

Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance among Employees: A Comparative Study Based on Gender and Job Type

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ABSTRACT

Workplace demands have grown steadily more complex, and the capacity of employees to regulate emotion while sustaining a workable boundary between professional and personal domains has become a matter of practical as well as theoretical interest. This paper examines the association between emotional intelligence and work-life balance among 134 full-time employees drawn from technical and non-technical occupations, and additionally tests whether gender and occupational category shape either construct independently or in combination. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, and work-life balance was assessed through an adapted version of Hayman's three-dimensional scale. Pearson correlation revealed a moderate, statistically significant positive association between emotional intelligence and work-life balance ($r = .331$, $p < .001$), suggesting that employees who read and manage their own emotional states with greater facility also report a more sustainable balance between work and personal commitments. A 2×2 factorial ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of gender on emotional intelligence, with male employees reporting somewhat higher scores than female employees, while job type produced no discernible effect and the gender-by-job-type interaction remained non-significant. Work-life balance, by contrast, did not vary meaningfully by gender, job type, or their interaction. These results are discussed with reference to the Conservation of Resources framework and existing literature on emotional competence in Indian organizational settings, and practical implications for workplace training are outlined.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, work-life balance, gender, occupational type, employees

INTRODUCTION

Ask any working adult what makes a job bearable over the long run, and the conversation rarely stays confined to salary or job title for long. It drifts, almost inevitably, toward how much of oneself the job consumes: whether there is still energy left at the end of the day for family, rest, or simply doing nothing in particular. This drift is not incidental. It points toward a genuine psychological tension between the emotional resources a person brings to work and the boundaries that person is able to protect once the workday nominally ends.

Emotional intelligence, understood here through the ability-based framework refined by Mayer and colleagues and operationalised for workplace research by Wong and Law (2002), refers to the capacity to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotional information (one's own as well as that of others) in the service of thought and action. It is not synonymous with a pleasant disposition, nor is it merely a personality trait dressed up in cognitive language. It functions, in practice, as a resource: something a person draws upon when circumstances at work turn demanding, ambiguous, or interpersonally fraught.

Work-life balance, meanwhile, has moved a considerable distance from its earlier framing as a simple tug-of-war between career obligations and domestic ones. Hayman's (2005) three-part conceptualisation, encompassing work interfering with personal life, personal life interfering with work, and the possibility that the two domains might actually enrich one another, captures a more textured reality than the conflict-only models that dominated research in the 1980s and 1990s. An employee's sense of balance is rarely a single number; it is a composite of how much work leaks into evenings and weekends, how much home life bleeds back into working hours, and whether either domain leaves the person better equipped for the other.

The link between these two constructs is not merely intuitive; it has a reasonably well-articulated theoretical basis in Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources theory, which treats stress as arising when resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished relative to the demands placed on a person. Emotional intelligence, in this view, operates as a personal resource that either cushions the depletion caused by work demands or helps a person recover more quickly once depleted. A person who can name what they are feeling, interpret the emotional signals of colleagues accurately, and regulate frustration before it spills into behaviour is, plausibly, better positioned to keep work stress from colonising personal time.

Yet the empirical picture connecting emotional intelligence to work-life balance remains somewhat scattered across occupational sectors, national contexts, and demographic subgroups, with relatively few studies examining both gender and occupational category as joint influences within a single design. The present paper addresses this gap directly, using data collected from a mixed sample of technical and non-technical employees, to ask two related questions: how strongly are emotional intelligence and work-life balance associated, and do gender or job type account for meaningful variation in either construct.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional Intelligence as a Coping Resource

A recurring theme across the literature is that emotionally intelligent individuals do not so much avoid stress as metabolise it more efficiently. Nanda and Randhawa (2020) proposed a sequential model in which emotional intelligence functions as an antecedent to work-life balance, which in turn shapes broader indicators of occupational well-being. Their argument rests on the premise that emotional skill is not incidental to balance but causally prior to it: a person first has to manage the internal experience of stress before they can meaningfully protect external boundaries. Complementary work by Joyce and colleagues, drawing on expectancy-based reasoning, similarly frames emotionally skilled individuals as more adaptable when confronted with unplanned demands, which reduces the likelihood of burnout translating into home-life disruption.

Sector-specific studies lend some texture to this general claim. Naz et al. (2021), working with a sample of female university teachers, found that emotion regulation and empathic accuracy were associated with a more manageable balance between professional and domestic obligations, an effect they attributed to reduced occupational stress rather than to any direct behavioural mechanism. Ahmad et al. (2022), studying working women more broadly, reported a similar pattern: composure under pressure correlated with better self-reported balance. In a sector where the boundary between home and office has become notoriously porous, Kumar and Das (2022) observed that IT professionals navigating hybrid arrangements in the post-pandemic period relied on emotional intelligence to negotiate the blurred line between the two domains, essentially treating emotional skill as a substitute for the physical boundary that a separate office once provided.

Evidence from Indian Organizational Settings

Because the present sample is drawn from an Indian occupational context, findings from Indian-specific research warrant particular attention. Pandey and Garg (2009), examining software professionals in the Delhi NCR region, linked empathy and self-regulation to more effective multitasking between job and home responsibilities, while also noting that organisational provisions such as flexible scheduling amplified this effect, a reminder that individual-level emotional skill does not operate in an organisational vacuum. Debnath et al. (2021), working with healthcare professionals in eastern India, reported that emotional intelligence mattered for balance across the sample as a whole but that women in the sample experienced comparatively

greater difficulty, a pattern the authors traced to persisting expectations around domestic labour rather than to any deficit in emotional skill itself.

Kaur and Sharma (2015) found that among IT professionals in Chandigarh, higher emotional intelligence corresponded with better stress management and, by extension, a cleaner separation between work demands and personal time. Mishra and Mohapatra (2010), examining private-sector employees in Odisha (the same broad geographic and occupational context relevant to the present study), reported that higher emotional intelligence tracked with greater satisfaction regarding the work-personal life relationship.

Taken together, this body of work converges on a fairly consistent conclusion: emotional intelligence assists in balancing occupational and personal demands regardless of sector or geography, even as the precise mechanism (stress reduction, boundary management, or interpersonal facilitation) varies somewhat from study to study.

Gender and Occupational Differences

The literature on gender differences in emotional intelligence is considerably less settled. Some studies report a female advantage in empathic accuracy alongside a male advantage in self-regulation and impulse control (Bar-On, 1997), while others, using more tightly validated instruments, find negligible differences once measurement artefacts are accounted for (Arar & Oneren, 2021).

Findings on work-life balance by gender are somewhat more consistent, with women frequently reporting greater work-family conflict, a pattern attributed largely to the disproportionate share of domestic and caregiving responsibilities women continue to bear across many cultural contexts (Allen et al., 2000). Pandey and Garg (2009) documented greater conflict among female software professionals relative to male counterparts despite comparable working conditions, while Debnath et al. (2021) reported a similar asymmetry among healthcare workers. Interestingly, Kaur and Sharma (2015) found no meaningful gender difference in work-life balance among IT professionals specifically, raising the possibility that occupations with uniformly high demands may flatten gender-based disparities that would otherwise appear.

Comparisons between technical and non-technical employees remain comparatively underexplored. Technical roles are often characterised by irregular hours, project-driven deadlines, and an expectation of after-hours availability (Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Rao & Chandraiah, 2012), while non-technical roles more often involve sustained emotional labour and structured but relationally demanding schedules (Debnath et al., 2021). Whether these structurally different sources of strain translate into measurable differences in emotional intelligence or work-life balance has not been tested extensively within a single factorial design, which is one of the specific gaps this paper addresses.

Rationale and Objectives

Much of the existing research either treats emotional intelligence and work-life balance as a simple bivariate pair without attention to demographic moderators, or examines gender and occupational differences without situating them alongside the emotional intelligence and work-life balance relationship itself. Combining both lines of inquiry within a single Indian sample, spanning both technical and non-technical roles, offers a more integrated picture and allows the relative contribution of demographic category to be weighed against the strength of the underlying psychological association.

Objectives:

1. To examine the association between emotional intelligence and work-life balance among employees.

2. To examine whether gender and job type, independently or interactively, produce significant differences in emotional intelligence.
3. To examine whether gender and job type, independently or interactively, produce significant differences in work-life balance.

METHOD

Design and Sample

The study followed a quantitative, cross-sectional design, combining a correlational analysis with a 2×2 between-subjects factorial comparison (gender $\times$ job type). A convenience sample of 134 full-time employees was recruited through professional networks and social media channels aimed at working professionals. The sample comprised 71 men (53.0%) and 63 women (47.0%); 70 participants (52.2%) held technical roles and 64 (47.8%) held non-technical roles. Across the four gender-by-job-type cells, sample sizes were reasonably balanced: male-technical ($n = 40$), male-non-technical ($n = 31$), female-technical ($n = 30$), and female-non-technical ($n = 33$).

Measures

Emotional intelligence was assessed using the 16-item Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002), which yields four subscale scores (Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion, and Regulation of Emotion) as well as a composite score. Internal consistency in the present sample was strong ($\alpha = .88$). Work-life balance was measured with an adapted 10-item version of Hayman's (2005) scale, capturing work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work-personal life enhancement; reliability in this sample was acceptable ($\alpha = .79$). Both instruments used a five-point response format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with negatively worded items reverse-scored prior to computing composite values.

RESULTS

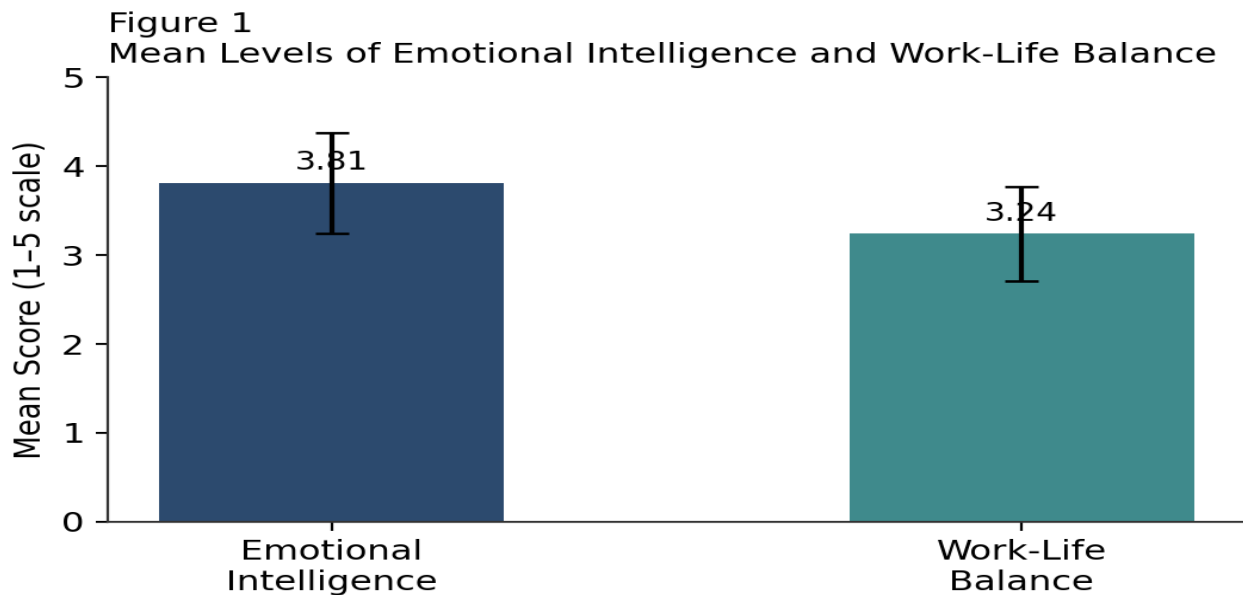
Descriptive Overview

Employees in the sample reported relatively high emotional intelligence overall ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.57$) against a somewhat more modest average level of work-life balance ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.53$), on a five-point scale where the midpoint of 3.0 represents a neutral position. The gap between these two averages is worth pausing on: it suggests that whatever emotional resources employees bring to the table, translating that capacity into a genuinely balanced daily life proves comparatively harder to achieve.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance ($N = 134$)

Variable	M	SD	
Emotional Intelligence	3.81	0.57	
Work-Life Balance	3.24	0.53	

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Both variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale.



Association Between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance

A statistically significant, moderate positive correlation emerged between emotional intelligence and work-life balance, $r = .331$, $p < .001$. Employees who scored higher on emotional intelligence tended also to report a more favourable balance between their work and personal commitments. The magnitude of this relationship, while meaningful, falls short of suggesting that emotional intelligence alone determines how balanced an employee's life feels. Roughly 11% of the variance in work-life balance is shared with emotional intelligence, leaving the bulk of variation attributable to other factors, whether organisational, structural, or purely situational.

Table 2 Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance

Variable	1	2
1. Emotional Intelligence	—	.331***
2. Work-Life Balance		—

Note. *** $p < .001$.

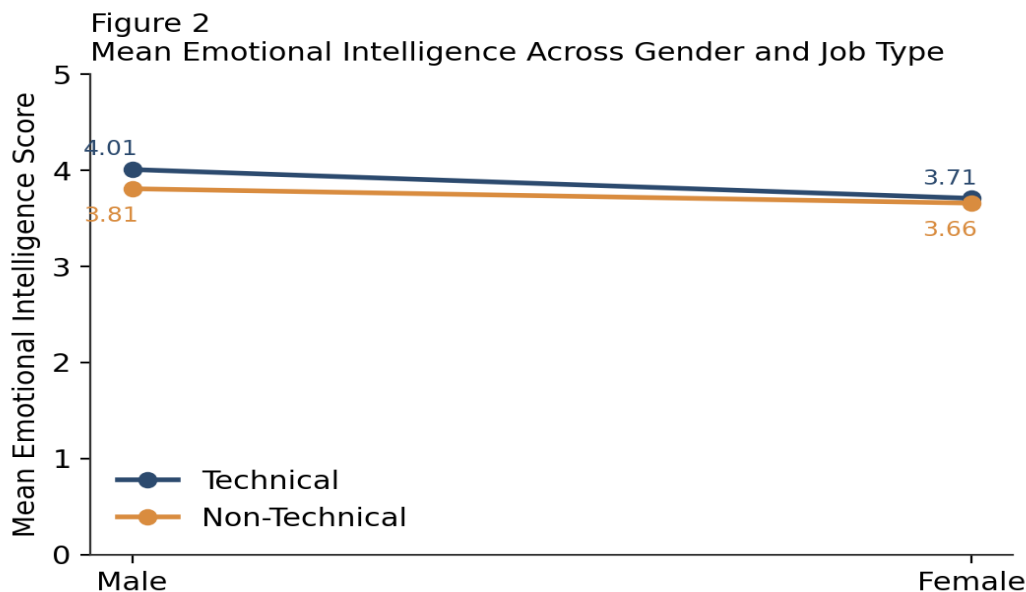
Gender and Job Type Effects on Emotional Intelligence

The factorial ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect of gender on emotional intelligence, $F(1, 130) = 5.72$, $p = .018$, with male employees ($M = 3.94$) scoring somewhat higher than female employees ($M = 3.70$). Job type produced no significant effect, $F(1, 130) = 1.89$, $p = .172$, nor did the interaction between gender and job type, $F(1, 130) = 0.58$, $p = .446$. Cell means were as follows: male-technical employees recorded the highest average ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by male-non-technical employees ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.53$), female-technical employees ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.52$), and female-non-technical employees ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.66$). The effect size associated with gender was modest (partial $\eta^2 \approx .04$), indicating that while the difference reached statistical significance, gender accounts for only a small proportion of the total variability in emotional intelligence scores.

Table 3 Two-Way ANOVA Results: Emotional Intelligence by Gender and Job Type

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Gender	1.783	1	1.783	5.72	.018*
Job Type	0.589	1	0.589	1.89	.172
Gender × Job Type	0.182	1	0.182	0.58	.446
Error	40.559	130	0.312	—	—
Total	43.114	133	—	—	—

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square. * $p < .05$.



Gender and Job Type Effects on Work-Life Balance

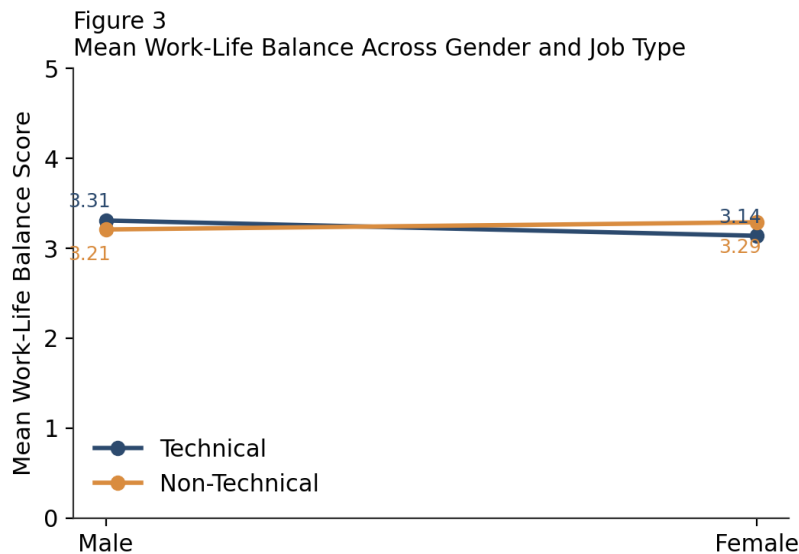
Unlike emotional intelligence, work-life balance showed no significant variation by gender, $F(1, 130) = 0.16$, $p = .693$, job type, $F(1, 130) = 0.05$, $p = .830$, or their interaction, $F(1, 130) = 1.25$, $p = .267$. Group means clustered closely around the sample average: male-technical ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.68$), male-non-technical ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.67$), female-technical ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.58$), and female-non-technical ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.54$). None of these differences approached conventional thresholds of significance, suggesting that within this sample, perceptions of work-life balance were experienced comparably across gender and occupational lines.

Table 4 Two-Way ANOVA Results: Work-Life Balance by Gender and Job Type

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Gender	0.061	1	0.061	0.16	.693
Job Type	0.018	1	0.018	0.05	.830

Gender × Job Type	0.486	1	0.486	1.25	.267
Error	50.724	130	0.390	—	—
Total	51.289	133	—	—	—

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square. None of the effects reached statistical significance at $p < .05$.



DISUSSION

The central finding of this study, a moderate, significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and work-life balance, sits comfortably alongside a substantial body of prior research (Nanda & Randhawa, 2020; Naz et al., 2021; Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Mishra & Mohapatra, 2010). It reinforces the idea, grounded in Conservation of Resources theory, that emotional skill functions as a personal reservoir that employees draw upon to prevent occupational stress from spilling uncontrollably into personal time. What the correlation does not establish, and what a cross-sectional design cannot resolve, is the direction of this relationship. It is entirely plausible that better balance itself supports the development or expression of emotional competence, rather than the reverse; a person with ample personal time and lower chronic stress may simply have more cognitive bandwidth available for accurate emotional appraisal in the first place.

The gender effect on emotional intelligence, while statistically significant, deserves a cautious reading given its modest effect size. Male employees in this sample scored higher on average, a pattern that diverges somewhat from research emphasising a female advantage in empathic and interpersonal domains (Bar-On, 1997) but aligns more closely with studies reporting a male edge specifically in self-regulation and composure under pressure (Arar & Oneren, 2021). Because the WLEIS weights self-regulation and self-appraisal alongside interpersonal appraisal, the composite score may be obscuring subscale-level nuance: it remains possible, for instance, that women in this sample scored comparably or higher on interpersonal appraisal while trailing on regulation, a pattern that a composite score alone cannot reveal.

Perhaps the more striking result is the absence of any gender difference in work-life balance, a finding that runs counter to a considerable amount of prior literature documenting greater work-family conflict among women (Allen et al., 2000; Pandey & Garg, 2009; Debnath et al., 2021). Several explanations seem plausible. The present sample skewed toward relatively young, well-educated, full-time professionals, a demographic

that may experience less domestic burden asymmetry than more representative working populations, or that may simply be earlier in family-formation stages where caregiving demands have not yet intensified. It is also possible that occupations requiring a baseline level of professional qualification, as most roles in this sample did, tend to normalise workload expectations across genders in ways that less formalised sectors do not. Kaur and Sharma's (2015) finding of no gender gap among IT professionals offers a partial precedent for this pattern, hinting that occupations with uniformly high demands might compress gender-based differences that would otherwise emerge in more heterogeneous samples.

The null effect of job type on both constructs is, in its own way, an informative result. Despite a reasonably intuitive expectation that technical roles, with their irregular hours and after-hours availability norms (Rao & Chandraiah, 2012), would produce lower work-life balance than non-technical roles, no such difference materialised here. One interpretation is that non-technical roles carry their own less visible burdens, particularly sustained emotional labour and relational accountability (Debnath et al., 2021), which may offset any structural advantage those roles hold in terms of predictable hours. Another, more mundane possibility is that occupational category, as a single binary variable, is too blunt an instrument to capture the actual variation in workload and autonomy that exists within both technical and non-technical job families.

Implications

For organisations seeking to support employee well-being, these findings offer a fairly direct set of takeaways:

- Because the emotional intelligence and work-life balance relationship held regardless of gender or occupational category, interventions built around emotion regulation training need not be tailored separately for different demographic groups.
- A single, organisation-wide programme targeting emotional self-awareness and regulation is likely to carry benefits across the workforce rather than only within specific subgroups.
- At the same time, the modest but real gender gap in emotional intelligence, however it should ultimately be interpreted, suggests that any such training might usefully include components on interpersonal emotional appraisal, given that this is one dimension where the composite gender difference could plausibly originate.

Limitations and Future Directions

- The cross-sectional nature of this study precludes causal claims about the direction of influence between emotional intelligence and work-life balance; longitudinal or experimental designs would be needed to disentangle whether emotional skill precedes balance or is itself shaped by it.
- The reliance on convenience sampling, combined with a relatively young and well-educated participant pool, limits how confidently these findings can be generalised to the broader Indian workforce, particularly to less formally structured occupations.
- Future research would benefit from disaggregating the emotional intelligence composite into its four subscales when examining gender differences.
- Incorporating variables such as caregiving responsibilities and organisational support, which were not measured here, would strengthen future models.
- Employing stratified sampling across a wider range of industries and regions would improve generalisability.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence and work-life balance were found to be meaningfully, if moderately, associated among the employees studied here, lending further support to resource-based accounts of how emotional skill helps sustain the boundary between work and personal life. Gender produced a small but statistically reliable difference in emotional intelligence favouring male employees, while work-life balance itself showed no significant variation across gender or occupational category. These results suggest that organisational efforts to strengthen emotional competence are likely to pay dividends broadly across a workforce, without needing to be narrowly targeted by gender or job type, even as the underlying gender difference in emotional intelligence merits further, more fine-grained investigation.

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