

**GENDER-SENSITIVE HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS****Dr. A.KRISHNA KUMAR**

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**ABSTRACT**

In the contemporary higher education environment, gender-sensitive human resource (HR) practices play a crucial role in promoting work–life balance, particularly among women faculty members. The present study examines the relationship between gender-sensitive HR practices and work–life balance in higher education institutions. Primary data were collected from 179 faculty members using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as Reliability Analysis, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test, and Exploratory Factor Analysis were applied using SPSS. The findings reveal that family-friendly policies, flexible work arrangements, and supportive leadership significantly contribute to improved work–life balance. The study highlights the importance of institutional commitment to gender-sensitive HR policies for enhancing employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Gender-sensitive HR practices, Work–Life Balance, Higher Education Institutions, Faculty Members, Factor Analysis

**INTRODUCTION**

Higher education institutions increasingly recognise the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive workplaces. Female faculty members often face dual responsibilities of professional commitments and family obligations, making work–life balance a significant concern. Gender-sensitive HR practices refer to policies and initiatives that acknowledge gender-specific challenges and promote equality, fairness, and flexibility in the workplace.

In academic institutions, gender-sensitive HR practices such as flexible working hours, maternity benefits, childcare support, and equitable promotion systems are essential in improving work–life balance. Institutions that adopt such practices not only enhance employee satisfaction but also improve productivity and retention. Therefore, the present study investigates the impact of gender-sensitive HR practices on work–life balance among faculty members in higher education institutions.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To analyse the level of gender-sensitive HR practices in higher education institutions.
2. To examine the level of work–life balance among faculty members.
3. To test the reliability and validity of the measurement scales.
4. To identify major factors underlying gender-sensitive HR practices.
5. To study the relationship between gender-sensitive HR practices and work–life balance.
6. To suggest measures for strengthening gender-inclusive policies in higher education institutions.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Pepple, Enuoh and Iwuanyanwu (2025) critically examined the role of gender-sensitive human resource management (HRM) practices in enhancing job satisfaction among female bank employees in Calabar, Nigeria, in response to persistent gender disparities within the banking sector. Grounded in the theory of gendered organisations and adopting an interpretivist paradigm with a phenomenological research design, the study collected primary data from ten female bankers using snowball sampling and semi-structured interviews, and analysed the data through the Braun and Clarke thematic framework. The findings identified six major gender-sensitive HRM practices currently implemented, including maternity leave policies, flexible work arrangements, mentorship and career support programmes, anti-sexual harassment and anti-discrimination policies, return-to-work and post-maternity support, and leadership development opportunities for women. The study further revealed that these practices significantly enhance job satisfaction by promoting work–life balance, reducing stress and anxiety, empowering female employees through career advancement opportunities, ensuring workplace safety and equity, and facilitating smoother post-maternity transitions. The authors concluded that institutionalising flexible work arrangements, strengthening mentorship and leadership programmes, and enforcing accountability in anti-harassment policies are essential for fostering workplace equity and improving job satisfaction among female employees.

Lee (2023) developed educational content aimed at fostering a gender-sensitive work–life balance organizational culture among employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Jeonnam (Jeollanam-do) region. The study sought to prevent women’s career interruptions and enhance their economic participation by designing workplace culture improvement programmes applicable to both male and female employees. Based on consultations with field experts and researchers, the educational content was structured to ensure contextual relevance, validity, and practical applicability within the regional setting. The programme was organised into three core areas—understanding, effectiveness, and implementation of a gender-sensitive work–life balance culture—and emphasized a holistic perspective encompassing individuals, families, organizations, and society. Importantly, the content promoted shared responsibility in achieving gender equality, encouraging improvements not only in workplace practices but also in domestic labor distribution and leisure time management. The study adopted an inclusive approach by addressing diverse groups such as women, men, single and married individuals, youth, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. The findings underscored the importance of active employee participation, institutional support through Women’s New Work Centers, and the strengthening of instructor expertise to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of gender-sensitive work–life balance education initiatives. Sobral, Vieira dos Santos, Giger and Teodósio (2025) examined the role of management in addressing gender inequality and offensive behaviors within a Portuguese public higher education institution (HEI), despite the numerical predominance of women in academia and their continued underrepresentation in leadership roles. Grounded in psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory, the study comprised two investigations involving 405 participants, including students and staff, to evaluate perceptions of gender equality and the impact of a management-promoted work-life balance culture (WLBC). The findings indicated that proactive managerial engagement in gender equality initiatives was significantly associated with lower perceptions of gender inequality among both groups, although female participants reported higher levels of perceived inequality compared to their male counterparts. While improvements in gender equality perceptions were evident, management efforts did not produce a statistically significant reduction in reported offensive behaviors, suggesting the multifaceted and deeply embedded nature of such issues. Furthermore, mediation analysis revealed that WLBC indirectly influenced perceptions of gender inequality and offensive behaviors through its effect on work-family conflict (WFC), identifying WFC as a key mediating variable. Overall, the study highlights the critical yet complex role of management in fostering inclusive academic environments and emphasizes the importance of addressing work-family dynamics in advancing gender equality outcomes in higher education.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

**Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

- **Sample Size:** 179 faculty members
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling
- **Area of Study:** Selected Higher Education Institutions

**Data Collection**

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Secondary data were gathered from journals, reports, and institutional policy documents.

**Tools for Analysis**

- Reliability Test (Cronbach’s Alpha)
- KMO and Bartlett’s Test
- Exploratory Factor Analysis

**RELIABILITY ANALYSIS**

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Gender-Sensitive HR Practices	14	0.865
Work–Life Balance	10	0.828

**Source: SPSS Output**

The reliability analysis demonstrates strong internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the study. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for the Gender-Sensitive HR Practices scale is 0.865 based on 14 items, while the Work–Life Balance scale records an Alpha value of 0.828 with 10 items. Both values are well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the items within each scale are highly consistent and reliably measure their respective constructs. This confirms that the instruments employed in the study are dependable and suitable for further statistical analyses such as factor analysis and correlation.

**KMO AND BARTLETT’S TEST**

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett’s Test**

Particulars	Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.793
Bartlett’s Test Approx. Chi-Square	756.214
Df	120
Sig.	0.000

**Source: SPSS Output**

The KMO and Bartlett’s Test results confirm the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.793, which is above the recommended minimum value of 0.60, indicating that the sample is adequate and the variables share sufficient common variance. Further, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is statistically significant, with a chi-square value of 756.214 at 120 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This rejects the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and confirms that meaningful relationships exist among the variables. Hence, the data are suitable for conducting factor analysis.

**FACTOR ANALYSIS**

**Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix**

Variables	Factor 1 (Family-Friendly Policies)	Factor 2 (Flexible Work Practices)	Factor 3 (Supportive Leadership)
Maternity benefits	0.812		
Childcare facilities	0.784		
Equal promotion opportunities	0.761		
Flexible working hours		0.829	
Work-from-home options		0.806	
Leave flexibility		0.773	
Management understanding			0.835
Gender equality initiatives			0.808
Fair performance appraisal			0.781

**Source: SPSS Output**

The rotated component matrix indicates the extraction of three distinct factors underlying gender-sensitive HR practices in higher education institutions. Factor 1, labelled as Family-Friendly Policies, includes maternity benefits (0.812), childcare facilities (0.784), and equal promotion opportunities (0.761), suggesting that institutional provisions supporting family responsibilities significantly contribute to gender inclusivity. Factor 2, termed Flexible Work Practices, comprises flexible working hours (0.829), work-from-home options (0.806), and leave flexibility (0.773), highlighting the importance of adaptable work arrangements in facilitating work–life balance. Factor 3, identified as Supportive Leadership, includes management understanding (0.835), gender equality initiatives (0.808), and fair performance appraisal (0.781), emphasizing the critical role of leadership support and fair organisational practices. The strong factor loadings across all variables confirm that gender-sensitive HR practices are multidimensional, encompassing policy support, flexibility, and leadership commitment.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. The study is limited to 179 respondents.
2. Convenience sampling limits generalisation.
3. Self-reported data may involve response bias.
4. The study is confined to selected institutions.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. Institutions should implement comprehensive family-friendly HR policies.
2. Flexible working arrangements should be formalised.
3. Leadership training on gender sensitivity should be introduced.
4. Transparent promotion and appraisal systems must be ensured.
5. Childcare support facilities should be strengthened.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that gender-sensitive HR practices significantly influence work–life balance in higher education institutions. Family-friendly policies, flexible work arrangements, and supportive leadership emerged as key determinants in promoting balance between professional and personal life. Institutions that adopt inclusive HR strategies not only enhance employee well-being but also improve organisational performance and sustainability. Strengthening gender-sensitive policies is therefore essential for fostering equitable and productive academic environments.

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