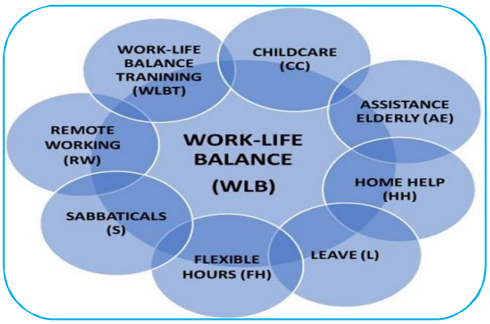
INDIAN STREAMS RESEARCH JOURNAL
ISSN NO : 2230-7850
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.1651 (UIF)
VOLUME - 16 | ISSUE - 9 | OCTOBER – 2026

WORK–LIFE INTERFERENCE, ENHANCEMENT AND BOUNDARY CONTROL AMONG GOVERNMENT HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT

Kavin Muhil J.
Research Scholar, Department of Counselling Psychology,
Arunodaya University, Arunachal Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Background: *School heads negotiate instructional, administrative and personal responsibilities that may interfere with one another but may also provide sources of enrichment. This study examined work-to-personal-life interference, personal-life-to-work interference and positive work–life enhancement among government higher secondary school heads in Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu. Methods: Ninety consenting heads participated in a cross-sectional questionnaire survey. Separate five-point measures assessed the three work–life dimensions, boundary control, family/personal demands and family/personal resources. The analysis used descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations and exploratory Welch tests. Results: Mean work-to-life interference was 2.93, life-to-work interference 3.00 and positive enhancement 3.43. Boundary control correlated negatively with work-to-life interference (r = −.850) and life-to-work interference (r = −.847), and positively with enhancement (r = .817). Family demands and resources were also strongly associated with these dimensions. Gender differences in the three principal outcomes were not statistically significant. Conclusion: The findings describe related but distinct negative and positive experiences of work and personal life among participating school heads. Strong correlations should be interpreted cautiously in this single-source, cross-sectional sample, and do not establish causal influence.*



KEYWORDS: *school heads; government higher secondary schools; work–life interference; work–life enhancement; boundary control; family resources; Tamil Nadu.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The work of a government higher secondary school head extends beyond the timetable. A school head is expected to ensure that teaching takes place, respond to staff and student concerns, maintain records, deal with administrative directions and sustain communication with parents and education authorities. These responsibilities do not always arrive in an orderly sequence or end with the school day. The question of work–life balance in this role is therefore not simply how many hours a person works, but how different responsibilities compete for time and attention, and what room remains for personal life.

Work–life balance cannot be captured adequately by a single judgement about whether work and family are in equilibrium. Work may intrude into personal life; personal commitments may, in turn, interrupt occupational responsibilities. At the same time, experience in one sphere may support

functioning in the other. A school head may find the job demanding and still draw confidence, purpose or useful relationships from it. Treating interference and enhancement separately makes these apparently contradictory experiences visible.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) described work–family conflict in terms of time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based incompatibilities. Their analysis makes it possible to view interference as directional rather than as a single undifferentiated problem. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) subsequently articulated an enrichment perspective, demonstrating why work and family domains should not be modelled only as competitors. The distinction is important in educational leadership, where service, professional identity and relationships may create sources of personal fulfilment alongside occupational strain.

The job demands–resources (JD–R) model offers an additional organisational explanation. Demands are aspects of work requiring sustained effort or generating psychological or practical costs; resources assist goal achievement, moderate demands or sustain motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The conceptual relevance to school leadership is considerable: administrative obligations and competing requests are not interchangeable with supervisory support, collegial collaboration or decision-making latitude. Importantly, the existence of a resource does not establish that a demand is absent. They should remain conceptually distinct even when questionnaire responses produce substantial empirical correlations.

Boundary perspectives add a third level of explanation. Clark's (2000) work/family border theory examines how individuals negotiate domains with different expectations and relationships. Kossek and colleagues (2012) emphasised perceived control of work–nonwork boundaries alongside role interruption. For school heads, the relevant question is not merely whether they communicate after school hours, but whether they can regulate the timing, urgency and spillover of such contact. Boundary control is therefore a potential correlate of both reduced interference and enhanced functioning.

International evidence confirms that the conditions of school leadership deserve attention. The OECD's analysis of principals in TALIS 2024 describes their working conditions and professional responsibilities across participating education systems (OECD, 2026). A recent scoping review of 38 articles from 18 countries identifies administrative workload, inadequate support and stress among the recurring concerns in principal well-being research (Tahir et al., 2026). These findings provide a reason to study school heads; they are not evidence that the same pressures occur in the same form or degree in Tamil Nadu.

Against this background, the study examined the work–life experiences of 90 government higher secondary school heads in Tiruchirappalli district. It considered not only how professional and personal responsibilities interfere with one another, but also how each sphere may enrich the other. Particular attention was given to perceived boundary control and the demands and resources within personal and family life. The purpose was to generate locally grounded evidence from school leaders without assuming that the findings represent all school heads in the district.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Competing roles and directional interference

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) locate work–family conflict in incompatibilities between role expectations. Their distinction between time-, strain- and behaviour-related conflict is useful here. A late administrative request can take away personal time; continued worry over school affairs can consume attention at home; responsibilities in the family can also make professional concentration more difficult. The direction of interference matters because the conditions that generate it, and the support needed to address it, may differ.

There is also reason to distinguish a school head from a teacher whose primary responsibility is classroom instruction. School heads must combine instructional oversight with decisions about staff,

students, records and institutional functioning. The scoping review by Tahir et al. (2026) reports that administrative duties and insufficient support recur in research on principals' stress. Nevertheless, an administrative job description does not establish an individual's actual experience. This study therefore measures respondents' accounts rather than assuming that every school head is overburdened.

Research on the measurement of work–family conflict reinforces the distinction between its directions and mechanisms. Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) developed a multidimensional measure that distinguished time-, strain- and behaviour-based forms of conflict across work and family domains. Michel et al. (2011), in a meta-analytic review of antecedents, showed that the work–family interface needs to be understood through conditions operating in both spheres rather than reduced to individual resilience. The present study draws on this conceptual distinction; it does not claim to have administered either published instrument unchanged.

2.2 The positive work–life interface

An account concerned only with interference would remain incomplete. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) explain how experiences and resources developed in one role may enrich another. Carlson et al. (2006) developed and validated a measure of work–family enrichment, strengthening the theoretical case for considering positive experiences as distinct from conflict. The present study therefore examined positive work–life enhancement alongside both directions of interference. It did not assume that reduced conflict necessarily implies greater enrichment.

Three separate outcomes were assessed: the extent to which work interfered with personal life, the extent to which personal responsibilities interfered with work, and the positive contribution that experiences in one sphere made to the other. Overall satisfaction with work–life balance was measured through one supplementary question. Examining these outcomes separately allowed the analysis to preserve differences that might be obscured by a single summary score.

The broader measurement literature warns against using different labels for similar constructs or combining distinct constructs under the single heading of balance. Casper et al. (2018) examined this ambiguity in a comprehensive review. Their argument lends support to reporting interference and enhancement separately and treating a global satisfaction question as an additional perception rather than a substitute for the domain-specific measures. The value of this distinction is interpretive: a person may report meaningful gains from work while also experiencing constraints on personal time.

2.3 Organisational conditions as theoretical context

The job demands–resources framework draws attention to the relationship between occupational requirements and the resources available to meet them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In school administration, the difference between a demanding responsibility and an unmanageable burden may depend on staffing, discretion, cooperation and timely support. This framework helps situate school leadership within its organisational context, even when the principal statistical analysis concentrates on work–life experiences and boundary management.

The study's empirical emphasis was therefore on the relationship of work–life experiences with perceived control over work–personal boundaries and with family or personal demands and resources. These constructs were examined individually rather than combined into an overarching index. The analytical focus reflects the specific research questions and avoids attributing independent effects that a cross-sectional survey cannot establish.

The JD–R perspective has since developed beyond the original distinction between demands and resources to consider how working conditions relate to well-being over time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Teacher-specific evidence is relevant but must be used with care. Collie (2023) found that job demands and resources were differentially associated with teachers' well-being and turnover intentions. Creagh et al. (2023), in a systematic synthesis covering teachers and school leaders, identified work intensification and time poverty as recurring concerns. These studies justify attention

to the organisation of school work; they cannot establish the level of administrative burden experienced by the present respondents. Accordingly, the JD–R model provides context rather than a fully tested explanatory model in this article.

2.4 Boundary control, family demands and personal resources

Boundary control concerns the extent to which individuals can exercise discretion over when, how and whether demands from one sphere interrupt another. Clark (2000) describes work and family as related domains whose borders are negotiated, not fixed. Kossek et al. (2012) distinguish perceived control from interruptions across role boundaries. For school heads, this leads to a practical question: can non-urgent school matters be deferred when personal responsibilities require attention? Such control may depend as much on institutional expectations as on personal discipline.

Family and personal circumstances also matter. Household work, caregiving and dependence on family or social support may shape the time and energy available to school heads. In this study, family/personal demands and family/personal resources were measured as separate dimensions, recognising that the presence of support is not simply the absence of competing responsibilities.

Resources should not be understood solely as the inverse of demands. Nilsson, Blomqvist and Andersson (2017) examined salutogenic resources in relation to teachers' work–life balance, drawing attention to the resources that sustain functioning under pressure. Boundary control is analytically adjacent but distinct: it concerns discretion over interruptions and the timing of role transitions. Family demands and personal resources may coexist, and their associations with interference and enhancement may not be mirror images. These distinctions are preserved in the present analysis.

2.5 Evidence from teachers and school leadership

Research on school work offers a necessary bridge between general work–family theory and the daily experience of educational leaders. Hascher and Waber (2021), in a systematic review of teacher well-being studies, demonstrate that well-being has been conceptualised through multiple psychological and organisational traditions. The review also shows why it is important to specify precisely which outcome a study measures. The present investigation concerns work–life interference and enhancement; these outcomes should not be described as direct measures of clinical stress, burnout or overall mental health.

In the Indian context, Chaudhry and Chhajer (2023) examined energy management, thriving, stress and psychological well-being among school teachers. Their findings locate individual resources and psychological experience within a recognisably Indian school setting, although their participants were teachers rather than school heads and their principal outcome was well-being rather than the three-dimensional work–life interface used here. International literature on school leadership, including Tahir et al. (2026), draws attention to administrative responsibilities and mental-health concerns among principals. Together these studies support a school-specific inquiry while underscoring the need to distinguish school heads from classroom teachers and locally observed evidence from findings obtained elsewhere.

2.6 Conceptual framework of the study

The study adopts an integrated but deliberately limited framework. Work–family conflict theory explains the two directions of interference; enrichment theory identifies positive exchanges between work and personal life; border theory directs attention to perceived control over role interruptions; and the demand–resource perspective clarifies why family circumstances may be experienced as constraints or supports (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Clark, 2000; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These perspectives are complementary, but they do not constitute a single causal theory tested in this survey.

The framework places three reported work–life outcomes alongside three correlates: boundary control, family/personal demands and family/personal resources. The three outcomes are assessed separately; global work–life satisfaction is a supplementary indicator, and gender is examined descriptively. Each association is understood as a contemporaneous relationship between self-reported measures. No direction of causation, mediation or change over time is claimed.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS (ASSOCIATIONS, NOT CAUSAL PATHWAYS).

Correlates: [Boundary control] [Family/personal demands] [Family/personal resources]
↕ Associations assessed independently ↕
Outcomes: [Work → personal-life interference] [Personal life → work interference] [Positive enhancement]
Supplementary indicator: global work–life satisfaction. Exploratory comparison: gender.

2.7 School leadership and the local research gap

Research on work–life balance increasingly recognises the coexistence of competing demands and positive enrichment, and the importance of maintaining workable boundaries between life domains. Studies of school principals have also identified administrative workload and institutional support as relevant concerns (Tahir et al., 2026; OECD, 2026). Yet the work–life experiences of government higher secondary school heads remain insufficiently documented in the specific context of Tiruchirappalli district. The present study contributes a local empirical account of how interference, enhancement, boundary control and family circumstances are associated in this leadership group.

2.8 Research objectives and analytical questions

The study pursued three objectives: first, to describe the levels of work-to-personal-life interference, personal-life-to-work interference and positive work–life enhancement among the participating school heads; second, to examine how these dimensions are associated with perceived boundary control, family/personal demands and family/personal resources; and third, to explore whether the reported work–life dimensions differed by gender. These objectives were addressed through the following research questions: (RQ1) How do school heads report the negative and positive dimensions of the work–life interface? (RQ2) What relationships exist between those dimensions and boundary control and family circumstances? (RQ3) Are there observable gender differences in the principal work–life outcomes? Because the study is descriptive and exploratory, it did not require directional null-hypothesis testing beyond the statistical comparisons reported.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design and setting

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed in government higher secondary schools in Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu. Information was collected once from each participant through a structured questionnaire. The design combined description of reported work–life experiences with correlational analysis of relevant psychological and contextual dimensions. The individual school head constituted the unit of analysis. No intervention was undertaken, and the study did not attempt to establish causality.

3.2 Participants and recruitment

Ninety headmasters and headmistresses serving in government higher secondary schools participated in the study after being approached through the accessible school-head network. Approximately 100 school heads formed the group available for contact, and 90 completed the questionnaire. The final respondents comprised 40 men (44.4%) and 50 women (55.6%), all reporting

regular or permanent appointments. The recruitment was non-probability based; accordingly, the findings pertain to the participating group and are not presented as probability estimates for all school heads in the district. Because a final verified count of invitations is unavailable, no exact response rate is asserted.

3.3 Instrument and operational scoring

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire using five-point response scales. Seven measures were used for this article: work-to-personal-life interference (five statements), personal-life-to-work interference (four statements), positive work–life enhancement (five statements), perceived boundary control (four statements), family/personal demands (three statements), family/personal resources (three statements), and global satisfaction with work–life balance (one statement). For each multi-item measure, the respondent's score was the arithmetic mean of its constituent responses. Higher interference scores represent greater encroachment of one life domain into the other; higher scores for enhancement, boundary control, resources and satisfaction indicate more favourable reported experiences in those respective constructs. The global satisfaction question was analysed separately rather than incorporated into the other scale scores.

These measures were selected to reflect the study's conceptual distinctions between demands, resources, the capacity to manage boundaries and the outcomes of the work–life interface. Cronbach's alpha was estimated for each multi-item measure in the present sample. The study does not claim that the questionnaire is a fully standardised diagnostic instrument, nor does it interpret any single mean score as a clinical or normative category.

3.4 Data screening and statistical procedures

The completed questionnaires yielded 90 distinct respondent records, with valid answers to all 65 five-point survey items included in the data screening. No repeated respondent identifiers or identical complete response patterns were identified. Demographic characteristics were summarised using frequencies and percentages; scale distributions were summarised using means and standard deviations. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency of the six multi-item scales reported here. Pearson's correlation coefficients examined relationships among the study dimensions; approximate 95% confidence intervals were calculated for the principal boundary-control correlations using Fisher's z transformation. Exploratory differences between male and female respondents were examined using two-sided Welch independent-samples tests. Because multiple comparisons were undertaken, results were interpreted primarily through their direction and magnitude rather than solely through statistical significance.

The analytical approach was intentionally parsimonious. It focused on directly interpretable scale means and bivariate associations. No causal, mediation or intervention effects were inferred, and no complex multivariable explanatory model was fitted to the sample.

The presentation of design, participants, measures and limitations was informed by guidance for transparent reporting of observational studies (von Elm et al., 2007).

3.5 Ethics and reporting transparency

Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. The responses were recorded using coded identifiers, and only aggregated results are presented in this article. Participation was voluntary, and the analysis does not disclose the identity of any school or individual respondent. The study does not claim an institutional ethics approval number where none has been documented.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Profile of respondents

The study included 90 school heads serving in regular appointments. Their mean age was 49.14 years (SD 6.62; range 40–60), and mean teaching experience was 24.22 years (SD 2.59; range 20–28). The average reported one-way journey to school was 59.36 minutes (SD 31.23). Respondents reported an average of 14.68 hours per week for household work and 15.38 hours for caregiving activities. Table 1 presents the principal demographic and work characteristics of the group.

Characteristic	Estimate
Respondents	90
Male	40 (44.4%)
Female	50 (55.6%)
Age, years	49.14 ± 6.62
Teaching experience, years	24.22 ± 2.59
Present-school service, whole years	3.20 ± 2.01
Married	72 (80.0%)
Unmarried	10 (11.1%)
Widowed	5 (5.6%)
Divorced/separated	3 (3.3%)
One-way commute, minutes	59.36 ± 31.23
School work outside school, h/week	2.94 ± 1.36
Household work, h/week	14.68 ± 6.12
Caregiving work, h/week	15.38 ± 6.45

Table 1. Demographic and work characteristics of participating school heads (N = 90).

4.2 Descriptive statistics and reliability

The mean work-to-life interference score was 2.93 (SD 0.90) and the mean life-to-work interference score was 3.00 (SD 0.95). Positive work–life enhancement averaged 3.43 (SD 0.74). The global satisfaction item averaged 3.52 (SD 1.08). These five-point response means are not prevalence rates or diagnostic categories. Internal consistency estimates for the six relevant multi-item scales ranged from .731 to .845, providing useful initial evidence of consistency within this sample but not proving overall construct validity.

Measure	No. of items	Mean	SD	α
Family/personal demands	3	3.004	0.911	0.747
Family/personal resources	3	3.426	0.845	0.731
Boundary control	4	3.194	0.948	0.831
Work-to-life interference	5	2.933	0.896	0.845
Life-to-work interference	4	2.997	0.948	0.832
Positive work–life enhancement	5	3.429	0.737	0.78
Global work–life satisfaction	1	3.522	1.083	—

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency of the study measures (N = 90). Cronbach's alpha is not applicable to a single-item satisfaction question.

4.3 Correlations with work–life balance dimensions

Boundary control showed strong inverse associations with work-to-life interference (r = −.850) and life-to-work interference (r = −.847), together with a positive association with work–life enhancement (r = .817); all unadjusted two-sided p values were < .001. Family/personal demands

correlated positively with interference (r = .808 and .814) and negatively with enhancement (r = −.822). Family/personal resources correlated negatively with interference (r = −.825 and −.758) and positively with enhancement (r = .795). The magnitudes were unusually high for conceptually distinct self-report dimensions and should not be interpreted as evidence of independent effects.

Correlate	Work→life	Life→work	Enhancement	Overall satisfaction
Family/personal demands	+0.808	+0.814	-0.822	-0.598
Family/personal resources	-0.825	-0.758	+0.795	+0.597
Boundary control	-0.850	-0.847	+0.817	+0.663

For the three boundary-control associations, approximate 95% confidence intervals (Fisher z transformation) were: work-to-life interference, r = -0.850, 95% CI [-0.899, -0.780]; life-to-work interference, r = -0.847, 95% CI [-0.897, -0.776]; positive enhancement, r = 0.817, 95% CI [0.734, 0.876]. These intervals quantify sampling uncertainty for the observed correlations; they do not address measurement overlap or recruitment bias.

Table 3. Exploratory Pearson correlations between family circumstances, boundary control and work–life outcomes (N = 90). All reported two-sided p values were < .001; significance tests were not adjusted for multiple comparisons.

4.4 Gender comparisons

Recorded gender differences in the principal work–life outcomes were small and statistically non-significant. Male respondents averaged 2.97 on work-to-life interference compared with 2.90 among females (Welch p = .728). For life-to-work interference the means were 3.14 and 2.89 (p = .210), while enhancement means were 3.38 and 3.47 (p = .539). These comparisons do not establish equivalence between genders or rule out differences in particular personal circumstances.

Outcome	Male (n=40)	Female (n=50)	p (Welch)
Work-to-life interference	2.970	2.904	0.728
Life-to-work interference	3.138	2.885	0.210
Positive enhancement	3.375	3.472	0.539
Global satisfaction	3.500	3.540	0.860

Table 4. Exploratory gender comparisons in work–life outcomes (two-sided Welch tests; unadjusted p values).

4.5 Interpretation of the measurement results

The measured dimensions were analysed on their original five-point metric without imposing unvalidated thresholds for high or low work–life balance. The correlation and reliability results should be understood as properties of the responses in this study. They are not evidence that the measures possess established normative cut-offs or that the variables are causally independent.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Work–life balance is not a single score

The results suggest that the negative and positive sides of the work–life interface can exist together. The mean scores for interference in the two directions were near the centre of the five-point response scale, while positive enhancement was somewhat higher. This pattern is not contradictory. A role may intrude on family time while also providing confidence, meaningful relationships or a sense of achievement. The distinction is consistent with the theoretical treatment of conflict and enrichment as

related but separate experiences (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Carlson et al., 2006).

An enhancement mean of 3.43 cannot by itself establish that the group enjoys adequate work–life balance. Similarly, interference means near the midpoint cannot be translated into severity classifications without validated reference values. What the data show is the distribution of self-reported scores on defined dimensions among these respondents.

The conceptual framework helps interpret these findings without converting their correlations into causal explanations. The coexistence of interference and enhancement is consistent with the argument that negative and positive work–family processes are not merely opposite ends of one continuum (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Casper et al., 2018). It is also consistent with the differentiated view of teacher well-being in Hascher and Waber (2021). What this sample adds is not proof of the mechanisms proposed by these theories, but a description of how the dimensions are reported together among government school heads in one district.

5.2 Boundary control as a practical organisational question

Boundary control had strong associations with each of the three outcomes. Respondents reporting greater control also reported less interference and more positive enhancement. This relationship deserves attention because it is both conceptually intelligible and potentially relevant to school practice. However, the unusually large coefficients are not in themselves evidence of a strong practical intervention effect. The scales were completed by the same individuals at one point in time; overlapping perceptions and response tendencies may have contributed to their magnitude. The findings indicate an association, not the direction of influence.

The administrative implications are questions worth examining rather than remedies already proved effective: which communications genuinely require an immediate response, which can be postponed, where can routine decisions be delegated, and how can a school head protect time for family responsibilities without compromising essential school functions? These questions shift attention from individual resilience alone towards the organisation of work.

5.3 What the analysis does not establish about organisational demands and resources

Although the job demands–resources model illuminates the organisational conditions of school leadership (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), this study did not set out to rank institutional demands and resources as competing predictors. Its evidence concerns how work–life interference and enhancement are associated with boundary control and family circumstances. These results are appropriately understood as descriptive and correlational, not as estimates of causal contributions.

Further research could extend this account by measuring specific administrative demands, levels of staffing and delegation, supervisory support and communication expectations as distinct organisational constructs. Such an extension would enable closer examination of the circumstances in which greater boundary control becomes possible.

School leadership research gives the boundary-control findings practical significance. Work intensification and reduced discretionary time have been documented in systematic research on school work (Creagh et al., 2023), while JD–R research shows why an organisational response cannot be replaced by individual advice alone (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Collie, 2023). The present data cannot tell us whether changing a particular rule would improve balance; they do suggest that the capacity to manage interruptions merits institutional attention and closer study.

5.4 Personal and family contexts

The family-related results make a complementary point. Higher perceived demands were associated with more interference and less enhancement; resources showed the reverse pattern. This is broadly consistent with work–family conflict and enrichment theory. The strength of these

relationships, however, calls for restraint. They do not tell us which particular family arrangements cause difficulty, nor whether support in the home offsets institutional demands. The questionnaire gives a cross-sectional account of perceptions, not a sequence of events from which causal mechanisms can be inferred.

Household and caregiving responsibilities are likely to differ across individual life situations, and the present study did not attempt to establish separate effects for each arrangement. A focused follow-up investigation could explore how caregiving intensity, household support and commuting conditions shape the experience of school leadership.

5.5 Gender and the limits of a null result

No statistically significant difference between the recorded male and female groups emerged on the three principal work–life outcomes. This should not be read as evidence that gender is unimportant. A group-level mean can conceal different experiences of household work, caregiving and institutional expectations. Moreover, the study was not designed to establish equivalence between groups. The appropriate conclusion is narrower: this sample did not provide clear statistical evidence of a gender difference in the outcomes examined.

The correlations involving family circumstances should also be read against evidence that resources contribute to work–life functioning in ways not reducible to the absence of pressure (Nilsson et al., 2017). The findings are compatible with that perspective, but common-method measurement, respondent interpretation and the strong overlap between constructs prevent claims that family resources independently protect against interference.

5.6 Relationship to existing leadership evidence

The local results enter a broader discussion about the sustainability of school leadership. The OECD (2026) examines principals' work across participating systems, and Tahir et al. (2026) draw attention to administrative workload and support in a multinational research literature. Such studies justify asking similar questions in Tamil Nadu, but not importing their estimates or explanatory patterns. The value of the present paper lies in its own bounded observations and in identifying boundary arrangements and family circumstances as topics for further inquiry.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A measured institutional response would begin with an examination of routine administrative practices. Schools and education authorities might review expectations for after-hours communication, repetitive reporting, possibilities for delegation and the availability of support when family responsibilities intensify. These are implications for discussion, not interventions shown to be effective by this study. Future research could examine whether changes to such arrangements are accompanied by changes in reported work–life experience.

Future studies should document the sampling frame and recruitment sequence, retain auditable source records and collect complementary organisational information rather than relying entirely on self-report. Larger datasets could test whether work demands, institutional resources, boundary control and family circumstances form distinct constructs and whether their relationships persist after adjustment for confounders. Repeated measurements would strengthen understanding of temporal order.

7. LIMITATIONS

The study is restricted to 90 consenting school heads recruited through an accessible, non-probability group in one district. Its results cannot be generalised statistically to all school heads in Tiruchirappalli or Tamil Nadu. Because the data were collected once and from the same respondents, associations may reflect common-method variance, shared item interpretation or overlapping

constructs; they cannot identify causes. Several correlations are unusually large and warrant caution. Internal-consistency coefficients do not establish the full validity of the questionnaire in this population. The study did not assess objective workload or organisational records, and no complex JD–R or mediation model was tested. Multiple exploratory comparisons were conducted without confirmatory multiplicity adjustment. These limits should guide both the interpretation and future replication of the findings.

8. CONCLUSION

The responses of 90 government higher secondary school heads show that work–life balance is better described as a set of related experiences than as a single score. Work-to-life and life-to-work interference were reported alongside positive enhancement. Perceived boundary control and family circumstances were strongly associated with these outcomes; the exploratory gender comparisons did not show statistically significant differences. The study cannot establish causation or represent all school heads in the district. Its principal contribution is to bring the different dimensions of work and personal life into the same local account and to make the organisation of school leadership—not only individual coping—a legitimate subject of further enquiry.

REFERENCES

1. Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands–resources model: State of the art. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22(3), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115
2. Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 22(3), 273–285. https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056
3. Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., & Williams, L. J. (2000). Construction and initial validation of a multidimensional measure of work–family conflict. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 56(2), 249–276. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1713
4. Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., Wayne, J. H., & Grzywacz, J. G. (2006). Measuring the positive side of the work–family interface: Development and validation of a work–family enrichment scale. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68(1), 131–164. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.02.002
5. Casper, W. J., Vaziri, H., Wayne, J. H., DeHauw, S., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2018). The jingle-jangle of work–nonwork balance: A comprehensive and meta-analytic review of its meaning and measurement. Journal of Applied Psychology, 103(2), 182–214. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000259
6. Chaudhry, S., & Chhajer, R. (2023). Enhancing psychological well-being of school teachers in India: Role of energy management, thriving, and stress. Frontiers in Psychology, 14, 1239587. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1239587
7. Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. Human Relations, 53(6), 747–770. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700536001
8. Collie, R. J. (2023). Teacher well-being and turnover intentions: Investigating the roles of job resources and job demands. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 93(3), 712–726. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12587
9. Creagh, S., Thompson, G., Mockler, N., Stacey, M., & Hogan, A. (2023). Workload, work intensification and time poverty for teachers and school leaders: A systematic research synthesis. Educational Review. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2196607
10. Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. Academy of Management Review, 10(1), 76–88. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352
11. Greenhaus, J. H., & Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work–family enrichment. Academy of Management Review, 31(1), 72–92. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.19379625

12. Hascher, T., & Waber, J. (2021). Teacher well-being: A systematic review of the research literature from the year 2000–2019. Educational Research Review, 34, 100411. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100411
13. Kossek, E. E., Ruderman, M. N., Braddy, P. W., & Hannum, K. M. (2012). Work–nonwork boundary management profiles: A person-centered approach. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 81(1), 112–128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.04.003
14. Michel, J. S., Kotrba, L. M., Mitchelson, J. K., Clark, M. A., & Baltes, B. B. (2011). Antecedents of work–family conflict: A meta-analytic review. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 32(5), 689–725. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.695
15. Nilsson, M., Blomqvist, K., & Andersson, I. (2017). Salutogenic resources in relation to teachers' work–life balance. Work, 56(4), 591–602. https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-172528
16. OECD. (2026). The value of school principals in TALIS 2024. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/a2cdb777-en
17. Tahir, L. M., Wan Mohd Yunus, W. M. A., & Rosli, M. S. (2026). Stress and mental health among school principals: A scoping review. School Mental Health, 18, 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-025-09825-3
18. von Elm, E., Altman, D. G., Egger, M., Pocock, S. J., Gøtzsche, P. C., & Vandenbroucke, J. P. (2007). The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement: Guidelines for reporting observational studies. PLOS Medicine, 4(10), e296. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0040296