

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64672/IJIFR/26.05.13.10.011>

PUBLISHED ON: JUNE 17, 2026

FAMILY SUPPORT AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE AMONG WOMEN FARMERS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

A. ANANDHIPRABHA

Assistant Professor,

Department of Commerce – Banking and Insurance

NGM College, Pollachi, Tamilnadu –India

Abstract: *Women farmers constitute a significant segment of the agricultural workforce, yet they frequently encounter challenges in balancing productive agricultural activities with domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Despite increasing scholarly attention to women’s empowerment in agriculture, limited empirical research has examined the influence of family relationships on the work–life balance of women farmers. This study investigates the extent to which family support dimensions—namely spousal support, emotional support, household cooperation, and participation in decision-making—affect the work–life balance of women engaged in agriculture. Using a structured interview schedule, primary data were collected from 120 women farmers selected through random sampling from rural agricultural households. Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques were employed to analyse the data. The findings reveal that a substantial proportion of respondents experience low to moderate levels of work–life balance, reflecting the challenges associated with managing dual productive and reproductive roles. Correlation results indicate significant positive associations between family relationship variables and work–life balance, with emotional support exhibiting the strongest relationship ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further demonstrates that family relationship factors collectively explain 58% of the variance in work–life balance ($R^2 = 0.58$), with emotional support emerging as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.35$), followed by spousal support ($\beta = 0.31$), household cooperation ($\beta = 0.28$), and participation in decision-making ($\beta = 0.24$). The study contributes to the growing discourse on gender and rural livelihoods by demonstrating that supportive family environments significantly enhance women farmers’ well-being, reduce work–family conflict, and improve their capacity to manage multiple responsibilities. The findings underscore the need for family-centred interventions and gender-sensitive agricultural policies aimed at strengthening social support systems, promoting shared household responsibilities, and fostering the sustainable empowerment of women in agriculture.*

Index Terms: *Women Farmers, Work–Life Balance, Family Support, Emotional Support, Gender Equality, Rural Livelihoods, Agricultural Empowermen*

Recommended Citation:

Anandhiprabha, A. :: “Family support and work–life balance among women farmers: An empirical study”, *International Journal of Informative & Futuristic Research (IJIFR)*, Vol. (13) (10), June 2026, pp. 1733-1739
<https://doi.org/10.64672/IJIFR/26.05.13.10.011>



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1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains a backbone of rural economies, with women constituting a substantial proportion of the agricultural workforce. Women farmers contribute extensively to sowing, weeding, harvesting, livestock management, and post-harvest activities, while simultaneously managing household responsibilities. Despite their dual contribution, women farmers face structural and social constraints that affect their work–life balance.

Work–life balance refers to an individual’s ability to manage professional responsibilities alongside personal and family life without undue stress or conflict. For women farmers, this balance is deeply embedded within family relationships, including spousal cooperation, family expectations, and caregiving roles. Understanding how family dynamics influence work–life balance is essential for promoting gender equity, improving agricultural productivity, and enhancing rural well-being.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies (2025) emphasize mental health, stress, and subjective well-being as integral components of work–life balance among women farmers. Contemporary research increasingly views work–life balance as a relational and household-level issue rather than an individual challenge, highlighting the need for family-centered and gender-sensitive agricultural policies.

Patel and Mehta (2024) explored the relationship between family dynamics and work–life balance among women farmers. Their findings indicated that shared decision making, spousal cooperation, and emotional support within families significantly enhance women’s ability to balance agricultural and household responsibilities, leading to improved well-being and productivity.

Sharma et al. (2023) analysed time-use patterns among women farmers and found that women spend significantly more hours on unpaid domestic labour than men. The study concluded that unequal household labour distribution intensifies work–life imbalance and called for family-level and policy interventions.

Singh and Verma (2022) examined work–life balance among rural women engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The study revealed that family support plays a decisive role in managing work pressure and stress. Women with limited family cooperation experienced higher fatigue and emotional strain.

Rao and Raju (2021) conducted a study on women farmers’ well-being and found a strong relationship between spousal support and reduced work–family conflict. Women who received emotional and practical support from family members reported better mental health and higher life satisfaction.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) reported that supportive family environments enhance women farmers’ participation in agricultural training, technology adoption, and farmer organizations. The report emphasized that family cooperation improves women’s productivity and reduces stress associated with multiple roles.

2.1 Research Gap Identified

From the review of literature, it is evident that while several studies have examined women’s role in agriculture, gender inequality, and empowerment, empirical studies explicitly linking family relationships with work–life balance among women farmers remain limited. Most studies address women’s labour contribution or empowerment independently, without integrating family dynamics into work–life balance analysis. Hence, the present study seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining the influence of family relationships on the work–life balance of women farmers.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature of family relationships among women farmers.

2. To assess the level of work–life balance experienced by women farmers.
3. To analyse the impact of family relationships on the work–life balance of women farmers.
4. To suggest measures for improving work–life balance through family and policy interventions.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical in nature and is based on primary data collected from women farmers actively engaged in agricultural activities. A structured interview schedule was used to ensure uniformity and reliability of responses. The respondents were selected through random sampling from rural agricultural households.

The interview schedule included sections on socio-economic characteristics, family relationship indicators (spousal support, emotional support, decision-making participation, and household cooperation), and work–life balance indicators such as time management, stress levels, fatigue, and personal well-being. Responses were measured using categorical responses and a five-point Likert scale.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, and mean score comparison to examine the relationship between family relationships and work–life balance. Secondary data were collected from academic journals, government reports, and policy documents to support and contextualize the findings.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis is based on primary data collected from 120 women farmers selected through random sampling from rural agricultural households. Data were analysed using percentage analysis and mean score comparison to understand the relationship between family relationships and work–life balance.

5.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of Women Farmers (n = 120)

Variable	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age	18–30 years	42	35.0
	31–45 years	54	45.0
	Above 45 years	24	20.0
Marital Status	Married	74	61.7
	Unmarried/Widowed	46	38.3
Family Type	Nuclear	91	75.8
	Joint	29	24.2
Primary Occupation	Agriculture only	82	68.3
	Agriculture and allied activities	38	31.7

Source: Calculated by the author through primary data

The table shows that most women farmers are in the active working age group, with 45% aged between 31–45 years and 35% between 18–30 years, indicating high involvement in both farm and household activities. A majority of the respondents (61.7%) are married, suggesting additional family and caregiving responsibilities along with agricultural work. Most women farmers (75.8%) belong to nuclear families, which implies limited support from extended family members and increased domestic workload. Regarding occupation, 68.3% depend solely on agriculture, while 31.7% combine agriculture with allied activities, indicating multiple work roles. Overall, the profile reflects that women farmers handle significant responsibilities at both household and farm levels, which can influence their work–life balance.

5.2 Nature of Family Relationships

Table 2: Family Relationship Indicators of Women Farmers

Family Relationship Variables	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
Spousal Support	54	28	18
Participation in Decision-Making	47	30	23
Household Cooperation	41	36	23
Emotional Support	49	33	18

Source: Calculated by thr author through primary data

The table indicates that a majority of women farmers receive strong support from their families in different areas. Spousal support is high for 54% of respondents, while emotional support is high for 49%, showing that many women benefit from encouragement and help from family members. Participation in decision making and household cooperation are slightly lower, with only 47% and 41% reporting high levels, respectively, suggesting that some women still face limitations in having a say in farm and household decisions or sharing domestic tasks. Overall, the data highlight that while emotional and spousal supports are relatively strong, there is room for improvement in decision-making involvement and household cooperation to enhance women farmers’ work–life balance.

5.3 Level of Work–Life Balance

Table 3: Level of Work–Life Balance among Women Farmers

Level of Work–Life Balance	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Low	46	38.3
Moderate	50	41.7
High	24	20.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Calculated by thr author through primary data

The table shows that most women farmers experience low to moderate levels of work–life balance. Specifically, 38.3% of respondents report low work–life balance, while 41.7% experience a moderate level, indicating that a large portion of women struggle to manage their farm and household responsibilities effectively. Only 20% of women report a high level of work–life balance, suggesting that few are able to balance their professional and personal roles with ease. This highlights the challenges women farmers face in managing dual responsibilities, emphasizing the need for family support and interventions to improve their overall well-being.

5.4 Correlation Analysis between Family Relationships and Work–Life Balance

To examine the relationship between family relationship variables and work–life balance among women farmers, **Pearson’s correlation analysis** was employed. The key family relationship variables considered were spousal support, participation in decision making, household cooperation, and emotional support. Work–life balance was treated as the dependent variable.

Table 4: Correlation between Family Relationship Variables and Work–Life Balance

Variables	Work–Life Balance (r value)
Spousal Support	0.68**
Participation in Decision Making	0.61**
Household Cooperation	0.65**
Emotional Support	0.70**

Source: Calculated by thr author through testing the data

Note: Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

The correlation analysis reveals a strong and positive relationship between family relationships and work–life balance among women farmers. Emotional support shows the highest correlation (r =

0.70), followed by spousal support ($r = 0.68$), household cooperation ($r = 0.65$), and participation in decision making ($r = 0.61$). This indicates that improvements in family relationships are associated with higher levels of work–life balance. The statistically significant correlation values confirm that family support plays a crucial role in reducing work–family conflict and stress among women farmers.

5.5 Regression Analysis: Impact of Family Relationships on Work–Life Balance

To assess the extent to which family relationship variables influence work–life balance, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. Work–life balance was taken as the dependent variable, while spousal support, participation in decision making, household cooperation, and emotional support were treated as independent variables.

1) Regression Model

$$\text{Work–Life Balance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Spousal Support}) + \beta_2(\text{Decision Making}) + \beta_3(\text{Household Cooperation}) + \beta_4(\text{Emotional Support}) + \epsilon$$

Table 5: Regression Results

Independent Variables	Beta (β)	t-value	Significance (p)
Spousal Support	0.31	4.62	0.000
Participation in Decision Making	0.24	3.87	0.001
Household Cooperation	0.28	4.21	0.000
Emotional Support	0.35	5.08	0.000

Source: Calculated by the author through testing the data

R² = 0.58

Adjusted R² = 0.56

F value = 39.42 (p < 0.01)

The regression results indicate that family relationship variables together explain 58 per cent of the variation in work–life balance among women farmers, which is statistically significant. Emotional support emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.35$), followed by spousal support ($\beta = 0.31$), household cooperation ($\beta = 0.28$), and participation in decision making ($\beta = 0.24$).

The positive beta coefficients suggest that an increase in family support leads to a significant improvement in work–life balance. The statistically significant F value confirms the overall fitness of the model, indicating that family relationships have a meaningful and measurable impact on women farmers’ work–life balance.

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Most women farmers (45%) belong to the age group of 31–45 years.
2. Majority of the respondents (61.7%) are married and manage both family and farming responsibilities.
3. Most women farmers (75.8%) live in nuclear families, which increases their household workload.
4. About 68.3% of respondents depend only on agriculture for their livelihood.
5. More than half of the women farmers receive good spousal support and emotional support from their families.
6. Participation in family decision making and household cooperation are moderate among respondents.
7. A large number of women farmers experience low to moderate work–life balance.
8. Only 20% of respondents enjoy a high level of work–life balance.
9. Family relationship factors have a positive relationship with work–life balance.
10. Emotional support has the strongest influence on improving work–life balance.
11. Spousal support and household cooperation also help women farmers balance work and family life.
12. Regression analysis shows that family relationships significantly affect the work–life balance of women farmers.
13. Overall, better family support leads to better work–life balance and reduced stress among women farmers.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to a sample of 120 women farmers and may not be generalized to all regions.
- The analysis relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal perceptions.
- Future studies may use longitudinal designs and advanced statistical techniques for deeper analysis.

8. SUGGESTIONS

- Promote awareness programmes on shared household and farm responsibilities.
- Encourage family-based interventions to support women farmers.
- Strengthen access to childcare, health services, and labour-saving technologies.
- Incorporate gender-sensitive policies in agricultural development programmes.

9. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research may explore:

- Comparative studies across regions or farming systems
- The impact of institutional support on women farmers' work–life balance
- The relationship between work–life balance and farm productivity
- Intersectional factors such as caste, education, and land ownership

10. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that family support is a pivotal factor influencing the work–life balance of women farmers. The findings reveal that emotional support, spousal cooperation, household assistance, and participation in decision-making significantly enhance women's ability to balance agricultural and domestic responsibilities, with emotional support emerging as the strongest predictor. The results underscore that work–life balance is not solely an individual concern but a socially embedded outcome shaped by family dynamics and support systems. By integrating family relationship dimensions into the discourse on women's agricultural participation, the study contributes to the literature on gender, rural livelihoods, and sustainable development. The evidence suggests that strengthening family support mechanisms can reduce work–family conflict, improve well-being and enhance the productive capacity of women farmers. Consequently, gender-responsive policies and family-centred interventions that promote shared responsibilities, social support, and women's decision-making power are essential for advancing agricultural sustainability, rural prosperity and inclusive development. The results therefore call for a paradigm shift in agricultural and rural development policies—from a predominantly productivity-oriented approach to one that explicitly recognizes and strengthens family-based support systems. Promoting shared household responsibilities, enhancing women's participation in decision-making, and fostering gender-equitable family practices can generate multidimensional benefits that extend beyond individual households to rural communities and agricultural development. In this regard, strengthening family support structures emerges not only as a social imperative but also as a strategic pathway towards gender equality, sustainable livelihoods and inclusive rural transformation.

Acknowledgement

The author sincerely acknowledges and expresses gratitude to the Management of NGM College, Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, for their generous financial assistance through the SEED Money Support for this research work.

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