

“WORK–LIFE BALANCE AND ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AMONG WORKING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR WOMEN IN INDIA”

Dr. More Yogita Subhash

Assistant Professor, Shri Shivaji Shikshan Prasarak Mandal's
Loknete Ramdas Patil Dhumal Arts, Science & Commerce College, Rahuri

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines how work–life balance (WLB) influences online consumer behaviour among working women employed as Assistant Professors in India. Women in academia face a unique combination of teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, research commitments, and domestic caregiving expectations. These overlapping pressures intensify time scarcity and emotional fatigue, prompting increased reliance on digital commerce for personal and household needs. Using a qualitative approach grounded in secondary data—including academic studies, government reports, and market insights—this paper investigates the psychological, socio-cultural, and occupational factors shaping online purchasing patterns among female Assistant Professors. Findings reveal that better WLB supports rational and planned online shopping, whereas heavy workloads, semester pressures, and family responsibilities often lead to impulse buying and mobile-based quick purchases. The study emphasises the need for institutional reforms, gender-sensitive digital marketing, and supportive workplace environments to enhance the well-being and consumer decision-making of women in higher education.

Keywords: Work–life balance, online consumer behaviour, Assistant Professors, working women, digital commerce, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Women employed as Assistant Professors in Indian higher education institutions represent a growing academic workforce. Yet their professional journey is characterised by the simultaneous management of teaching schedules, research expectations, examination duties, student mentoring, administrative tasks, and domestic responsibilities. These demanding roles often result in disturbed work–life balance, leaving limited time for leisure or physical shopping.

Parallely, India’s digital commerce sector is expanding rapidly, offering convenience and flexibility to time-constrained professional women. For Assistant Professors—who often work extended hours during

examination periods, NAAC preparation, conferences, and research deadlines—online shopping becomes an essential tool for managing personal and household needs.

This study explores how the academic workload, cultural expectations, and emotional stress associated with their profession influence online consumer behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work–life balance literature identifies academic professions as high-pressure environments due to intellectual demands, research obligations, and continuous performance evaluation (Singh & Khurana, 2020). Women in academia additionally experience work–family conflict, limited support structures, and gendered expectations at home (Budhwar & Debrah, 2019).

Digital consumer behaviour studies highlight convenience, accessibility, and time-saving benefits as primary motivators for online shopping (Deloitte, 2022). For female educators, digital literacy further supports confidence in mobile commerce and online payment systems.

Theoretical models such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour explain that perceived behavioural control and attitudes influence purchase intentions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs indicates that stress and unmet emotional needs often stimulate self-reward purchasing or impulsive buying (Maslow, 1943).

Market reports show that working women increasingly depend on online platforms for groceries, personal care, clothing, and academic resources due to time limitations (IAMAI, 2023; Statista, 2024).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse how work–life balance affects online consumer behaviour among working Assistant Professor women in India.
2. To identify psychological, social, and occupational factors shaping their digital purchasing patterns.
3. To examine product categories frequently purchased by female Assistant Professors through online platforms.
4. To highlight implications for academic institutions, policymakers, and marketers.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative and descriptive design based on secondary data. Sources include:

Peer-reviewed literature on academic workload, work–life balance, and women in higher education. Reports from McKinsey, Deloitte, Statista, IAMAI, and RedSeer. Government surveys such as NSS and Time Use Reports, International studies on online consumer behaviour, A thematic analysis technique was used to identify patterns connecting WLB and online purchasing among women Assistant Professors.

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Work–Life Balance Challenges Specific to Assistant Professor Women

Women Assistant Professors frequently face:

Heavy teaching workloads

Continuous assessment, exam duties, and paper evaluation

Research pressure for promotions (API/PBAS requirements)

NAAC/ISO documentation responsibilities

Student mentoring and administrative tasks

Household duties, childcare, and eldercare

This cumulative burden results in fatigue, emotional stress, and limited time for physical shopping.

5.2 Online Consumer Behaviour Patterns Among Women in Academia

Due to rigid academic schedules, Assistant Professors prefer online platforms for their efficiency. Patterns observed include:

Shopping during lunch breaks, late nights, or weekends

High dependence on mobile apps

Preference for home delivery due to lack of time

Increased reliance on reviews and peer recommendations

During peak academic periods (exams, admissions), impulse buying and unplanned purchases become more common due to stress and mental overload.

5.3 Preferred Product Categories

Female Assistant Professors frequently purchase:

Formal and ethnic clothing suitable for academic settings

Books, e-resources, and academic materials

Personal care and wellness products

Groceries and household essentials

Gadgets, stationery, and teaching aids

These choices align with professional requirements and time-saving household needs.

5.4 Psychological Factors Influencing Purchases

Academic stress and time pressure contribute to:

“Reward purchases” after completing major tasks like paper checking

Emotional buying during stressful periods

Quick decision-making to reduce cognitive load

Dependence on subscription models or auto-delivery for essentials

5.5 Socio-Cultural Influences

Despite professional roles, many Assistant Professor women continue to manage the majority of household duties. Cultural expectations of caregiving remain strong, leading them to use online platforms to save time and maintain family responsibilities.

5.6 Impact of Work–Life Balance on Online Behaviour

Positive WLB: Planned shopping, careful comparison, budget-oriented decisions

Poor WLB: Impulse buying, reliance on fast delivery, emotional purchases, and last-minute decision-making

Workload peaks (examination season, accreditation tasks) strongly correlate with increased impulse purchases and frequent mobile browsing.

6. FINDINGS

Women Assistant Professors experience high work pressure, leading to significant work–life imbalance.

Time scarcity increases their reliance on digital and mobile commerce.

Their online purchases are influenced by academic workload, family duties, and emotional stress.

The most frequently purchased categories include academic materials, personal care items, clothing, and household essentials.

Social media, online reviews, and peer educators significantly impact buying decisions.

Poor work–life balance leads to emotional and impulsive online shopping.

7. CONCLUSION

Work–life balance significantly shapes the online consumer behaviour of Assistant Professor women in India. Their dual responsibilities—academic and domestic—push them towards digital platforms for convenience and time efficiency. While balanced schedules promote rational shopping behaviour, academic stress and workload peaks often result in emotional and impulsive purchases. To improve the well-being and purchasing behaviour of women in academia, institutions should adopt flexible timings, reduce administrative burdens, and promote gender-sensitive policies. Meanwhile, marketers should develop ethical strategies that support, rather than exploit, time-constrained women consumers.

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