

A Quantitative Analysis of Work-Life Integration and Stress among Dual-Career Couples

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Abstract

This study analyzes the relationship between work-life integration(WLI) and perceived stress(PS) in dual-career couples. In modern organizations, the growing involvement of both partners in professional careers has made it a tougher task to juggle work and personal responsibilities at the same time. Understanding the influence of WLI on psychological well-being is thus of great importance. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study, and primary data were obtained from a total of 105 dual career respondents with the use of a structured online questionnaire. The Work-Life Integration Scale(WLIS) and the Perceived Stress Scale(PSS) were the measurement instruments. The statistical analysis was performed with the software package, with the help of statistical analysis software (SPSS), namely descriptive statistics(DS), Pearson correlation analysis(PCA), and independent sample t-test. The results showed a significant moderate negative correlation between WLI and PS ($r = -0.553$, $p < 0.01$), that is, the higher the integration between the professional and personal life, the lower the level of stress among the respondents. Furthermore, the independent sample t-test shows the significant difference in the stress levels of the respondents with a high and low WLI ($t = -3.147$, $p = 0.002$). Among demographic variables, educational qualifications significantly influence both WLI and stress. In contrast, gender, age, experience, family type, and area of living do not show statistically significant differences. The results highlight the importance of organizational support, flexible work policies, and supportive leadership practices in supporting employee well-being. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on WLI issues in the Indian context. It has some practical implications for human resource managers in formulating employee-friendly workplace policies.

Keywords: WLI, Dual-Career Couples, , Work-Family Interface, Employee Well-being, Organizational Support, Human Resource Policies.

Introduction

In the current competitive work environment, the concept of WLI has attracted much interest. Unlike traditional work-life balance, WLI is about finding a balance between work and personal life. This approach helps people manage their professional duties while balancing their personal commitments, incorporating positive life experiences into the work culture, and gaining positive benefits for both employees and organizations (Samtharam & Baskaran, 2023). Companies can assist this integration by understanding and accommodating the unique needs of their employees and fostering an environment that encourages both professional and personal well-being.

Stress, a feeling of strain and psychological pain, can be both productive and harmful (Timotius & Octavius, 2022). While a low level of stress can be motivational and help to increase adaptation, too much stress causes physical and mental health problems (Scurry & Clarke, 2022). Dual-career couples, in which both partners have active professional careers, are faced with special issues of work-life balance, relocation, and career development. Effective human resource management policies, such as flexible working arrangements and dual career programs, are necessary to support these couples (Kalokar et al., 2025; Sarker et al., 2021). This study examines the effect of WLI on stress among dual-career couples, with a special focus on the role of organizational support in managing their professional and personal commitments.

The objectives of this investigation are to examine. This research paper attempts to answer the following research questions: 1. How does the degree of WLI influence stress for dual career couples? 2. Is there a substantial difference in levels of stress between high and low WLI couples? 3. How does WLI differ between demographic variables such as age, gender, parental status, and career stage? By answering the questions, this research seeks to offer suitable actionable insights to H.R professionals so that can design more inclusive and flexible work policies that facilitate the integration of work and life in a healthy way. The research also examines demographic differences in order to determine if individual and situational variables do impact WLI and stress (Low et al., 2024).

Unique Contribution and Organization of the Study : Even though some studies have been conducted on work-life balance and stress, there is a paucity of empirical studies, particularly work-life on WLI among couples in a dual-career setting in India. The research has contributed to the body of knowledge as it is an empirical analysis of the correlation between WLI and the PS based on standardized measurement tools. It also examines how the demographic variables affect two constructs.

The paper has the following structure. Section 2 is literature review of relevant literature and identification of research gaps. The research methodology is described in the section 3. The results and analysis section are shown in the section 4. Section 5 concludes the research by discussing key implications, limitations, and future research directions.

Review of Literature

As more women continue to pursue higher education and become serious about their careers, the number of households with two working spouses continues to increase, and this affects the structure of organizations and societal expectations. This increasing demographic shift has prompted researchers to concentrate on work-family integration since conventional gender-based norms are changing and there are new demands being placed on men and women (Schultheiss, 2020). WLI seeks to bridge the gap between work and personal life so that professionals can fulfill their responsibilities at a time that is convenient to them, rather than dividing "work time" and "personal time". This approach is different from work-life balance, which entails setting clear boundaries between home and work to allow each to thrive separately (Arevin et al., 2024). Flexibility is the most important benefit of WLI as it helps employees manage their schedule and duties effectively, and thus gives them more satisfaction in all areas of their lives (Rostini et al., 2025). However, there can be negative effects of crossing boundaries if work and personal life start colliding, which leads to low levels of satisfaction and productivity in both areas (Dyrbye et al., 2020). By using available facilities, technologies, and policies, employees can achieve a better balance of their work and personal lives, resulting in a more integrated and fulfilling experience (Eljaaidi & Smiw, 2026). Little research has focused on understanding how dual career couples deal with two conflicting demands of work and home, especially when their professional and personal boundaries are closely knitted (Gao et al., 2025; Garcia et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Using the thematic analysis, key challenges in WLI were identified, which included reduced levels of social integration, societal expectations, monotonous routines, job insecurity, absence of organizational support, and the role of spousal support (Allen, 2013). The findings highlight the complex interactions of personal, professional, and societal influences on the work-life experiences of dual career couples, especially in cases where both partners work within the same work environment.

The explosion in the number of married women in the workforce has done much to increase the number of dual-career couples, exacerbating the possibility of stress and strain as individuals try to balance the dual demands of work and family roles (Krishnan et al., 2020).

Studies also highlight that the stress levels of women professionals in the workplace have been observed to be caused by high job demands, poor work-life balance, and lack of support, causing them to have a higher stress level and unsatisfying job (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Female employees in academic institutions are exposed to additional stressors, such as work overload and administrative problems, which adversely affect their work performance and personal lives (Chauhan et al., 2020; Tawfik et al., 2021). The research shows that dual-career couples are often more satisfied with their jobs as progress in their careers, even though the first few years are demanding, particularly if children are present (Kundu et al., 2016). The study calls attention to the importance of supportive and flexible work environments in order for DCCs to be successful, including fair opportunities for growth, professional development, and flexible work schedules. Notably, dual-career couples, especially women, are more ambitious than their single-career counterparts (SCCs). Still, may view top-executive positions as inflexible and thus be discouraged from seeking such positions. It emphasizes the importance of regular communication and alignment of goals, suggesting regular periods of discussion to ensure that there is alignment in terms of career goals and personal life. Relocation and family responsibilities demand coordinated efforts and compromises, with one partner occasionally making adjustments in their career path to support the other. Identity crisis is also a concern as people are dealing with multiple roles as well, which can be worked through by clear communication and regular checking in. A dual career couple's study revealed deficiencies in self-care, social support, and cognitive coping resources. A study found the need for effective coping strategies, such as exercise, spirituality, and music therapy, to deal with stress and enhance marital satisfaction in dual-career couples (Savickas et al., 2009). According to the reviewed studies, "Professional stress has the most effect on work-life balance for dual career couples." The developed hypotheses are

H01- There is no significant relationship between WLI and stress

H02- There is no significant difference in the stress levels between the high WLI group and the low WLI group

H03 - There is no significant difference in the demographic variables and WLI.

H04 - There is no significant difference between the demographic variables and stress

Summary and Research Gap

The literature reviewed shows that WLI is an important factor that has the potential to affect the well-being of employees, their level of job satisfaction, and stress. Previously, the main focus of research has been on healthcare professionals, academic staff, and corporate employees, and very little has been paid to couples who have both careers in the developing economies. In addition, work-life balance is highlighted in most of the studies instead of integration. The testing of the impact of WLI on the PS among Indian couples in dual careers is wanting in empirical evidence. Also, there is little research on how the demographic variables could have an influence on this relation. Thus, the present research addresses this gap by undertaking a systematic research on the impact of WLI on stress in dual career couples by using a quantitative research design.

Research Methodology

Sampling Procedure

In this study, the purpose sampling method was applied, which ensured that all the respondents who did not meet the requirements of being a member of a dual-career couple were removed. Dual-career couples were considered to be households in which both parties were employed in full-time/part-time professional jobs. Prospective respondents were located through professional networks, academic institutions, and online. The questionnaire was distributed through email and social media to a wide range of working couples. One hundred twenty responses were initially obtained during the data collection period. Questionnaires that had not been completely screened, questionnaires that were inconsistent, and questionnaires that had not been filled out completely were eliminated from the analysis. At the end, 105 responses were to be discussed as appropriate and valid to be analyzed statistically. This was a sufficient sample, which was used to make correlation and comparative analyses. The purposive design enabled the researcher to obtain pertinent and valid data on the participants who had first-hand experience with the issue of WLI.

The respondents were from different professional backgrounds. In particular, 34% were used in academic and educational institutions, 22% in the IT and technology industry, 18% in healthcare services, 16% in the banking and

corporate sectors, and 10% in other professional industries. Geographically, most of the participants were from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry areas.

The 105 respondents sample size is good to meet the minimum required in terms of behavioral research. It is recommended that a minimum of 5 or 10 respondents per variable will be adequate. The a priori analysis of power required to have a medium effect size (0.30) at the 95 % level, which implies 90 respondents at a minimum. Thus, the size of the sample is robust from the statistical point of view.

Data Collection Period

The data was obtained during the six weeks between January 5, 2026, and February 15, 2026, with the use of an online questionnaire that was designed in a structured format and given out through professional networks and academic institutions.

Measurement Instruments

The current paper used standardized and tested measures to obtain the measurement of the two variables of WLI and PS. The WLI has been measured on a 19-item WLI Questionnaire, used to find out the capability of the respondents to balance work and family lives. The dimensions measured by the instrument include flexibility, the management of the border, the organizational support, and the personal satisfaction. The measure of PS was based on the PSS, which is widely used in psychological and organizational research. The scale measures how much people consider their lives to be stressful, unpredictable, and overwhelming. The two instruments have been validated in past empirical research, and both have shown good psychometric properties. The results of the application of standard tools make them more credible, reliable, and therefore comparable. When adopting these instruments in the current research, previous consent and appropriate citation were both taken care of.

Scale Format and Scoring

Questionnaire items were all required to be measured on a five-point Likert scale to give an effective measurement of the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. The scale of response was on a 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) scale. This type of scale was selected because it is easy, reliable, and appropriate to conduct behavioral research. In the case of WLIS, the more the scores, the more the work and personal life integration, the more the flexibility, satisfaction, and balance. On the other hand, low scores indicated that I had problems with various roles. In case of PSS, the higher the score, the higher the level of stress, emotional strain, and psychological pressure, and vice versa. Single-item scores were added together to get composite scores of each construct. The scoring operation allowed a significant comparison between the respondents and allowed the statistical analysis of relationships and group differences.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the measurement instruments, as this has been generally accepted as a method of measuring internal consistency. Reliability analysis provides the establishment of consistency in a scale based on the items in the scale measuring the same underlying construct. In the present research, WLIS provided a Cronbach alpha of 0.82, which reflects that it is a good measure of internal consistency. On the same note, the PSS also gave a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, which means that it is reasonably reliable. The three values that are greater than 0.70 are typically considered satisfactory in a social science study, which provides proof that all three instruments can be used as the means of conducting an empirical study. The results show that the items have good correlation among items and also among items and their corresponding construct. The high reliability increases validity in the findings as well as reliability in the conclusions drawn from the data. Hence, the scales adopted in this study could be considered suitable for further statistical processing.

Construct Validity

Construct validity tests were performed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.83, which indicates that sampling adequacy was satisfactory. The test of sphericity by Bartlett was significant ($\chi^2 = 398.214$, $p < .001$), which leads to the confirmation of the factorability. Factor loading ranged from 0.62 to 0.87, which indicated a reasonable convergent validity.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were coded, tabulated, and further analyzed using SPSS. At the beginning, the demographic features of the respondents and important variables were summarized with the assistance of DS, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The relationship between WLI and PS was tested by the use of PCA in order to compare the strength and direction of this relationship. Independent t-tests were applied to determine the

difference in mean between the different demographic groups, such as gender, age, education level, work experience, place of stay, and family category. These tests were useful in determining if there were any significant differences between the various groups of respondents. All statistical tests were performed at a level of significance of 5 % ($p < 0.05$). This level of confidence provided the results with a reasonable degree of reliability and decreased the possibility of error by chance. The way of analysis made it possible to interpret and substantiate the hypotheses of the research in a comprehensive way.

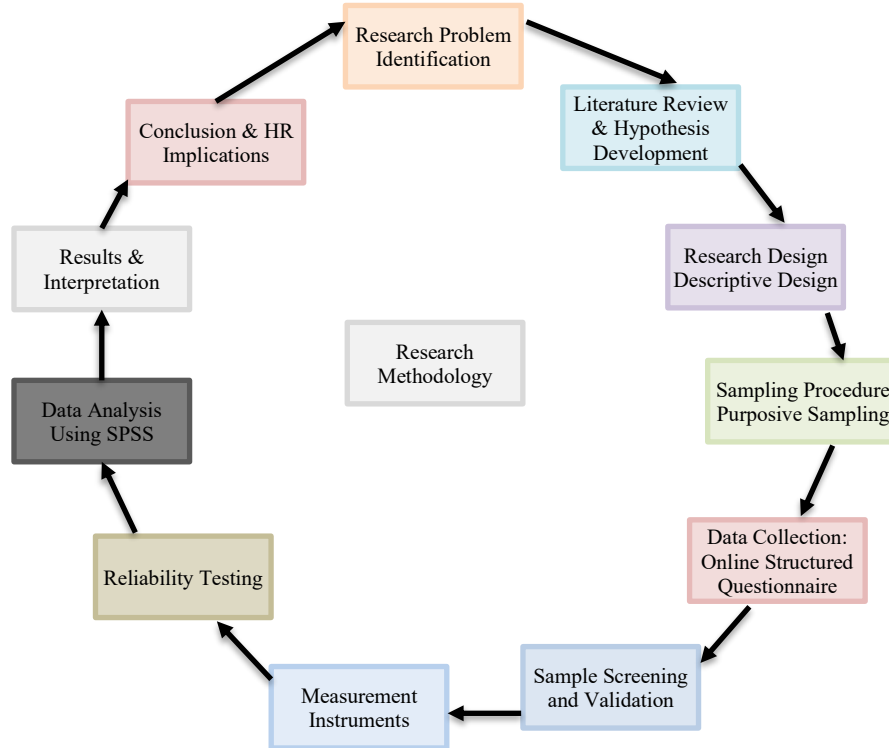


Fig. 1: Research Methodology Framework

In fig. 1 illustrates the chronological research design that would be used in this paper. It is initiated by the identification of the research problem and the literature review, and the development of a hypothesis. Data was gathered on 105 couples engaged in dual careers using a descriptive research design and a purposive sampling technique. Following reliability and validity testing, DS, correlation, and independent-sample t-tests were employed to analyze data, which resulted in the interpretation and implications for human resources.

Results

In table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents included in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 105)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	48	45.7%
	Female	57	54.3%
Age	Below 30	29	27.6%
	31–40	44	41.9%
	Above 40	32	30.5%
Education	Undergraduate	46	43.8%
	Postgraduate	59	56.2%
Area of Living	Urban	67	63.8%
	Rural	38	36.2%
Family Type	Nuclear	61	58.1%
	Joint	44	41.9%

The table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The sample was 54.3% and 45.7% females and males, respectively. Most of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years of age (41.9 %). Most of the respondents were postgraduate respondents (56.2%), 63.833% of them lived in urban areas, and 58.13% of them lived in nuclear families. The results show the same representation of important demographic factors. Table 2 summarizes the DS for the key study variables, which were WLI and PS.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics(DS) of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
WLI	3.78	0.69
PS	3.21	0.74

The DS of the significant study variables are shown in table 2. WLI was scored on average by the respondents with 3.78 (SD 0.69) scores; there was a relatively high level of integration between the respondents. The mean PS was 3.21 (SD 0.74), which implies that the sample is experiencing a moderate amount of stress. Table 3 shows the outcomes of the PCA of the relationship between WLI and PS.

Table 3: PCA Between WLI and PS among Dual-Career Couples (N = 105)

Correlations			
Work-life integration Stress			Worklifeintegration
			Stress
	Pearson Correlation		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		-.553**
	N		105
	N		105
Work-life integration Stress	Pearson Correlation		-.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		1
	N		105
	N		105
	Sig. (2-tailed)		-.553**
	Pearson Correlation		1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table 3 indicates that there is a significant moderate negative relationship between WLI and PS, $r(103) = -0.553$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the higher WLI relates to the lower stress levels among the respondents. Therefore, hypothesis H01 is not accepted.

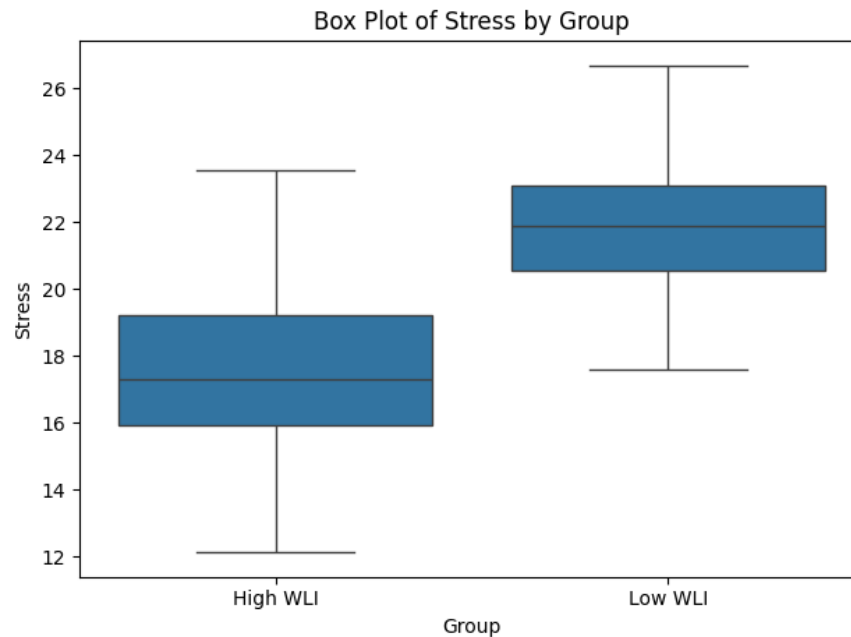


Fig. 2: Scatter Plot Showing the Relationship Between WLI and Stress

A negative linear relationship has been identified between WLI and PS ($r = -0.553$, $p < 0.001$) as shown in fig.2.

In table 4 contains the results of the independent samples t-test comparing the stress levels of the respondents who have high and low WLI.

In table 4, the t-value -3.147 of the mean difference between the high work life integration group and the low work life integration group is significant ($P=0.002<0.05$).

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Stress Levels between High and Low WLI Groups (N = 105)

	WLI	T Test	Sig.(2 tailed)
Stress	High Work Life Integration group	-3.147	0.002
	Low Work Life Integration group		

There was a huge dissimilarity in the level of stress between the high and low WLI groups, $t(103) = -3.147$, $p = .002$. The result was that the value of the effect size was medium (Cohen's $d = 0.61$). Therefore, H_{02} is rejected.

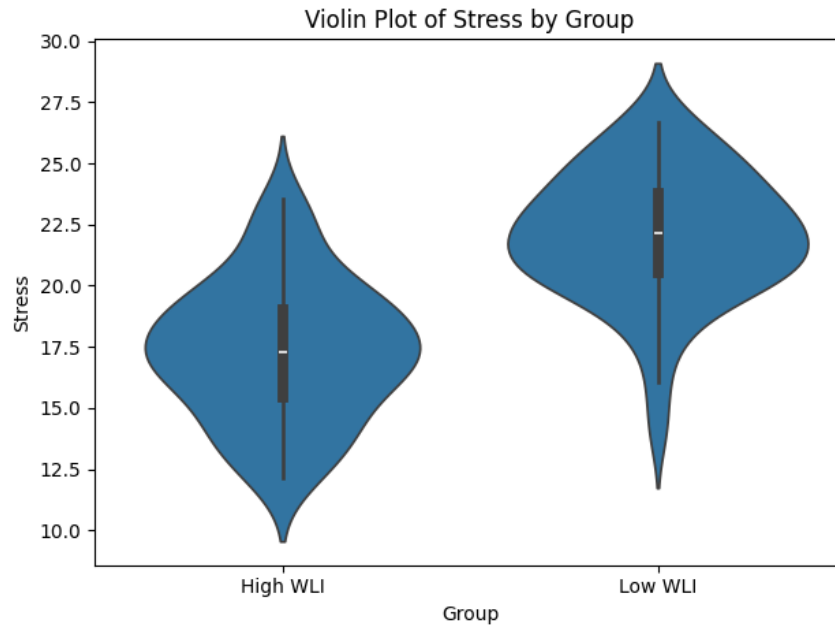


Fig. 3: Violin Plot of Stress Levels by WLI Group

In fig. 3 shows the distribution and density of stress scores of respondents with high and low levels of WLI. The wider distribution and the higher central tendency in the low WLI group indicate the presence of comparatively elevated levels of stress that support the significant difference obtained through an independent sample t-test ($t = -3.147$, $p = 0.002$). The differences in WLI across various demographic variables across independent samples t-test are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-Test Examining Differences in WLI across Demographic Variables (N = 105)

	Demographic variable	T-Value	Sig(2 tailed)	Remark
Work Life Integration	Gender	1.875	0.064	Not significant
	Age	-0.157	0.876	Not significant
	Experience	-0.002	0.999	Not significant
	Area of Living	1.485	0.141	Not significant
	Family type	-0.122	0.903	Not significant
	Education	-2.942	0.004	Significant

In table 5 shows the results of the independent samples t-test that was conducted to study the differences in WLI in relation to demographic variables. Education was significant, but other demographic variables were not. Therefore, H_{03} is rejected to some extent.

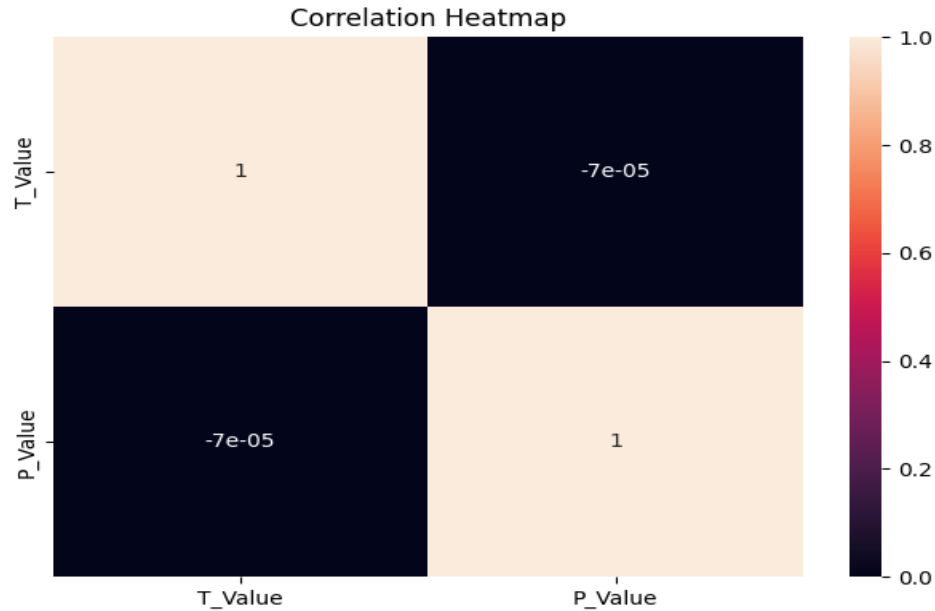


Fig. 4: Correlation Heatmap Between T-Values and P-Values

In fig. 4 heatmap shows the correlation matrix between the calculated t and the corresponding p-values. The near-zero correlation ($r \sim 0$) means that there is no linear relationship between the magnitude of t values and p values in the tested variables. The results of independent samples t-test analyses of differences in PS based on demographic variables are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test Examining Differences in PS across Demographic Variables (N = 105)

	Demographic variable	T-Value	Sig(2 tailed)	Remark
Stress	Gender	-0.541	0.590	Not significant
	Age	0.795	0.428	Not significant
	Experience	-0.236	0.814	Not significant
	Area of Living	0.236	0.814	Not significant
	Family type	0.861	0.391	Not significant
	Education	2.356	0.020	Significant

Education showed a significant difference, whereas other demographic variables were not significant. Therefore, H04 is partially rejected.

In fig.5 radar chart displays the magnitude and direction of t-values derived from independent sample t-tests for differences in stress for demographic variables. Education has the highest absolute t-value, which shows a statistically significant difference, while gender, age, experience, area of living, and family type have relatively low and non-significant t-values. The visualization puts education as the most consistent demographic factor that influences stress levels in the study.

The results show that there is a moderately negative correlation between work and life integration and stress. Increased integration has to do with reduced levels of stress. The only important demographic factor that had an impact on both constructs was education. There was no significance in other demographic factors.

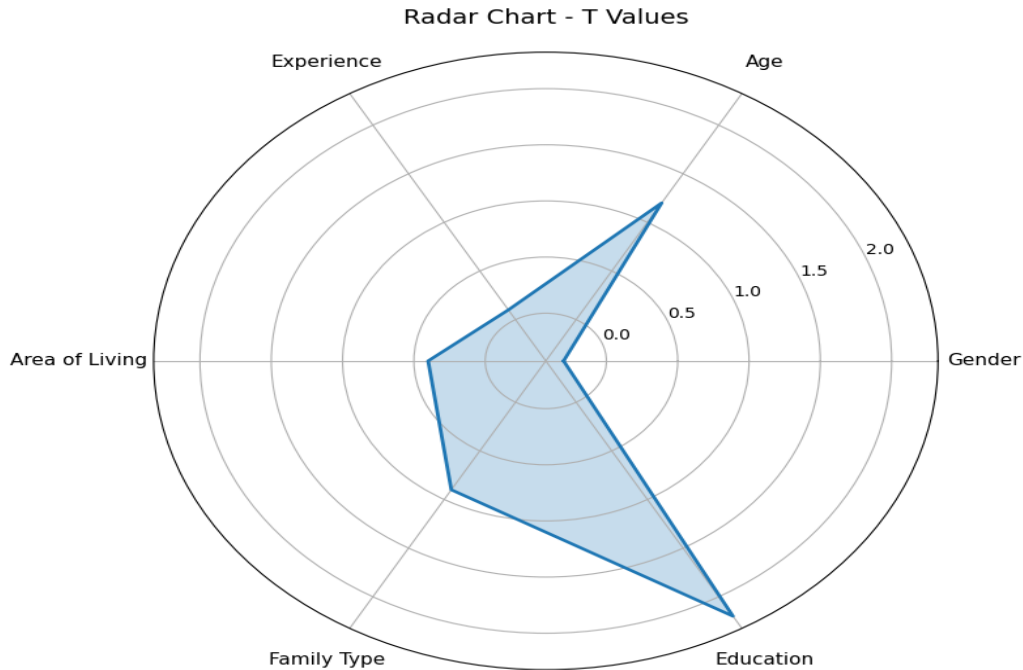


Fig. 5: Radar Chart Representing T-Values across Demographic Variables

Discussion

WLI aims to bring unison between work and personal life, in which professionals are enabled to fulfill their obligations whenever convenient. Unlike work-life balance, where there are clear boundaries between work and personal life, this study found that there was a significant negative correlation (-0.553) between WLI and stress, which is in line with other studies that show similar results. The significant t-value (-3.147) and p-value (0.002) suggest that people with high WLI have lower levels of stress, similar to results from structured stress-reduction interventions such as meditation. The study also found no significant differences in WLI by gender, job experience, geographical location, or family structure, which is consistent with previous research. However, there is a significant difference between undergraduates and postgraduates ($t = -2.942$, $p = 0.004$), indicating that higher education brings better WLI as it offers the individual more job flexibility and resources. Stress levels revealed no significant differences on the basis of gender, age, job experience, geographical location, and family structure in accordance with other research, but there is a significant difference between the educational levels ($t = 2.356$, $p = 0.020$), showing that postgraduates have lower stress levels, possibly due to better coping mechanisms and job resources (Gupta & Kumar, 2020).

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This research examined the relationship between WLI and PS in dual career couples using data from 105 respondents. The result is a very strong empirical evidence of a significant negative relationship between WLI and stress ($r = -0.553$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that increased WLI is related to decreased perceptions of stress by dual-career couples.

The independent samples t-test further showed a statistically significant difference in the levels of stress between people with high and low WLI ($t = -3.147$, $p = 0.002$), which confirmed that there is a significant difference between the stress experienced by the respondents with higher integration who experience stress significantly less. Additionally, the entire results showed that educational qualification was found to significantly affect both WLI ($t = -2.942$, $p = 0.004$) and stress levels ($t = 2.356$, $p = 0.020$) while other demographic variables such as gender, age, experience, area of living, and family type did not show significant differences ($p > 0.05$).

These findings highlight the importance of encouraging WLI practices in organizations. Flexible work arrangements, supportive leadership, and employee-centric policies can help to lower stress levels considerably in dual-career couples. By boosting the strength of institutional support systems, organizations can help to improve the well-being of employees, boost productivity, and support long-term career sustainability.

Overall, the study adds empirical evidence to the growing evidence base on WLI in the Indian context while also underlining the critical role this has in reducing stress in dual-career households.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has a weakness because of a relatively small sample size that limits the generalization of the results. There can be bias in the usage of self-reported data. Causal interpretation is also limited by the cross-sectional research design. Larger and more diverse samples of different sectors and regions can be used by future researchers. The longitudinal research designs would give a good contribution to the study in terms of providing insights into how WLI may change over time. The qualitative research can also contribute to the knowledge of coping strategies and work experiences, through interviews and focus group conversations. Future studies can also deal with how organizational culture and leadership can be used to promote WLI.

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