

# Work–Life Imbalance and Psychological Stress Among Police Women in India: A Cross-Sectional Study

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## Abstract:

### ➤ *Background:*

Work–life balance has become a critical issue in high-demand professions such as policing, particularly for women who face dual responsibilities of professional duties and family roles. Police women in India are exposed to irregular working hours, shift duties, and occupational stressors that may disrupt their work–life balance and contribute to psychological stress.

### ➤ *Aim:*

To assess the level of work–life imbalance and its relationship with psychological stress among police women in India.

### ➤ *Methodology:*

A quantitative cross-sectional analytical study was conducted among 150 police women in selected police departments of Delhi NCR using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured demographic questionnaire, Work–Life Balance Scale (WLBS), and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression using SPSS version 27.0.

### ➤ *Results:*

The study revealed that 56.7% of participants experienced moderate work–life imbalance, while 26.6% reported high imbalance. Similarly, 60% of participants had moderate stress levels. A significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between work–life imbalance and psychological stress, indicating that higher imbalance is associated with increased stress.

### ➤ *Conclusion:*

Work–life imbalance is a major determinant of psychological stress among police women. The findings emphasize the need for organizational and policy-level interventions to improve work–life balance and promote mental well-being in this population.

**Keywords:** *Work–Life Balance, Psychological Stress, Police Women, Occupational Stress, Mental Well-Being.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ Background

Work–life balance has emerged as a central concern in occupational health, organizational psychology, and public administration, particularly in the context of increasing professional demands and evolving socio-cultural expectations. It refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage competing demands between professional responsibilities and personal or family life, ensuring psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction (Ndou, 2025; OECD, 2023). In recent years, the concept has evolved beyond mere time management to include emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of balance, reflecting the complexity of modern work environments (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022; UN Women, 2023).

In contemporary workplaces, rapid urbanization, technological advancements, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life have intensified the challenge of maintaining equilibrium between these domains. Employees are increasingly expected to remain accessible beyond traditional working hours, leading to extended workdays and reduced opportunities for rest and recovery (Anjum et al., 2022; Kumar, 2023). Such conditions have been strongly associated with increased psychological stress, burnout, and diminished quality of life (Ndou, 2025; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

The issue of work–life imbalance becomes particularly critical in professions characterized by high demands, unpredictability, and emotional labor. Among these, policing stands out as one of the most challenging occupations, where the nature of work inherently disrupts conventional work–life boundaries (Kaushal & Parmar, 2022; Menon, 2022).

Policing is widely recognized as a high-risk and high-stress occupation due to its unique combination of physical danger, psychological strain, and organizational pressures. Police personnel are required to maintain public order, respond to emergencies, and manage crises, often under conditions of uncertainty and risk (Jaegers et al., 2022; Sun & Mason, 2025). These responsibilities necessitate long and irregular working hours, shift duties, and constant vigilance, which significantly disrupt personal and family life (Saravanan & Rani, 2026; Sharma & Gupta, 2023).

Recent studies have highlighted that police officers frequently experience excessive workload, inadequate staffing, and administrative burdens, all of which contribute to occupational stress and work–life imbalance (Saravanan & Rani, 2026; Singh, 2022). Furthermore, the unpredictable nature of policing, including emergency responses and exposure to traumatic events, exacerbates stress levels and limits opportunities for psychological recovery (Patel et al., 2022; Parveen, 2023). The consequences of such occupational stress extend beyond physical exhaustion to include significant psychological outcomes. Prolonged exposure to stressors has been linked to anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, burnout, and emotional fatigue among police personnel (Jaegers et al., 2022; WHO, 2022). These

findings underscore the importance of examining work–life balance within the policing context, particularly among subgroups that may be more vulnerable to stress, such as women.

The increasing participation of women in policing reflects broader societal efforts toward gender equality and empowerment. However, despite this progress, policing remains a male-dominated profession characterized by hierarchical structures and traditional gender norms (UN Women, 2023; Bourassa Rabichuk et al., 2025). Women entering this field often face unique challenges, including gender discrimination, limited career advancement opportunities, and lack of organizational support (Gupta, 2023; Sun & Mason, 2025). In addition to workplace challenges, policewomen are also influenced by socio-cultural expectations that assign primary responsibility for household and caregiving duties to women. This dual burden creates a situation where women must simultaneously fulfill demanding professional roles and traditional domestic responsibilities (Padma & Reddy, 2022; Priyalakshmi, 2025). Consequently, policewomen often experience role conflict, where the expectations of one role interfere with the ability to perform the other effectively (Kaushal & Parmar, 2022; Bano, 2022).

Research conducted in India indicates that policewomen frequently encounter difficulties in maintaining work–life balance due to excessive workload, irregular duty hours, and insufficient support systems (Priyalakshmi, 2025; Sawant, 2025). These challenges highlight the need for a gender-sensitive approach to understanding work–life balance in policing. Work–life imbalance occurs when the demands of professional responsibilities exceed an individual's capacity to manage personal and family life effectively. In the context of policewomen, this imbalance is particularly pronounced due to the demanding nature of policing and the socio-cultural environment in India (Effulgence Journal, 2023; Kaushal & Parmar, 2022).

Empirical evidence suggests that policewomen often work extended hours, including night shifts and emergency duties, which disrupt family routines and social interactions (Priyalakshmi, 2025; IJLLR, 2025). Additionally, the lack of flexible work arrangements and childcare facilities further exacerbates the challenge of balancing work and family life (ILO, 2022; UN Women, 2023). A qualitative study conducted among policewomen in Delhi identified key factors contributing to work–life imbalance, including unpredictable working hours, job rigidity, family size, and childcare responsibilities (IJLLR, 2025). Similarly, research by Sawant (2025) found that excessive workload, shift duties, and lack of leisure time significantly impact the ability of policewomen to maintain a healthy work–life balance. The cumulative effect of these stressors often leads to dissatisfaction, burnout, and reduced quality of life. Furthermore, the inability to achieve work–life balance can have long-term implications for both physical and mental health, highlighting the importance of addressing this issue.

Psychological stress is defined as a state of mental and emotional strain resulting from an individual's inability to cope effectively with demanding situations. In occupational settings, stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's coping capacity, leading to negative emotional and physiological outcomes (WHO, 2022; Kumar, 2023). Among policewomen, psychological stress is a significant concern due to the combined impact of occupational and domestic responsibilities. Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to stress can lead to a range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Jaegers et al., 2022; Parveen, 2023). The relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress is well established in the literature. Work–life conflict has been identified as a key predictor of stress, as individuals struggle to meet competing demands from work and family domains (Ndou, 2025; Anjum et al., 2022). In the case of policewomen, this conflict is intensified by the demanding nature of their profession and the lack of institutional support (Saravanan & Rani, 2026; Bano, 2022).

Moreover, psychological stress not only affects individual well-being but also has broader organizational implications. High levels of stress can lead to reduced job performance, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates, ultimately affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of policing services (Sharma & Gupta, 2023; Singh, 2022). The work environment plays a crucial role in shaping work–life balance and stress levels among employees. In policing, organizational factors such as workload, shift patterns, supervisory support, and workplace culture significantly influence the experiences of police personnel (Menon, 2022; Kaushal & Parmar, 2022). Studies indicate that inadequate staffing, poor shift scheduling, and lack of supportive leadership contribute to increased stress among policewomen (Saravanan & Rani, 2026; Parveen, 2023). Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive policies, such as maternity benefits, childcare facilities, and flexible working arrangements, further exacerbates work–life imbalance (ILO, 2022; UN Women, 2023).

Organizational culture also plays a critical role in determining the extent to which policewomen can balance their professional and personal responsibilities. A male-dominated work environment may discourage women from seeking support or expressing concerns, leading to increased stress and isolation (Bourassa Rabichuk et al., 2025; Gupta, 2023). The socio-cultural context of India adds another layer of complexity to the issue of work–life balance among policewomen. Traditional gender roles often assign primary responsibility for household and caregiving duties to women, regardless of their professional commitments (Padma & Reddy, 2022; Priyalakshmi, 2025). As a result, policewomen are expected to fulfill both professional and domestic roles simultaneously, leading to increased workload and stress. Studies have shown that women in India often experience higher levels of work–life conflict compared to men due to these socio-cultural expectations (Sawant, 2025; Bano, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of social support systems, such as childcare facilities and family-friendly workplace policies, further exacerbates the challenges faced by policewomen

(ILO, 2022; UN Women, 2023). These factors highlight the need for a gender-sensitive approach to addressing work–life balance and stress in the policing context.

Despite the growing body of literature on work–life balance and occupational stress, there remains a significant gap in research focusing specifically on policewomen in India. Most existing studies are either limited in scope or focus on general police populations without addressing the unique challenges faced by women (Effulgence Journal, 2023; Gupta, 2023). Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive quantitative studies that examine the relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress among policewomen (Singh, 2022; Sharma & Gupta, 2023). Existing research often relies on small sample sizes or qualitative methods, limiting the generalizability of findings.

Given the increasing participation of women in policing and the critical role they play in maintaining public safety, it is essential to understand the factors influencing their well-being. A cross-sectional study examining work–life imbalance and psychological stress can provide valuable insights into the extent of the problem and inform the development of targeted interventions (Jaegers et al., 2022; WHO, 2022). This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on work–life imbalance and psychological stress among policewomen in India (Ndou, 2025; OECD, 2023). Second, it highlights the need for gender-sensitive policies and interventions to support the well-being of policewomen (UN Women, 2023; ILO, 2022).

Third, the findings of this study can inform policymakers and organizational leaders in designing strategies to improve work–life balance and reduce stress among police personnel (Saravanan & Rani, 2026; Kumar, 2023). Such strategies may include flexible work arrangements, improved shift scheduling, and access to mental health support services. Finally, the study has broader implications for public safety and organizational effectiveness. By addressing work–life imbalance and stress among policewomen, it is possible to enhance their performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, ultimately contributing to a more efficient and effective policing system (Sharma & Gupta, 2023; Singh, 2022).

#### ➤ Objectives

To assess the relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress among police women in India.

#### ➤ Assumptions

Police women are exposed to significant occupational stress due to irregular duty hours, shift work, and high-risk job responsibilities.

- Work–life imbalance among police women arises from the dual burden of professional duties and socio-cultural expectations related to family and caregiving roles.
- Psychological stress among police women can be reliably assessed using standardized and validated self-report scales.

- Work–life imbalance has a measurable influence on the level of psychological stress experienced by police women.
- Organizational and demographic factors such as shift duty, working hours, marital status, and years of experience may affect work–life balance and stress levels.

#### ➤ *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent of work–life imbalance and its relationship with psychological stress among police women in India. By utilizing standardized measurement tools and structured questionnaires, the study aims to quantify the levels of work–life imbalance and perceived stress, and to examine the association between these variables. This investigation seeks to address the existing gap in gender-sensitive occupational health research within the policing sector, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based interventions and organizational strategies aimed at improving work–life balance, reducing psychological stress, and enhancing overall well-being and professional efficiency among police women.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative, cross-sectional analytical study was designed to assess the level of work–life imbalance and its relationship with psychological stress among police women in India. Data collection was carried out over a three-month period (January to April 2026) at selected police departments in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR), India, chosen for their diverse representation of female police personnel across ranks and duty patterns. The target population consisted of police women who are actively engaged in field or administrative duties and exposed to varying work schedules, including shift and rotational duties. Employing purposive sampling to ensure adequate representation across different ranks and work conditions, a sample of 150 participants was determined to achieve sufficient statistical power for examining associations between variables.

A multi-tool approach was adopted, utilizing a structured demographic questionnaire, a standardized Work–Life Balance Scale (WLBS), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to assess psychological stress. The research instruments were pilot-tested on 15 participants to ensure clarity, feasibility, and cultural appropriateness, with internal consistency reliability established using Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ). Data collection involved self-administered questionnaires completed during duty hours in a controlled and confidential setting.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis) using SPSS version 27.0. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee, and written informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

#### ➤ *Inclusion Criteria*

- Police women currently employed in selected police departments within the study setting.
- Individuals with at least one year of work experience in policing.
- Police women engaged in fixed, shift, or rotational duty schedules.
- Willingness to participate and provide informed consent.

#### ➤ *Exclusion Criteria*

- Police women currently on long-term leave (medical/maternity leave).
- Police personnel in exclusively administrative roles with no field exposure (optional—depending on your design).
- Those unwilling or unable to complete the questionnaire.

#### ➤ *Variables of the Study*

- Demographic Variables: Age, marital status, number of children, educational qualification, rank/designation, years of experience, type of duty, and working hours per day.
- Independent Variable: Work–life imbalance.
- Dependent Variable: Psychological stress.

#### ➤ *Research Tools & Analysis*

The tools used in this study include a structured demographic questionnaire, the Work–Life Balance Scale (WLBS), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), all of which are widely validated and reliable instruments in occupational health research. Content validity of the tools was established through expert review by specialists in psychiatric nursing, community health nursing, and occupational health. The pilot study confirmed the feasibility and reliability of administering these tools among police women in the selected setting.

Data analysis will include descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics and levels of work–life imbalance and stress. Inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation, will be used to examine the relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress, while multiple regression analysis will identify predictors of stress. The findings aim to provide evidence-based insights for developing organizational strategies and interventions to improve work–life balance and mental well-being among police women.

## III. RESULTS

#### ➤ *Section 1: Demographic Characteristics of Police Women*

The demographic distribution of the participants revealed that the majority of police women (36.7%) belonged to the age group of 31–40 years, followed by 30% in the 20–30 years category, 23.3% in the 41–50 years group, and 10% above 50 years. In terms of marital status, a significant proportion (63.3%) of the participants were married, while 26.7% were single and 10% belonged to other categories.

Regarding the type of duty, most participants were engaged in shift duties (40%), followed by rotational duties (36.7%) and fixed duties (23.3%). This distribution indicates that a large proportion of the study population is in the active

working age group, married, and exposed to irregular duty patterns, which may influence their work–life balance and stress levels.

Table 1 Age Group

Age Group (years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
20–30	45	30%
31–40	55	36.7%
41–50	35	23.3%
>50	15	10%
Total	150	100%

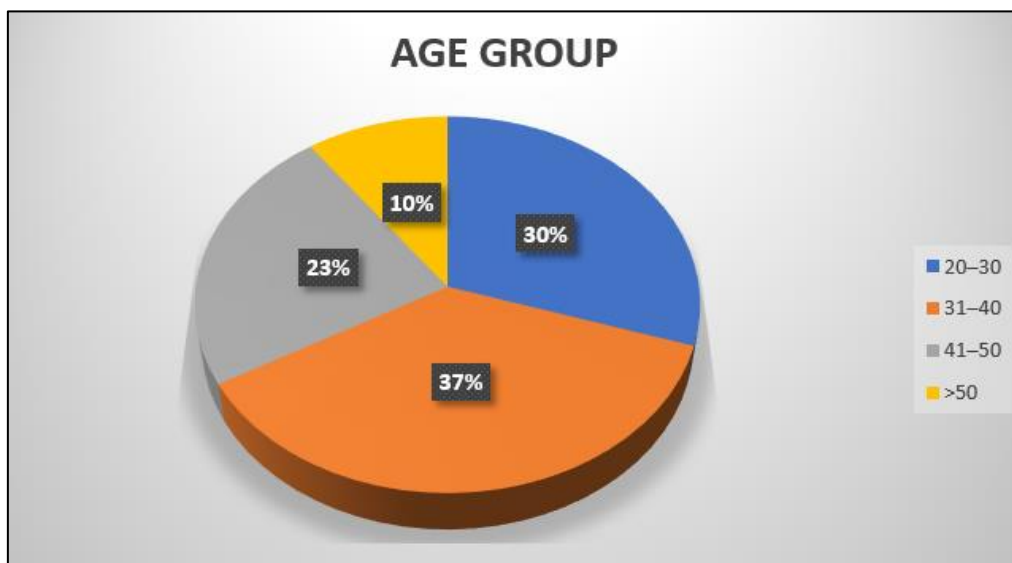


Fig 1 Age Group

Table 2 Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	40	26.7%
Married	95	63.3%
Others	15	10%
Total	150	100%

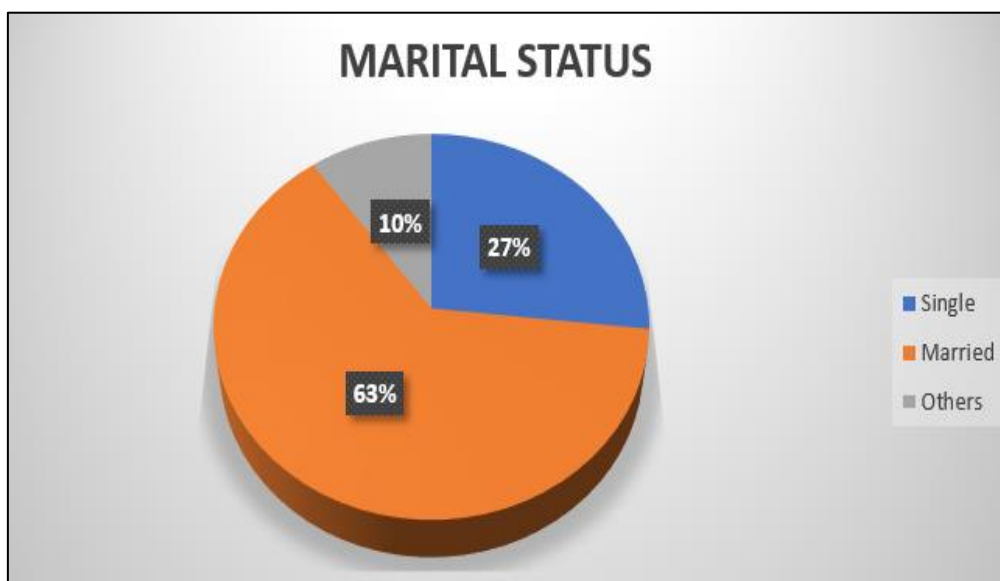


Fig 2 Marital Status

Table 3 Type of Duty

Type of Duty	Frequency	Percentage
Fixed	35	23.3%
Shift	60	40%
Rotational	55	36.7%
Total	150	100%

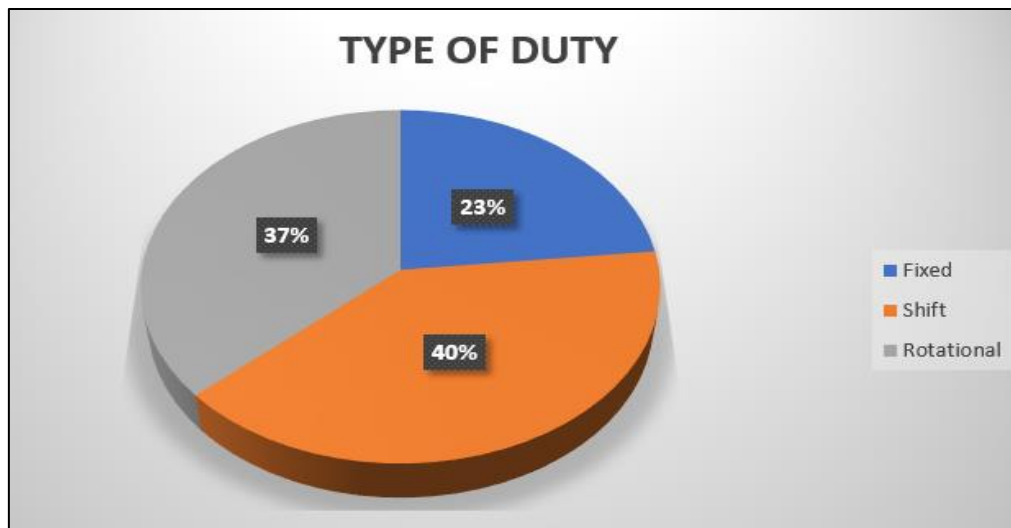


Fig 3 Type of Duty

➤ Section 2: Level of Work–Life Imbalance

The findings related to work–life imbalance showed that more than half of the participants (56.7%) experienced a moderate level of imbalance, while 26.6% reported a high level of imbalance and only 16.7% had a low level of imbalance. The mean work–life imbalance score was 52.4

with a standard deviation of 8.6, indicating a moderate level of variability among participants. These results suggest that the majority of police women face considerable difficulty in balancing professional and personal responsibilities, likely due to the demanding nature of their occupation.

Table 4 Level of Imbalance

Level of Imbalance	Frequency	Percentage
Low	25	16.7%
Moderate	85	56.7%
High	40	26.6%
Total	150	100%

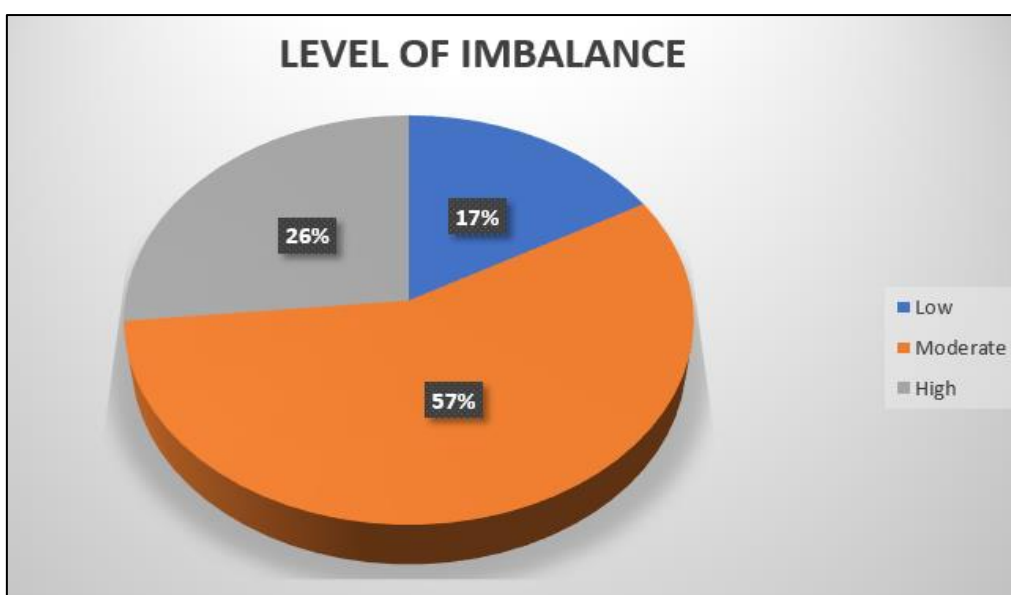


Fig 4 Level of Imbalance

➤ *Section 3: Level of Psychological Stress*

Assessment of psychological stress revealed that the majority of participants (60%) experienced moderate stress, while 20% reported high stress and another 20% had low stress levels. The mean stress score was found to be 21.8 with

a standard deviation of 6.2, indicating moderate stress levels among the study population. These findings highlight that psychological stress is prevalent among police women, potentially affecting their mental well-being and job performance.

Table 5 Stress Level

Stress Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	30	20%
Moderate	90	60%
High	30	20%
Total	150	100%

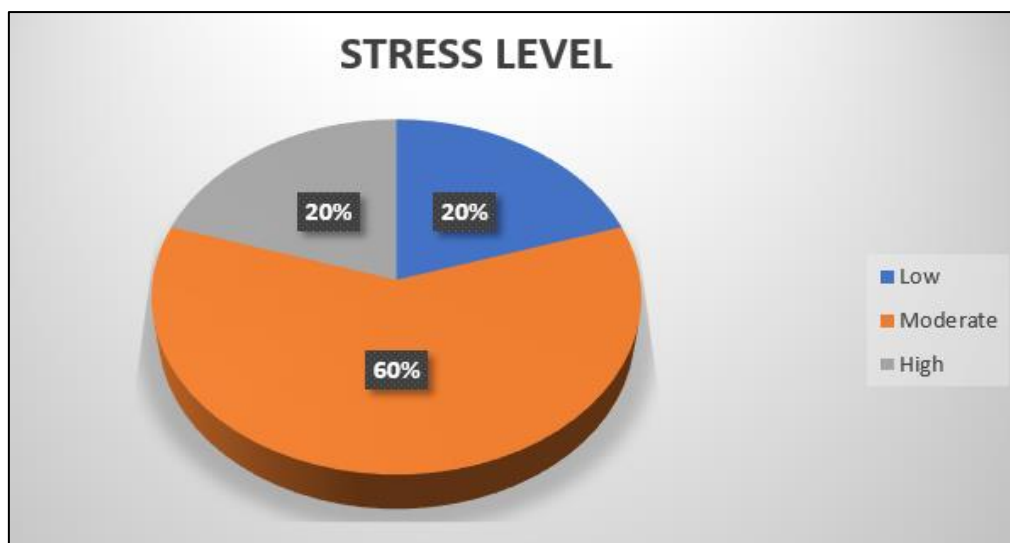


Fig 5 Stress Level

➤ *Section 4: Relationship Between Work–Life Imbalance and Psychological Stress*

The analysis of the relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress demonstrated a moderate to strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ), which was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that as work–life imbalance increases, the level of psychological stress also increases among police women. The finding confirms that imbalance between professional and personal life is a key contributing factor to elevated stress levels in this population.

significantly influence occupational stress. Furthermore, Bourassa Rabichuk et al. (2025) emphasized that demographic factors such as marital status and work schedules play a critical role in shaping stress experiences among policewomen. These findings collectively suggest that the demographic profile identified in the present study reflects a high-risk group for work–life imbalance and stress, particularly due to the combined pressures of occupational demands and family responsibilities.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

The present study revealed that the majority of participants were in the age group of 31–40 years, predominantly married, and largely engaged in shift or rotational duties. This demographic pattern is consistent with findings reported by Singh (2022), who observed that women in policing are primarily concentrated in their mid-career phase, often balancing professional responsibilities with family commitments. Similarly, a study by Sharma and Gupta (2023) found that married policewomen constituted the majority of the workforce and were more likely to experience role conflict due to dual responsibilities. The high proportion of participants engaged in shift duties aligns with the findings of Menon (2022), who highlighted that irregular working hours are a defining characteristic of policing and

The findings of the present study indicated that the majority of police women experienced a moderate to high level of work–life imbalance. This is consistent with the study conducted by Kaushal and Parmar (2022), which reported significant work–life conflict among police personnel due to long working hours and lack of flexibility. Similarly, Priyalakshmi (2025) found that female police officers frequently struggle to maintain equilibrium between professional and personal roles, largely due to unpredictable duty schedules. A recent study by Sawant (2025) also reported that more than half of policewomen experienced moderate work–life imbalance, closely aligning with the current findings. International evidence further supports these results; the OECD (2023) highlighted that occupations involving irregular schedules and high demands are strongly associated with poor work–life balance. Additionally, the International Labour Organization (2022) emphasized that women in demanding professions are more vulnerable to

work–life conflict due to societal expectations and caregiving roles. Thus, the present study corroborates existing literature, reinforcing that work–life imbalance is a pervasive issue among policewomen.

The present study demonstrated that a majority of police women experienced moderate levels of psychological stress, with a notable proportion reporting high stress. These findings are consistent with those of Jaegers et al. (2022), who identified moderate to high levels of stress among law enforcement personnel due to occupational demands and exposure to stressful events. Similarly, Patel et al. (2022) reported that police personnel frequently experience elevated stress levels, particularly due to workload and emotional strain. Sharma and Gupta (2023) also found that policewomen in India exhibit significant levels of stress, which are often associated with job-related pressures and lack of coping mechanisms. Furthermore, Parveen (2023) reported that prolonged exposure to occupational stressors contributes to mental health issues such as anxiety and burnout among police personnel. Global reports by the World Health Organization (2022) also highlight that high-stress occupations, including policing, are strongly associated with psychological distress. These findings suggest that the stress levels observed in the present study are consistent with both national and international evidence, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

The present study found a statistically significant positive correlation between work–life imbalance and psychological stress, indicating that increased imbalance is associated with higher stress levels among policewomen. This finding is supported by Anjum et al. (2022), who reported that work–life conflict is a significant predictor of stress and reduced well-being among employees. Similarly, Ndou (2025) emphasized that imbalance between work and personal life is directly linked to psychological distress and burnout. A study by Sun and Mason (2025) further highlighted that female police officers experiencing higher work–life conflict reported significantly elevated stress levels compared to their counterparts. Additionally, Bano (2022) found that role conflict and work–family interference significantly contribute to stress among policewomen in India. The findings are also in line with the OECD (2023) and ILO (2022) reports, which emphasize that poor work–life balance is a major determinant of occupational stress, particularly among women. Therefore, the present study strongly supports the existing body of evidence, confirming that work–life imbalance is a key factor influencing psychological stress among policewomen.

## V. FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method designs to better understand the causal relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress among police women, as cross-sectional findings are limited in establishing temporal associations. Expanding the study to multiple states and including rural and urban policing contexts would enhance generalizability. There is also a need to incorporate qualitative approaches to explore lived

experiences, coping mechanisms, and organizational challenges faced by police women in greater depth.

Intervention-based studies should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of stress management programs, resilience training, and work–life balance interventions tailored specifically for police personnel. Organizational reforms such as flexible duty scheduling, provision of childcare facilities, and gender-sensitive workplace policies should be systematically assessed for their impact on reducing stress and improving well-being.

Future studies should also examine additional variables such as social support, job satisfaction, burnout, and mental health outcomes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of occupational well-being. The integration of technology-based monitoring tools and digital mental health interventions could be explored as innovative solutions. Overall, evidence-based strategies should be developed and tested to promote sustainable work environments and enhance the psychological health of police women.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights that work–life imbalance is a significant concern among police women in India, with the majority experiencing moderate to high levels of imbalance and psychological stress. The demanding nature of policing, characterized by irregular duty hours, shift work, and high occupational pressure, combined with socio-cultural expectations related to family responsibilities, contributes substantially to this imbalance. The study further establishes a statistically significant positive relationship between work–life imbalance and psychological stress, indicating that increased imbalance directly elevates stress levels among police women. Work–life imbalance emerged as a key predictor of psychological stress, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions at both organizational and policy levels.

These findings underscore the urgent need for gender-sensitive workplace policies, flexible duty schedules, mental health support systems, and organizational reforms aimed at improving work–life balance. Addressing these issues is essential not only for enhancing the well-being of police women but also for improving their professional efficiency and overall effectiveness in maintaining public safety.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST- NA

SPONSORSHIP OR FINANCIAL AID- NA

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