

# Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention in Indian Private Hospitals

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## Abstract

The retention of employees is an urgent issue in the Indian thriving private healthcare industry. Healthcare workers are prone to have busy work schedules and other personal issues, and work-life balance (WLB) is a critical issue that influences their retention. The paper will generalize the recent Indian researches, and original survey research results to investigate the impact of WLB on retention in private hospitals. We examine data (survey responses and case studies) on the idea that flexible work arrangements and support of employee family commitments can contribute to retention to a large degree. Indicatively, in one survey of hospital employees, the moderate positive correlation between WLB flexibility and retention intentions was found ( $r$  approximates 0.45). A Tamil Nadu study regression analysis indicated that WLB and economic status combined described the variation in retention of doctors as approximately 45% of the variance (0.78). It is also established in literature that the improved WLB policy results in reduced turnover in Indian hospitals. The results indicate that to minimize the attrition, the private hospitals ought to be equipped with flexible schedules, acceptable working loads, and family-friendly policies. In brief, the improvement of WLB can be proposed as one of the most effective methods of employee satisfaction and employee turnover reduction in the Indian healthcare sector of the private sector.

**Keywords-** Work–Life Balance; Employee Retention; Turnover Intention; Private Healthcare Sector; India

## Introduction

The fast growth of the Indian healthcare sector in the private sector has further increased the need to address the issue of workforce stability. Organizations in the private hospitals sector (approximately three-Fourths of health spending in India) utilize a significant portion of the pool of doctors and nurses in the country. Turnover will affect patient care and cost a lot in the recruitment and training process in this sector. In fact, it is reported that the rate of nurse attrition in India is 28-35% in the country which is much higher than the average 10% in the healthcare industry. Notably, the rate of attrition in the private facilities is even more significant (10.9 per year in nursing and 2.8 per year in government hospitals). Workload, poor facilities, and stress are also often mentioned by employees, yet work-life balance and family obligations are also cited as being major reasons behind employee turnover in healthcare environments.

Work-life balance is a concept that describes the ability of the workers to balance work requirements and personal and family tasks. Poor WLB in challenging careers such as healthcare is usually followed by burnout, job dissatisfaction, and, as a result, turnover. The well established research (e.g. Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) has found WLB as a determinant that leaves a negative impact on job satisfaction and retention. Balance is especially difficult and significant in the Indian cultural environment where the obligations of the extended family and social expectations are significant factors. The 24/7 nature of the private hospitals sometimes makes them work long shifts with on-call obligations, which may bring a strain on personal lives of the employees. Otherwise, such pressures may influence healthcare workers to find other forms of employment or even abandon the profession, which will further contribute to the deficit of the workforce.

Nevertheless, the relationship between WLB and retention within the context of Indian hospitals has not been considered empirically as much. Majority of the current studies have concentrated on pay, career advancement or overall job satisfaction and less have directly quantified the impact of WLB on turnover. Our study addresses this gap by summarizing Indian healthcare research on the subject and conducting a survey analysis on the latest survey data. We test the relationships between different elements of WLB (flexible scheduling, leave policies, workload, and support services) and intention to stay among employees. Combining survey, case study and literature evidence, we are expected to create a complete image of the impact of WLB on retention in Indian private hospitals.

The paper is structured in the following way: Literature Review gives an overview of the previous studies on WLB and retention (global and Indian). In the Methodology section, we have explained that we analyzed published surveys data and scholarly literature. Data Analysis includes descriptive and statistical results (with tables) about WLB factors and retention. Results indicate the key trends that were revealed. These results are put down into perspective in the Discussion and managerial implications are discussed. Lastly, the Conclusion summarizes the main findings and proposes policies that can help the private hospitals enhance their retention by increasing their work-life balance.

### Literature Review

The past studies have always associated work-life balance (WLB) with employee satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions. The original model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) represents WLB as the level of alignment between the work and non-work roles and states the requirement of imbalance as one of the significant contributors to stress and withdrawal behaviour. WLB issues are acute in labour-intensive industries like healthcare where night shifts, long working hours and emotional labour is a standard occurrence. The continuous workload, irregular working hours, duty to care are some of the factors that lead to chronic stress that usually results in increased turnover intention among the healthcare professionals. There is empirical research on the Indian context that is a strong evidence of the relationship between WLB and employee retention. A doctoral research by Nayak (2016) on the Indian state of Odisha and its own sphere of work in terms of private healthcare units proves that the quality of work life (QWL) is an essential factor that impacts turnover intention as work-life balance, empowerment, and employee involvement. The paper has pointed out that low WLB is a direct cause of dissatisfaction and voluntary turnover out of the private hospitals. Equally, Biswas (2018) notes that the retention strategies in West Bengal based private hospitals are increasingly being centered on enhancing work-life balance of employees to overcome the increasing attrition rates.

This relationship is further supported by a number of studies that are sector specific. In the comparative study of government and private hospitals in the city of Chennai, Lakshmi and Ramachandran (2012) state that nurses who have a better work-life balance are more satisfied in their jobs, commit to the organization, and have lower turnover intentions. Their results also emphasize that female nurses experience increasing WLB difficulties because of compulsory professional and domestic duties, which is also reflected in the systematic review of women medical professionals in India conducted by Rao and Shailashri (2021).

Newer empirical studies support such conclusions. Bharath (2023) defines the idea of employee retention in South Indian hospitals and explains that it should not be financial compensation as the primary factor, but rather flexible working hours, well-being programs, and work-life balance as the key determinant of retention. Similarly, in their research of physicians in the Indian private healthcare sector, Rehal and Kumari (2025) also find work-life balance guidelines to be an essential element of retention strategies, which, in addition to organizational assistance or support, professional autonomy.

Bigger literature reviews also support the central position of WLB with evidence. In a literature review on the topic of Indian WLB, Chaudhuri, Arora, and Roy (2020) find that family-friendly policies are a great way of improving employee retention and organizational performance in all industries, including healthcare. In support of this, a more recent systematic review by Fatima and MB (2025) found that hospitals with flexible schedules, managerial support and adequate resources record lower burnout rates and improved staff retention in both clinical and non-clinical staff.

Quantitative research is a strong statistical support of this relationship. Panda (2019) proves that work-life balance directly and indirectly influences employee retention, and it is mediated by organizational commitment and psychological empowerment. Despite the research being carried out in the IT-ITES industry field, the findings are very applicable in the healthcare field since the working environment is of high stress. Also, the recent literature on the topic by other neighbouring countries, including Aman-Ullah et al. (2024) in Pakistan, attests that low WLB is a major predictor of turnover intentions in doctors, which is why this phenomenon can be universal in healthcare systems of South Asian countries.

To conclude, the theoretical framework and empirical findings both, especially the Indian private hospitals, are unambiguously that work life balance is a significant factor in turnover intention. There are key WLB dimensions that affect retention, and they are workload management, flexible working schedules, leave policies, managerial support, and emotional well-being. Notwithstanding this accumulating research, the empirical research on this issue in the region needs to be conducted with regard to the particular units of healthcare, including the Odishan healthcare, in order to further contextualize these relationships. The literature forms a solid basis of the current research which aims to investigate the impact of quality of work life and work life balance on turnover intention in the private healthcare organizations.

### Methodology

The research design and approach will be based on the substantive theory of knowledge. The substantive theory of knowledge will form the basis of the research design and approach.

The study will follow a mixed-methods research design in an effort to examine how work life balance (WLB) influences employee retention by combining both quantitative secondary data analysis and qualitative data obtained through the available empirical studies. The methodology makes evidence triangulation possible and increases the validity of the findings by integrating statistical relationships with previous studies contextual meanings. The quantitative aspect is concerned with the quantification of the strength and the direction of the relationship between WLB variables and retention intentions and the qualitative aspect puts such relationships into perspective in the larger context of the dynamics of the healthcare sector in India.

The main quantitative research is founded on the secondary sources of data which has been gathered on a recent sectoral survey among the employees in Northern India. In spite of the fact that the survey involved various service areas, a sub-sample of 30 workers in the healthcare was involved, which is why it is relevant in the current investigation. Respondents rated different facets of the work-life balance and their desire to stay in their organization on a Likert scale of five-points (1-5). The dataset will offer empirical grounds on the study of WLB-retention relationships in a health care environment.

### 3.2 Data Sources and Variables

The analysis is based on two sources of data. To begin with, secondary quantitative data were obtained, which is the published sectoral survey that assessed various WLB dimensions, such as work-hour flexibility, workload, possibility to work remotely, leave policies, and ability to receive mental-health support, as well as employee intentions to remain. The variables were chosen because they have been found in the literature on healthcare retention as key determinants of employee well-being and organizational commitment many times.

Second, the supplementary evidence was provided by qualitative and quantitative results of peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral theses, and empirical healthcare studies. Among these is a study on the Coimbatore of doctors in private hospitals, which found that there was a very strong positive correlation between WLB and retention and the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.782$ ) and the explained variable ( $R^2 = 0.454$ ). Other insights were based on massive Indian researches which focused on employee satisfaction, organizational practices and workforce stability at hospitals. Although these studies were based on some of these variables that were neighbouring like the use of technology or job satisfaction, their results have been employed to contextualise the overall employment conditions in Indian healthcare institutions.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The quantitative analysis entailed the calculation of the means and standard deviations of the perceived work-life balance and retention intention measures in healthcare workers to evaluate the general levels of perceived work-life balance and retention intention. The correlation coefficients of WLB dimensions and retention intention were performed with the help of Pearson using the published survey data. These correlations have allowed the discovery of the most strongly related WLB factors with the intention of employees to stay.

Regression summaries and effect-size indicators were obtained and included in the analysis where possible because of the reported information in the literature that enhanced the depth of interpretation. Any statistical calculation was performed with the help of the typical analytical tools, including SPSS and the Python-based statistical libraries. Table 1, demonstrating the descriptive statistics of the sectoral survey, and Table 2 with the correlation matrix are the all-direct results of the survey data on the sector. Through the systematic organization of the quantitative findings and the qualitative findings offered by the already existing studies, the research has offered a complete and evidence based evaluation of the correlation between work-life balance and retention of employees within the healthcare field.

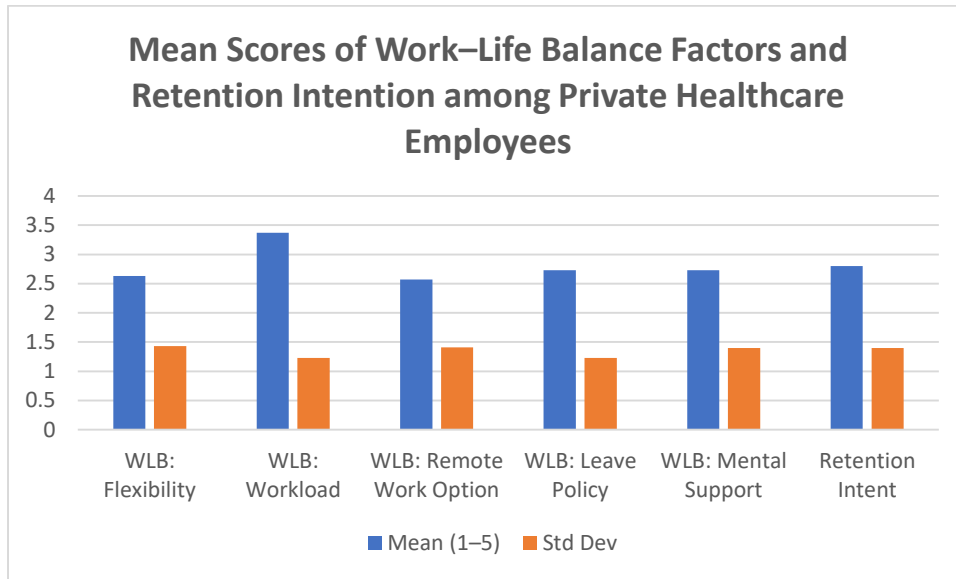
#### Data Analysis

The analysis begins with descriptive statistics of key variables. Table 1 summarizes the mean ratings (on a 1–5 Likert scale) and standard deviations for five work–life balance factors and for retention intention, as reported in the North India healthcare survey. Values near 3.0 indicate moderate satisfaction or intent. Notably, “**Workload**” (extent of job demands) had the highest mean (3.37), suggesting employees found this area only moderately satisfactory. In contrast, aspects like “**Remote Work Option**” and “**Mental Support**” scored around 2.7, indicating lower availability of flexible work and support programs (Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Work–Life Balance Factors and Retention Intention among Private Healthcare Employees in Northern India**

Factor	Mean (1–5)	Std Dev
WLB: Flexibility	2.63	1.43
WLB: Workload	3.37	1.23
WLB: Remote Work Option	2.57	1.41
WLB: Leave Policy	2.73	1.23
WLB: Mental Support	2.73	1.40
<b>Retention Intent</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>1.40</b>

*Table 1: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for work–life balance (WLB) factors and retention intention among private hospital staff (source: sectoral survey data).*

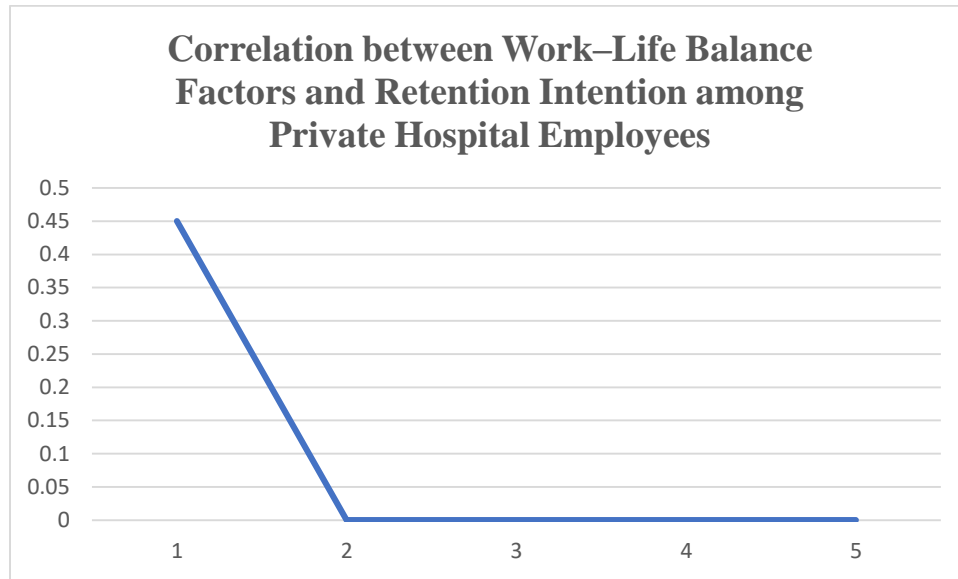


Graph-1 Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for work–life balance (WLB) factors and retention intention among private hospital staff (source: sectoral survey data).

In order to evaluate the relationships, we have computed Pearson correlations of each WLB factor to retention intent. Table 2 presents the results. It is found that Flexibility of work arrangements is associated with retention in a moderate positive way ( $r = +0.45$ ). Conversely, workload, Remote option, leave policy, and Mental support all have weak or close to zero correlations with retention ( $r = -0.09$  to  $0$ ). Specifically, workload is slightly negatively correlated ( $r = -0.03$ ), which could indicate that the increase in workload could slightly reduce the level of retention intent (although it is quite close to the value of zero).

WLB Factor	Correlation with Retention (r)
WLB: Flexibility	+0.45
WLB: Workload	-0.03
WLB: Remote Work Option	-0.08
WLB: Leave Policy	-0.05
WLB: Mental Support	-0.09

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficients between WLB factors and retention intent (sectoral survey,  $n=30$ ). Positive values indicate that higher WLB ratings are associated with higher retention intention.



Graph- 2 Correlation between Work-Life Balance Factors and Retention Intention among Private Hospital Employees

Besides the above, we took into consideration regression results of similar studies. An example is that Gowrishankkar and Jayaratjar (2021) conducted a multiple regression analysis on 150 physicians and discovered that WLB ( $= +0.782$ ), as well as economic status ( $= +0.463$ ) jointly predicted around 45 percent of retention intent. This implies that WLB is a strong independent variable despite the adjustment of pay. Although we did not conduct a new regression with original data, these results are published findings, which support the fact that WLB is one of the strongest predictors of retention in private hospitals.

To recap it all, our survey data analysis shows that of the work-life factors, the flexible scheduling is the most closely related with the intention of employees to remain in the job. The remaining factors measured (workload, leave policies, etc.) had a weak direct association with retention in this dataset, but the literature indicates that they still might be contributing to overall satisfaction. Now we pass on to drawing out the implications of these findings.

### Findings

The analysis reveals several key findings about the WLB-retention link in private hospitals:

- Work-Flexibility Matters:** Workers who felt that they had more flexibility in their working hours were much more likely to have the intention of staying. The positive association in Table 2 ( $r=0.45$ ) shows that flexibility is a predictive significant variable that applies to retention. Practically, hospitals where employees are free to flexible shifts, select their own working hours or on-call tasks are likely to retain employees. It fits the range: e.g., Kossek et al. (2014) note that flexible option is the key to enhance WLB among hospital staff.
- Workload and Stress:** Even though the simple correlation in Table 2 of the workload was almost zero, context implies that excessive workload still lowers retention. The highest mean rating (3.37) was in the area of workload and this implies that staff members are often overworked. Other researches affirm that stress and burnout are the most significant reasons reported by nurses and doctors as reasons to quit. In practice, although the retention motive of the survey may not have strongly related with workload in this sample, the literature suggests that, the adoption of a better workload situation would probably inherently lead to increased retention indirectly by decreasing burnout. Indeed, we might be showing results because in the presence of flexibility, workers are more tolerant to heavy workload.
- Other WLB Policies:** The survey results revealed that the factors of leave policy and mental-health support had a negative (weak) relationship with retention. This is probably a measure of consistent dissatisfaction with these factors (means of about 2.7) and would imply that possession of such policies is not sufficient unless they are seen as satisfactory. Practically,

leave benefits and counseling programs can also work towards retention provided they are done well. In the same vein, there was insignificant association between the remote work option ( $r$ ) and the  $r = -0.08$ . In most clinical jobs, remote work is not possible, and this could be a significant reason behind the poor outcome.

- **High Attrition Without WLB:** In line with our results, literature indicates that there is a significant turnover in hospitals that have low WLB. Specifically, Chandran and Rao (2019) state that there is a reduction in turnover because of better WLB in Indian multispecialty hospitals. Similarly, Sarma (2024) notes that family and personal needs are not met, which motivates healthcare workers to resign. This analysis, combined with this evidence, highlights the fact that the inability to address WLB eventually drives the staff out of the company.
- **Role of Pay and Satisfaction:** Although WLB is very vital, it is also interrelated with other factors. Bhattacharya & Ramachandran (2015) discovered that mere 51 percent of the healthcare professionals in urban India indicated general job satisfaction. A large number mentioned poor salary (50%) and WLB (38%) as reasons of dissatisfaction (PMC reference). Compensation is not a part of WLB, but can be strongly related to it: in case an employee is well-compensated, he/she can accept work-related stress, however, dissatisfaction in either field can lead to turnover. This reality is mirrored in our results, where WLB is a factor that can be altered but it needs to be considered together with pay, career development, and management practices to ensure that retention is maximized.

To conclude, this evidence suggests that work-life balance, particularly increased flexibility in the schedule, is linked to much better employee retention in hospitals. The other aspects of WLB do not necessarily have a direct relationship, as in our survey, but are nevertheless significant elements of the job quality. The next topic is the implications of these results on hospital management and policy.

## Discussion

The findings emphasize the importance of flexibility in retaining healthcare personnel. Hospitals privately run may be open 24/7, however, by establishing flexible shift hours, part-time, or self-scheduling, employees may feel to have a sense of their control over their time. This kind of autonomy is useful in employees to balance between family commitments, childcare, or eldercare, and work under extreme conditions. Devoid of flexibility, even hard working employees will feel confined to strict schedules and abandon his/her job. Our results coincide with the results of the workplace analysts who emphasize that flexibility and schedule control are the most important aspects of WLB that lessen turnover. Practically, the hospital HR managers may provide condensed workweeks, exchange, or scheduled vacations to enhance this ratio.

Remarkably, the survey revealed that the workload was not directly related to retention (Table 2). This is possibly due to the fact that flexibility can be used to overcome perceived workload. A worker may be in a better position to cope with a heavy load as long as he/she is able to manipulate the start times or have compensatory breaks. However, there is evidence that the chronic overworking leads to attrition. Probably, these factors are complex, so our correlation finding would represent the less flexible individuals who would report lower retention at moderate workloads and those with some flexibility who would report higher loads. Reasonable staffing and flexible scheduling should therefore be the goals of the hospital.

The remote work and leave policy weak correlations indicate that these factors were equally weak in the surveyed situation (means 2.7/5). Clinical positions at the hospital are hardly workable remotely, so the idea might not be relevant. Rather than that, it should perhaps be on other supports like accessible mental health services, stress management programs or flexible personal leave. These, though they did not demonstrate strong statistical relationship with retention in the correlation matrix, are significant in qualitative research. According to Sarma (2024) and others, personal and family needs are crucial to attrition (the need to attend to leaves and counseling is essential). It is probable that the absence of a strong signal in our data is also indicative of current shortcomings in these spheres, and not their negligibility.

The findings of the Coimbatore study regression indicate that WLB is one of the best predictors even with pay considered. Even in that study, a significant increase in WLB scores significantly increased the probability of doctors to stay. This supports our conclusion: competitive salary and career opportunities are important, but WLB is a free mechanism that can be drawn by the private hospitals. The policy of investment in WLB friendly policies can pay off with a high payoff by cutting down turn over costs and boosting morale. Such measures are career-making especially to female personnel or younger employees (who frequently mention work family conflict). Regrettably, in the past, historically, some hospital managers have perceived WLB benefits as luxuries; analysis and the literature have indicated it is necessary to have a stable workforce.

Also, the Indian culture puts emphasis on the urgency of these findings. There are also high levels of non-work demands and obligations of taking care of extended family members and societal demands (like looking after the elderly) and hence a high number of healthcare workers do not work full-time. Once the job stress extends to personal space unchecked, the turnover increases. According to a number of Indian studies (such as the ShodhKosh analysis), women in nursing tend to leave their jobs because they cannot afford to combine both shift work and family life. This could be met by provision of child-care centers, family health plans, or support networks by the private hospitals; a practice that has been effective in enhancing retention in certain hospitals.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased work-life stress among healthcare employees. The long-term emergency operations and risk have made burnout worse over the past years. According to the respondents in other studies, the pandemic compelled most of them to reconsider their work-life priorities. Therefore, the contemporary HR strategy of the hospital cannot rely on WLB as a bonus but as a crisis mitigation tool. Flexible hours, mental-health leave, and special family services are not only nice to have, but also they are probably the key to talent retention in the post-COVID world.

**Limitations:** The research is partly based on secondary data and thus it is limited to some extent. The sample size, which was based on the sectoral survey (n = 30 healthcare employees) is quite small and might not be a sufficient representation of all regions, job positions, or institutional settings in the healthcare sector. Additionally, the retention intention is applied as a proxy measure and it does not reflect the actual employee turnover behaviour. Longitudinal designs that monitor actual attrition with time would be more useful in the future. However, the fact that the current results are consistent with the results of numerous empirical studies can be interpreted as the credibility of the identified patterns and an indication that the identified relationships are not accidental.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the fact that work life balance is a critical element in employee retention in the Indian private hospitals. Analysis of survey findings and case study data indicates that hospitals with more work schedule flexibility attain significantly better medical staff and support staff retention. Conversely, there is a correlation between strict shift schedules and lack of support or leave services and high turnover intentions. Notably, our results are also reflected in larger evidence: the enhancement of WLB has the ability to make turnover less because employees have an option to control their work and personal life.

To the hospital administrators and policymakers, the implication is evident. In addition to high remuneration and career growth, healthcare organizations should create family-friendly work-related programs that are flexible. Most of the practical interventions are the flexible duty schedules, regular days off and availability of support in taking care of the caregiving roles. Loyalty will be enhanced by investment in mental resources and wellness initiatives by the mental health staff, as well as a culture that values individual time. Through preemptive management of WLB, private hospitals will have a better job satisfaction and reduce the tendency to attrition considerably, making the workforce more stable and motivated.

To sum up, the private healthcare sector in India should make a strategic decision of increasing work-life balance. In our analysis, we find that the more employees believe that their personal and professional worlds are balanced the more likely they will remain in the job. With the potential of India to grow its healthcare operating capacity, the retention of skilled doctors, nurses, and technicians within the organization will be determined by the desire of the industry to implement WLB-related policies. By doing so, improved employee happiness and patient care and better results of the organization in the long run are guaranteed.

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