

Does Work-Life Balance Mediate the Relationship of Perceived Organizational Support and Job Satisfaction for Healthcare Workers? A Study on Female Nurses in India

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Arunkumar Dubey ● S. Riasudeen

Abstract

Purpose: Studies time and again ascribe increased attrition in the nursing profession to poor organizational support and issues of work-life balance resulting in higher levels of job dissatisfaction among nurses. Considering this background, we conceptualized a model (POS-WLB-JS) anchored on organizational support theory and examined the mediating influence of work- life balance in the relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction for female nurses in the Indian healthcare ecosystem.

Methodology: Convenience sampling techniques were used to collect data from 250 female nurses from 40 hospitals in Mumbai. Hierarchical regression analysis techniques were used to test the hypotheses. In addition, Sobel test for indirect effects was used to assess the mediating influence of work -life balance in the conceptual model.

Findings: Perceived organizational support, work- life balance, and job satisfaction have a significant and positive relationship among them. In addition, work- life balance mediates the relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction for female nurses in the Indian nursing context.

Practical Implications: The study will be beneficial to healthcare administrators, doctors, and practitioners who play a pivotal role in the delivery of healthcare services through nurses. It explores the process of job satisfaction through work-life balance and organizational support.

Originality: The study makes a distinction between specific support for work- life measures and distal support that exists for nurses in hospitals. It was found that the latter as measured by the perceived organizational support scale has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction and work- life balance.

Keywords: *Perceived Organizational Support, Work-life Balance, Job Satisfaction, Healthcare, Female Nurses.*

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1. Introduction

Nursing remains one of the preferred jobs for many women in India (Johnson, Judith, & Maben, 2014). They represent the largest front-line workforce in the entire healthcare ecosystem. The number of nurses working in urban areas is almost thrice than those employed in rural areas as nurses prefer working in cities (Gill, 2011; Park, 2011). However, of late, nursing as a profession is losing its charm given a plethora of challenges and concerns associated with it. FICCI (2016) in its report identified some of the pressing concerns in the nursing profession such as lack of rewarding career progression, poor welfare measures, income disparity, low social status, inadequate work environment, poor work life balance, and issues of empowerment. Furthermore, regular nursing tasks are physically and emotionally challenging (Demerouti, Bakker, & Bulters, 2004; McQueen, 2004) contributing to a higher level of stress in nurses. Therefore, job satisfaction (JS) for clinically focused nurses is considered as one of the main factors affecting their recruitment and retention, contributing to nurses shortages and staff turnover, which are issues of both national as well as international concern (Kumar, Dass, & Topaloglu, 2014; Alotaibi, Paliadelis, & Valenzuela, 2016).

Importantly, low job satisfaction impacts the quality of patient care (Cavanagh, 1992) and in turn the reputation of hospitals (Poulose & Sudarsan, 2017). Furthermore, studies on the satisfaction of nurses in metropolitan cities have revealed the prevalence of huge dissatisfaction among the nurses on almost all satisfaction rating scales (Murray and Smith, 1988, Kuaru, 1994). The problems caused due to such dissatisfaction leads to absenteeism, grievances, low morale, and high turnover (Gangadhraiah, Nardev, & Reddy, 1990; Martin, 1990 & Abou Hashish, 2017). Han, Carter, and Champion (2018) in a study on job satisfaction of nurses found that a greater portion of job dis-satisfiers was extrinsic including company policies, working conditions, and compensation. Such dissatisfaction results in the poor perception of organizational support by the nurses. (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002; Kwak, Chung, Xu, & Cho, 2010).

According to Organizational Support Theory (OST), employees develop a general perception of support for their organizations' approach in terms of caring for their contribution and well-being which is referred to as perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Studies on POS are in abundance and have explained time and again the significance of it in predicting job satisfaction in the nursing context too (for reference see, Li et al., 2020; Gillet et al., 2013 & Chang, 2015). However, studies linking such distal support (general support) to work-life balance in the healthcare settings are limited (McCarthy et al., 2013; Amazue & Onyishi, 2016). Furthermore, explicit work-life balance measures may or may not exist for nurses considering the very demanding nature of their work in the healthcare sector.



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Thus, we argue, even distal perception of organizational support as conceptualized in terms of perceived organizational support too would promote work life balance and job satisfaction. Therefore, anchoring our research on organizational support theory, we proposed a theoretical model and examined the effect of perceived organizational support on job satisfaction through the mediating influence of work-life balance for female nurses in the Indian healthcare sector. In the subsequent section, we present the theoretical arguments in support of our hypotheses and propose the conceptual model.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Perceived Organizational Support and Job satisfaction

Deriving its roots in organizational support theory, POS is termed as the general belief among employees concerning to the organization values, their contributions, and about their well- being. (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). Research on POS has demonstrated favourable results on an individual as well as on organization. Perception of favourable support culminates in employees experiencing psychological well-being and positive feelings towards their work and organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Employees who believe that their organization value their contributions and is concerned about their welfare tend to reciprocate by performing their jobs well (Shore and Wayne, 1993). It meets the psychogenic needs of the employees and contributes to overall job satisfaction by conveying to employees that help and support are always available (Eisenberger and Rhoades, 2002; Casimir et al., 2014).

Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector, 1997). Both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and how one perceive it (Locke, 1969). Job satisfaction is affected by many factors and the perception of organizational support has a predictive effect on it. Studies have shown a positive relationship between POS and job satisfaction (Shore & Tetrick, 1991; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Hongvichit, 2015). Empirical research on nursing too has found a positive relationship between POS and job satisfaction (Al-Hussami, 2008; Burke, 2003; Laschinger, Purdy, Cho, & Almost, 2006; Filipova, 2011; Poulouse and Sudarsan, 2014; Shao, Zhang, & Chen, 2016). Therefore, in line with the previous research, we hypothesize;

Hypothesis 1: Perceived organizational support has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction.



2.2 Perceived Organizational Support and Work -life balance

According to Poulouse and Sudarsan (2014), the balancing act of an individual between the organization and personal life is termed as Work- life balance (WLB) or work-family balance. Work- life balance is positively associated with one's quality of life and overall well-being (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). Employee's perception of organizational support also predicts many work and family outcomes such as reduced role conflict, higher job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions. (Greenglass et al., 2001 & Garret et al., 2001). A lot of research is focused on the need of creating a proper work environment for nurses. However not much is known about the influence of POS on overall work- life balance about nurses working in hospitals as their work involves high mental as well as physical demands owing to excessive workload arising out of lean workforce in hospitals often requiring night shifts and forfeiture of normal holidays (Greenglass, Burke, & Fiksenbaum, 2001; Garret and McDaniel, 2001; McCarthy et al., 2013). Also, explicit work- life balance policies may or may not exist for nurses in the place of their work (hospitals) considering the demanding nature of their work. Thus, it could be argued that the overall perception of organizational support in terms of recognizing their contribution, care, and concern shown towards them (Eisenberger et al., 1986) may enable the nurses to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively. Therefore, we hypothesize;

Hypothesis 2: Perceived organizational support has a significant and positive relationship with work- life balance

2.3 Work- life balance and Job satisfaction

Clark (2001) defines WLB as satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum of role conflict. Considering the dual role of women in Indian society on the family and work front, WLB has become a major concern for women employees in today's scenario as extended work hours in the organization constraints their productivity and time meant to be devoted at the family front (Vasumathi, 2018). Research has found that WLB of employees increases various employee and organizational- related job outcomes (Sirgy and Lee, 2017) including job satisfaction. The same is equally true for female nurses who represent the largest group of workforce engaged in patient care. Nurses have to work in a challenging and emotionally demanding condition along with physically demanding working conditions, such as weekend work, work shifts, and high workload (Van der Heijden, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2008) which makes them more prone to work-family conflict (Yildirim and Ayca, 2008).

Most research on work- life balance has focussed on the effect of WLB on outcome variables such as job attitudes, work performance, productivity, lateness, absenteeism, and turnover (Konrad and Mangel, 2000; Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002;



NMIMS
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Volume XXIX
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Behson, 2005; Ahmad, 2008; Cohen & Liani, 2009). However, studies focussing on employees' job satisfaction with work- life balance on female nurses are few and far between. Also work- life balance may or may not guarantee job satisfaction (Kim & Ryu, 2017). Considering this dichotomy over the effect of work- life balance on job satisfaction, we hypothesize;

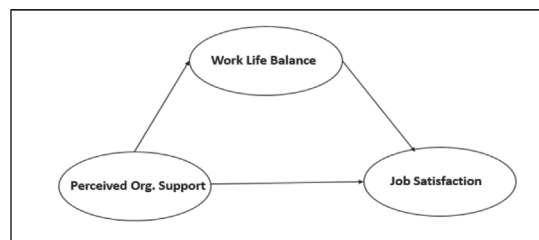
Hypothesis 3: Work- life balance has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction.

2.4 Work-life balance as a mediator between Perceived Organizational Support and Work- life balance

Research has demonstrated that work- life balance leads to increased job satisfaction, health satisfaction, family satisfaction, and overall life satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Joseph and Lee (2017) in an integrative review on Work-life balance have identified antecedents and consequences of WLB on employee and organizational outcomes. The authors have highlighted the significance of the support system in predicting job satisfaction by assisting the employees to manage work and life demands in a better way. Further, literature on WLB, anchoring on organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) have underscored the importance of working conditions, work environment, managerial support, work-life initiatives, and other organizational attributes in enabling the employees to manage their work and non-work demands (Casico, 2000; Gupta et al., 2015; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Allen, 2001; Murphy and Zagorski, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2010; Brannen & Lewis, 2000). However, barring few studies (McCarthy et al., 2013 & Amazue & Onyishi, 2016), very limited research has explained the influence of general perception of support i.e., POS and WLB in the area of nursing. Casper and Buffardi (2004) and Joseph and Lee (2017) through their findings have predicted the interrelationship between POS, WLB and JS. However, very little is known on the impact of POS on job satisfaction through the mediating role of WLB in the nursing context. Therefore, in line with previous research we hypothesize;

Hypothesis 4: Work-life balance mediates the relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample

Using the convenience sampling technique, we collected data from female nurses working in private hospitals in Mumbai over a span of four months (July, 2019 to October, 2019). The convenience sampling technique was used because of two reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to adopt probability methods of sampling because many hospitals refused to participate in the study. Secondly, Mumbai is geographically big enough with many private hospitals in different localities.

A total of 40 hospitals were visited from 13 different locations in Mumbai. Responses were collected from 250 nurses out of which 214 responses were considered fit for further analysis. Prior permission was sought from hospital administrators before collecting the responses of nurses. Questionnaires were given only to those nurses who consented to participate in the study. The purpose of the research was conveyed to the hospital administrators and the nurses at the beginning. The nurses were assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The demographic details of the respondents are presented in table 1 given below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of nurses

		Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
Age				
	20 to 30 years	139	65	65
	31 to 40 years	51	23.8	88.8
	41 to 50 years	17	7.9	96.7
	Above 50 years	7	3.3	100
Marital Status				
	Unmarried	111	51.9	51.9
	Married	98	45.8	97.7
	Divorcee	1	0.5	98.1
	Widow	4	1.9	100
Education				
	B.Sc Nursing	24	11.2	11.2
	M.Sc Nursing	16	7.5	18.7
	GNM	56	26.2	44.9
	ANM	90	42.1	86.9
	Others	28	13.1	100



Experience				
	Less than 1 year	40	18.7	18.7
	2 to 5 years	106	49.5	68.2
	6 to 10 years	35	16.4	84.6
	More than 10 years	33	15.4	100
Working Status				
	Part time	13	6.1	6.1
	Full time	201	93.9	100
Working hours				
	Less than 8 hours	61	28.5	28.5
	8 to 10 hours	129	60.3	88.8
	10 to 12 hours	24	11.2	100

3.2 Measures

We used validated scales in literature to measure the constructs of perceived organizational support, work- life balance, and job satisfaction. All the constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The responses were self-reported by the nurses.

Perceived organizational support was measured through eight- item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The sample item of the scale was; the organization values and contribution to its well-being.

Job satisfaction was measured through a 10-item generic job satisfaction scale developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997). A sample item of the scale was; I receive recognition for a job well done.

Work- life balance was measured using a four- item scale developed by Brough et al. (2009). A sample item of the scale was; I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.

The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. The overall reliability for all the 22 items used in the study is 0.841 which is excellent.

4. Results

Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS version 22. Hierarchical regression analysis techniques were used to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. Hypothesis 4 i.e., Mediation was tested using PROCESS macro plug- in for SPSS that is most



popularly used in social sciences for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2013). We further validated the findings of mediation using Sobel test.

Perceived organizational support was found to be positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r=0.533$). Similarly, the correlation coefficient ($r=0.314$) was found to be positive between job satisfaction and work-life balance, whereas perceived organizational support and work-life balance too were found to be positively correlated ($r=0.257$). The alpha values for job satisfaction, perceived organizational support and work life balance were 0.814, 0.710 and 0.656 respectively. The alpha values for job satisfaction, perceived organizational support is found to be higher than the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair Jr, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). However, we found a relatively lower alpha value for work-life balance and this is acceptable in line with few previous studies on scale reliabilities (Nunnally, 1967, Aron and Aron, 1999; Hair Jr, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

The results of descriptive statistics, scale reliability, and correlation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha & correlation coefficient.

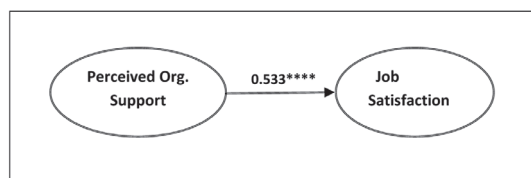
Constructs	Mean	SD	α	POS	WLB	JS
Perceived Org. Support (POS)	3.749	0.536	0.710	1		
Work Life Balance (WLB)	3.690	0.633	0.656	0.257**	1	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	4.048	0.480	0.814	0.533**	0.314**	1

Notes: SD – Standard deviation; α – Cronbach Alpha, ** Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient significant at $p < 0.01$

4.1 Hierarchical Regression Analysis:

We tested three models based on our hypothesis. In model 1, job satisfaction was regressed on perceived organizational support. The results were found to be significant ($\beta=0.533$, $F=83.928$, $p<0.001$), thus providing evidence in support of our hypothesis 1 i.e., perceived organizational support has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction. Figure 2 presents the direct effect of POS on JS.

Figure 2: Path relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction (*) $p<0.001$**



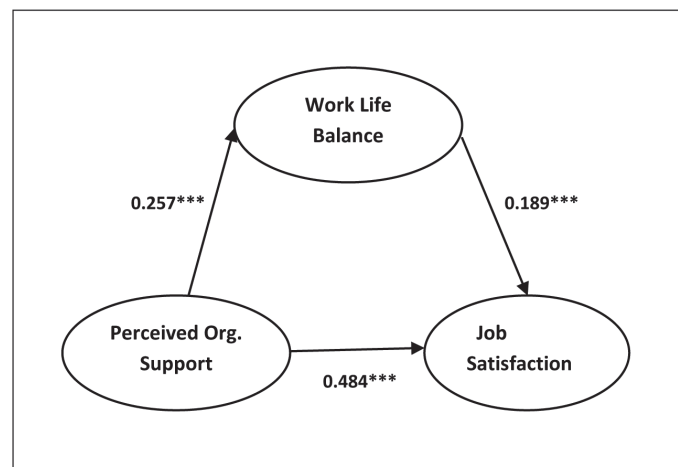
In model 2, we regressed, work- life balance on perceived organizational support. The results were found to be significant ($\beta=0.257$, $F=15.009$, $p<0.001$) providing evidence in support of hypothesis 2 i.e., perceived organizational support has a significant and positive relationship with work-life balance. In model 3, we regressed, job satisfaction on perceived organizational support and work- life balance to assess the total effects of both variables on the outcome variable. The results were again found to be significant (β (POS)=0.484, β (WLB)=0.189, $F=48.979$, $p<0.001$) providing evidence in support of hypothesis 3 i.e., work- life balance has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction. It was also found that the original effect of POS on JS as evidenced in model 1 further declined from ($\beta=0.533$) to ($\beta =0.484$) in the presence of work- life balance, thus suggesting possible mediation of WLB in the relationship of POS and JS (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Table 3 given below depicts standardised regression coefficients and other statistics related to the model, and figure 3 represents the mediation effect.

Table 3: Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Constructs	Dependent Variable		
	Job Satisfaction	Work Life Balance	Job Satisfaction
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Perceived Organizational Support	0.533***	0.257***	0.484***
Work Life Balance	-	-	0.189***
R ²	0.284	0.066	0.317
ΔR^2	0.284	0.066	0.033
F value	83.928***	15.009***	48.979***

*** Standardized coefficients (β) significant at $p<0.001$

Figure 3: Mediation effect of work life balance in the relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction (* $p<0.001$)**



Furthermore, we tested the possible mediation of WLB as indicated in hierarchical regression analysis using PROCESS macro plug-in (Hayes, 2013) and Sobel test. Mediation results derived from the PROCESS macro plug-in with a bootstrap sample size of 10,000 showed that work- life balance mediated the relationship of POS and JS. Sobel’s test for indirect effect too was found to be significant (Sobel $t = 2.491$, $p < 0.05$). This provided evidence in support of our conceptual model and hypothesis 4 i.e., work-life balance mediates the relationship of perceived organizational support and work-life balance. The results of mediation with effect size and Sobel test are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Mediation results

Mediation	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Sobel test
POS > WLB > JS	0.046	0.022	0.013	0.102	2.491*

*significant at $p < 0.05$

5. Discussion

Female nurses occupy a centre stage in the delivery of nursing services in the healthcare scenario. They play a quintessential role in patient care as they spend considerable time looking after their needs and even assist doctors on a routine basis. Therefore, challenges associated with the nursing profession are varied and have a potential impact on their satisfaction level which has resulted in increased attrition particularly among female nurses. Our findings adequately validate the role of organizational support theory in influencing an important individual outcome i.e., job satisfaction of nurses in the Indian healthcare space. Hospital administrators in this regard need to be mindful of ensuring an adequate support system to nurses so that they in term experience a positive perception of organizational support. Higher levels of support will surely prevent attrition by enhancing satisfaction levels with the job as they would be more dependent on their organization for their personal and professional needs.

Furthermore, female nurses represent the majority workforce in hospitals and outnumber men nursing staff in the Indian healthcare system. Additionally, given the peculiar characteristic of women in Indian society, they perform twin roles as a homemaker on the family front and as caregivers in hospitals. Therefore, it is practicable to expect issues of work-life balance with them not much in common with their male counterparts. Poor perception of organizational support and inability to handle work and family demands results in dissatisfaction. Hence, our conceptualization of the theoretical model (POS – WLB – JS Model) is based on peculiarities that are realistic for female nurses in the Indian healthcare context. Our study throws light on the process that leads to satisfaction of nurses with their job through the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship of POS and JS. Our study equitably demonstrates



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 Volume XXIX
 Issue-3 | July 2021

that nurses' perception of organizational support at the work place has a cascading impact on their subjective assessment of balancing multifarious roles at the personal and organizational level popularly referred to as work- life balance (Haar et al., 2014 & Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Lastly, this study contributes to the existing literature in nursing and organizational support in several ways. Firstly, we use the distal support at the organizational level which encompasses a general level of support (McCarthy et al., 2013) which nurses experience in their workplaces and is operationalized as perceived organizational support. In addition, drawing from the organizational support theory, we make a distinction between specific support and overall support that exists in the workplace. We found that such distal support as perceived by nurses has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction and work-life balance. In addition, we also found distal support to be positively related to work-life balance. Earlier studies have linked work-life balance to various work-life initiatives (specific support) which the organization had for their employees. Studies linking distal (general support) to work life balance are very limited. This is one of the main contributions of the study as explicit work-life balance policies may or may not exist for nurses considering the very demanding nature of their work. Thus, we argue that the overall perception of organizational support in terms of recognizing their contribution, care, and concern shown towards them (Eisenberger et al., 1986) will enable the nurses to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively. Further, in line with our findings, we expect that higher levels of organizational support even though distal as perceived by nurses would foster better work-life balance which in turn would enhance their overall job satisfaction.

6. Implications of the Study

The study explores the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction through the mediating role of work-life balance. POS and WLB are significant predictors in enhancing the satisfaction level of nurses in private hospitals. This study assumes significance for healthcare administrators, doctors, and practitioners who have a pivotal role to play in the delivery of healthcare services through nurses by providing better support systems at the workplace in terms of supervision, proper working environment, rewards and recognition, decent salary. Work-life balance has an equally important role to play in enhancing the satisfaction level of nurses as females have a dual role to perform unlike men. Work- life initiatives for nurses such as flexible timings, work sharing, proper leave policies, supervisory support etc. would go a long way in enhancing their overall satisfaction and reducing attritions. Proper support systems at hospitals for females can help them to take care of their responsibilities at the home and organizational front systematically.



7. Limitations

Despite the empirical nature of the study and its usefulness, it is not free from limitations. The first limitation is concerning our sample and the sampling technique. Our research is exclusively centred on understanding the constructs of perceived support, work- life balance, and job satisfaction as female nurses are only given the dominance of the female workforce in the nursing profession. Future research may involve male counterparts to female nurses in the healthcare space. This would help in exploring the comparative understanding of the important phenomenon covered in our study. In addition, the findings of the study are based on convenience sampling, a non-probability method, which requires readers to exercise a plausible degree of caution as far as the generalizability of the study is concerned. The second limitation concerning the nature of our research data is cross-sectional in nature. Thirdly, we suggest future researchers' measure organizational support in terms of work-life balance separately and assess its influence on the relationship of work-life balance and job satisfaction. This would possibly explain additional variance in the conceptual model. Researchers may try inclusion of other antecedents to job satisfaction at an individual and organizational level as mediators and moderators in our proposed theoretical framework. Despite limitations in our study, we expect it to be useful for readers, researchers, and practitioners in understanding the association of three crucial constructs for female nurses in the Indian healthcare industry.

8. Conclusion

Female nurses working in hospitals are the backbone of the healthcare system in India. It is difficult to imagine hospitals without them. Therefore, organizational support, work- life balance, and job satisfaction are important areas where considerable attention is warranted. Given the prevalence of high attrition rates in nursing, it becomes imperative that adequate work- life balance support should be provided to them. This would increase their perception of support at the workplace which in turn would enable them to be satisfied with their jobs through work- life balance. The study explains the process by which the job satisfaction level of nurses can be enhanced through greater organizational support and work-life balance. Our findings suggest that work-life balance mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. Even distal perception of support influences job satisfaction through work-life balance. Hence, it is suggested that they are provided organizational support at work such as a decent work environment, rewards and recognition, social and moral support from supervisors, adequate leaves, and timely breaks during work hours so that they experience balance and satisfaction on the job and family front.



NMIMS
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Arun kumar Dubey is an Assistant Professor in Commerce & Management at S K Somaiya College of Arts, Science & Commerce. He can be reached at prof.arunkumard@gmail.com, His ORCID id is <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7427-8254>

Dr. S Riasudeen is an Associate Professor at Department of Management Studies, School of Management, Pondicherry University. He can be reached at riasudeen.dms@pondiuni.edu.in, His ORCID id is <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3177-6333>



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