

Reframing Work-Life Balance Through Strategic HRM: Evidence from Indian Higher Education Institutions

Khushbu Chudasama¹ and Preeti Mishra²

School of Commerce and Management, Dr. Subhash University, Junagadh, Gujarat 362 001

E-mail: ¹<kschudasama@zohomail.in>, ²<preeti.mishra@dsuni.ac.in>

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ABSTRACT The intensification of academic workloads, performance expectations, and digital teaching demands has increased work-life imbalance experienced by faculty members within Indian higher education institutions. While prior studies largely conceptualise work-life balance as an individual concern, the present study examines it as an outcome of strategic HRM initiatives. Drawing on the Work Demands-Resources framework, the study investigates how strategic HRM initiatives affect work-life equilibrium and work effectiveness through work demands and work resources. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected from faculty members teaching in commerce and management colleges in Gujarat, India, using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised standardised scales measuring strategic HRM practices, job-related requirements, and available job-related resources, work-life equilibrium, and job effectiveness. Data were analysed with the help of descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, mediation analysis, along with structural equation modelling. Results indicate that strategic HRM strategies enhance work-life equilibrium by reducing work demands along with strengthening job resources, thereby improving faculty job effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated transformation within the higher education sector in India has placed unprecedented demands on teaching professionals. Faculty members are now expected to balance academic instruction, research output, administrative duties, and community engagement while adapting to continuous technological and pedagogical change. This intensification of professional responsibilities has diminished the distinction between personal and professional life, resulting in increased stress, burnout, along with declining job satisfaction. As higher education institutions compete for rankings, accreditation, and reputation, the question of how to sustain faculty well-being and organisational effectiveness has become both a managerial and strategic imperative.

Work-life balance has traditionally been examined from an individual or psychological standpoint, focusing on coping strategies, role conflict, and personal time management. However, recent studies indicate that the balance between work along with life is profoundly shaped by organisational systems and HRM practices. In this regard, Strategic HRM provides a crucial lens for understanding how institutional policies, culture, and leadership collectively influence employee well-being. When HR systems are aligned with employ-

ee needs and organisational objectives, they not only foster productivity but also improve psychological well-being along with long-term commitment.

Despite extensive research on work-life balance across sectors, limited empirical attention has been directed toward the higher education context, particularly in developing economies like India. Academic institutions often rely on traditional HR models that emphasise performance evaluation and compliance over holistic faculty development. This study addresses this gap by reframing work-life balance as a strategic HRM issue rather than an individual challenge. By examining the policies, practices, and leadership behaviours that enable or constrain faculty balance, the paper aims to generate insights relevant to HR leaders, policymakers, and institutional administrators seeking to design more sustainable and supportive academic workplaces.

Recent studies emphasise that work-life balance has moved beyond being an individual concern and is increasingly viewed as a strategic organisational responsibility. A systematic review of contemporary research highlights that institutional policies, leadership support, and flexible work arrangements play a crucial role in shaping worker's views of work-life equilibrium.

Specific to higher education, recent investigations into faculty well-being in India reveal persis-

tent challenges related to quality of work life. Studies report that academic staff frequently face excessive administrative duties, performance pressures, and limited organisational support, which negatively affect their professional and personal balance. The literature further indicates that demographic factors and career stages influence how faculty members experience work-life conflict, highlighting the need for context-specific institutional interventions (Kumar and Singh 2024).

Finally, systematic reviews of empirical studies consistently establish a strong relation between work-life equilibrium and worker satisfaction. Literature confirms that employees who perceive nicer organisational support and manageable work demands report higher levels of satisfaction along with commitment. Nevertheless, most existing studies rely on cross-sectional designs and focus on non-academic sectors, pointing to the need for more targeted research within higher education institutions (Sharma et al. 2025).

Overall, the reviewed literature clearly indicates that work-life balance among academic professionals is shaped more by organisational and institutional factors than by individual efforts alone. These findings support the focus of the present study on examining institutional support, job satisfaction, stress management, and time management as key determinants of work-life equilibrium within faculties.

Objectives of the study

The current study was undertaken to explore and understand several important dimensions of faculty work experience within higher education institutions. One of the primary objectives is to examine how strategic HRM approaches influence work-life balance among faculty members. The study also seeks to analyse the relationship between these HRM practices and key workplace factors, particularly work demands and job-related resources. In addition, an important aim of the study is to testify whether work demands along with job-related resources play a mediating role in influencing the relation between strategic HRM approaches and work-life equilibrium. Finally, the study intends to evaluate the effect of work-life equilibrium on the overall work effectiveness of faculty members. Together, these objectives are designed to give a thorough understanding of how

organisational practices affect both the professional well-being and performance of academic staff.

Literature Review

Conceptualising Work-Life Balance in the Contemporary Workplace

Work-life balance continues to be one of the most extensively examined concepts in organisational behaviour and human resource management research. Earlier studies described work-life balance as the ability to effectively manage both work and non-work roles without experiencing role conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). However, more recent viewpoints acknowledge that balance is not solely an individual issue but is shaped by organisational structure, managerial support, and workplace culture (Kossek and Ozeki 1998; Haar et al. 2019).

Within the higher education sector, academic staff frequently encounter blurred boundaries between their personal and professional lives due to increasing workloads, administrative responsibilities, and the transition toward online teaching (Kinman and Wray 2021). These conditions make faculty members more susceptible to burnout and emotional exhaustion, which in turn leads to reduced job satisfaction and performance. Therefore, achieving work-life balance in academic settings is increasingly regarded not only as an individual requirement but also as a strategic organisational priority (Friedman and Westring 2020).

Strategic Human Resource Management and Employee Well-Being

Strategic HRM (SHRM) represents the integration of human resource practices with organisational strategy to enhance performance and competitiveness (Wright and McMahan 2011). Unlike traditional human resource management, which focuses on administrative efficiency, Strategic HRM emphasises alignment between human resource policies, such as talent management, performance evaluation, and training, and the organisation's strategic goals (Ulrich 1997; Boxall and Purcell 2016).

Emerging research highlights that strategic HRM significantly influences employee well-being and work engagement (Guest 2017; Alfes et al. 2019). By embedding flexibility, fairness, and employee participation within HR systems, organisa-

tions can create conditions conducive to balance and well-being (Peccei and Van de Voorde 2019). Within the context of educational institutions, adopting a strategically aligned HRM orientation can shift the responsibility for work-life balance from individual faculty members to the institution itself, positioning balance as a strategic outcome rather than a personal coping mechanism (Guest 2017; Peccei and Van de Voorde 2019).

However, in India's higher education system, HRM practices remain largely procedural, focusing on compliance rather than employee experience (Singh and Kaur 2023; Kumar and Singh 2024). This gap suggests that reorienting HRM from transactional to strategic can directly enhance faculty satisfaction and institutional effectiveness.

The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model as a Theoretical Lens

The work Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al. 2001) provides a robust conceptual foundation to better understand how workplace conditions affect employee's well-being. The model posits that job demands (that is, workload, role ambiguity, time pressure) drain energy and result in burnout, whereas work resources (that is, autonomy, interpersonal support, recognition) enhance motivation and engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2017).

In academia, heavy teaching loads, research pressure, and administrative responsibilities represent significant job demands. Conversely, strategic human resource practices, such as fair evaluation systems, mentorship opportunities, and leadership support, serve as institutional job related resources that nullify the negative effects of stress (Lesener et al. 2019). Thus, strategic HRM can be conceptualised as a resource-enhancing mechanism within the Job Demand-Resources framework, influencing how faculty manage competing role demands and maintain well-being.

Work-Life Balance in Indian Higher Education Institutions

Within Indian higher education system, the discourse on work-life balance has gained attention only recently. Studies reveal that faculty members in both public and private universities face high workloads, rigid schedules, and limited autonomy, all of which undermine well-being (Kaur and Sharma 2021). Moreover, gendered expectations often exacerbate challenges for women faculty, who

juggle domestic and professional roles with little institutional support (Khurana and Misra 2022).

Few Indian institutions have embedded strategic HRM practices such as flexible work arrangements, participative leadership, or workload adjustments. Consequently, academic staff rely on individual coping mechanisms rather than systemic support. This highlights a crucial research gap, that is, the lack of empirical evidence linking strategically aligned HRM strategies with faculty work-life balance along with institutional performance in the Indian context (Singh and Kaur 2023).

Research Gap and Theoretical Contribution

The reviewed literature reveals two major gaps. First, most studies on Work-Life Balance focus on individual coping and gender differences, overlooking the contribution of strategic HRM systems in institutionalising balance. Second, while the Work Demands Resources model has been applied in corporate settings, its integration with Strategic HRM in higher education, especially in emerging economies like India, remains scarce.

This study looks to bridge these nicks by reframing Work-Life Balance as a strategic outcome of HRM practices rather than an individual level problem. It proposes that Strategic HRM acts like a resource-oriented system which enhances faculty well-being and, consequently, organisational effectiveness. The conceptual integration of Strategic HRM along with Job Demand-Resources models offers a novel lens for understanding how institutional strategy can promote sustainable work environments in academia.

Transition to Conceptual Framework

Building on this synthesis, the study proposes a conceptual model linking strategic HRM practices to work and life balance through the mediating effects of work requirements along with work related resources, influencing organisational effectiveness. The next section presents this framework and associated hypotheses.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Theoretical Foundation

The study draws primarily upon work Demand-Resources model (Demerouti et al. 2001) along with

the Strategic HRM framework (Wright and McMahon 2011) to conceptualise work-life balance as a strategic organisational outcome rather than an individual coping mechanism. The Job Demand-Resources model explains how work demands contribute to strain and burnout, while job related resources foster motivation and engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Strategic HRM, meanwhile, emphasises the alignment of Human resource practices with organisational goals to enhance both performance and employee well-being (Guest 2017).

Integrating these two perspectives allows the study to explore how Strategic HRM practices act like organisational resources that reduce job demands, strengthen job resources, and promote sustainable work-life balance experienced by faculty members within higher education institutions.

Conceptual Model

Figure no. 1 showcases the conceptual framework of the study, showing the given relationships among strategic HRM practices, work demands, job related resources, work-life balance, and job effectiveness and proposes that Strategic HRM practices positively influence work and life balance both directly along with indirectly through job resources and job demands. The framework also hypothesises that improved work-life balance leads to enhanced organisational effectiveness, thus positioning balance as a driver of institutional performance rather than merely a personal state of equilibrium.

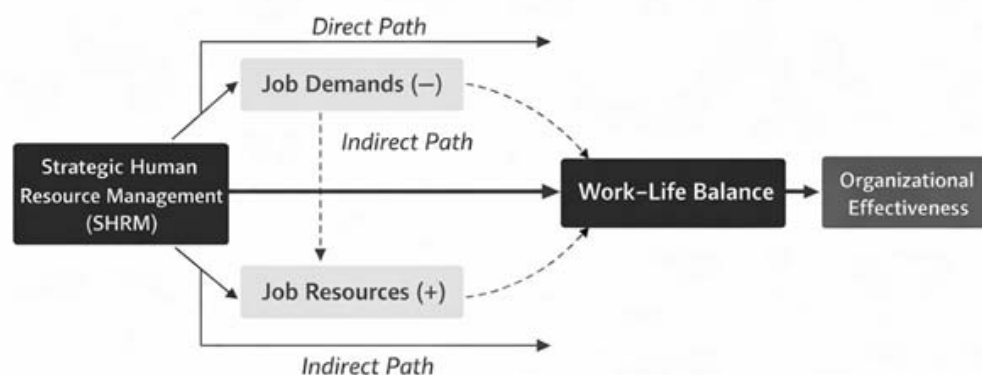


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

Strategic Human Resource Management and Work-Life Balance

Strategic HRM practices such as flexible scheduling, employee involvement, fair appraisal systems, and developmental opportunities are associated with higher perceptions of work autonomy and lower role conflict (Boxall and Purcell 2016; Peccei and Van de Voorde 2019). When institutions implement Human Resource policies strategically, employees perceive greater support and control over their roles, which contributes to nicer work-life integration (Guest 2017).

In higher education institutions, Strategic HRM can reduce administrative rigidity and empower faculty members to balance teaching, research, and personal responsibilities effectively. Hence, the hypothesis assessed is as below:

H1: Strategic human resource management practices have a positive and significant effect on work-life balance among faculty members.

Strategic Human Resource Management and Job Demands

Work demands refer to physical, mental, or organisational components of a job which demand continuous effort along with, are linked to physical and mental strain (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). High teaching loads, time pressure, and research output expectations are common demands in academia (Kinman and Wray 2021).

Strategic HRM practices, such as transparent workload policies, supportive leadership, and fair performance evaluation, can mitigate these excessive demands by optimising resource allocation and workload distribution (Lesener et al. 2019). Thus, second hypothesis (H2) assessed is as below:

H2: Strategic human resource management practices negatively influence job demands among faculty members.

Strategic Human Resource Management and Job Resources

Work resources pertain to the physical, social, or organisational components that facilitate goal achievement along with reduce job strain (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Strategic HRM contributes to resource enhancement through mentoring systems, training programs, participative leadership, and recognition mechanisms. These practices help employees feel valued, supported, and motivated (Alfes et al. 2019).

When academic institutions adopt strategic HRM policies, faculty gain access to resources such as career development support and autonomy, enabling them to manage academic workloads effectively. Hence, the third hypothesis (H3) assessed is as below:

H3: Strategic human resource management practices positively influence job resources among faculty members.

Mediating Role of Job Demands and Job Resources

The work Demand-Resources model suggests that worker well-being is shaped by the equilibrium between demands along with resources (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). When demands are high and resources low, employees experience burnout and stress. Conversely, sufficient job resources foster engagement and balance. Strategic HRM can simultaneously lower work demands and enhance job related resources, thereby improving work-life equilibrium outcomes.

In academic institutions, supportive HRM practices can buffer the negative impact of heavy workloads while strengthening faculty resilience through autonomy and participation. Hence, the fourth hypotheses assessed are as follows:

H4a: Job demands mediate the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practices and work-life balance.

H4b: Job resources mediate the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practices and work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance and Organisational Effectiveness

Work-life equilibrium is connected with spiked work satisfaction, organisational commitment, along with employee retention (Haar et al. 2019). Institutions that support faculty balance tend to experience higher performance, lower absenteeism, and improved institutional reputation.

In higher education, where teaching quality and research output depend heavily on faculty motivation, maintaining balance directly contributes to institutional effectiveness and sustainable performance (Kaur and Sharma 2021). Fifth hypothesis (H5) assessed is as below:

H5: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on organisational effectiveness.

Summary of Hypotheses

Table 1 summarises the hypotheses developed in the study based on the theoretical framework and literature review.

Proposed Contribution

This framework contributes to theory and practice in three ways.

1. It integrates strategic HRM with the JD-R model, offering a dual-level explanation of how strategic HR systems influence employee well-being.
2. It reconceptualises WLB as a strategic outcome of institutional HR architecture rather than an individual-level variable.
3. It provides a context-specific model for Indian higher education institutions, where empirical evidence remains limited.

This integration advances strategic HRM literature by demonstrating that fostering work-life balance through human resource strategy can serve as both an ethical and competitive imperative for educational institutions.

Table 1: Hypothesis summary

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Statement</i>
H1	Strategic Human Resource Management practices positively affect work-life balance.
H2	Strategic Human Resource Management practices negatively affect job demands.
H3	Strategic Human Resource Management practices positively affect job resources.
H4a	Job demands mediate the Strategic Human Resource Management and work-life balance relationship.
H4b	Job resources mediate the Strategic Human Resource Management and work-life balance relationship.
H5	Work-life balance positively affects organisational effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to find the influence of strategic HRM practices on work-life equilibrium along with work effectiveness between faculty members within higher education institutions. This design was considered appropriate as the study aimed to analyse relationships among multiple variables and to test a theoretically grounded conceptual framework.

The study population comprised teaching professionals working in commerce and management colleges in Gujarat, India, including Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors. A purposive sampling method was used to confirm that participants possessed adequate exposure to institutional human resource practices and academic work demands. Faculty members with a minimum of one year of teaching experience were considered eligible for participation. A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed, and 240 completed and valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis. The sample included respondents across different academic designations, teaching experience levels, gender categories, and institutional types (government and private), thereby providing a representative profile of faculty members in the selected context.

Primary data were gathered using a constructed questionnaire administered through institutional email and online survey platforms. Participation was voluntary, and participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to enhance the accuracy and reliability of responses.

The measurement instrument consisted of standardised scales adapted from prior empirical studies. Strategic HRM practices were measured using adapted items covering training and development, performance management, work redesign, employee involvement, and HR flexibility. Work-life bal-

ance was measured using adapted items capturing time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. Job demands were assessed through items related to workload and role-related pressures, while job resources were measured using items reflecting autonomy, supervisory support, and institutional support. Job effectiveness was monitored using adapted things related to academic performance, engagement, along with perceived professional effectiveness.

All scale items were minimally adjusted in wording to fit the academic context of Indian higher education institutions while retaining their original conceptual meaning. Prior to final administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by senior faculty members to ensure content validity and contextual relevance. All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

RESULTS

Introduction to Data Analysis

Table no. 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables, highlighting overall trends in faculty perceptions of strategic HRM practices, job demands, job resources, work-life balance, and job effectiveness. The observed mean value for Strategic HRM practices was 4.03, indicating a high level of perceived strategic HR practices among faculty respondents. The minimum and maximum scores suggest that while perceptions varied, the overall orientation toward Strategic HRM practices was favourable.

Work Demands recorded mean score of 3.18, reflecting moderate level of work-related demands experienced by faculty members. The range of scores indicates the presence of both low and high levels of job demands across respondents, highlighting variability in academic workload and role pressures.

Table 2: Description statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Strategic human resource management practices	4.03	0.48
Job demands	3.18	0.62
Job resources	3.81	0.49
Work-life balance	3.64	0.53
Job effectiveness	4.09	0.41

Job Resources showed a relatively high mean score of 3.81, suggesting that faculty members generally perceived adequate institutional and supervisory support. The minimum and maximum values indicate that access to job resources varied among respondents but remained largely positive.

The mean score for Work-Life equilibrium was 3.64, showcasing a moderate high level of balance between professional and personal responsibilities. This suggests that although faculty members experience notable job demands, available resources and institutional practices support work-life integration to a considerable extent.

Job Effectiveness recorded the highest mean score of 4.09, reflecting strong perceived professional effectiveness among faculty respondents. The range of scores indicates that most respondents reported high levels of engagement and effectiveness in their academic roles.

Overall, the descriptive statistics demonstrate meaningful variation across study variables, providing a strong basis for subsequent correlation, regression, mediation, and structural equation modelling analyses.

Correlation Analysis

Table no. 3 showcases the correlation matrix among study variables. The results indicate that strategic HRM practices are positively associated to work-life equilibrium and job effectiveness, while work demands show a negative relationship, thereby providing preliminary support for the proposed hypotheses. The correlation analysis reveals sig-

nificant and theoretically consistent relationships among the study variables. Strategic HRM practices show a positive connection with work-life balance and job effectiveness, indicating that stronger Strategic HRM practices are linked with improved faculty well-being and performance. Job resources are positively related to work-life equilibrium and work effectiveness, suggesting that institutional and supervisory support enhances both balance and effectiveness. In contrast, job demands exhibit negative relationship with work-life equilibrium and work effectiveness, implying that excessive work pressures reduce faculty balance and performance. These correlations provide starting empirical provide support for the hypothesized relationships and warrant further regression and mediation analyses.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

The measurement scales were tested for reliability and validity through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The results showed that all constructs achieved values above the recommended thresholds for both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, reflecting strong internal consistency. Furthermore, AVE values surpassed the acceptable benchmark, supporting convergent validity. Collectively, these findings establish the adequacy of the measurement model for subsequent regression and structural equation modelling analyses (Table 4).

Table 3: Correlation matrix

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Strategic human resource management practices	1.00				
Job demands	-0.31	1.00			
Job resources	0.46	-0.28	1.00		
Work-life balance	0.54	-0.42	0.48	1.00	
Job effectiveness	0.59	-0.37	0.51	0.63	1.00

Table 4: Reliability and validity results

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability</i>	<i>Average</i>
Strategic human resource management practices	0.89	0.91	0.68
Job demands	0.83	0.86	0.61
Job resources	0.87	0.90	0.66
Work-life balance	0.91	0.93	0.71
Job effectiveness	0.88	0.90	0.64

Regression Analysis

Table 5 reports the regression results for predictors of work-life equilibrium. The findings show that the regression results showcase that strategic HRM practices and job resources exert a positive influence on work-life equilibrium, whereas work demands have a significant negative effects. The model accounts for a considerable share of the variation in work-life balance, demonstrating strong predictive power. Table 6 presents the regression results for job effectiveness, in which work-life balance emerges as the strongest predictor of job effectiveness, followed by strategic HRM practices and job resources, while job demands negative-

ly affect effectiveness. These findings suggest that faculty performance is enhanced when institutional HR practices support balance and reduce excessive demands.

Mediation Analysis

Table 7 presents the mediation analysis results, indicating that work-life equilibrium partially mediates the relation between strategic HRM practices along with job effectiveness. The mediation analysis reveals that work-life equilibrium partially mediates the relation between strategic HRM practices along with job effectiveness. Partial mediation effects are also observed in the relationships in-

Table 5: Regression results (predictors of work-life balance)

<i>Predictor</i>	β (Beta coefficient)	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i> (Probability value)
Strategic human resource management practices	0.41	6.92	0.000***
Job demands	-0.27	-5.11	0.000***
Job resources	0.33	5.78	0.000***
R² (Coefficient of Determination) = 0.54	F = 91.45 (F-statistic)	p < 0.001 (Probability value)	

Table 6: Regression results (predictors of job effectiveness)

<i>Predictor</i>	β (Beta coefficient)	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i> (Probability value)
Strategic human resource management practices	0.29	5.02	0.000***
Job resources	0.22	4.18	0.000***
Work-life balance	0.46	8.07	0.000***
Job demands	-0.18	-3.32	0.001**
R² (Coefficient of Determination) = 0.67	F = 123.91 (F-statistic)	p < 0.001 (Probability value)	

Table 7: mediation results

<i>Path</i>	<i>Direct effect</i>	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Total effect</i>	<i>Mediation type</i>
Strategic human resource management → Job effectiveness	0.29***	0.19***	0.48***	Partial mediation
Job resources → Job effectiveness	0.22***	0.14***	0.36***	Partial mediation
Job demands → Job effectiveness	-0.18**	-0.12**	-0.30**	Partial mediation

volving job demands and job resources. These findings indicate that strategic HR practices influence faculty effectiveness both directly and indirectly through their impact on work-life equilibrium. This highlights central role of work-life equilibrium as the mechanism through institutional practices translate to improved professional outcomes.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Fit Indices

Table 8 presents the model fit indices obtained from structural equation modelling. The values indicate that structural equation modelling was assigned to validate the given conceptual framework. The model fit indices fall within acceptable and recommended thresholds, suggesting an adequate fit between the proposed model and the observed data. These results confirm that the hypothesised relationships among strategic HRM practices, job demands, job resources, work-life balance, and job effectiveness are empirically supported.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the descriptive, correlational, regression, mediation, and structural equation modelling analyses collectively support the proposed conceptual framework. Strategic HRM practices significantly influence job demands, job resources, and work-life balance, which subsequently affect the job effectiveness of faculty members. These results offer a solid empirical basis for the discussion and implications outlined in the subsequent section.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study provide compelling evidence that Strategic HRM plays a decisive role in shaping work-life equilibrium between faculty members in higher education institutions. Moving beyond traditional approaches that frame

work-life equilibrium as an individual type concern (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Kossek and Ozeki 1998), the results support a growing body of literature that positions work and life balance as an outcome of organisational systems and institutional design (Guest 2017; Peccei and Van de Voorde 2019). Recent studies further reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that flexible work arrangements, organisational support, and human resource policies significantly influence employee well-being in contemporary workplaces (Allen et al. 2024; Kelliher et al. 2024). The current study extends this line of inquiry by empirically establishing that strategic HRM functions as a strategic mechanism through which institutions actively structure employee work-life experiences.

The key contribution of research is in demonstrating the dual pathway through which strategic HRM influences work-life balance. Consistent with the Work Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al. 2001; Bakker and Demerouti 2017), the findings reveal that strategic HRM simultaneously reduces job demands while enhancing job resources. This dual mechanism is particularly relevant in academic settings, where faculty members operate under conditions of high workload, role multiplicity, and performance pressure (Kinman and Wray 2021; Verma and Rao 2024). While earlier research has largely examined job demands and job resources as independent predictors of well-being (Lesener et al. 2019), recent meta-analytic evidence suggests that organisational interventions addressing both dimensions jointly yield more sustainable outcomes (Kossek et al. 2025; Brough et al. 2024). The present study empirically validates this proposition within the context of higher education, thereby strengthening the applicability of the Job Demands-Resources framework in institutional settings.

However, the findings also reveal an important nuance that advances existing literature. Although job resources positively influence work-life bal-

Table 8: Model fit indices

<i>Fit index</i>	<i>Recommended value</i>	<i>Obtained value</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
χ^2 (Chi-square)/df (Degrees of Freedom)	< 3.00	2.11	Excellent fit
GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.94	Good fit
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.96	Excellent fit
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.95	Excellent fit
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	< 0.08	0.05	Acceptable fit

ance, their effectiveness appears to depend on the level of job demands. In contexts where job demands remain excessively high, the buffering effect of resources may be insufficient. This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that the intensification of work, particularly in digitally mediated environments, continues to blur work-life boundaries despite the availability of organisational support (Deery and Jago 2025; Kelliher et al. 2024). Thus, the study challenges the assumption that resource enhancement alone is adequate, and instead emphasises the need for a more balanced human resource approach that actively manages workload alongside resource provision. This insight contributes to ongoing debates within Job Demands-Resources literature by highlighting the conditional nature of resource effectiveness.

Another significant contribution of the study relates to the implementation and strategic alignment of strategic HRM practices. While traditional HRM literature has focused on the presence of human resource policies (Ulrich 1997; Wright and McMahan 2011), the findings show that their impact is contingent upon effective execution along with alignment with organisational goals. This observation resonates with recent research indicating that the mere existence of human resource policies does not guarantee improved employee outcomes unless supported by leadership commitment and organisational culture (Patel and Desai 2025). In the context of higher education, where human resource practices often remain procedural and compliance-driven (Singh and Kaur 2023; Kumar and Singh 2024), this finding underscores the need to transition toward more strategic and employee-centric human resource systems.

The study further establishes a strong positive relation between work-life equilibrium along with job effectiveness, reinforcing the argument that employee well-being is a critical determinant of organisational performance. Previous research has consistently linked work-life balance with job satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Haar et al. 2019; Gupta and Kulkarni 2024), while recent systematic reviews highlight its broader implications for organisational sustainability and performance outcomes (Sharma et al. 2025). The present study advances this understanding by demonstrating that work-life equilibrium functions like a mediating mechanism with which strategic HRM practices influence job effectiveness. This finding con-

tributes to the strategic HRM performance discourse by providing empirical support for the argument that human resource practices impact performance indirectly through employee well-being, rather than through direct effects alone.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study makes a meaningful contribution by integrating strategic HRM with the Work Demands-Resources framework in the context of higher education. While the Work Demands-Resources model has traditionally focused on individual-level stress and motivation (Bakker and Demerouti 2017), the present findings demonstrate that job resources can be strategically created and enhanced through organisational human resource systems. This reconceptualization positions strategic HRM as a dynamic, resource-generating mechanism that actively shapes work conditions rather than passively responding to them. Furthermore, by linking strategic HRM practices with both work demands and job related resources, the study provides a more comprehensive and multi-level understanding of how organisational strategies influence employee well-being and performance. This integration also responds to recent scholarly calls to reconceptualise work-life balance in light of evolving work environments and organisational complexities (Kelliher et al. 2024; Deery and Jago 2025).

Importantly, the findings also offer context-specific insights relevant to higher education institutions, particularly within the Indian context. Academic environments are characterised by increasing workloads, administrative pressures, and evolving teaching modalities, which collectively intensify job demands (Kaur and Sharma 2021; Khurana and Misra 2022). In such settings, the role of strategic HRM becomes critical in designing supportive and flexible work systems that enable faculty members to manage competing demands effectively. However, the findings also indicate that many institutions continue to rely on traditional human resource models that prioritise performance and compliance over employee well-being (Singh and Kaur 2023). This highlights a structural gap that can be addressed through strategic human resource interventions aimed at balancing institutional objectives with employee needs.

Overall, the study advances the conceptualisation of work-life balance by positioning it as a strategic organisational outcome rather than an individual coping mechanism. By demonstrating

the interconnected roles of strategic human resource management, job demands, job resources, and job effectiveness, the findings provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how institutional practices shape employee well-being and performance. The study not only validates existing theoretical models but also extends them by offering a more integrated and contextually grounded perspective relevant to contemporary higher education systems.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the influence of Strategic HRM practices on Work-Life equilibrium and Work Effectiveness between faculty members in higher education institutions in Gujarat. The findings confirm that well-designed and effectively implemented human resource practices play a crucial role in enhancing both work-life equilibrium and overall job effectiveness of academic professionals. The study further establishes that work-life equilibrium acts as important connecting mechanism by which strategic HR initiatives contribute to improved faculty performance and well-being. These results highlight that organisational policies which address employee welfare alongside institutional objectives lead to more sustainable and productive academic environments. The findings suggest that higher education institutions should integrate work-life balance into their strategic HRM frameworks, as this approach can enhance faculty satisfaction, alleviate stress, and support sustained institutional effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, it is suggested that the higher education institutions adopt a strategic approach to HRM that explicitly prioritises faculty work-life balance. Academic institutions should integrate flexible work arrangements, transparent workload allocation, and supportive performance management systems to reduce excessive work demands and enhance job related resources. Institutional leaders are encouraged to foster participative and supportive leadership practices that strengthen faculty autonomy, professional development, along with access to organisational support. Regular assessment of faculty workload and well-being should be institutionalised as part of

strategic planning to sustain job effectiveness and long-term engagement. By embedding work-life balance initiatives within the broader human resource strategy, higher education institutions can enhance faculty effectiveness while promoting organizational sustainability.

ENDNOTES

1. Strategic HRM practices referred to in this study include institution-level human resource policies related to training and development, performance management, employee involvement, work redesign, and flexibility that are aligned with organisational goals.
2. Job effectiveness in the present study is conceptualised as faculty members' self-perceived effectiveness in fulfilling teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities.

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