the intensity of their responsibilities, where physical exhaustion, emotional involvement, and high-stakes decision-making define their work. The demanding schedules and high-pressure environment often lead to significant physical and emotional fatigue, as nurses must remain attentive and responsive to patient needs at all times. Administrative roles in NGOs demand efficiency in managing schedules, addressing client concerns, and ensuring smooth daily operations. Organization and problem-solving are key aspects of the job, as described by M. Khakda *“My day starts with making sure everything is in order. I handle client requests, manage schedules, and solve problems to keep things running smoothly”* (M. Khakda, Personal Communication, 2024). Singh echoed a similar routine, emphasizing structured planning: *“I begin by checking the schedule and organizing appointments. I manage client concerns, ensure services are delivered on time, and coordinate with the team.”* (B. Singh, Personal Communication, 2024). Likewise, B. Bohora highlighted the importance of multitasking: *“I organize tasks and review pending issues. I make sure client inquiries are handled, manage documents, and solve problems quickly to keep everything on track”* (B. Singh, Personal Communication, 2024).

Unlike corporate jobs, entrepreneurs must juggle marketing, inventory management, customer service, and strategic planning. Mulmi stated, *“I do everything on my own—from creating marketing content to responding to customer inquiries and packing orders. It’s a lot of work, but I love the challenge”* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024). Thapaliya and Homagai highlighted the importance of digital marketing: *“Our team creates reels for TikTok and Facebook to attract customers”* (R. Thapaliya, Personal Communication, 2024; A. Homagai, Personal Communication, 2024). The ability to innovate and manage time effectively is crucial in self-employment, as business owners often lack structured support systems.

5.1.2.2 Participation in Professional Development Activities

Engaging in professional development is crucial for career growth, yet many women struggle to participate due to family responsibilities, time constraints, and rigid work schedules. While professional training and skill-building programs offer opportunities for advancement, the ability to attend varies across industries, often influenced by personal commitments and workplace flexibility.

Teachers frequently participate in work-related training during office hours, as these programs are often incorporated into their work schedules. However, attending after-hours or overnight training sessions presents significant challenges. Bhandari shared her experience, stating, *“I can attend workshops during work hours, but training after hours creates tension in my personal life”* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, Pradhan, a breastfeeding mother, explained how her responsibilities have shifted over time: *“I used to participate in overnight training, but as a breastfeeding mother, I can no longer attend”* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Similarly, on the other side Bista shared, *“As vice principle, I am responsible for managing most of the work-related programs, and it is necessary for me to participate in these during regular office hours. However, before and after that, or on weekends, there is often a rush and a lack of concentration because I have a school-going child in UKG. I'm often tense, thinking that she may get hungry or need rest. During these times, I try to get help from my mother and brother to pick up and take care of my child, which helps me feel more at ease. Sometimes, I arrange for my child to stay at school and wait for me there. After my program finishes, we go home together. I feel bad for her sometimes. There are times when she falls asleep in the car, and it makes me feel guilty that she has to wait so long”* (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024)). These data highlight how personal and family responsibilities limit teachers' ability to pursue professional growth opportunities outside regular working hours.

Women in the banking sector often face additional challenges in career advancement due to rigid work schedules and family responsibilities. One major obstacle is the inability to attend after-hours training programs, which are often crucial for professional growth. Sharma highlighted this difficulty, stating, *“I am unable to participate in work-related programs outside regular hours because of my family*

responsibilities, especially my children” (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Similarly, Shristi Dhital faces challenges in attending professional development activities beyond her regular office hours. While she participates in essential overtime and meetings, her family duties frequently take precedence, limiting her ability to engage in additional work activities. However, not all women in banking experience these barriers to the same extent. Raut, for instance, reported minimal difficulties in attending professional programs, suggesting that access to family support plays a crucial role in enabling participation (S. Raut, Personal Communication, June 2024).

Unlike teachers and bankers, healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, are often required to undergo continuous education to stay updated with medical advancements and patient care practices. However, participation in these programs is not always flexible. Bhattarai shared her perspective: *“I participate in work-related programs before or after regular office hours if they are important, but I often feel rushed. I am also able to attend residential or overnight training programs, when necessary, but before that I have to create a proper plan and diet for my children from bottle milk to other needed foods*(D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). This reflects a key distinction, while participation in professional development is often optional in other sectors, healthcare professionals must engage in mandatory training, making their professional growth both essential and time-sensitive. While NGO professionals generally engage in skill-building activities, Bhandari *“I rarely participate in work-related programs before or after regular office hours due to household responsibilities. I am unable to attend residential or overnight training program.”* (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, 2024). Singh frequently participates in work-related programs before or after regular office hours without difficulty. Women in NGOs generally have greater opportunities to engage in skill-building activities, as these organizations often encourage training and professional development. In contrast, entrepreneurs and businesswomen have flexibility in balancing professional growth with business and family responsibilities. Mulmi, a business owner, highlighted this struggle, *“I regularly try to attend both physical and online workshops and webinars related to marketing and leadership, which help me stay updated on industry trends and are essential for my growth.”* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 2024). Unlike salaried employees who may receive

structured training from their organizations, entrepreneurs must self-manage their learning. This makes professional growth a personal responsibility rather than an organizational initiative, requiring them to carefully balance their commitments.

5.1.2.3 Building Relationship Among Peer and Colleagues

Building positive relationship plays a vital role in ensuring efficiency and success in every profession, whether in education, banking, healthcare, business, or NGOs, professionals rely on collaboration to manage their roles effectively and overcome challenges. A study of 20 respondents from different fields highlights the importance of working together to improve efficiency and achieve better outcomes. Although teamwork may look different in each sector, its impact remains significant across all professions.

In education, research indicates that teachers depend on collaboration to enhance teaching methods and improve student performance. Bista, a school vice principal, emphasized the value of sharing ideas, resources, and strategies with colleagues. She stated, "It's not just about planning lessons. It's about supporting each other to ensure our students succeed. When we brainstorm and share resources, we can create a better learning environment" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Similarly, teachers such as Koirala, Bhandari, and Pradhan collaborate to plan lessons, address student concerns, and provide individualized attention. By working as a team, they create a better learning environment that benefits both students and educators. In the banking sector, professionals, including Sharma, Dhital, Shrestha, and Raut, collaborate to manage high customer demand and ensure compliance with regulations. Raut noted that teamwork helps handle the workload efficiently, while Sharma acknowledged that competition among teams sometimes creates tension. She explained:

"Working in a bank can be hectic, especially when we have a lot of customers to serve and multiple tasks to juggle. But teamwork makes it all manageable. We rely on each other to stay organized and get everything done on time, whether it's resolving an issue or ensuring compliance. However, there's always a bit of groupism. Some teams get along really well, while others create unnecessary drama. It's frustrating because when a group feels excluded, the work environment becomes tense, and that negativity affects everyone" (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024).

Similarly, Dhital, a senior assistant, reported that group dynamics sometimes lead to workplace conflicts, making it difficult to stay focused. She noted *“In banking, teamwork and coordination are necessary to help meet tight deadlines. But it can get complicated when one team works well together while another criticizes or undermines efforts. When some team members gossip or make snide remarks about others, it affects the entire workplace. It’s important to focus on the work, but group dynamics can sometimes upset the process, making it harder to stay focused.”* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, June 2024) For healthcare workers, teamwork is crucial in providing quality patient care. Nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals collaborate to develop treatment plans and monitor patients’ conditions. Among four respondents from the healthcare sector, Bhattarai highlighted the importance of teamwork in ensuring patients receive proper care, stating, *“In healthcare, everyone plays a role, and we depend on each other to give the best care possible”* (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). Other nurses also emphasized that teamwork is essential for patient care, noting that when communication between shifts is clear, everything runs smoothly. However, Panthi pointed out challenges in communication: *“Sometimes, important details, like a patient’s medication schedule or special care instructions, aren’t properly handed over. This can create confusion, delay treatment, and add stress for both nurses and patients. So, proper communication is important.”* (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, June 2024)

Professionals such as Bhandari, Singh, and Bohora, who work in NGO administrative sectors, emphasized that collaboration helps streamline processes, improve communication, and enhance problem-solving. Singh noted, *“When we coordinate, tasks are completed faster, and service delivery improves”* (B. Singh, Personal Communication, June 2024). In NGO administration, where managing records, responding to inquiries, and organizing activities are crucial, teamwork ensures that operations run efficiently and that beneficiaries receive timely support. In the business sector, teamwork is equally important, though its structure varies. Entrepreneurs like Homagai, Thapaliya, and Mulmi rely on small teams to manage inventory, marketing, and customer service. Homagai explained: *“We all work together to keep the business running—handling social media, reaching out to clients, and keeping track of stock. My team is small, but we all pull together to make sure the business keeps running.”*

We handle everything from social media to reaching out to potential clients, and each of us plays a crucial part." (A. Homagai, Personal Communication, June 2024)

However, not all business professionals work in teams. Mulmi, who runs an online business independently, shared her experience *"I do everything on my own, from creating marketing content to responding to customer inquiries and packing orders. It's a lot of work, but I love the challenge. Every step I take, from launching a new product to packing and delivering, feels like progress. It's a lot of work, but seeing my business grow makes it worth it."* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 2024)

Teamwork plays a crucial role across various professions, enabling individuals to manage responsibilities more effectively and achieve better results. Whether in education, banking, healthcare, NGOs, or business, collaboration helps professionals overcome challenges, improve efficiency, and provide better services. While teamwork brings many benefits, challenges such as competition and conflicts can arise. However, when individuals work together with mutual respect and shared goals, they create a more productive and supportive environment, ultimately leading to greater success in their respective fields.

5.1.2.4 Workplace Relationship and Stakeholders Engagement

Building strong relationships with stakeholders is key in many professions such as teaching, banking, and nursing. Trust serves as the foundation of these relationships, whether it is between doctors and patients, teachers and parents, or businesses and customers. Strong relationships create loyalty and confidence, leading to better outcomes and long-term success. A study involving 20 women across different professions highlights the importance of prioritizing communication, trust-building, and satisfaction to foster meaningful connections and drive success.

In the learning environment, professionals such as teachers and school coordinators emphasize the importance of communication and trust in building strong relationships. Bhandari shared, *"I work hard to build strong relationships with my students and their parents. I make sure to communicate well, listen to concerns, and offer guidance on schoolwork"* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, Pradhan emphasized her role in staying in touch with students and their families, offering both academic and emotional support. Basnet, a school vice

principal, highlighted the importance of maintaining smooth communication between all stakeholders: *"I organize schedules, manage meetings, and address concerns from both students and parents. My goal is to maintain a well-organized system that helps everyone stay informed and supported"* (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024).

Relationship management is essential in banking, as professionals focus on client satisfaction and ensuring financial needs are met efficiently. Sharma pointed out, "In banking, helping customers is a big part of my job. I assist with things like credit, loans, and payments. It's important to fix problems quickly and make sure customers have a good experience" (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Similarly, Raut noted, "My day is all about helping customers with their questions and transactions. I listen to their concerns and solve any problems. Making customers happy is my top priority, though at times, their urgent demands can be challenging and stressful" (S. Raut, Personal Communication, June 2024).

Nurses, as frontline caregivers, understand the importance of building strong patient relationships. One respondent noted, "As a nurse, I take care of patients both physically and emotionally. Building a good relationship with them helps me feel more comfortable" (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). Respondent from NGO sector, like Bhandari, Singh, and Bohora, emphasize understanding client needs and delivering excellent service. They prioritize listening to customers, ensuring they feel valued, and providing the best solutions to create lasting relationships and satisfaction., Singh stated, "My job is to make sure customers feel heard and valued. I listen to their needs and give them the best solution" (B. Singh, Personal Communication, June 2024).

For businesswomen like Mulmi, Homagai, and Thapa, building relationships with customers is not just about selling products but ensuring consistent satisfaction and engagement. Mulmi shared, *"Running an online business means I take care of all customer service. I focus on providing great products, listening to feedback, and staying in touch with customers. By building strong relationships, I make sure they trust my brand."* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 2024). Homagai emphasized the importance of responsiveness: "Customer satisfaction is important for me. I offer great products and also respond quickly to customer feedback." (A.

Homagai, Personal Communication, June 2024). Thapa added, "Customer service is the heart of my business. Whether answering questions, handling complaints, or making sure orders are delivered on time, I focus on customer satisfaction. I listen to my customers to keep them happy and loyal to my brand" (S. Thapa, Personal Communication, June 2024).

Conclusion

Women in diverse professional fields navigate unique challenges, yet share common struggles related to multitasking, time management, and balancing work with personal responsibilities. Structured industries like banking and NGOs offer clear operational guidelines but may present challenges in flexibility. Healthcare and entrepreneurship require adaptability, emotional resilience, and a high degree of personal investment. Professional development remains a crucial yet challenging aspect for women, with family responsibilities often limiting participation in after-hours training. Workplace relationships play a fundamental role in efficiency, but interpersonal conflicts and competition can sometimes hinder collaboration. Ultimately, while women continue to break traditional barriers, persistent societal expectations and workplace structures still shape their professional experiences. Organizations and policymakers must implement flexible work policies, childcare support, and inclusive professional development opportunities to enable women to thrive in both their careers and personal lives.

5.1.3 Balancing Work and Life Strategies

Balancing work and household responsibilities is a critical challenge faced by many women, particularly in societies where domestic labor is still largely gendered. This analysis explores the patterns of household task sharing among 20 women respondents, highlighting the extent of support they receive from family members and domestic helpers. The findings are structured into key themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of how responsibilities are distributed.

5.1.4 Household Task Sharing

Household tasks are distributed among family members to prevent overburdening any one person. Responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry are shared

flexibly. Some participants employ domestic help to ease their workload, while others rely on family support. Notably, several households aim to minimize gendered divisions of labor, promoting equitable participation in domestic chores.

Out of 20 women studied, four said they share household tasks equally with their spouses and family members. Raut and Thapliya have one of the most balanced arrangements without hiring house help. In Raut's home, both men and women take part in cooking, cleaning, and laundry. She believes that sharing responsibilities reduces stress and improves time management. Similarly, Panthi finds that dividing chores strengthens family relationships and increases work efficiency. She says, "My husband and I share all household tasks, from cooking to childcare, and we also have a housemaid for extra support" (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024). This shows a shift away from traditional gender roles, promoting balance and harmony at home. Singh and Mahat also divide work fairly, making household responsibilities easier to manage. Singh explains, "In our home, no task is assigned based on gender. Everyone helps out, making daily work less stressful" (B. Singh, Personal Communication, March 6, 2024).

Some participants highlight the role of cultural norms in shaping domestic responsibilities. B. Singh explains that family members step in to manage tasks when needed, particularly during menstruation. She states, "When I am unable to do household chores, my husband and other male family members step in without hesitation" (B. Singh, Personal Communication, March 10, 2024). Similarly, two other respondents with flexible working environments report that male family members take over kitchen work during menstruation due to cultural restrictions. This demonstrates the adaptability of household structures in accommodating practical needs while reinforcing traditional norms. Six women benefit from strong family support, especially in joint families. Bhattarai, who lives in a joint family, says that communal living helps in sharing household tasks. She states, "*I primarily manage cooking as the only adult female member, but other members support in cleaning, laundry, and grocery shopping. A domestic helper provides additional childcare, emphasizing the efficiency of communal living*" ((D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). This suggests that joint families offer a structured

approach to task-sharing, reducing individual stress. However, five women face inconsistent family support, making it harder to balance work and home. Sharma, for example, sometimes gets help from her husband and mother-in-law, but it is not reliable. She says, "*Sometimes they help, sometimes they don't. It depends on their mood, which makes balancing work and home difficult.*" (A. Sharma, Personal Communication, March 9, 2024). Similarly, Bhandari's husband and children assist when asked, but she still manages most household work. She explains, "They help, but the main responsibility is on me." These cases show that unreliable support can increase stress and make work-life balance difficult (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, March 11, 2024). These cases illustrate how inconsistency in household support can heighten stress and reduce efficiency in managing work and home responsibilities.

Hiring domestic workers also plays a role in managing household tasks. But Basnet expresses frustration over the inefficiency of her houseworker, stating, "*I have to repeat instructions over and over. Instead of making things easier, it adds to my stress*" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This shows that having help does not always make work easier. Conversely, Mulmi, whose husband works abroad, finds household help essential in maintaining balance. She explains, "*Without my helper, I don't know how I would manage. But even then, I have a lot to do*" (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024). This highlights that the effectiveness of house help depends on supervision and expectations.

Based on the research the division of household women among these women varies based on family structure, cultural expectations, and access to domestic help. The study highlights various strategies families use to balance work and household responsibilities. Household task sharing is a key element in reducing the stress of managing both work and home life. In many cases, domestic help is employed to provide additional support. The level of assistance from family members varies, with some offering consistent help, while others only contribute sporadically. Shared responsibility for domestic tasks, regardless of gender, is increasingly common and helps create a more equitable environment within the household.

5.1.5 Calendar Planning

Out of 20 participants, only two use tools like calendars, reminders, and planners to organize both personal and professional tasks. These tools help them keep track of household chores, work commitments, and personal activities, ensuring nothing is overlooked. Family members also coordinate schedules for shared tasks, leading to smoother routines and better time management. Raut relies on digital calendars and reminders to maintain balance and manage her responsibilities. She believes scheduling tasks in advance helps distribute workload efficiently and prioritize commitments. She explains, *"Using a calendar allows me to plan ahead and avoid last-minute stress. It keeps me organized and ensures I allocate enough time for both work and family"* (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024).

Similarly, Mulmi takes a detailed approach by integrating work and childcare responsibilities into her daily planner. She explains, *"Having a daily planner helps me balance my business and childcare. It ensures that I don't miss important events and keeps me on track"* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024).

These findings show that only two out of 20 participants use scheduling tools, but adopting such methods can significantly improve time management. Effective planning reduces stress, enhances productivity, and helps individuals allocate time efficiently while avoiding conflicts.

5.1.6 Time Management and Prioritization

Time management plays a crucial role in balancing work and personal life. Based on the research, most respondents create well-planned schedules to manage their daily responsibilities, allocating time for professional commitments, family obligations, and personal care activities. Early mornings and late evenings are commonly used for household chores and work, ensuring dedicated time for relaxation. Respondents prioritize their tasks based on urgency and importance, addressing immediate responsibilities first while postponing less critical ones.

Pradhan prioritizes quality time with her children after work while also scheduling self-care activities, such as weekend outings with her family. She receives emotional support from friends and colleagues, which helps her when needed. She organizes her

tasks according to urgency—mornings are dedicated to preparing her child for school, while evenings are reserved for cooking, grocery shopping, and managing bedtime routines. She states, *"Spending quality time with my children is a priority. I also prioritize gatherings with family and close friends. Weekend outings with my family help me maintain balance"* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Sharma manages her responsibilities by prioritizing essential tasks while engaging her children in activities to allow for effective multitasking. She shares, *"I schedule cleaning and laundry after my children are asleep so that I can manage time efficiently without distractions"* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). These perspectives highlight how strategic planning enables women to navigate the challenges of work-life balance effectively.

Similarly, Dristi, who works as a nurse with shift-based duties, adapts her household chores according to her work schedule. On morning shifts, she prepares meals for her family early in the day and handles other tasks in the evening. For evening shifts, she completes most household tasks in the morning, ensuring that she efficiently balances work and home life. Effective time management and task prioritization are essential for maintaining work smooth, they plan their daily activities, allocate time for essential tasks, and adapt their schedules based on personal and professional demands.

5.1.7 Communication with Family and Friends and Taking Help

Effective communication with family members and friends is essential in balancing the demands of personal and professional life. Research found that several respondents rely on family members for household tasks, childcare, and emotional support. Basnet shares, *"I receive full support from my maiti—my mother, father, brother, and sister-in-law. My parents take care of my children and their meals before and after school, while my brother helps by taking and picking up my child from school"* (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Occasionally, colleagues and friends provide support for official work, but this assistance is inconsistent. Similarly, Sharma communicates regularly with her parents and receives support from her mother, who helps care for her younger child and assists with household chores, particularly during overtime work hours (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Similarly, Raut benefits from support from friends and neighbors, who assist with childcare, meals, and emergency tasks. She also

receives emotional support from colleagues and friends at work, who help cover tasks and share time management tips (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024). In addition, Bhattarai's reliance on her mother during overnight training or residential programs demonstrates how family support facilitates professional development by allowing individuals to focus on career growth without neglecting family duties. To manage breastfeeding while working, she uses bottled milk, reducing stress and maintaining continuity in her routine (P. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, 2024). This shows how adaptable family members can be in supporting a woman's professional and personal life. Furthermore, Ushma's experience of relying on her sister for babysitting, school pick-ups/drop-offs, and homework assistance further demonstrates the importance of a reliable support network to balance both personal and business tasks (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024).

Together, these examples reinforce the critical role that family and social networks play in managing the various demands of work and home life. Many respondents coordinate with family and friends and occasionally seek help in emergencies, underlining that effective communication and social support networks are essential for managing multiple roles and achieving a balanced life.

5.1.8 Flexible Work Schedules

Flexible work schedules are a crucial tool for many participants in balancing their work and family responsibilities. Flexible work schedules are an essential tool for many participants in balancing their work and family responsibilities. The ability to adjust working hours as needed helps participants manage unexpected household duties or caregiving responsibilities. While some workplaces offer supportive policies, others lack such accommodations, creating challenges for employees.

Pradhan benefits from a supportive work environment with occasional flexibility regarding arrival times, helping her balance both professional and personal commitments. *Raut*, *Bhandari* and *Khakda* have fully embraced flexible work policies and telecommuting, which help them manage their work tasks alongside family duties. *Sunita* shares, "*Having flexible hours and the option to work from home has given me a great balance. I can handle my family's needs without falling behind at work.*" (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024). *Khakda* also emphasizes the

importance of flexible work, stating, *"As the only member in a formal job, I am always responsible for some household tasks. I'm lucky that my office environment is flexible. I have utilized flexible work hours, work from home, and occasional telecommuting options to balance my work and personal responsibilities effectively, especially when I have family commitments or personal errands to attend to."* (M. Khakda, *Personal Communication*, 2024). Similarly, Ushma, an online business owner, enjoys the flexibility of working from home, allowing her to balance family duties more effectively. Other businesswomen also echo this sentiment, highlighting how the flexibility of working from home enables them to manage both their professional and personal lives.

However, not all participants have access to such flexible arrangements. Bhandari reports that her workplace lacks flexible hours, childcare support, or maternity leave, making work-life balance difficult. *"Having to follow strict work hours without any flexibility makes it challenging to attend to family matters,"* she explains. This contrast highlights how the availability of flexible work schedules can significantly impact an individual's ability to balance work and family commitments. In contrast, respondents working in the banking sector do not benefit from flexible work arrangements. *"We have a set number of leaves per year, including annual, sick, and casual leave, but no flexible scheduling,"* one respondent shared. Similarly, Bhattarai and Thapa, who work in the nursing sector, explained, *"We have flexible hours, but it doesn't mean we work from home or arrive late. We coordinate with colleagues to adjust schedules in emergencies."* This highlights the disparities in work environments and how the availability of flexible schedules significantly impacts one's ability to balance personal and professional commitments. Additionally, respondents working in the banking sector and nursing sector report limited flexibility, further emphasizing how work arrangements differ across industries. These findings demonstrate that flexible work schedules play a crucial role in enhancing work-life balance, with significant variation in the availability of such policies across professions. Ensuring that more workplaces adopt flexible work arrangements could greatly benefit employees in managing their personal and professional responsibilities more effectively.

5.1.9 Self-Care

Self-care is essential for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Engaging in activities such as exercise, meditation, proper nutrition, and sufficient sleep is crucial for preventing burnout and sustaining overall health. Additionally, personal leisure activities like reading, spending time outdoors, and pursuing hobbies contribute significantly to stress management and rejuvenation. Many participants integrate these self-care practices into their daily or weekly routines, recognizing their importance in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Nirma, for example, practices self-care by listening to music as a way to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being. As she states, “Listening to music allows me to unwind and clear my mind, which is vital for my emotional health” (N. Nirma, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Asha uses self-care techniques such as talking to friends and family, watching movies, and treating herself to spa treatments. “Taking time to relax with family and having occasional spa treatments helps me to recharge” (A. Asha, Personal Communication, 2024). Rachana, another participant, prioritizes self-care by taking her children out on public holidays to recharge. She acknowledges the importance of these breaks, stating, “Spending time with my children outdoors during the holidays helps me maintain my emotional health and stress levels” (R. Rachana, Personal Communication, 2024). Likewise, Barsha stays active, takes regular breaks, and maintains strong relationships with friends and colleagues to provide additional support and help manage stress. “I always take breaks and make sure I stay connected with my support network to manage stress” (B. Barsha, Personal Communication, 2024). Samjhana ensures time for self-care by taking daily walks, maintaining hygiene, and taking regular breaks to cope with the pressures of balancing work and family life. “My self-care includes daily walks and maintaining good hygiene, which helps me feel refreshed” (S. Samjhana, Personal Communication, 2024). Brinda, on the other hand, prioritizes self-care during weekends, engaging in relaxing activities to effectively manage stress. “Weekend relaxation activities are my way of recharging before the new work week” (B. Brinda, Personal Communication, 2024).

Four respondents integrated exercise, yoga, and healthy eating into their routines to ensure long-term well-being. Their commitment to physical health played a significant role in maintaining their energy levels and resilience. Bidhya practices morning yoga to maintain her physical and mental well-being. As she states, “Yoga

has helped me stay grounded and focused, particularly in stressful times” (B. Bidhya, Personal Communication, 2024). Ushma places a strong emphasis on self-care, integrating yoga, meditation, pranayama, and other wellness activities into her routine. She also maintains a healthy diet and skincare routine, which helps her stay energized and focused on both work and home responsibilities. “Yoga and a healthy diet are essential for me to manage the demands of work and family life” (U. Ushma, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Sneha recognizes the importance of self-care and regularly participates in activities like exercise, meditation, and spa treatments to maintain a sense of well-being amid the pressures of both her personal and professional life. She notes, “Making time for myself through exercise and meditation is necessary to keep up with the demands of my daily life” (S. Sneha, Personal Communication, 2024). Pratima incorporates self-care into her daily life with similar activities, such as exercise, meditation, and healthy eating. She explains, “By maintaining a balanced lifestyle with exercise and meditation, I can stay physically and mentally strong” (P. Pratima, Personal Communication, 2024). Several participants emphasized structured routines and regular breaks to sustain well-being. In addition to exercise and meditation, Sunita prioritizes self-care by maintaining a healthy diet and occasionally enjoying reading and spending time outdoors to relax. “Exercise and meditation are key parts of my routine, but I also love reading to take my mind off stress” (S. Sunita, Personal Communication, 2024). Participants also highlighted the importance of spending quality time with family and friends as a key strategy for reducing stress and strengthening relationships. Self-care is not merely a luxury but a necessary practice for managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. The diverse approaches to self-care highlight its personalized nature, while the emphasis on routine and consistency suggests that self-care should be an integral part of daily life for effective stress management and overall well-being.

Conclusion

Managing the balance between work, family, and self-care is a complex process that requires careful planning and prioritization. The participants in this study demonstrate the importance of using tools like calendars, flexible work arrangements, and strong support systems to stay organized and manage the demands of their multiple roles. By prioritizing self-care and seeking support from family and colleagues, these individuals are able to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives, ensuring well-being and fulfillment.

The division of household labor has a profound impact on women's physical and mental health, work-life balance, and professional performance. For many participants, the overwhelming responsibility of managing domestic tasks alone led to stress, fatigue, and negative health outcomes. However, those with more equitable support systems at home experienced fewer challenges and were better able to maintain their health, personal well-being, and work performance. A more balanced division of household responsibilities not only helped these women manage the demands of both work and home life but also allowed them to pursue personal activities and focus on their careers without significant sacrifices.

The experiences of the women in this study demonstrate that balancing work and life is a multifaceted challenge that requires support from family, colleagues, and workplaces. While some women benefit from a strong support system, others struggle with a lack of assistance, especially when it comes to household chores and caregiving duties. The availability of flexible work hours and supportive workplace policies also plays a significant role in helping women manage their dual responsibilities. To improve work-life balance for women, it is essential to promote shared domestic responsibilities, encourage open communication, and implement workplace policies that accommodate family needs. Self-care practices, such as exercise, relaxation, and time management, are also crucial for maintaining physical and mental well-being while navigating these challenges.

5.1.10 Challenges of Balancing Work and Life: A Study of Various Individuals' Experiences

Balancing work and personal life is a critical issue that affects individuals across various professions, particularly women who often face additional societal expectations. Traditionally, women were primarily responsible for managing households, while men worked outside the home to provide for the family (Singh & Singhal, 2016; Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). However, over the past few decades, this dynamic has shifted significantly due to increased education, globalization, gender equality movements, and economic demands. While this shift has financially empowered women, it has also introduced new challenges, particularly in balancing professional and personal responsibilities (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

This study explores the experiences of 20 professional women across various fields who manage work and home responsibilities. Through in-depth interviews, the study examines key themes, including physical exhaustion, emotional stress, limitations in social participation, lack of personal time, challenges in professional growth, and workplace support needs. The findings highlight the need for systematic support and equitable division of responsibilities to ensure sustainable work-life balance.

5.1.11 Physical Challenges of Balancing Work and Home Responsibilities

The study found that 14 out of 20 respondents felt very tired due to managing both work and home duties. Many said they were stuck in a routine of office work and household chores, leaving them with little time to rest. This constant exhaustion not only drained their energy but also affected their health, making them more likely to get sick and feel weak.

Pradhan explained how overwhelming it is to handle so many tasks, saying, "*The house needs attention, the kids need help with homework, and I still have to cook dinner. It's exhausting*" (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Basnet also shared how ongoing fatigue affected her health: "*Sometimes I feel like I'm collapsing from exhaustion, and I just want to rest, but I can't. Stress and fatigue make me more vulnerable to frequent colds and allergies*" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 20, 2024). These experiences show how balancing work and home life can harm physical well-being.

People with physically demanding jobs face even more challenges. Bhattarai, a nurse, shared, "Balancing household and work responsibilities, especially with my shift-based job at the hospital, takes a toll on me. Sometimes, I have to do 24-hour shifts. Managing patient care at the hospital and taking care of two children at home often leaves me feeling overwhelmed" (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). . This shows how jobs with long or irregular hours make it even harder to cope with home duties.

Some respondent suffers from more than just exhaustion. Sharma said, "*Managing household chores, childcare, and my demanding job leaves me physically drained. I experience leg pain and swelling, but I rarely have time to take care of myself*" (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Dhital also described her struggle:

"My day starts early, and by the time I finally make it home, I'm completely drained both physically and emotionally. It feels like there's no time left for myself, no moment to just breathe and relax. The long commute is a struggle on its own, with multiple bus changes that seem to drain whatever energy I have left. By the end of it all, I'm exhausted to the core. But the day doesn't end there; there's still childcare, helping with homework, and making sure my little one, just a year old, feels the warmth of a mother's love and touch. The constant rush and lack of rest take a toll on me, leaving me with headaches and fatigue that linger throughout the day. Sometimes, it feels like I'm just running on empty, trying to keep up with everything without a moment to recharge. I still remember working right up to the day before giving birth, enduring that long commute on crowded public buses. Looking back, I realize how much I pushed myself, and today, I can feel the impact on my body. I get physically weaker and fall sick more often than before" (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024).

However, not all respondents faced the same level of burden. Six respondents experience only occasional tiredness and maintain better well-being due to family support and task sharing. Some have mitigated exhaustion through effective support systems. Panthi shared that she no longer experiences significant exhaustion after improving the distribution of household duties, which has greatly reduced her stress and enhanced her overall well-being. She states:

"In the past, I experienced physical exhaustion from balancing work and household responsibilities, often dealing with tiredness and health issues like back and leg pain due to the pressures of both. However, I took steps to change that, I now divide household tasks with my husband and have also hired a housemaid, which has significantly reduced my overall burden. Sometimes, I feel like when you share responsibilities, it's as if a weight has been lifted off your shoulders."(P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024)

These data show that sharing household tasks can reduce physical stress and tiredness. Women who get help from family or hire assistance feel healthier and have more energy than those who do everything alone. This highlights the importance of dividing household duties fairly to prevent burnout among working women

5.1.12 Emotional Stress and Burnout Due to Work and Household Responsibilities

Seven respondents reported feeling emotionally drained from balancing work and home responsibilities. One of the strongest recurring emotions was guilt. Bhandari expressed, "I often feel guilty prioritizing work over family, particularly when engaging in training programs. This guilt makes me feel like I'm being judged as a 'bad mother'" (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, Basnet stated that she faces stress and guilt from juggling motherhood, her job, and studies. She shared, "I experience guilt for neglecting my child or academic responsibilities due to the overwhelming nature of my duties at home and work" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 20, 2024). These responses highlight how the emotional burden of multiple responsibilities contributes to burnout among women.

In some cases, societal expectations intensified stress. Three respondents mentioned experiencing occasional arguments, which caused emotional stress. Sharma expressed, "*I feel overwhelmed, especially when my kids are on holiday or when I have to work overtime. My husband is not always available to help, which results in stress and occasional arguments*" (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 20, 2024). Similarly, Dhital shared, "*As a daughter-in-law, I am expected to take care of the kitchen, children's homework, and bedtime routines, all while managing a full-time job. These pressures sometimes lead to frustration and occasional arguments with family members*" (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024).

The burden of traditional gender roles continues to impact women's mental well-being, particularly in managing financial and household responsibilities. Another respondent, Koirala, revealed, "*After my in-laws lost their financial stability, my husband and I had to take responsibility for a family of five. The financial pressure combined with household duties is mentally exhausting for me*" (N. Koirala, Personal Communication, 2024). These accounts illustrate how traditional gender roles contribute to stress and mental exhaustion, making it difficult for women to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Furthermore, household expectations can be a significant source of emotional strain. Thapa reported that she used to wake up at 5 a.m. to clean the house and prepare

everything before her grandmother-in-law's weekly pooja. She explained, "*The belief was that women should come first in household chores. However, I feel relieved that my mother-in-law now takes steps to help me by making excuses and supporting me*" (S. Thapa, Personal Communication, 2024). This experience demonstrates how generational shifts in attitudes toward gender roles can help ease the burden on women, though traditional expectations remain a source of stress.

Research shows that women with strong support systems reported lower stress levels. Five out of 20 respondents acknowledged the pressure of managing both home and work, but they benefited from family support. Panthi stated, "*I've learned to manage my stress by sharing responsibilities with my husband. I now prioritize self-care and don't feel guilty for taking time for myself*" (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024). This highlights the role of open communication and shared responsibilities in alleviating emotional burnout. By actively involving everyone in household chores, these families have created a cooperative and less stressful environment, making it easier to manage their responsibilities.

Some respondents reported experiencing tension and stress due to household tasks during peak seasons of their business, particularly when trying to balance business deadlines with household responsibilities. Additionally, they experienced guilt when missing personal or social events due to their work commitments. However, this stress varied based on the availability of external support. For instance, Mulmi enjoys her business because she has the support of a full-time housemaid to handle domestic chores (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024). This contrast underscores how access to domestic assistance significantly influences stress levels and the ability to manage work-life balance.

5.1.13 Social Limitation

Balancing professional responsibilities, household duties, and social engagement presents a significant challenge for many individuals. This study examines the experiences of 20 respondents to understand how work and domestic pressures affect their ability to maintain social connections. The analysis explores themes related to exhaustion, time constraints, adaptive strategies, and prioritization. Data were collected through Personal Communications with 20 individuals, who provided insights into their daily routines and the impact of work and household responsibilities on their social lives.

A predominant theme emerging from the data is the physical and mental exhaustion resulting from juggling work and home responsibilities. Many respondents reported that the relentless demands of their daily routines leave them with little energy for social engagements. Dhital explained, “There’s always something that needs doing at home or work, and on the weekends, there is more pressure with household chores. I’m often too tired to engage outside of these responsibilities” (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024). This suggests that persistent fatigue and limited discretionary time contribute directly to social isolation.

A recurring theme in the discussion is the conflict between professional responsibilities and household duties, particularly in households with young children. Respondents such as Basnet and Sharma shared how their packed schedules make it challenging to participate in community events or gatherings, with their children often playing a key role in shaping their social engagement. Basnet stated, “By the time I’m done with everything, I’m too tired to even think about leaving the house. Despite this, I try to adjust my schedule to accommodate my 5-year-old daughter, who insists on attending family gatherings. As a mother of a young child, I need to supervise my daughter at all times, which limits my enjoyment of these events. I only join them with the belief that socializing is important for my child’s development” (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This reflects how parental responsibilities extend beyond household tasks to ensuring a child’s social and emotional growth.

Similarly, Sharma noted, “It feels like there’s never enough time for everything. I want to attend every event, but it’s just not feasible for me. With eight hours of daily duty at the bank and occasional late evenings, I often have to skip family gatherings and social events. I prefer to send my children with my mother instead, and occasionally, I take part. This leaves me with little time to maintain relationships outside my immediate family, and sometimes, I get criticized and mocked for missing these activities” (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Sharma’s experience highlights how childcare arrangements impact a parent’s ability to engage socially, with external support, such as grandparents, playing a crucial role. This interplay between professional obligations, household responsibilities, and childcare underscores the challenges working parents face in balancing personal, professional, and social life.

Despite these challenges, some respondents have adopted adaptive strategies to remain socially active. Approximately six respondents emphasized the importance of family support and deliberate scheduling in mitigating the adverse effects of their busy lives. Respondents such as Raut, Mahat, and Koirala reported that with the backing of their spouses and in-laws, they are better able to make time for social participation (S. Raut, Personal Communication, 2024; B. Mahat, Personal Communication, 2024; N. Koirala, Personal Communication, 2024). Conversely, Bhattarai commented on the struggle of balancing childcare with social commitments, stating, “I usually take part in it and I enjoy being involved, but with two toddlers, sometimes it feels like I’m running from one task to the next. Because I need to take them with me” (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). These responses highlight that a supportive familial and social network, along with intentional time management, can partially alleviate the pressures that hinder social involvement.

The role of personal prioritization also influences how individuals balance social activities with family obligations. Panthi shared that she actively participates in volunteer work and meetings but opts out of cultural ceremonies or family gatherings due to personal preferences. She explains, “I love being involved in volunteer work and meetings, but cultural ceremonies or family gatherings are usually not in my personal preferences” (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Thapaliya and Pradhan indicated that while they value social interactions, they sometimes sacrifice these opportunities to ensure quality family time. Thapaliya emphasized the importance of personal priorities, stating, “It’s all about priorities and my preferences” (R. Thapaliya, Personal Communication, 2024). Likewise, Pradhan enjoys participating in social, community, and cultural events but prioritizes spending time with her children, often opting to forgo these gatherings (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This theme reveals the strategic decision-making process that individuals employ to manage competing demands, emphasizing the balance between social fulfillment and familial responsibilities.

Not all respondents feel that their social life is significantly limited. For example, Singh and Mulmi expressed a strong commitment to social engagement, sharing the belief that, “It’s tough being at home with a young child, but I make it a priority to

engage in community work and cultural activities. It's what keeps me going and brings me joy." These perspectives highlight the role of individual agency and intentional effort in maintaining social connections despite time constraints.

Overall, this study underscores how the tension between professional and domestic responsibilities affects social engagement. While time constraints present challenges, support networks and prioritization strategies help mitigate social isolation, enabling some individuals to stay connected despite their obligations.

5.1.14 Personal Time Constraints

Personal time is crucial for individuals to recharge, reduce stress, and maintain mental and emotional well-being. It fosters a healthy balance between responsibilities and self-care, leading to greater productivity and happiness in both personal and professional life. However, the demands of work and household responsibilities often leave little room for personal time. This analysis explores the challenges faced by 20 individuals in balancing household, work, and personal responsibilities, with a specific focus on their personal time. For 13 out of 20 respondents, the constant juggling of responsibilities leaves little room for self-care or leisure.

Bhandari shared, *"I often find myself sacrificing personal time just to get everything done. Between household chores and work, there's little time left for me, and I can't remember the last time I had a break."* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, Pradhan prioritizes her children over personal leisure, stating, *"I wish I could relax a bit more, but my kids come first. It's hard to find time for myself when I'm constantly needed by them"* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024).

Basnet share her hectic schedule: *"Evenings and weekends are consumed by college emails or deadlines, making it hard to relax and fully focus on my personal time. I even sacrifice activities like meditation and yoga, which are essential for my overall well-being."* (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). Likewise, Sharma echoed this sentiment, saying, *"By the time I finish all my chores, it's already late, and I just want to sleep. Then, early in the morning, I have to wake up to prepare meals for my children. There's no time left to sit, relax, or do anything just for*

myself” (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Dhital added, *“It feels like I’m on a never-ending mission. If one task is done, another is already waiting for me. By the end of the day, I’m too tired to do anything for myself, even if I wanted to.”* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, March 2024) These responses highlight the exhaustion and burnout resulting from a lack of personal time.

While the majority struggle, seven respondents have successfully prioritized self-care through structured routines and support systems. Their experiences provide insight into effective time management strategies: Panthi shared, *“I make sure I take time for myself, whether it’s exercising or just sitting down to read, with the belief that if I don’t take care of myself, I can’t take care of others.”* (P. Panthi, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Mahat benefits from her mother-in-law’s support: *“I’m blessed that my mother-in-law helps a lot. It gives me the freedom to focus on my work, well-being, and spend time without pressure.”* (B. Mahat, Personal Communication, 2024)

Respondents like Singh and Thapaliya, emphasized the importance of structured routines, stating, *“I’ve learned how to juggle everything, and making time for myself is non-negotiable. I need it to stay balanced.”* (B. Singh, Personal Communication, 2024, R. Thapaliya, Personal Communication, 2024). Similarly, Bohora noted the role of family support, saying, *“With their help, I can prioritize self-care practices like yoga and maintain balance. It’s my way of staying centered and healthy.”* (B. Bohora, Personal Communication, 2024). Mulmi prioritizes self-care, stating, *“Taking care of myself is important. Even a 30-minute workout or some quiet time helps me balance work and life.”* (U. Mulmi, Personal Communication, June, 21, 2024). These responses demonstrate that with effective time management and strong support systems, it is possible to balance responsibilities while ensuring personal well-being.

Research show that respondents with young children struggle more to find personal time due to the constant demands of childcare and household responsibilities. Among nine such respondents, Bhattarai, a mother of two, explained, *“Even on vacation, I feel rushed with two children and often end up sacrificing my own needs to keep things running smoothly. Watching kids’ cartoons on YouTube and TV with my two children is the only way I can de-stress and escape for a bit.”* (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). In contrast, Bhandari has a grown-up child, finds

some personal time but remains occupied with various responsibilities. (S. Bhandari, Personal Communication, March 2024). However, respondents with strong support systems are better able to prioritize personal time and self-care. This analysis suggests that while parenting demands are relentless, support systems play a crucial role in enabling personal time and well-being.

This analysis highlights that while personal time is essential for well-being, the demands of work and household responsibilities often make it seem unattainable. Thirteen out of 20 respondents struggle to find time for themselves, while seven have successfully maintained balance through structured routines and support systems. The key takeaway is that achieving personal time is possible with effective time management, external support, and a commitment to self-care.

5.1.15 Challenges in Participating in Work-Related Programs

Participating in work-related programs is essential for professional development, networking, and skill enhancement. However, balancing these opportunities with family and personal responsibilities presents a significant challenge for many individuals. This analysis explores the difficulties faced by 20 respondents in engaging in work-related programs outside regular office hours and how flexible schedules and support systems influence their participation. The findings emphasize the critical role of structured support in fostering professional growth.

Among the 20 respondents, 12 reported difficulties in balancing professional development with their family responsibilities, particularly when work-related programs take place outside standard working hours. Childcare responsibilities emerged as a major obstacle, particularly for mothers with infants and young children. For instance, Pradhan stated, *"I used to participate in residential or overnight training programs, but now I cannot due to being a breastfeeding mother"* (S. Pradhan, Personal Communication, June 18, 2024). This highlights how early motherhood significantly impacts engagement in professional development opportunities. Similarly, Basnet, a Vice Principle, described the stress of balancing work-related programs with family duties: *"I'm often tense, thinking that my child may get hungry or need rest. During these times, I try to get help from my mother and brother to pick up and take care of my child." The mental burden of ensuring proper childcare while*

attending work commitments contributes to the difficulty of participating in professional development programs effectively and nonproductive." (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, 2024).

Other respondents, including Sharma and Dhital, echoed similar concerns. Sharma stated, *"I am unable to participate in work-related programs outside regular hours because of my family responsibilities, especially my children"* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). Dhital added, *"While I attend essential overtime and meetings, my family duties often take priority especially my breastfeeding child, making it difficult to fully engage in professional development activities"* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 21, 2024). These responses suggest that household responsibilities not only limit time availability but also create additional stress, further discouraging participation in career-enhancing programs.

Despite these difficulties, 8 out of 20 respondents manage to participate effectively in work-related programs, often due to structured support systems such as flexible work schedules and family assistance. For example, Raut shared, *"I have learned to balance work and personal commitments so that I can attend work-related programs, even outside regular office hours. My family's support makes this possible."* (S. Raut, communication, 2024). This underscores the importance of external support in enabling professional growth. Similarly, Bhattarai highlighted how pre-planning and family assistance enable her participation despite childcare responsibilities: *"I participate in work-related programs before or after regular office hours if they are important, but I often feel rushed. I am able to attend residential or overnight training programs, when necessary, but before that, I need to take care and ensure that the needed things are available for my baby, including bottle milk."* (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024). This statement reinforces that while participation is possible, it requires careful planning and additional effort.

The findings highlight that 12 out of 20 respondents face significant challenges in participating in work-related programs due to family and childcare responsibilities. However, 8 out of 20 respondents have successfully navigated these challenges through workplace flexibility and family support. This shows that structured support systems and flexible work policies play a crucial role in enabling individuals to balance their professional development with personal responsibilities. Organizations

can enhance participation in work-related programs by promoting family-friendly policies and offering flexible work arrangements, ultimately fostering career advancement opportunities for employees.

5.1.16 Professional Growth Barriers

Professional growth is vital for career advancement, skill development, and overall fulfillment. However, balancing household responsibilities with work duties can significantly hinder professional growth, affecting productivity, energy levels, and career progression. This analysis explores how household responsibilities impact professional growth among 20 employed women, focusing on work performance, career advancement, and the strategies used to overcome these challenges.

Out of 20 respondents, 12 reported that household responsibilities negatively impact their professional growth, limiting opportunities for career advancement. One respondent shared that her inability to attend after-hours training programs or networking events hinders her career progression. Sharma echoed this, stating, *"Managing the house and caring for my young children leaves me with little time and energy for professional growth. I also struggle with punctuality due to childcare responsibilities, which has led to negative feedback at work, affecting my reputation."* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024)). Similarly, respondents reported that household responsibilities impact their productivity. Bhandari explained, *"Household tasks often leave me physically and mentally exhausted, which affects my performance at work. I often start the day feeling tired instead of refreshed, and my limited participation in professional programs makes me feel less competitive and disconnected from my team."* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). In addition to exhaustion, some respondents face missed career opportunities. Dhital noted that despite maintaining punctuality and performance, she faced health issues and career setbacks due to family obligations and office politics, further complicating her professional growth. (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, 2024)

Despite these challenges, 8 out of 20 respondents have successfully managed their professional growth through structured routines, support systems, and flexible work arrangements. Raut shared, *"While I occasionally struggle with punctuality due to family commitments, it has not affected my work performance. Household tasks may*

sometimes make me tired, but they do not impact my productivity. I actively participate in programs outside regular hours, and my workplace recognizes my contributions, ensuring that promotions have not been an issue." (S. Raut, Personal Communication, March 2024. Among those who manage their professional growth positively, six benefit from flexible work options such as telecommuting and work-from-home arrangements, making it easier to balance responsibilities without hindering career progression. Singh and Thapaliya emphasized the role of workplace flexibility, stating, *"Having the option to work remotely allows us to manage both personal and professional responsibilities without sacrificing one for the other."* (B. Singh, Personal Communications, 2024, R. Thapaliya, Personal Communications, 2024).

Findings indicate that respondents with strong family support systems are better equipped to balance household responsibilities and career growth. Mahat shared, *"I'm fortunate that my mother-in-law helps with household tasks, which gives me the freedom to focus on my work without additional stress."* (B. Mahat, Personal Communication, 2024). Conversely, respondents without strong support systems struggle to advance in their careers due to time constraints and exhaustion. This underscores the importance of external support in enabling professional growth.

The analysis highlights that household responsibilities significantly impact professional growth, with 12 out of 20 respondents facing challenges such as exhaustion, reduced productivity, and limited career advancement opportunities. However, 8 out of 20 respondents have successfully managed their professional growth through family support, workplace flexibility, and effective time management. The findings emphasize the need for supportive work environments and flexible policies to help individuals balance personal and professional responsibilities while achieving career growth.

5.1.17 Need of Flexibility and Formal Support

In today's demanding professional environment, workplace flexibility and formal support systems play a crucial role in helping employees balance their work and personal responsibilities. The findings from a study involving 20 respondents highlight how the lack of flexibility and formal support impacts individuals' ability to

manage their careers effectively. While some employees benefit from informal flexibility or workplace policies, others struggle due to rigid structures and insufficient formal support systems. This analysis explores these challenges and emphasizes the need for organizational changes to foster a supportive work environment.

A significant number of respondents (11 out of 20) reported facing challenges due to limited workplace flexibility and formal support. These individuals, particularly those in structured sectors such as banking and nursing, struggle with rigid schedules, limited leave policies, and a competitive work environment that often prioritizes productivity over work-life balance. For example, Bhandari stated, *“The organization provides limited leave policies, which are insufficient in easing the burden of managing dual responsibilities.”* (A. Bhandari, Personal Communication, June 26, 2024). Similarly, Dhital emphasized the impact of rigid policies, noting, *“The limited leave policies in the banking sector provide minimal support during family emergencies, and the competitive environment sometimes makes it difficult for employees to manage work-life balance.”* (S. Dhital, Personal Communication, March 2024). These responses highlight how stringent workplace policies create barriers to maintaining a sustainable work-life balance. Other respondents echoed similar sentiments, stressing the detrimental effects of inadequate workplace flexibility. Bhattarai pointed out, *“The lack of formal support systems exacerbates the difficulties I face in managing both work and home responsibilities (D. Bhattarai, Personal Communication, June 19, 2024).* Sharma added, *“The lack of flexibility in the office leads to negative comments for reaching late, which affects my reputation.”* (R. Sharma, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). These views reinforce the idea that rigid workplace expectations can harm employees’ well-being and professional reputations. Additionally, Basnet explained the exhaustion of balancing responsibilities alone, stating, *“I don’t use flexible work arrangements because I prioritize my job over personal commitments, but balancing everything alone is exhausting.”* (N. Basnet, Personal Communication, March 2024). This response shows how employees without external support or workplace flexibility often bear a greater burden in managing their responsibilities.

In contrast, eight out of 20 respondents reported successfully managing their responsibilities due to informal flexibility or supportive workplace policies. Employees who have access to flexible work arrangements and supportive colleagues are better equipped to balance personal and professional demands. For instance, Raut benefits from flexible working hours and telecommuting options, stating, “These policies contribute to a better work-life balance.” (S. Raut, Personal Communication, March 2024). Like Raut, five other respondents utilize flexible work hours and receive support from colleagues, which helps them manage their responsibilities more effectively. These experiences suggest that implementing flexibility in work arrangements can significantly improve employees' ability to balance their commitments. Among these eight respondents, three are entrepreneurs who highlighted the advantages of self-employment in managing their time effectively. They shared similar perspectives, running own business allows to balance personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. There are no boundaries or personal commitments, and have flexibility to manage schedule as needed.” Homagai who previously struggled with rigid banking policies, now enjoys greater control over her schedule as a business owner, stating, “*Since I own my own clothing store, I have more control over my hours, which makes balancing work and home responsibilities much easier.*” (A. Homagai, Personal Communication, March 2024).

The findings highlight the critical role of workplace flexibility and formal support systems in promoting a healthier work-life balance. Employees in structured industries face significant challenges due to rigid schedules and insufficient support, while those with access to flexible work arrangements and supportive policies manage their responsibilities more effectively. The study highlights the importance of implementing formal support systems such as childcare assistance, wellness programs, and flexible work policies like telecommuting and remote work options. By fostering a culture of flexibility and structured support, organizations can enhance employee well-being, increase job satisfaction, and ensure equal professional growth opportunities for all employees.

Conclusion

Balancing work and personal responsibilities present significant challenges, particularly for women who juggle household chores, childcare, and professional commitments. This study, based on interviews with 20 women and case among five

respondents, highlights the dual burden they face. Historically confined to domestic roles, women have increasingly joined the workforce, gained financial independence while simultaneously experienced heightened stress.

The findings reveal that physical exhaustion, emotional burnout, and limited personal time are common struggles. A majority of respondents (14 out of 20) reported chronic fatigue due to the overwhelming nature of their responsibilities. Additionally, 7 out of 20 highlighted emotional stress and guilt, particularly in their roles as mothers, while 3 out of 20 mentioned experiencing occasional conflicts with partners or family members due to household responsibilities.

On a professional level, rigid workplace policies and insufficient formal support systems create further obstacles. Among the respondents, 6 out of 20 women from structured sectors such as banking and nursing reported difficulties due to inflexible schedules, while four from other professions faced similar challenges. However, the study also identified positive outcomes among those with access to support systems. Eight out of 20 women reported experiencing greater balance due to family support, flexible work arrangements, or shared responsibilities. Notably, 5 of these 8 women benefited from telecommuting or flexible hours, which allowed them to manage their professional and personal duties more effectively.

The findings emphasize the urgent need for equitable distribution of household tasks, workplace policies that support flexibility (such as remote work and adaptable schedules), and a cultural shift toward prioritizing self-care. While achieving work-life balance remains a challenge, these obstacles can be mitigated through structured support systems at home and in the workplace. To foster a more inclusive and empowering environment, organizations must implement policies that acknowledge and accommodate employees' diverse needs. Additionally, societal shifts toward gender equality will be instrumental in ensuring that women can thrive both professionally and personally. With the right balance of workplace flexibility, supportive policies, and shared responsibilities, individuals can overcome these challenges, leading to improved well-being and career success.

5.2 Case story Data Presentation

Data was collected through case studies with five women from various professions, offering rich insights into their daily struggles, coping mechanisms, and the impact on their well-being and career growth. The interviews were transcribed and analysis is organized into three main themes based on the respective objectives: the types of activities women perform at home and work, how they manage their responsibilities, and the challenges they face in balancing work and personal life.

Case Study 1: Balancing Work and Home in a Nuclear Family

Bista (name changed) is a 40-year-old woman living in Kathmandu. She holds a Master's degree and works at a bank. Living in a nuclear family with her husband and young son, Bina's daily life reflects the common struggle faced by many urban working women trying to balance a full-time job with the unending responsibilities at home. Her mornings begin before sunrise. *"My mornings are very busy. I wake up before the sun, prepare breakfast, get my son ready for school, and then rush to get myself ready for work,"* she shared with a tired smile. Although she receives some help from a domestic helper who comes once a week for four hours, the primary responsibility for household tasks like cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, childcare, laundry, and even watering the plants, falls on her.

Her husband supports her occasionally, especially with maintenance tasks or helping their son. *"He helps when I ask, but most of the responsibility still naturally falls on me,"* Bina admitted. *"Maybe it's just how we were raised. It's hard to unlearn old habits."* While the imbalance isn't deliberate, its effects are real. She often feels overwhelmed by the number of tasks she has to manage. *"I'm constantly on my feet. During school holidays, it gets even more difficult. My son needs more attention, and I feel like I'm being pulled in every direction,"* she said. The continuous rush means she rarely gets any time for herself. *"I don't get time to relax. I feel like I'm always running against the clock."*

Even with her busy schedule, Bina tries to stay involved in community activities and volunteering. *"I want to give back to society, but when there's no one to look after my son, I have to skip events. It's frustrating,"* she confessed. The physical and mental

burden of her dual roles is visible. *“If I can’t finish my chores, I feel anxious. That anxiety builds up I get headaches, I snap easily, and it affects my mood at work,”* she said, acknowledging how it spills into her professional life.

Punctuality is another major concern for Bina, especially during her son’s holidays when her routine is disrupted. *“Thankfully, my supervisors are kind and understanding, but I still feel guilty when I’m late. It’s not just about being on time, it’s about how I show up mentally. Some days I arrive, but my mind is still at home,”* she explained. Despite these challenges, Bina has managed to grow professionally. However, she regrets missing out on some important opportunities. *“I couldn’t attend residential training programs because there was no one to take care of things at home. That bothers me. I know I could’ve learned a lot more if I had the chance,”* she reflected. Still, she is thankful that these limitations have not affected her career advancement. *“I haven’t missed out on promotions, and for that, I’m grateful.”*

Her support system goes beyond her immediate family. *“My neighbors have really helped me out. Sometimes they pick up my son from school when I can’t make it. And my colleagues cover for me at work when needed. These small things mean a lot,”* she said. Her workplace policies, such as flexible hours facilities, have also helped. *“These are lifesavers. Without them, I don’t think I’d be able to manage everything as I do now.”*

To cope with stress, Bina make out moments for herself. *“I need my ‘me time’, long drives, coffee alone, Netflix, or an occasional spa visit. That’s how I reset. Sometimes I even take a day off just to breathe and sort out things at home.”* When asked what working women like her need most, she answered without hesitation: *“Flexible work options, childcare support at the office, shared responsibilities at home, and most importantly, time for ourselves. We don’t need superheroes; we just need support.”*

Case Study 2: Story of Balanced Family Life

Anupa Dahal (name changed), Anupa Dahal (name changed), a 36-year-old woman with a Master’s degree, runs her own business in Kathmandu while living with her husband and two daughters in a nuclear family. Anupa has mastered the art of balancing both household and work duties through clear communication, time

management, and an equal partnership with her spouse. *“We don’t divide chores by who is the man or the woman. We divide them by what needs to be done, and I teach my daughters the same,”* she says confidently.

In Anupa's household, all tasks cooking, cleaning, childcare, gardening, and grocery shopping are handled collectively. While Anupa takes on most of the cooking and cleaning, the family rotates responsibilities to ensure no one feels overburdened. Her husband actively contributes, especially in the mornings before leaving for work, and their daughters are learning to pitch in as well. *“He cuts the vegetables while I cook, and after dinner, we all wash dishes together. Even the kids help clean the living room,”* she shares with a smile. This collaborative approach helps avoid any sense of ownership over household chores. *“It’s never just ‘my’ job or ‘his’ job. It’s our home, so we all take care of it,”* she adds.

Anupa’s routine allows her to balance her business with her family life. She works from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and completes most household tasks in the morning. Evenings are dedicated to family time, filled with shared chores and assisting the children with their schoolwork. *“There are days when my husband has to travel or the kids have exams, but those moments are rare, and we handle them together,”* she explains, reflecting her calm and steady approach to navigating time pressures without letting stress spill into her work life.

Unlike many women in similar situations, Anupa hasn’t faced difficulties with workplace attendance or punctuality, thanks to her business’s flexible hours. *“I’m lucky that I can adjust my work hours when needed. That freedom has made a big difference,”* she says. Her supportive home environment allows her to participate in meetings, volunteer events, and professional training outside regular hours. *“Whenever I need to step out for work-related programs, I just let my family know. Everyone adjusts. We have that understanding,”* she explains, highlighting the importance of clear communication. Anupa does not rely on neighbors or friends for help because the support she receives at home is enough. Her physical and mental energy remains steady, and she rarely feels exhausted. *“Stress happens to everyone, but I don’t let it build up,”* she notes. To maintain her well-being, Anupa practices yoga and meditation regularly, which she says keeps her grounded. *“Spending time with my daughters also gives me the happiness I need to recharge,”* she shares.

What stands out in Anupa's story is the conscious effort her family makes to maintain fairness and harmony. *"We talk about everything who's doing what, what the kids need, what's coming up. That keeps us on the same page,"* she says. Anupa believes that a woman-friendly workplace and flexible policies are essential in supporting women like her. For Anupa, balancing work and home life isn't complicated. She believes that shared responsibility, open dialogue, and self-care supported by a positive family environment empower women to succeed both professionally and personally.

Case Study 3: Balancing Work-Life in a Traditional Family Structure

Rupa GC (name changed), a 28-year-old nurse, lives in a large joint family with 11 members, including her husband, in-laws, and extended family. Despite working full-time, Rupa is expected to manage most of the household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and tending to the garden. She also helps with seasonal crops managed by the family. Her daily routine starts at 5 AM, and the morning is often hectic as she tries to fit in chores before her shift at the hospital. However, her responsibilities leave little time for personal activities or leisure.

"I try to fit in chores before my shift starts, but sometimes I just can't keep up," Rupa explains, reflecting the challenge of balancing her demanding job with household duties. As a nurse working on a shift basis, Rupa's work schedule makes it difficult to complete her domestic chores, which she tries to fit in either early in the morning, during her breaks, or late at night. The pressure to manage everything within her family's traditional structure is overwhelming. *"In our family, it's expected that women take care of everything,"* Rupa shares. This cultural expectation, deeply ingrained in her family, means that the responsibility of maintaining the home primarily falls on her and the other women in the household, regardless of their professional commitments or personal well-being.

In contrast, the men in Rupa's family, including her father-in-law, husband, and uncles-in-law, are mostly involved in outdoor work, handling finances, and making key family decisions. *"The men are responsible for the bigger decisions, and they work outside, while we handle everything inside,"* Rupa says, explaining the unequal distribution of household responsibilities. This division of labor leads to frustration, as Rupa feels the weight of her domestic duties while trying to balance her career.

Rupa's workload leaves little time for herself. *"I rarely get time for myself. I can't remember the last time I went out just to enjoy myself,"* she says. Social activities, cultural events, and community gatherings are often sacrificed because of her household and work responsibilities. When she does attend events, it is only enjoyable when surrounded by people who understand her situation. This lack of personal time contributes to Rupa's feelings of stress and isolation.

The physical toll of her daily responsibilities is evident. She suffers from back pain, headaches, and sore feet due to the constant physical strain. *"My back is constantly sore, and I always have headaches. I don't even know how to relax anymore,"* Rupa admits. These health issues are exacerbated by her constant juggling of work and home duties, leading to burnout and fatigue.

Balancing her nursing job and household responsibilities affects Rupa's professional life. There are times when she is late to work due to the demands of her home duties, although she has not faced formal consequences. *"Sometimes, I'm late, and it's stressful, but luckily, my boss is understanding,"* she says. However, this constant fatigue makes it difficult to focus at work, and it negatively impacts her performance. *"It's hard to focus when I'm so tired from everything at home,"* she reflects.

Rupa's professional growth has also been hindered by her inability to participate in work-related programs. *"I missed some important training, and that frustrates me. I know it could've helped me advance,"* she says. Her career development has been limited, as she has not participated in any training or professional development activities for the past year. This lack of time and energy for professional growth has prevented her from advancing in her career.

Despite the overwhelming demands of her responsibilities, Rupa receives support from her family, particularly from her mother-in-law and other female relatives, who help with household chores. *"My mother-in-law is a huge help. Without her, I don't know how I would manage everything,"* Rupa says. This support has been crucial in helping her manage both her work and home life. Additionally, Rupa also receives help from friends, neighbors, and colleagues, who assist her in balancing her commitments. *"I'm thankful for the help from my friends and neighbors. They sometimes take care of small things when I'm really tied up,"* she acknowledges.

To cope with the stress, Rupa has developed strategies to help her relax. She takes short breaks during the day, reads books, watches videos on her phone, or talks to friends and family. *“I have to take breaks. Even if it’s just 10 minutes, I need to recharge,”* she says. These brief moments of respite are essential in helping her manage the physical and emotional toll of her daily routine.

Rupa has also learned to prioritize tasks and let go of minor disruptions to reduce stress. *“I’ve learned to let go of little things. If I focused on every small detail, I’d lose my mind,”* she shares. This coping mechanism has helped her deal with the pressures of managing her household and career without becoming overwhelmed.

Case Study 4: Unseen Struggles of Balancing Work and Home in a Nuclear Family

Muna Basnet (Name Changed), a 33-year-old service provider with a Master's degree, lives in a nuclear family with her husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law, and two children. She handles both professional and domestic responsibilities, navigating traditional family expectations where women are typically expected to manage the majority of household chores.

Muna takes charge of cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, childcare, grocery shopping, and laundry, though some of these tasks are occasionally shared. *“It feels like I am responsible for everything at home. Sometimes, I feel exhausted, but there’s always more to do,”* she shares. Her husband and father-in-law are involved in the family business and are away for long hours, occasionally helping with chores, but the expectation remains that Muna will manage the home.

Her day starts early, around 5 AM, to complete household chores before heading to work. Despite her efforts, she often arrives late to the office, adding to her stress. *“I try to get everything done in the morning, but there are always tasks I can’t finish,”* she says. Although her workplace offers some flexibility, tardiness occasionally affects her performance.

Muna finds little time for self-care or personal activities, sacrificing social engagements and relaxation to meet her domestic and professional obligations. *“I can’t remember the last time I had a moment just for myself,”* she admits. The

constant balancing act has taken a toll on her physical and emotional health, with frequent fatigue, anxiety, and stress headaches. *"I feel mentally exhausted, and my body aches from doing so much,"* she shares.

Support from her mother-in-law with childcare and household chores is vital for Muna. However, despite this assistance, she struggles to communicate her challenges to her husband and family members, feeling that they don't fully understand the extent of her workload. This lack of understanding has caused tension in her relationship, making it difficult to set boundaries between work and home life.

Muna tries to incorporate self-care activities, like spending time with friends or practicing mindfulness, but these moments are rare due to her busy schedule. *"Even if it's just a few minutes of rest, I need to recharge,"* she says. Though she remains committed to her family and work, Muna feels the need for better balance and more support from those around her.

Case Study 5: Financial Challenges Impacting Work-Life Balance

Anupa Panday (Name Changed), a 35-year-old teacher with a Master's degree, lives in an extended family of five members: her in-laws, husband, son, and herself. While household chores are divided between men and women, gender-specific tasks still persist. Men typically handle room cleaning and babysitting, while women manage cooking, cleaning, and laundry.

Despite some family support, Anupa carries most of the domestic responsibilities. She shares grocery shopping with her husband and receives help with babysitting from her in-laws. To manage, she allocates early mornings and evenings for domestic duties, as her daytime is occupied with teaching.

The financial burden remains heavy, as Anupa and her husband are the sole breadwinners, supporting three dependents. Anupa reflects, *"I often feel like I'm juggling two full-time jobs one at home and one at work. The constant pressure takes a toll on me."* This imbalance, along with limited support from her family, contributes to stress and conflicts at home, especially when older family members avoid responsibilities.

The lack of time and personal space affects her social life, as she rarely participates in community or social events. *"There's simply no time left for me,"* Anupa explains. This constant strain, especially during health crises, has led to mental and physical exhaustion, impacting her work performance and overall well-being.

Although Anupa tries to participate in work-related programs outside of office hours, her limited time for professional development has hindered her career growth. *"I know I'm missing out on opportunities for growth, but there's just no time to commit,"* she admits.

Anupa finds support from her colleagues and workplace flexibility, which helps her manage both work and personal responsibilities. She practices self-care through meditation and exercise to cope with stress. *"Taking care of myself is essential to manage everything,"* she shares.

Anupa's experience highlights the significant challenges working women face in balancing work and household duties, with financial strain and an unequal division of chores affecting their well-being and professional growth. She advocates for more flexibility, equitable division of household responsibilities, and a supportive family and workplace environment to improve work-life balance. *"If both men and women share responsibilities equally, it would make a world of difference,"* she concludes.

Analysis of Case Study

For the first objective to examine the impact of household labor division on the professional careers of urban married women in Kathmandu. The case studies findings indicate that the division of household labor significantly influences the professional trajectories of urban married women in Kathmandu. Case studies reveal that women embedded in traditional or semi-traditional family structures such as Rupa and Muna face a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities. These women are often overburdened with chores, limiting their time and energy for professional growth, participation in training, or engagement in career-enhancing activities. As a result, their career progression is frequently hindered, despite their dedication and competence.

Conversely, households with a more equitable distribution of labor like Anupa enable women to better balance their work and domestic roles. In such settings, collaborative efforts from spouses and even children facilitate a more manageable daily routine, allowing women to attend professional development programs, pursue promotions, and maintain healthier work-life integration. However, the situation is nuanced. Even in seemingly progressive nuclear families, such as Mina's, traditional gender norms continue to influence labor division, with women still assuming primary responsibility for domestic tasks despite the absence of extended family members.

Professionally, all participants are actively engaged in demanding sectors including education, banking, healthcare, NGOs, and entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, the ability to participate in optional but critical career-building activities like networking events, training sessions, or stakeholder meetings varies according to the level of domestic support they receive. This imbalance underscores that while employment is increasingly accessible to women, professional advancement remains unevenly shaped by the invisible weight of household labor. The comparison thus highlights that the structure and dynamics of the home environment play a pivotal role in either facilitating or constraining women's professional development.

For the objective second to explore the coping strategies these women use to balance their careers and household duties. The case studies reveal that urban married women in Kathmandu employ a range of coping strategies to navigate the dual demands of professional and domestic life. These strategies vary widely depending on family structure, spousal support, and workplace flexibility. One key coping mechanism is seeking support from family members particularly spouses and in-laws. Respondents like Anupa and Anupa, who enjoy a more balanced division of labor at home, are able to share household responsibilities, which significantly lightens their daily load and allows them to focus on both career and self-care. Open communication and cooperative routines within the family unit are essential in these cases. Another common strategy involves utilizing flexible work arrangements. Respondent who has understanding employers or jobs that permit work-from-home options, such as Anupa, benefit from greater control over their time. This flexibility enables them to align professional tasks with household demands, though its effectiveness is limited without corresponding domestic support.

Prioritization and time management also emerge as critical tools. Respondent like those in Mina adopt structured schedules, multitasking techniques, and clear task breakdown to ensure both professional deadlines and home obligations are met. This strategic organization is especially crucial in environments with limited external support. In some cases, women choose to building external support networks leaning on friends, neighbors, or colleagues for assistance with childcare or errands during periods of heightened pressure. While informal, these networks serve as important barriers, especially for respondent like Mina who face inconsistent help at home. Additionally, self-care practices, though often limited, are part of the coping toolkit. Short breaks, mindfulness techniques, or brief leisure activities are employed by respondent like those Mina and Muna to mitigate stress and sustain mental well-being amidst packed schedules. However, the success of these coping strategies is deeply shaped by the underlying family dynamics. Anupa experience highlights how shared responsibilities and mutual understanding at home create an enabling environment. In contrast, Rupa and Muna, lives in traditional or semi-traditional households, carry the bulk of domestic labor themselves, relying more on personal endurance than on systemic support. Even Mina, despite living in a nuclear family, struggles due to erratic spousal involvement, showing that household type alone does not guarantee equality.

For the third objective to identify and analyze the specific problems urban married women in Kathmandu face while trying to balance their work and life. The case studies highlight several key problems that urban married women in Kathmandu face to balance their job and home life. One of the biggest challenges is the unequal division of household work. Even though these women are working outside the home, they are still expected to do most of the cooking, cleaning, and childcare. This is especially true for women like Rupa, Anupa, and Muna, who live in more traditional households. Another common problem is the lack of support from family members. Some women do not get enough help from their husbands or in-laws, which makes it hard for them to manage everything alone. This often leads to stress, tiredness, and even health issues.

Many women also struggle to arrive at work on time and stay productive because they are busy with household chores before and after work. Cases like Mina, Rupa, and Anupa show how these time pressures can affect their job performance. In addition,

some women cannot take part in training, workshops, or other professional development activities because of their responsibilities at home. This limits their chances to grow in their careers. The pressure of doing both jobs at home and at work also affects their health and mental well-being. Some women report headaches, back pain, and emotional stress due to constant overwork and lack of rest.

However, the problems are not the same for everyone. For example, Rupa and Muna face the most stress because of strong traditional expectations and little personal time. Mina gets some help and has flexible working hours, but still feels tired and guilty from trying to do everything. Anupa feels extra pressure because she is the main earner in her family, which adds to her stress. On the other hand, Anupa has a more balanced life because she shares household duties with her husband and children. This helps her manage both work and home without too much stress.

The case studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by married women in Kathmandu as they try to balance their careers and household responsibilities. The findings show that how household chores are divided has a significant impact on these women's career paths. In traditional families, where women are primarily responsible for domestic chores, they have limited time and energy to focus on their professional development. This makes it difficult for them to attend work-related programs, participate in training opportunities, and engage in promotional activities. As a result, their career progress and skill development suffer.

Conversely, in families where household responsibilities are shared more equally between men and women, women are better able to manage their work and personal commitments. This allows them to participate in professional development activities and maintain a healthier work-life balance. The case studies also highlight the specific problems faced by married women in Kathmandu, such as the unequal division of household labor, lack of support from family members, difficulties with punctuality and productivity at work, limited participation in professional development opportunities, and the impact on their physical and mental health.

To cope with these challenges, women use various strategies, such as seeking support from family members, using flexible work arrangements, prioritizing and organizing tasks, practicing self-care, and seeking support from their social networks. These coping mechanisms help them navigate the complexities of managing their dual responsibilities.

Overall, the findings stress the importance of a more equitable distribution of household labor and greater support from family members and employers. This will enable married women in Kathmandu to succeed in both their professional and personal lives. Addressing these issues can empower these women and promote their career advancement, benefiting their well-being and the overall socioeconomic development of the region.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND THEORETICAL REFLECTION

6.1 Findings

The study has interviewed 20 married women and case studies among five from diverse professions in Kathmandu, aged 25 to 44. Participants included teachers, bankers, nurses, business owners, and NGO worker. The major findings of the study highlight that majority of women in Kathmandu navigate the dual demands of professional responsibilities and household duties. It offers in-depth understanding of how household roles, family dynamics, external support and gender expectations shape their experiences of work-life balance. During research, aged 20-45 were categorized into various age groups with distinct challenges. Respondents aged 30–38 showed a strong focus on advancing professionally while raising young children, thus demanding greater time and emotional energy and was deeply engaged in career development, marriage, and parenting. They reported the highest pressure in balancing personal and professional life. Women aged 39-45 handle responsibilities more maturely than other aged group, as their children grow older, but they still face increasing demands. Similarly, the respondent aged between 20-29 respond that they are starting their careers or education, and beginning to take on household and marriage responsibilities and are more depend on their in-laws for supporting in managing certain household activities, such as finances and daily household management compared to other respondents. These age-related findings underscore how work-life balance needs vary across life stages, with younger women requiring more direct support, and older women facing more complex, though differently distributed, pressures.

Among the 20 women interviewed, the family composition of respondents varied, with nine lived in joint families, receiving some caregiving and emotional support, particularly from in-laws, nine resided in nuclear families, two of whom were managing households alone due to husbands working abroad or in other districts. These women often relied on parents or temporary domestic helpers. This shows that the family structure played a key role in work-life balance. Joint and extended families were more likely to provide childcare or cooking assistance, while nuclear family women often bore sole responsibility for all domestic tasks.

Out of 20 respondents, 17 had children, with 8 having one child and 9 having two. Three women do not have children and while they had more flexibility in time management, some faced emotional stress due to societal expectations around motherhood. Those with younger children, particularly infants and preschoolers, struggled the most, citing the need for constant attention, interrupted sleep, and restricted time for professional development. Childcare needs significantly shaped how women managed household duties and professional responsibilities, especially in the absence of shared caregiving.

All 20 respondents were engaged in both paid employment and unpaid domestic work, reflecting the ongoing challenge of dual roles. Despite their professional commitments, these women continue to shoulder the majority of household duties, underscoring persistent gender-based disparities in domestic labor distribution. Effective communication with family members and friends is essential in balancing the demands of personal and professional life. Many respondents rely on family members for household tasks, childcare, and emotional support. Seven out of 20 respondents share childcare equally with spouses or partners similarly, four out of 20 respondents specifically mentioned extended family (like in-laws) helping with household tasks. Multiple case studies detail reliance on siblings, parents, or spouses for tasks like school pickups, cooking, or emotional support. This informal network of support plays a crucial role in easing daily pressures and enabling women to fulfill both professional and domestic responsibilities. Family support helps facilitate work-life balance by sharing responsibilities, especially during challenging times such as overtime work or emergency situations. However, occasionally, colleagues and friends provide support for official work, but this assistance is inconsistent.

The use of external support such as domestic workers, can help women manage household task. Among the respondents, five out of 20 reported relying on domestic helpers specifically for cleaning tasks where three out of 20 respondents reported using external help for laundry, four out of 20 respondents delegated cooking responsibilities to house helpers. However, one respondent shared that although she has a house helper, it sometimes creates more stress than relief, as she has to repeat instructions frequently. While domestic helpers are commonly employed, their effectiveness varies. For some women, they significantly reduce the workload; for

others, they introduce additional stress due to issues like unreliability or the need for constant supervision. Women with supportive family members, especially spouses and extended family, report better work-life balance and less stress. Flexible work policies, when available, significantly help women manage both professional and household responsibilities. Balancing work and household tasks often lead to physical and mental fatigue, though some women manage through support systems and delegation. Household responsibilities often limit women's participation in career advancement opportunities, though family support can mitigate this impact. Overall, the study underscores the importance of equitable division of labor at home, external support, and workplace flexibility in helping women achieve better work-life balance. The study explores how household labor division affects the careers of urban married women in Kathmandu.

Women were generally responsible for the bulk of household chores, including cooking, cleaning, childcare, and grocery shopping. 15 out of 20 respondents reported that husbands or fathers-in-law typically managed technical repairs, confirming that men's roles were often restricted to maintenance tasks. In many cases, male involvement in chores like cooking or cleaning occurred only during emergencies or special cultural circumstances, such as menstruation when women were restricted from entering the kitchen. Overall, men's contributions were described as occasional and conditional, depending on work schedules or traditional expectations. 16 out of 20 participants likely expressed dissatisfaction with the unequal division of household work, although a few only 4 out of 20 women had more balanced domestic arrangements with their spouses. Among 20 respondent's majority of the respondents report feeling overwhelmed by household duties, which affected their physical and mental well-being. 14 out of 20 respondents reported chronic fatigue due to the overwhelming nature of managing both work and household responsibilities. Additionally, 7 out of 20 respondents reported emotional stress and guilt, especially in their roles as mothers. However, 4 out of 20 women reported that they shared household tasks equally with their spouses and family members and noted that equitable sharing of domestic duties contributed significantly to reduced stress and improved time management, ultimately leading to better work-life balance. In joint families, traditional gender roles were often reinforced, with women bearing the majority of household work. In contrast, nuclear families tended to have a more

balanced distribution of tasks, contributing to a healthier balance between work and family life. Some participants experienced shared household responsibilities, traditional gender roles remained dominant, and affecting women's ability to balance work and family life effectively.

Most had at least one child, with the majority holding Master's degrees. Many women shoulder most household tasks, limiting their time and energy for work, which impacts their professional growth. Households with more balanced labor divisions allow women to focus more on their careers and well-being. The use of domestic helpers and family support helps reduce the burden on women, improving work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements and supportive policies enable better management of home and work duties. Unequal household labor leads to stress, burnout, and health issues, while equitable sharing improves mental and physical health. Effective time management, self-care, and strong support networks are crucial for managing both professional and personal responsibilities.

In traditional family structures, women bear the majority of household responsibilities, limiting their time and energy for professional growth. This affects their participation in work-related programs and career advancement. In families with a more balanced division of labor, women can better manage work and home duties, enabling them to engage in professional development and maintain a healthier work-life balance. Women are expected to handle most domestic tasks, even when employed outside the home. Insufficient support from husbands or in-laws increases stress and burnout. Juggling work and household duties can result in late arrivals and decreased productivity at work. Household responsibilities prevent full participation in training and career advancement opportunities. The burden of managing both work and home life leads to stress, fatigue, and health issues such as headaches and depression. Women in households with more equitable labor divisions and supportive family members can better manage their dual responsibilities. Women utilizing flexible hours or work-from-home options find it easier to balance personal and professional commitments. Organizing tasks and prioritizing duties help women meet both work and household demands. Women engage in self-care routines such as relaxation and leisure activities to reduce stress and maintain well-being. Women often rely on friends, neighbors, and colleagues to help with childcare and household tasks during high-demand times.

The study highlights that a more equitable division of household labor and increased support from both family and employers are essential for enabling urban married women in Kathmandu to balance their careers and personal lives. Addressing these issues can lead to better career advancement, improved well-being, and greater socioeconomic development in the region.

The major findings of the study on the relationship between household responsibilities and the professional careers of women in Kathmandu valley are precise differently as per the perceptions of the participants. The study highlights that despite working outside the home, women in Kathmandu bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities, including cooking, cleaning, childcare, and grocery shopping. This unequal distribution of tasks persists even as women participate in the workforce, aligning with traditional gender roles that expect women to manage domestic duties.

The heavy burden of managing both work and household responsibilities leads to physical exhaustion and mental stress. Women reported experiencing burnout, fatigue, and health issues such as headaches, back pain, and depression. The constant juggling of domestic and professional tasks exacerbates stress, negatively affecting their well-being. The unequal division of household labor limits women's ability to participate in work-related programs, training, and promotional opportunities, hindering their career growth. Many women struggle with punctuality and maintaining productivity due to their overwhelming household duties, which restrict their chances of advancing in their careers.

Women reported significant challenges in balancing their professional and personal lives. The lack of support from family members, particularly spouses and in-laws, increased their stress and led to conflicts within households. This made it difficult for them to effectively manage both work and home responsibilities. Some women in the study were able to manage their dual roles more effectively due to supportive family members who shared household responsibilities. Women with husbands or extended family members who actively contributed to domestic tasks experienced a better work-life balance and lower stress levels. In some cases, women benefited from flexible work arrangements, such as work-from-home options or flexible hours, which enabled them to better balance their professional and domestic responsibilities. These supportive workplace policies were crucial in helping women manage their dual roles more effectively.

The study found that women in nuclear families, where the division of labor was more balanced, were better able to manage their work and personal commitments. In contrast, women in joint families often faced a more traditional and unequal division of household labor, which negatively impacted their work-life balance. The findings emphasize the need for interventions that promote a more equitable distribution of household labor and workplace policies that support work-life balance. Implementing these changes would help reduce stress, improve women's career development opportunities, and enhance their overall well-being. Overall, the study underscores the importance of addressing the unequal division of household labor, providing greater family and employer support, and implementing flexible work policies to help women balance their professional and personal lives more effectively.

Eleven respondents from structured sectors such as banking and healthcare reported that rigid work schedules and limited leave policies made it harder to balance personal and professional life. The absence of formal support systems led to added stress and reduced job satisfaction. In contrast, eight women with access to flexible hours, remote work options, or supportive employers managed their responsibilities more effectively. Entrepreneurs particularly enjoyed freedom over their schedules, allowing for better balance.

The study found that family support, equitable sharing of household chores, flexible work policies, and personal time management are critical in achieving work-life balance. Women with access to these support systems reported better physical health, lower emotional stress, more time for social interaction, and greater professional satisfaction. This underscores the need for both cultural and organizational changes to promote gender equality and sustainable work-life integration.

The case studies opine important perceptions regarding the challenges faced by married women in Kathmandu valley which they have tried to balance their careers, professional and family life by fulfilling their household responsibilities. According to the cases studies, 3 out of 5 married women are not able to maintain their household work with their professional carrier as well as 2 out of 5 of the participants of the case studies have handled their professional work with their house hold work efficiently. Ultimately, married women are expecting full support with the family members to encounter their professional work and the house hold work, such as seeking support

from family members, using flexible work arrangements, prioritizing and organizing tasks, practicing self-care, and seeking support from their social networks. So, this finding reveals that, stress the importance of a more equitable distribution of household labor and greater support from family members and employers. So, Married women in Kathmandu to succeed in both their professional and personal lives. Addressing these issues can empower these women and promote their career advancement, benefiting their well-being and the overall socioeconomic development of the region.

6.2 Conclusion

This study highlights the profound impact that the unequal division of household labor has on the professional careers and overall well-being of married women in Kathmandu. The findings clearly show that despite being employed outside the home, women continue to shoulder the majority of domestic responsibilities. This imbalanced often leads to physical exhaustion, mental stress, and significant barriers to career growth, affecting both professional development and job satisfaction. The study also highlights the importance of a sharing household tasks. Women who shared domestic duties and receive support from family members, particularly spouses, were better able to balance their professional and personal lives. The positive impact of such shared responsibility on work-life balance cannot be overstated. Additionally, the use of external support, such as domestic workers, and flexible work arrangements including work-from-home options or flexible hours, were found to be crucial factors in easing the burden on women, and helping them to better manage both work and family duties more effectively.

However, the study also reveals that challenges faced by women in more traditional family structures, particularly in joint families where rigid gender role persist. In these settings, limited support from family members further strains women's ability to meet both professional and personal demands, increasing stress and reducing opportunities for career advancement. The findings point to a clear need for systemic change at both the societal and organizational levels to promote a more equitable distribution of domestic work and create supportive workplace policies that encourage work life balance.

Many women have adopted strategies such as effective time management, prioritizing urgent tasks, using tools like calendars and reminders, and setting aside time for self-care. Family involvement in caregiving and household responsibilities significantly reduces stress and enhances well-being. Flexible work arrangements, including telecommuting and understanding workplace cultures, allow women to adapt to personal responsibilities without compromising their careers.

While working from home offers convenience and flexibility, it also brings challenges such as blurred boundaries and distractions. Conversely, traditional workplaces offer structure but may lack the flexibility needed by those juggling caregiving duties. Supportive environments like wellness programs, flexible hours, and recognition of family obligations empower women to better manage both realms.

Key barriers to achieving balance include time constraints, absence of flexible policies, role overload, and unpredictable disruptions. Despite these challenges, women are finding ways to cope by seeking family and social support, leveraging flexible schedules, and practicing self-care.

In conclusion, married women in Kathmandu continue to face significant challenges in balancing household duties and professional commitments. Their efforts to manage both spheres demonstrate resilience and adaptability, but there remains a pressing need for greater support both from families and employers. A fair division of domestic responsibilities, coupled with flexible workplace practices, is essential for empowering women socially, economically, and emotionally. Addressing these structural imbalances will not only benefit women but also contribute to broader societal progress and gender equity.

6.3 Combining the Theories: Implications for Work – Life Balance

When you combine both theories, the picture of women's Work Life Balance becomes clearer:

- **Dual Burden:** Both theories emphasize the persistence of traditional gender roles that contribute to the dual burden on women. While modernization has provided women with opportunities to participate in the workforce, societal expectations of women as primary caregivers and homemakers remain entrenched, making it difficult for women to fully benefit from these opportunities.

- **Need for Structural Change:** Modernization theory points to the need for structural support systems (e.g., flexible work policies, shared caregiving roles), while Gender Role Theory highlights the cultural and social expectations that hinder real progress. Without challenging these ingrained norms and providing adequate support structures, women will continue to face an unequal distribution of household labor.
- **Re-conceptualizing Gender Roles:** Both theories suggest that achieving true equality will require a shift in societal expectations and gender norms. Modernization theory calls for systemic changes, such as gender equality in policy and the workforce, while Gender Role Theory emphasizes the need to shift cultural norms so that domestic labor is not solely seen as women's responsibility. Only by challenging and redefining gender roles can women achieve a better work-life balance.

The findings of the study closely align with the claims of Gender Role Theory, which posits that societal norms and cultural expectations dictate specific roles and responsibilities for men and women, particularly in the context of domestic labor and work responsibilities. Let's break down how the findings from the study match the theoretical claims of Gender Role Theory:

6.3.1 Traditional Gender Roles and Unequal Household Labor

Gender Role Theory emphasizes that societal norms traditionally assign women the role of primary caregivers and domestic workers, while men are typically viewed as the breadwinners. This division of labor is largely a social construct rather than a biological imperative. The study's findings highlight that despite women's participation in the workforce, they continue to bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and grocery shopping. This reflects the persistence of traditional gender roles in society, where women are expected to manage domestic tasks, even when they work outside the home.

- **Example from the study:** The majority of women in the study shouldered the bulk of household tasks, often with limited help from their husbands or extended family members, which aligns with the traditional gender expectation that women

are primarily responsible for home management. Even in families with more equitable task distribution, traditional gender roles still influenced expectations about household duties.

- **Explanation in terms of Gender Role Theory:** According to Eagly (1987) concept of gender roles as a social construct, these entrenched norms continue to shape women's behaviors and expectations. The study reflects this by showing how women internalize these roles, even when they are balancing professional duties. The unequal distribution of household labor aligns with the theory's claim that gender roles are deeply embedded in societal structures and expectations.

6.3.2 Physical and Mental Strain as a Result of the Dual Burden

The study found that women often experience physical and emotional strain due to the dual burden of work and household responsibilities. This is consistent with Gender Role Theory, which highlights the pressure women face in trying to meet societal expectations regarding domestic duties while also participating in the workforce.

- **Example from the Study:** Many women reported burnout, fatigue, and health issues (headaches, back pain, depression) due to the overwhelming demands of managing both work and household responsibilities. This stress is exacerbated in households where women carry the majority of domestic tasks without sufficient support from their spouses or family members.
- **Explanation in Terms of Gender Role Theory:** The theory posits that women are socialized to take on caregiving roles, which can create significant stress when these roles conflict with professional expectations. The "second shift" (as discussed by Hochschild) reflects the same phenomenon described in the study, where women are expected to work a full day outside the home but then come home to perform the majority of household tasks. This conflict between professional and domestic duties directly contributes to the physical and emotional strain that the study participants experience.

6.3.3 Impact on Career Growth and Professional Opportunities

Gender Role Theory suggests that women's traditional roles in domestic spheres limit their participation in the workforce and reduce their opportunities for career

advancement. In the study, women's involvement in household tasks often limited their ability to participate in work-related programs, training, and career advancement opportunities.

- **Example from the Study:** Many women struggled to engage in career development activities because household duties, especially in traditional family structures, took up significant amounts of their time and energy. This impacted their ability to attend training sessions, meet work deadlines, or be fully involved in career advancement opportunities.
- **Explanation in Terms of Gender Role Theory:** As West and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" Framework suggests, gender roles are not static; they are performed and reinforced in daily life. When women are expected to fulfill traditional domestic roles, they are often less able to perform "masculine" professional roles that require time, focus, and flexibility. The imbalance in household labor, as found in the study, restricts women's professional development, aligning with the theory's assertion that rigid gender roles limit women's opportunities in both the domestic and professional spheres.

6.3.4 Support Systems and Role Negotiation

Gender Role Theory also emphasizes the role of socialization and negotiation of gender expectations within the family and workplace. The study found that women with supportive partners and family members who contributed to domestic tasks experienced a better work-life balance. In contrast, those without such support faced more stress and difficulty balancing their roles.

- **Example from the Study:** Women in nuclear families, where there was a more balanced division of labor, were able to better manage work and household responsibilities, contributing to a healthier work-life balance. Additionally, women with flexible work hours or work-from-home options found it easier to manage both domains.
- **Explanation in Terms of Gender Role Theory:** The theory suggests that gender roles can be negotiated and that societal expectations can shift. In families where gender roles are more flexible, with shared responsibility for domestic tasks, women were able to achieve a better work-life balance. This supports the theory's

claim that gender roles are not fixed and can be adjusted depending on individual circumstances and societal norms. In this case, a shift in the division of labor (away from traditional gender roles) allows for more equitable management of both professional and domestic responsibilities.

6.3.5 The Role of Cultural Expectations in Family Dynamics

The study found that joint families often reinforced traditional gender roles, with women bearing the brunt of household responsibilities. In contrast, nuclear families tended to have a more balanced division of labor, which contributed to a healthier work-life balance. This aligns with Gender Role Theory, which explains that cultural expectations around gender roles can vary depending on family structure and societal norms.

- **Example from the Study:** Women in joint families typically had a more unequal distribution of household labor, which created stress and hindered their ability to manage work and home responsibilities. In contrast, women in nuclear families had more equitable task-sharing arrangements, improving their ability to balance both areas of life.
- **Explanation in Terms of Gender Role Theory:** Gender roles are strongly influenced by cultural norms and family structure. In more traditional joint family setups, the persistence of gendered expectations about domestic work is more pronounced, reinforcing the unequal distribution of labor. In nuclear families, however, there may be more flexibility in negotiating household responsibilities, leading to a more balanced division of labor and less stress for women.

In summary, the findings of the study align closely with the theoretical claims of Gender Role Theory. The unequal distribution of household labor, the physical and emotional strain women experience, the impact on their professional opportunities, and the role of supportive family structures all reflect the core principles of Gender Role Theory. This theory helps explain why women continue to face significant challenges in balancing household responsibilities and career advancement and underscores the importance of addressing these deeply ingrained gender norms to promote greater gender equality and support for women. Modernization theory and Gender Role theory help to explain the persistent challenges women face in balancing

household management and work responsibilities. Modernization has opened up opportunities for women but also introduced new conflicts, such as the dual burden. Gender Role Theory, on the other hand, highlights the social constructs that perpetuate traditional gender roles in the home and workplace. Together, these theories underscore the need for structural changes in society, including policy reforms and a shift in cultural norms, to support women in achieving a better work-life balance and greater equality both at home and in the workplace.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. **Please describe about background information below:**
 - a) Age
 - b) Level of Education.....
 - c) Occupation.....
 - d) Do you have children?

2. **Gendered Division of Household Chores**
 - a) Can you please describe your family structure and the major domestic chores performed by each family member?
 - b) And how the household chores are divided between the males and females; are there any exclusively male or female task?
 - c) Do you think the household chores divided between you and your family members is fair?

3. **Problems Women Face in Managing Household Work**
 - a) What are some domestic chores for which you are responsible, and how do you allocate your time for them each day—in the morning, evening, or at any time?
 - b) How often do you feel like you don't have enough time or feel rushed to complete all your household chores, and do they create any conflicts at home?
 - c) How often do you participate in community work, cultural ceremonies, social gatherings and volunteering and do you find challenging it to balance these activities with your household responsibilities?
 - d) How do you spend time with your kids and family? Do you need to manage your schedule to find that time, and if so, how do you do it?
 - e) Do household chores affect your physical or mental health, cause you any stress or anxiety, or even lead to burnout?

4. Problem Women Face in the Workplace

- a) What Kind of activities you do at office?
- b) Have your household responsibilities ever caused you difficulties in arriving at work on time or led to negative consequences for your punctuality and attendance?
- c) Can you participate in work-related programs, such as trainings or meetings held outside regular office hours or overnight, and do your household duties pose challenges for your participation?
- d) Do you believe that limited participation in work-related programs has affected professional development and growth? How has it impacted you personally?
- e) Did you experience any problems or complications during promotion or while trying to extend the contract?
- f) How has balancing both work and household duties impacted your health and overall work performance?

5. Balancing Work-Life

- a) How do you organize your domestic duties after work?
- b) Do you receive family support or have a house helper for domestic duties and childcare, Is the support sufficient to help you balance your home and work responsibilities?
- c) Do your friends and neighbors help you balance work and life, and how do they support you?
- d) Do your colleagues or friends at work support you in managing your work-life balance, and how important is that support?
- e) Are there any other work policies that support employees in balancing their work and life, and how have you used them to manage work-life commitments?
- f) Are the available work-life balance policies effective, and what additional measures would you suggest for your workplace to better support employees' work-life balance?
- g) How beneficial do you find having a supportive system in balancing your work-life?

- h) What self-care practices do you use to manage stress and maintain well-being, and are you able to find time for personal leisure and hobbies despite domestic work?
- i) How do you balance work and personal life and what suggestions do you have to improve work-life balance for women in your situation?

Thank you very much for giving your time and sharing your precious views with us. It's so important for us that you decided to take part in our research, because your responses could actually help us better comprehend the way in which women professionals' careers are influenced by household chores.