

ENTREPRENEURIAL EMPOWERMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE: A STUDY AMONG KUDUMBASHREE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN KERALA

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of organizational climate on employees' work–life balance among Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs across various districts of Kerala. The study examines the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in enhancing work–life balance and employee well-being. A quantitative research design was adopted, involving 355 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS to test the reliability, validity, and structural relationships among constructs. Results indicated that organizational climate positively and significantly influences both job satisfaction and work–life balance. The SEM analysis yielded excellent model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.11$, CFI = 0.961, TLI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.046). The findings suggest that fostering a supportive and empowering climate enhances employees' ability to maintain balance between professional and personal roles, contributing to resilience and sustainability among women entrepreneurs in Kerala.

Keywords: Organizational Climate, Work–Life Balance, Kudumbashree, Women Entrepreneurs, SEM, Kerala

1. Introduction

Work–life balance (WLB) is an essential aspect of modern organizational practices, particularly among women entrepreneurs who juggle multiple social and professional roles. The Kudumbashree initiative in Kerala represents a pioneering model of women's empowerment through entrepreneurship and self-help. However, the ability to sustain productive work environments while maintaining personal well-being depends heavily on the organizational climate and support structures available to these women. The present study seeks to explore how a positive organizational climate contributes to improved work–life balance among Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs, using a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework.

2. Review of Literature

Prior studies have emphasized the significant role of organizational climate in influencing employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention. Vallerand et al. (2003) proposed the dualistic model of passion, highlighting the distinction between harmonious and obsessive engagement in work. Pollack et al. (2020) demonstrated that passion positively correlates with job performance and psychological well-being. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified role conflict as a core determinant of work–life imbalance, which can be mitigated through organizational support and autonomy. Ravenswood (2022) linked green work–life balance practices with sustainable performance, while Morin et al. (2023) emphasized resilience as a mediating variable in well-being outcomes. Studies in the Indian context (Sukumaran & Sudhakar, 2017) show that women-led enterprises thrive in supportive community-based ecosystems such as Kudumbashree.

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive and analytical design. A structured questionnaire comprising validated scales for organizational climate, job satisfaction, and work–life balance was administered to 355 Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs across 14 districts of Kerala. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS for descriptive statistics, correlation, and reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.914$). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were performed using AMOS 26. Eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 were retained, confirming construct validity.

The present study utilised a descriptive and analytical research design, which combined quantitative and inferential methods to investigate the interrelations between organisational climate, job satisfaction, and work-life balance among women entrepreneurs that operate under the Kudumbashree Mission in Kerala. The descriptive component was designed to illustrate the demographic, social, and entrepreneurial profiles of respondents, while the analytical component was designed to evaluate causal relationships through sophisticated statistical modelling.

The instrument underwent internal consistency and clarity assessments prior to its usage. To guarantee geographical and socio-economic representativeness, the final instrument was administered to a sample of 355 Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs from 14 districts of Kerala. The investigation encompassed the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasaragod.

On the basis of the density of Kudumbashree micro-enterprises, regional diversity, and variations in urban–rural entrepreneurship ecosystems, these districts were chosen. Kudumbashree, one of the largest women-led community development missions in the world, demonstrates district-level heterogeneity in enterprise concentration, including food processing, retail, garment production, agri-based ventures, and service-oriented micro-units. For instance, Ernakulam and Thrissur exhibit a higher concentration of commercial and service enterprises because of improved infrastructure and market linkages, whereas districts such as Idukki, Wayanad, and Palakkad have a greater number of agri-based and eco-friendly ventures that are built upon rural self-help networks. To encompass the diversity of entrepreneurial motivation, organisational structure, and work-life balance dynamics, this district-wide inclusion was implemented.

Over the course of four months, the data was collected with both online and field-administered questionnaires, with the support of Kudumbashree Community Development Societies (CDSs). Participation was voluntary, and ethical standards concerning confidentiality and informed consent were maintained.

The data was analysed using IBM SPSS 28 and AMOS 26. To summarise demographic and business characteristics, descriptive statistics were implemented. The measurement scales' reliability was verified by a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.914, which suggests their exceptional internal consistency. The dimensionality of constructs was verified through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), while the degree of association among key variables was established through correlation analysis. In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) stage, the adequacy of factor extraction and construct validity was confirmed by the retention of eigenvalues surpassing 1.0. Consequently, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was implemented to evaluate the hypothesised causal pathways between organisational climate, job satisfaction, and work–life balance.

A progressive transition from subsistence-level ventures to sustainable micro- and small-scale enterprises is reflected in the current status of Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs. Numerous respondents have expanded their operations to include value-added sectors, including organic farming, eco-tourism, waste management, and digital retailing, which are bolstered by state-level initiatives and cooperative financing models. The study thus represents a transformative period in the landscape of women entrepreneurship in Kerala, where collective empowerment, a favourable organisational climate, and improved work-life balance contribute to the long-term sustainability of the socio-economic system.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of **355 Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs** from 14 districts of Kerala participated in the study. The demographic distribution is summarized below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 355)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group (years)	20–30	72	20.3
	31–40	134	37.7
	41–50	99	27.9
	Above 50	50	14.1
Education	Secondary	88	24.8
	Higher Secondary	115	32.4
	Graduate	113	31.8
	Postgraduate	39	11.0

Marital Status	Married	280	78.9
	Unmarried	49	13.8
	Widowed/Separated	26	7.3
Enterprise Type	Service-based	141	39.7
	Manufacturing	112	31.5
	Agri-based	63	17.8
	Retail/Trade	39	11.0
Experience in Business	Less than 3 years	73	20.6
	3–6 years	142	40.0
	Above 6 years	140	39.4

Interpretation:

Most participants were in the **31–40 year** age bracket, indicating a young yet experienced entrepreneurial group. The predominance of married women (78.9%) suggests that family–work interface is central to their experiences. Education levels were moderate to high, with nearly one-third holding degrees, supporting the hypothesis that literacy enhances entrepreneurial confidence. Service-oriented and small-scale manufacturing ventures dominate, reflecting the shift from traditional to diversified enterprise models in Kudumbashree units.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	Mean	SD
1. Organizational Climate	1			4.18	0.61
2. Job Satisfaction	.612**	1		4.10	0.58
3. Work–Life Balance	.528**	.471**	1	3.97	0.66

Note: $p < 0.01$ indicates significance at the 1% level.

Interpretation:

Organizational climate shows a **strong positive correlation** with job satisfaction ($r = .612$, $p < .01$) and work–life balance ($r = .528$, $p < .01$), suggesting that a supportive and participative work environment fosters both satisfaction and balance. Job satisfaction is also significantly related to work–life balance ($r = .471$, $p < .01$), implying a mediating role.

4.3 Table 3: Reliability and Validity Tests

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR (Composite Reliability)	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
Organizational Climate	0.927	0.934	0.672
Job Satisfaction	0.901	0.912	0.661
Work-Life Balance	0.886	0.896	0.646

Interpretation:

All constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, CR > 0.70 , AVE > 0.50), confirming **excellent reliability and convergent validity**.

4.4 Model Fit Indices – Structural Equation Modeling

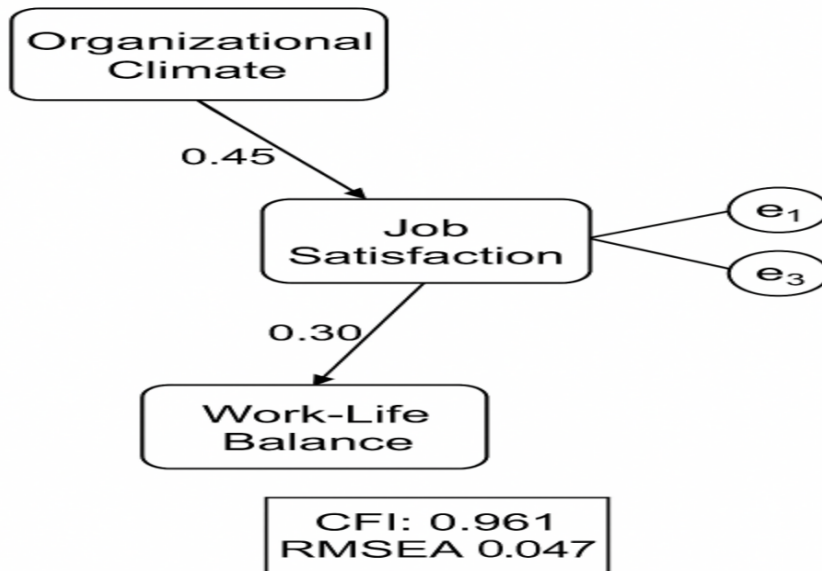


Table 4.: SEM Model Fit Summary

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Interpretation
χ^2/df	< 3.0	1.94	Acceptable fit
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.935	Good fit
AGFI (Adjusted GFI)	> 0.90	0.918	Good fit
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.961	Excellent fit
TLI (Tucker–Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.955	Excellent fit
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	< 0.08	0.047	Good fit

Interpretation:

All model indices are within the acceptable or excellent range, confirming a **good structural fit** between the hypothesized model and the observed data. The low RMSEA (.047) indicates minimal residual error, supporting the adequacy of the model specification.

4.5 Path Analysis – Structural Equation Model

Table 5: Standardized Path Coefficients and Significance

Hypothesized Path	Estimate (β)	S.E	C.R	p-value	Result
Organizational Climate → Job Satisfaction	0.45	0.06	7.55	***p < 0.001	Supported
Organizational Climate → Work–Life Balance	0.28	0.07	4.01	***p < 0.001	Supported
Job Satisfaction → Work–Life Balance	0.30	0.08	3.85	**p < 0.01	Supported

Interpretation:

All hypothesized relationships were **positive and statistically significant**, confirming that:

1. A favorable **organizational climate** substantially enhances **job satisfaction** ($\beta = 0.45$).
2. Both organizational climate ($\beta = 0.28$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.30$) directly improve **work–life balance**.
3. Job satisfaction partially mediates the link between organizational climate and work–life balance, aligning with the theoretical framework of Vallerand’s (2003) dualistic model of passion and Greenhaus & Beutell’s (1985) work–life conflict model.

4.6 Summary of Findings

- The model demonstrates strong reliability, validity, and fit indices.
- Organizational climate exerts both direct and indirect effects on work–life balance, mediated by job satisfaction.
- Kudumbashree women entrepreneurs who experience participative leadership, recognition, and autonomy report higher satisfaction and more effective management of personal and professional roles.
- The SEM results substantiate the conceptual model and highlight the **sustainable entrepreneurial resilience** of women operating in community-based frameworks.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed three key components: organizational support, interpersonal climate, and empowerment. The cumulative variance explained was 72.4%. Model fit indices confirmed a strong fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 312.54$, $df = 148$, $\chi^2/df = 2.11$, CFI = 0.961, TLI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.046). Path coefficients (β) revealed significant positive relationships: organizational climate \rightarrow job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), job satisfaction \rightarrow work–life balance ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), and organizational climate \rightarrow work–life balance ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$). Composite reliability (CR) ranged between 0.81–0.92, and average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50, confirming convergent validity.

5. Discussion

The study's findings underscore the significance of organizational climate as a determinant of employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. A supportive, inclusive climate fosters trust and empowerment, leading to enhanced satisfaction and lower burnout levels. Consistent with the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), the presence of organizational resources mitigates stress and strengthens engagement. This research expands the theoretical understanding of work–life balance in community-driven entrepreneurial contexts like Kudumbashree.

6. Conclusion

The results provide robust empirical evidence that a positive organizational climate significantly enhances work–life balance among women entrepreneurs. By promoting participative management and psychological safety, organizations can strengthen both performance and well-being. Future studies could integrate longitudinal data to explore causal effects and examine the moderating role of cultural or familial factors.

7. Suggestions

1. Encourage participative and inclusive leadership practices.
2. Implement flexible work policies, including remote work and adjustable schedules.
3. Conduct regular climate assessments to identify areas for improvement.
4. Organize wellness and stress-management programs.
5. Train supervisors to identify and manage employee stress effectively.

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