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Work-life balance among Krishi Sakhis

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Abstract

This study focuses on Krishi Sakhis, grassroots-level women extension workers who play a significant role in promoting sustainable agriculture and enhancing rural livelihoods under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). The study examines their demographic profile, work patterns, work-life balance, workplace stress, and mental health status. A total of 217 respondents were included, representing four districts of Karnataka. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents belonged to the 31–40 years age group and had education up to the secondary level, with most having around three years of work experience. The results indicated that while most respondents reported working 7–8 hours per day and perceived that they maintained a satisfactory work-life balance, a considerable proportion experienced challenges such as missing family time, worrying about work during leave, and limited time with children. Workplace stress levels were found to be moderate, with many respondents experiencing fatigue and emotional strain. In terms of mental health, a notable proportion reported symptoms of depression and anxiety, although most remained within the normal range for stress. The study also highlighted that respondents primarily relied on informal coping strategies such as listening to music, practicing yoga, and engaging in recreational activities, while a significant number lacked effective stress management mechanisms. Organizational support was found to be variable, though initiatives such as family involvement in organizational activities were positively perceived. Additionally, factors such as long working hours, meetings beyond office time, and the dual role of technology were identified as influencing work-life balance. Overall, the study concludes that although Krishi Sakhis demonstrate resilience and a positive attitude towards their work, they face considerable challenges in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. The findings emphasize the need for structured interventions, including stress management programs, flexible work arrangements, and enhanced organizational support, to improve their well-being and work efficiency.

Keywords: Krishi Sakhis, Work-Life Balance and Organizational Support

Introduction

Krishi Sakhis are grassroots-level women extension workers who play a vital role in promoting sustainable agriculture and improving rural livelihoods in India. The term “Krishi Sakhi,” meaning “friend of farmers,” reflects their function as trained community resource persons who provide technical guidance, encourage improved agricultural practices, and support women farmers in enhancing productivity and income. This initiative operates under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), which focuses on empowering rural women through self-help groups (SHGs) and livelihood interventions. Selected from SHGs, Krishi Sakhis receive training in areas such as crop production, soil health, organic farming, and pest management, enabling them to bridge the gap between formal agricultural systems and local communities. The importance of Krishi Sakhis has increased with the

feminization of agriculture, as women constitute a major share of the agricultural workforce. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2011), women contribute nearly 43 per cent of the global agricultural labor force, and in India, about 60–70 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture. Under NRLM and related programs such as MKSP, more than 30,000–50,000 Krishi Sakhis have been trained across various states (Ministry of Rural Development, 2020). Their interventions have been associated with increased crop productivity, reduced input costs, and improved household food security. In states like Karnataka, they have played a significant role in promoting sustainable practices such as organic farming, vermicomposting, and water conservation. Despite their significant contributions, Krishi Sakhis often face challenges in maintaining a proper work-life balance due to their dual responsibilities at work and home. Their

roles involve extensive fieldwork, training activities, and coordination, which, combined with household duties and childcare, increase their workload and stress levels. Therefore, understanding work–life balance is essential to ensure their well-being and effectiveness. Providing supportive work environments, flexible arrangements, and family support can help improve their quality of life and enhance the sustainability of their contributions to agricultural development.

Methodology

The present study employed a purposive random sampling technique to select a sample of 217 Krishi Sakhis from four districts of Karnataka, namely Hanamanamatti, Bijapur, Bagalkot, and Dharwad. Initially, the districts were purposively selected based on the active implementation of Krishi Sakhi programmes under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). Subsequently, lists of Krishi Sakhis were obtained from concerned authorities and self-help group (SHG) records. From these lists, respondents were selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal representation and to minimize selection bias.

Tools used for study

1. Self-Structured Questionnaire: A self-structured questionnaire was developed to collect information on socio-demographic characteristics and work-related factors of the respondents. The questionnaire included sections on age, educational status, family size, type of

family, marital status, years of work experience, and work patterns. The items were formulated based on literature review, expert consultation, and field observations of Krishi Sakhis. The questionnaire was designed to ensure clarity, simplicity, and relevance, allowing respondents to provide accurate information. Responses were mostly closed-ended with predefined options,

- 2. Work–Life Balance Assessment:** Work–life balance was assessed through questions regarding the respondent's ability to manage professional and personal responsibilities, satisfaction with time spent at work and with family, and methods of coping with stress. This included aspects such as working hours, time spent with children, family participation in organizational activities, and leisure activities. Responses were categorized to indicate the balance level:
 - **Good Balance:** Able to manage work and personal life effectively, reports minimal interference of work in family life
 - **Moderate Balance:** Occasionally experiences difficulty in managing work–personal life commitments
 - **Poor Balance:** Frequently experiences work–family conflict, unable to devote sufficient time to personal or family needs

Results and discussion

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
		N	%
Age	20-30	76	35
	31-40	117	53.0
	41-50	24	11.1
	10 th	108	49.8
Education	PUC	86	39.6
	Degree	23	10.6
	<3	23	10.6
Size of family	4-6	153	70.5
	>7	41	18.9
	Nuclear	139	64.1
Type of family	Joint	78	35.9
	1	31	14.3
Experience(years)	2	41	18.9
	3	134	61.8
	>4	11	5.1

The table 1, presents the distribution of respondents based on their demographic characteristics. A total of 217 respondents were included in the study.

With regard to age, more than half of the respondents (53.0%) belonged to the 31–40 years age group followed by 35 per cent in the 20–30 years category, while only 11.1 per cent were in the 41–50 years group. This indicates that the majority of participants were in their middle adulthood, which is typically considered a productive working age group. Similar findings were reported by Patil and Hosamani (2021) [5] in their study on Krishi Sakhis in Karnataka, where most respondents were in the middle age group, reflecting their greater involvement in agricultural extension activities.

In terms of educational status, nearly half of the respondents (49.8%) had completed education up to the 10th standard. About 39.6 per cent had completed Pre-University Course (PUC), whereas only 10.6 per cent had attained a degree-level education. This reflects a relatively low level of higher education among the respondents, suggesting limited access to advanced educational opportunities.

Regarding family size, a majority of the respondents (70.5%) belonged to families consisting of 4–6 members. A smaller proportion (18.9%) had large families with more than seven members, while only 10.6 per cent had small families with fewer than three members. This suggests that medium-sized families are most common among the study population.

Considering the type of family, most respondents (64.1%) belonged to nuclear families, while 35.9% were part of joint families. This indicates a shift towards nuclear family systems among the respondents.

In terms of work experience, a significant majority (61.8%) had three years of experience, followed by 18.9% with two years and 14.3% with one year of experience. Only 5.1% had more than four years of experience. This suggests that

most respondents were relatively experienced in their occupation, particularly with around three years of work exposure, which aligns with the findings of Shankar and Naik (2021) [7], who noted that most Krishi Sakhis had moderate experience due to the relatively recent expansion of such programs under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

Table 2: Work life balance of krishi sakhis

No. of hrs of work/day		Frequency	Percentage
		N	%
	7-8	151	69.6
	8-9	40	18.4
	9-10	26	12
Ability to balance work life	Yes	192	88.5
	No	25	11.5
Worrying about work during leave	Never think about work	125	57.6
	Always	80	36.9
	Sometimes	12	5.5
	Often	-	-
No. of hrs spent with children/day	<2	101	46.6
	4-5	94	43.2
	2-3	22	10.2
Feelings about time spent at work	Happy	113	53.1
	Very happy	94	42.3
	Very unhappy	10	4.6
Missing out family time due to work pressure	Rarely	42	19.4
	Always	79	36.4
	Sometimes	77	35.4
	Never	19	8.8
Tired/depressed because of work	Rarely	89	41
	Often	69	31.8
	Always	59	27.2
Management of stress arising from work	Sometimes	92	42.4
	Often	46	21.2
	Never	79	36.4
Ways to balance work life	Entertainment	43	19.8
	Songs	86	39.6
	Yoga	57	26.3
	Others	31	14.3
Provision of facilities by the organization	Telephone for personal use	11	5
	Health programme	50	23
	Transportation	33	15.2
	Others	123	56.8
Involvement of families in award functions	Yes	168	77.5
	No	49	22.5
Social function in office based on family time	Yes	178	82
	No	39	18
Reasons hindering work life commitments	Long working hours	81	37.4
	Others	96	44.2
	Meetings/ training after office hours	40	19.4
Reasons for work life balance	Technology like cell phones/ laptops	168	77.5
	Support from family members	49	22.5
Reasons hindering work life balance	Technology such as cell phones/ laptops	103	47.4
	Negative attitude of family members	85	39.2
	Frequently travelling away from home	29	13.4
Suffering from stress related issues	Obesity	84	38.7
	Frequent head aches	48	22.2
	None	85	39.1
Time for working out	Less than half an hour	67	30.9
	Half an hour	78	35.9
	Half an hour to one hour	25	16.2
	More than one hour	37	19
Time of losing temper	Can't remember	169	77.9

	None	30	13.8
	Always angry	33	8.3
	Strongly agree	161	74.2
Requirement of flexibility in attending personal events	Agree	56	25.8
Success of organization based on employees work life balance	Yes	199	91.5
	No	18	8.5

The table 2. presents detailed information regarding work patterns, work–life balance, stress management, and organizational support among the respondents (N = 217). The findings provide valuable insights into how respondents manage their professional and personal responsibilities.

With respect to the number of working hours per day, the majority of respondents (69.6%) reported working for 7–8 hours daily. A smaller proportion (18.4%) worked for 8–9 hours, while only 12 per cent worked for 9–10 hours per day. This indicates that most respondents have a standard working duration, although a notable proportion exceeds typical working hours. Similar observations were reported by Patil and Hosamani (2021) ^[5], who found that although Krishi Sakhis have structured working hours, their responsibilities often extend beyond official time due to field visits and farmer interactions. Despite this, many respondents perceived themselves as managing both domains effectively, largely due to flexible work structures and community-based functioning.

Regarding the ability to balance work and life, a significant majority (88.5%) reported that they are able to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives, whereas 11.5 per cent indicated difficulty in achieving such balance. This suggests that most respondents perceive themselves as capable of managing both domains effectively.

When asked about worrying about work during leave, more than half of the respondents (57.6%) reported that they never think about work during their leave period. However, 36.9% stated that they always worry about work even when on leave, and 5.5% reported doing so sometimes. This reflects that a considerable proportion of respondents still experience psychological attachment to work even during rest periods. This aligns with the study of Naik and Patil (2022) ^[3], which highlighted that Krishi Sakhis often experience role conflict as they balance household responsibilities with agricultural extension duties. Similarly, Ramesh and Geetha (2020) ^[6] reported that continuous engagement with farmers, travel, and seasonal workload contribute to mental preoccupation with work, even during rest periods. The limited time spent with children and the reported feelings of fatigue and emotional strain in the present study further support these findings, suggesting that perceived balance does not always translate into actual relief from work-related stress.

In terms of time spent with children per day, 46.6% of respondents spent less than 2 hours, while 43.2% spent 4–5 hours, and only 10.2% spent 2–3 hours with their children. This indicates variability in parental involvement, with nearly half spending limited time with their children.

Concerning feelings about time spent at work, more than half of the respondents (53.1%) reported feeling happy, while 42.3% felt very happy. Only 4.6% expressed feeling very unhappy. This suggests that the majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards their work

environment.

With regard to missing family time due to work pressure, 36.4% of respondents reported that they always miss family time, while 35.4% experienced this sometimes, and 19.4% rarely faced such issues. Only 8.8% reported never missing family time. This indicates that work pressure significantly interferes with family life for many respondents.

In relation to feeling tired or depressed because of work, 41% of respondents reported experiencing it rarely, while 31.8% experienced it often, and 27.2% always felt tired or depressed due to work. This highlights that a considerable proportion of respondents experience work-related fatigue and emotional strain.

Regarding the management of stress arising from work, 42.4% of respondents reported that they sometimes manage their stress effectively, while 21.2% often do so. However, 36.4% indicated that they never manage their stress, suggesting a gap in effective coping strategies among a significant number of respondents. Comparable findings were noted by Shankar and Naik (2021) ^[7], who observed that while Krishi Sakhis adopt informal coping mechanisms such as listening to music, yoga, and social interaction, structured stress management interventions are largely lacking.

In terms of ways to balance work and life, listening to songs was the most commonly adopted method (39.6%), followed by practicing yoga (26.3%), engaging in entertainment activities (19.8%), and other methods (14.3%). This indicates that respondents use both recreational and health-related approaches to maintain balance.

With regard to organizational support, 56.8% of respondents reported receiving other types of facilities, while 23% had access to health programmes, 15.2% received transportation facilities, and only 5% had access to telephones for personal use. This suggests variability in the type and extent of organizational support provided. Similarly study by Patil *et al.* (2022) ^[3], who emphasized that institutional support plays a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction and work–life balance. However, the dual role of technology as both a facilitator and a hindrance, along with reported stress-related health issues such as obesity and headaches, reflects the complex nature of work–life dynamics among Krishi Sakhis.

Concerning family involvement in organizational activities, 77.5% of respondents stated that their families were involved in award functions, and 82% reported that social functions were conducted in the office based on family time. This indicates a positive effort by organizations to integrate family participation.

When examining reasons hindering work–life commitments, 44.2% cited other factors, while 37.4% reported long working hours and 19.4% mentioned meetings or training after office hours. This highlights that extended work demands are a major barrier to maintaining balance.

In terms of reasons supporting work–life balance, 77.5% of

respondents identified technology (such as cell phones and laptops) as helpful, while 22.5% reported support from family members. However, the same technology was also identified as a hindrance by 47.4% of respondents, followed by negative attitudes of family members (39.2%) and frequent travel (13.4%). This indicates a dual role of technology in both facilitating and disrupting work–life balance.

Regarding stress-related health issues, 39.1% of respondents reported no issues, while 38.7% experienced obesity and 22.2% reported frequent headaches. This suggests that a notable proportion of respondents suffer from physical health issues related to stress.

In terms of time allocated for physical activity, 35.9% spent half an hour daily, while 30.9% spent less than half an hour. A smaller proportion (19%) spent more than one hour, and 16.2% spent between half an hour to one hour. This indicates that most respondents engage in limited physical activity.

When asked about losing temper, a majority of respondents (77.9%) could not recall instances of losing their temper, while 13.8% reported none, and 8.3% indicated that they were always angry. This suggests relatively controlled emotional responses among most respondents.

Regarding the need for flexibility in attending personal events, 74.2% strongly agreed and 25.8% agreed, indicating unanimous support for flexible work arrangements.

Finally, an overwhelming majority (91.5%) of respondents believed that the success of an organization depends on employees' work–life balance, while only 8.5% disagreed. This emphasizes the perceived importance of maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life for organizational effectiveness.

Conclusion

The study highlights that Krishi Sakhis, despite being actively engaged in agricultural extension services and belonging largely to the productive age group with moderate experience, face a complex interplay of workplace stress and mental health challenges. Although the majority perceived that they maintained a satisfactory work–life balance and expressed positive attitudes towards their work, significant proportions experienced moderate stress, depression, anxiety, fatigue, and occasional disruption of family life due to occupational demands. The reliance on informal coping strategies and the variability in organizational support further indicate gaps in structured interventions for stress management and well-being. Therefore, there is a clear need to strengthen institutional support systems, promote effective work–life balance practices, and introduce targeted mental health and stress management programs to enhance both the personal well-being and professional efficiency of Krishi Sakhis.

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