

Notification Number: 592/2025

Date of Notification: 31.12.2025

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Thesis Title: Gendered Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Work Life Balance: A Study of Information Technology Sector's Employees in Delhi-NCR

Keywords: Women Scheme Workers, Intersectional Marginalisation, Social Reproduction Theory, Care Work, Labour

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work-life balance (WLB) among IT sector employees in Delhi-NCR. It explores how work-from-home (WFH), changes in work performance, domestic and caregiving responsibilities, job-related uncertainties, and organisational responses affected male and female employees differently. The study adopts a feminist and intersectional perspective and focuses on five dimensions: work performance, WFH experiences, WLB concerns, organisational initiatives, and strategies for sustaining WLB and productivity.

The findings demonstrate that the pandemic did not affect IT employees in a gender-neutral manner. Chi-square analysis found significant associations between gender and compensation for extra work, salary changes, promotion/salary hikes, and partner/family support. Women experienced greater burdens of unpaid domestic and care work, while men were more likely to report advantages in promotions, salary increments, and leisure time. Although gender was not significantly associated with changes in daily routine or paid work hours, significant differences emerged in leisure time. Overall, 62% of respondents reported increased productivity along with increased roles and responsibilities, while distractions and difficulties in maintaining focus remained important challenges.

The study further establishes that care work, household responsibilities, emotional and physical health, and WLB concerns were strongly gendered. Women frequently experienced the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities, contributing to stress, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties in maintaining professional identities. Qualitative case studies further highlighted emotional isolation, career challenges, blurred work-life boundaries, and strained employer-employee relationships. Men also experienced challenges, particularly extended working hours, job insecurity, and boundaryless work.

The thesis concludes that COVID-19 reinforced existing gender inequalities, intensifying traditional gender roles, unpaid care responsibilities, and disparities in career progression and well-being. It recommends gender-responsive organisational policies, flexible and equitable work arrangements, recognition of unpaid domestic labour, stronger caregiving and mental-health support, equitable career advancement, and effective supervisory support. The study advocates moving beyond flexibility alone towards inclusive and gender-sensitive workplace models that promote both employee well-being and productivity.