

Work-Life Balance of National Migrant Workers in the Industrial Sector

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ABSTRACT

Internal (national) labour migration has become one of the defining features of industrial employment in developing economies, with tens of millions of workers moving from rural and economically weaker regions to industrial hubs in search of livelihood. While this movement sustains manufacturing, construction, textile, and processing industries, it imposes a distinctive set of pressures on the personal, familial, and social lives of the workers who undertake it. This paper examines the work-life balance (WLB) of national migrant workers employed in the industrial sector, drawing on secondary data, published empirical studies, and government reports to build a comprehensive analytical account of the phenomenon. The study situates migrant workers' WLB within established theoretical frameworks — role conflict theory, the spillover-compensation model, and the boundary theory of work and family — and examines how migration status compounds the ordinary tensions between paid work and personal life. Key factors analyzed include long and irregular working hours, absence of family and social support networks at the destination, substandard housing and living conditions, wage insecurity, restricted access to childcare and healthcare, linguistic and cultural isolation, and weak legal protection. The analysis further disaggregates the experience by gender, sector (textiles, construction, plywood and timber processing, manufacturing, and services), and migration pattern (circular, seasonal, and long-term). The paper finds that migrant workers in industrial settings systematically report lower work-life balance than their non-migrant counterparts, driven primarily by the erosion of informal support systems that typically buffer work-family conflict, and by employer and policy environments that treat migrant labour as a transient input rather than a stable workforce requiring welfare investment. The study concludes with policy-level and organisational-level recommendations, including portable social security, on-site welfare infrastructure, working-hour regulation, and inclusive human resource practices, and identifies directions for future research, particularly longitudinal and mixed-

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BY) method studies that can track how work-life balance evolves over the migration cycle.
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Keywords: Work-life balance; migrant workers; industrial sector; internal migration; role conflict; quality of work life; labour welfare; human resource management

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged over the past three decades as one of the central concerns of human resource management, organisational behaviour, and labour welfare research. It refers, broadly, to an individual's ability to meet the demands of paid employment while also fulfilling personal, familial, and social responsibilities without one domain persistently undermining the other. Campbell Clark (2000) described work-life balance as a state of satisfaction and effective functioning at work and at home, achieved with a minimum of role conflict, while Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) proposed that balance rests on three components — time, involvement, and satisfaction — being roughly equally distributed between the work and family domains. These conceptualisations, however, were developed largely with reference to settled, urban, often white-collar employees whose work and family lives occur within a single, stable geographic and social setting.

The situation changes considerably when the worker in question is a migrant — someone who has moved away from their home region, often across state or provincial boundaries, to take up industrial employment. For such workers, "life" outside work is not simply a matter of commuting home to a family; it may mean sending remittances to a family hundreds or thousands of kilometres away, living in shared dormitories or informal settlements, negotiating an unfamiliar language and culture, and maintaining relationships through infrequent visits and phone calls rather than daily presence. The migrant worker's work-life balance is therefore shaped not only by the conventional determinants examined in mainstream WLB literature — working hours, workload, supervisor support — but by an additional layer of

migration-specific stressors: separation from family, absence of community and social capital at the destination, insecure housing, and often precarious legal and contractual status.

1.2 The Scale and Significance of Internal Migration for Industry

National (internal) migration for work is a defining feature of large developing economies. In India, for instance, estimates place the number of internal migrants at well over 100 million, with the migrant workforce comprising roughly a fifth of the country's total labour force. The Economic Survey of India (2016–17) used railway passenger-flow data to estimate that inter-state labour mobility was considerably higher than earlier census-based figures had suggested, with an average of close to nine million people moving across state lines annually for work between 2011 and 2016, and a stock of inter-state migrants estimated at around 60 million by 2011–12. The Census of India (2011) recorded a total of over 450 million internal migrants (for all reasons combined, including marriage, education, and business), while more recent survey-based estimates such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2020–21) put the overall migration rate at close to 29 percent of the population, with urban migration rates markedly higher than rural ones. Much of this migration flows from relatively low-income states towards industrially developed regions and metropolitan clusters, feeding sectors such as construction, textiles and garments, brick kilns, plywood and timber processing, food processing, and light manufacturing.

This pattern is not unique to India. Similar dynamics of internal, rural-to-industrial migration are documented in China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, where large industrial workforces — particularly in textiles, garments, and electronics assembly — are

substantially composed of workers who have relocated from other regions of the same country. The economic significance of this labour is considerable: industrial output, export competitiveness, and urban service economies depend heavily on the willingness of migrant workers to relocate, often repeatedly, in search of employment. Yet the same workers who sustain industrial growth are frequently the least protected by labour law, the least represented by trade unions, and the least visible in corporate human resource policy, making them a population whose work-life balance is simultaneously highly consequential and poorly understood.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Despite the scale of internal labour migration, the bulk of established WLB literature continues to focus on settled, often professional or white-collar populations — IT professionals, bank employees, academics, and executives — for whom "life" outside work is assumed to be geographically co-located with work. Studies specifically addressing the work-life balance of migrant industrial workers remain comparatively limited, scattered across sector-specific studies (plywood industry workers in Kerala, textile workers in Tamil Nadu, garment workers in Bangladesh, service-sector migrants in London, and onshore petroleum workers in the Gulf) rather than synthesised into a coherent understanding of the phenomenon as it applies broadly to national migrant industrial labour. This paper seeks to address that gap by consolidating existing empirical findings, theoretical frameworks, and policy documentation into a single analytical account, with the aim of identifying both the common structural drivers of poor work-life balance among migrant industrial workers and the sector- and gender-specific variations that shape their experience.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- a. To examine the concept of work-life balance as it applies specifically to national migrant workers employed in the industrial sector.
- b. To identify the principal factors —

organisational, social, economic, and legal — that shape the work-life balance of migrant industrial workers.

- c. To analyse how migration status compounds or transforms conventional work-family conflict, drawing on role theory and boundary theory.
- d. To examine variation in work-life balance outcomes across gender, industry sub-sector, and migration pattern (seasonal, circular, and long-term).
- e. To propose policy and organisational recommendations that can improve the work-life balance of migrant industrial workers.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study is based on a synthesis of secondary sources: peer-reviewed journal articles, government survey data and reports, and published sector studies concerning migrant industrial labour, predominantly (though not exclusively) drawn from the South and Southeast Asian context, where internal industrial migration is most extensively documented. It does not present new primary survey data; rather, it constructs an analytical review intended to organise and interpret existing findings within a coherent theoretical structure. As such, its conclusions are necessarily general rather than specific to any single factory, region, or migration corridor, and future primary research — particularly longitudinal and comparative studies would be needed to test the propositions advanced here in specific industrial settings.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Defining Work-Life Balance

various, sometimes contested, ways in the literature. Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) foundational work on work-family conflict framed the issue in terms of role conflict theory: individuals occupy multiple roles (worker, spouse, parent, community member), each of which makes competing demands on time, energy, and psychological engagement; when the pressures associated with participation in one role are incompatible with participation in another,

conflict results. Three forms of conflict were identified — time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based — each of which can operate in either direction (work interfering with family, or family interfering with work).

Subsequent scholarship shifted the framing from "conflict" to "balance" as a more positive, achievable construct. Campbell Clark (2000) defined work-life balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with minimal role conflict, and introduced border theory, which conceptualises work and family as separate domains with borders that individuals cross daily; the permeability, flexibility, and blending of these borders shape how easily balance can be achieved. Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) proposed a three-part structure of balance — time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance — which has since been widely used as an operational definition in survey-based WLB research. A complementary line of theory, articulated by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), reframed the work-family relationship positively through the concept of work-family enrichment, the extent to which experience in one role improves quality of life in the other, suggesting that work and family need not be purely competitive domains.

2.2 Migration and the Reconfiguration of Work-Life Boundaries

For migrant workers, these theoretical frameworks require an important extension: the "life" side of the work-life equation is itself displaced. Where non-migrant workers negotiate role conflict within a single household and community, migrant workers typically negotiate it across geographic distance — their spousal, parental, and filial roles are often performed remotely, through remittances, phone calls, and periodic visits, rather than through daily co-presence. This transforms border theory's notion of "crossing" from a daily commute into a much larger, less frequent, and more consequential act of travel — often undertaken only once or twice a year for long-term migrants, or on a weekly or fortnightly cycle for circular and seasonal migrants working within reasonable distance of

home.

Scholars examining migrant work-life balance in Western destination contexts have extended these frameworks through an intersectional and relational lens. Ali, Malik, Pereira and Al Ariss (2017), studying Muslim migrant women in Western labour markets, argued that WLB analysis of migrant populations must move beyond a single level of analysis to account for the layered influence of discrimination, socio-cultural expectation, and religious pressure alongside conventional work-family variables — a relational, multi-level understanding that is equally applicable, with contextual modification, to internal migrants moving within their own country but across sharply different regional, linguistic, and cultural zones. Similarly, research on Chinese migrant mothers relocating internationally has shown that balance or conflict is shaped by the interrelationship between socio-cultural, work, and family domains simultaneously, rather than by work and family factors in isolation, and that migrants often experience negative spillover across domains alongside compensatory and renegotiation strategies as they attempt to reconstruct a sense of equilibrium in an unfamiliar setting.

Research specifically addressing migrant workers in low-wage service and industrial employment in host cities has similarly found that work-life balance for this population is frequently precarious and neglected by both employers and researchers, even though migrant labour underpins the very economic activity — such as healthcare, hospitality, and construction — that enables the work-life balance of others. This observation is particularly salient for national migrant industrial workers, whose labour sustains manufacturing output and urban infrastructure while their own personal and family lives remain largely outside the scope of employer or policy attention.

2.3 Quality of Work Life and Migrant Labour

A closely related body of work examines "quality of work life" (QWL) among migrant labour in specific industrial sub-sectors. A study of migrant labourers in the plywood industry in Kerala,

India, surveying 250 workers, found that migration generally produced a positive shift in workers' overall quality of work life, associated with improved earnings and employment stability relative to their region of origin, even though the same workers continued to report specific stresses connected to living and working away from home. This finding is important because it cautions against treating migrant industrial employment purely as a source of hardship: for many workers, migration represents a rational and often welfare-improving choice relative to the alternative of remaining in an area with limited employment opportunity. At the same time, the improvement in overall quality of life recorded in such studies typically coexists with continued deficits in the specifically relational and psychological dimensions of well-being — separation from family, restricted leisure, and limited social support — indicating that migrant workers may simultaneously experience economic gain and work-life strain.

2.4 Gendered Dimensions of Migrant Work-Life Balance

Gender is a consistently significant variable in migrant work-life balance research. Studies of migrant women employed in the textile and garment sector, a major employer of internal migrant female labour in regions such as Tamil Nadu, India, report that migrant women workers face compounded difficulty in achieving work-life balance because of long working hours, restricted access to childcare, absence of established social support networks in the new industrial location, prevailing social expectations regarding domestic responsibility, and, in some cases, exploitative working conditions; caregiving-related separation from their own children while employed in roles that may themselves involve caregiving for others has been identified as a particularly acute source of strain. Comparable findings emerge from studies of the ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh, where individual and organisational work-life balance strategies have been examined in relation to workers' subjective well-being, with autonomy, work-life conflict, and life satisfaction identified as significant correlates of overall well-being

outcomes.

Gendered patterns also appear in studies of women workers in other industrial sub-sectors, such as the tannery industry in Tamil Nadu, where work-life balance issues have been linked to a combination of workplace-related factors (working conditions, flexibility, workload, and travel time) and family-related factors (domestic demands, family support, and personal circumstances); notably, some of this research finds that workers with less industry experience report fewer work-life balance difficulties than more experienced workers, suggesting that the accumulation of years in physically and socially demanding industrial roles may itself erode work-life balance over time, independent of migration status.

2.5 Migrant Work-Life Balance Across Sectors and Geographies

Beyond South Asia, comparative evidence reinforces the generality of these patterns. A qualitative phenomenological study of Filipino migrant onshore workers in the petroleum industry in Qatar found that while workers were generally satisfied with salary levels and workplace benefits, a number nonetheless reported difficulty balancing time commitments between work and personal life, alongside experiences of discrimination in the host environment — illustrating that even relatively well-compensated migrant industrial employment does not automatically translate into strong work-life balance. Studies of industrial and service-sector labour more broadly, such as research conducted in Thailand examining factors associated with work-life balance among a sample of workers in industrial and service employment, have found that a majority of workers in such roles work more hours per day than stipulated under labour law, correlating with lower reported balance between work and personal life. These cross-national findings, spanning Gulf, Southeast Asian, and South Asian industrial contexts, converge on a common conclusion: irrespective of destination country or specific industry, migrant industrial workers as a category tend to report systematically greater

difficulty reconciling work with personal and family life than do non-migrant workers in comparable roles.

2.6 Organizational and Policy Literature on Work-Life Balance

At the organisational level, the broader work-life balance literature has documented the benefits of formal WLB policies and practices — flexible scheduling, family leave, on-site childcare, and employee assistance programmes — in reducing work-family conflict, improving job satisfaction, and reducing turnover intention. However, studies conducted within Indian corporate contexts have cautioned that the transplantation of Western-style work-life balance programmes does not automatically produce equivalent benefits, noting that family-friendly policies may have mixed effects on stress outcomes and that formal WLB provisions are frequently under-implemented in practice even where policies formally exist. For migrant industrial workers specifically — who are typically employed in informal or semi-formal arrangements, through labour contractors, and without long-term employment contracts — this gap between policy and implementation is likely to be still wider, since such workers rarely fall within the scope of corporate human resource departments' formal welfare planning.

2.7 Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

Drawing the literature together, this paper adopts an integrated framework in which the work-life balance of national migrant industrial workers is understood as a function of four interacting domains:

Structural/organisational factors — working hours, shift patterns, workload, wage structure, job security, and supervisor or contractor treatment.

Spatial/relational factors — geographic separation from family, disruption of daily co-presence with spouses, children, and parents, and the substitution of remittance and periodic visitation for continuous relationship maintenance.

Social-support factors — the presence or absence

of community networks, peer support among co-migrants, and access to informal and formal social capital at the destination.

Legal/institutional factors — the degree of legal protection, portability of social security and welfare entitlements across state or regional boundaries, and access to housing, healthcare, and education for accompanying family members.

This framework guides the analysis presented in the following section.

3. National Migrant Workers In The Industrial Sector: Contextual Analysis

3.1 Patterns of Internal Industrial Migration

National migrant industrial workers can be broadly classified into three patterns of movement, each carrying distinct implications for work-life balance:

Long-term or permanent migrants relocate to an industrial hub with the intention of remaining for an extended period, sometimes settling with their immediate family at the destination. For this group, work-life balance challenges centre on establishing a new social support structure, navigating housing and schooling for children, and adapting to a different language and cultural environment, but they are less affected by the acute separation from family experienced by other migrant categories.

Circular migrants move repeatedly between their home region and the industrial destination, often on a seasonal or cyclical basis tied to agricultural calendars, festival periods, or contract renewal cycles. For this group, family life is punctuated rather than continuous: work-life balance is experienced as an oscillation between intense work-focused periods away from home and compressed periods of family and social reintegration during visits home, each of which brings its own adjustment demands.

Seasonal migrants, closely related to circular migrants but typically moving for shorter, more clearly bounded periods (a single harvest season, a peak manufacturing order cycle, or construction season), experience the least

disruption to their base household structure but often endure the most precarious working and living conditions at the destination, given the short-term and informal nature of their employment.

Each of these patterns interacts differently with the four-domain framework set out above, and empirical work-life balance outcomes are likely to vary accordingly — a consideration frequently underexamined in existing research, which tends to treat "migrant worker" as a single undifferentiated category.

3.2 Sectoral Distribution of Migrant Industrial Labour

Migrant labour in industrial and allied sectors is concentrated in several recognisable sub-sectors, each with characteristic work-life balance implications:

Textiles and garments: A major employer of migrant labour, particularly migrant women, in regions such as Tamil Nadu, India, and comparable industrial clusters elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia. Long shift hours, production-linked incentive structures that discourage leave-taking, and hostel- or dormitory-based accommodation are characteristic features.

Plywood, timber, and wood-processing industries: Documented particularly in the Kerala plywood sector, employing substantial numbers of interstate migrant men, often on a circular migration basis, with accommodation typically provided at or near the factory site.

Construction: One of the largest single employers of internal migrant labour, frequently organised through labour contractors ("jobbers" or "mistris") who recruit workers in gangs from source regions; work is inherently itinerant, following project sites, and workers frequently live in temporary on-site shelters with minimal amenities.

Brick kilns, mining, and quarrying: Sectors associated with some of the most precarious migrant employment conditions, often involving advance wage payments that create informal bondage-like relationships and severely constrain

workers' bargaining power over working hours and living conditions.

Manufacturing and light industry (electronics assembly, food processing, auto components): Increasingly significant employers of migrant labour in industrial corridors, generally offering more formalised employment relationships than construction or brick kilns, but still characterised by contract or agency-based hiring that limits access to statutory benefits.

Petroleum, energy, and allied industries in overseas or cross-regional postings: Relevant for workers migrating to distant industrial zones (including cross-border postings for citizens working in national industries abroad), where high pay is frequently offset by extended rotational assignments and limited opportunity for family contact.

3.3 Living and Housing Conditions

A recurring theme across sectoral studies is the influence of housing arrangements on work-life balance. Migrant industrial workers are frequently housed in employer-provided dormitories, labour camps, or informal settlements clustered around industrial estates. These arrangements typically involve shared rooms, limited privacy, and communal facilities, and in many cases lack basic amenities such as reliable sanitation, clean drinking water, or safe recreational space. Because these residential arrangements are directly tied to employment, workers' housing security is contingent on continued employment, collapsing the ordinary separation between "workplace" and "residence" that underpins most conventional work-life balance theory: for many migrant industrial workers, the border between work and home, in a literal spatial sense, scarcely exists.

3.4 Wage Structures and Economic Pressure

Migrant industrial workers are frequently paid on a piece-rate or production-linked basis, or through daily or weekly wage arrangements mediated by labour contractors, rather than through the fixed monthly salary structures more typical of formal-sector employment. This wage structure creates strong incentives to maximise

working hours and minimise leave-taking, since income is directly tied to attendance and output rather than guaranteed irrespective of hours worked. Combined with the imperative to remit a substantial share of earnings to family at the origin location, this produces persistent pressure toward long working hours and voluntary forgoing of rest days — a pattern documented in industrial and service-sector labour studies showing that a majority of such workers exceed statutory daily working-hour limits.

3.5 Social Isolation and Cultural Displacement

Migrant industrial workers, particularly those crossing linguistic or regional boundaries within their own country, frequently experience a pronounced loss of social capital at the destination. Unlike non-migrant workers, who typically retain access to extended family, neighbours, and lifelong community relationships that can provide emotional support, informal childcare assistance, or crisis assistance, migrant workers must reconstruct such networks from limited materials — co-workers from the same region, informal community associations, or religious institutions serving migrant populations. Where such reconstruction is successful, it can substantially buffer work-life strain; where it is not, workers report heightened loneliness, difficulty accessing information about local services, and vulnerability to exploitation, given the absence of any local advocate or support figure.

3.6 Legal and Institutional Protection

Although several countries maintain specific legislative frameworks intended to protect internal migrant workers — in India, for example, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, requires registration of contractors and establishments employing such workers and mandates certain conditions of service — implementation has historically been weak, and large sections of the migrant industrial workforce remain outside the scope of effective regulatory oversight. A recurring institutional gap concerns the portability of welfare entitlements: social

security schemes, healthcare access, and food-subsidy or ration entitlements are frequently tied to a worker's registered domicile, meaning that a worker who has relocated for employment may be unable to access the very welfare protections designed to support low-income households, precisely at the point in their life when such protections would be most valuable. This administrative fragmentation compounds the work-life balance difficulties documented at the organisational and social levels, since it removes a potential institutional buffer that could otherwise offset the loss of informal, community-based support experienced through migration.

4. Analysis: Key Factors Shaping Migrant Workers' Work-Life Balance

Drawing on the theoretical framework and contextual review above, this section presents an integrated analysis of the principal factors influencing the work-life balance of national migrant industrial workers, organised according to the four domains identified in Section 2.7.

4.1 Structural and Organizational Factors

Working hours and shift structure. Extended and often irregular working hours represent the single most frequently cited determinant of poor work-life balance across the reviewed literature. Production-linked wage structures, understaffing, and seasonal order surges in industries such as textiles and garments create strong incentives — from both employer and worker sides — for hours substantially in excess of statutory limits. Because migrant workers typically lack the bargaining power of unionised or long-tenured local employees, they are less able to resist such demands, and because migration is frequently motivated by the need to maximise remittance income within a limited period of employment, workers themselves may voluntarily accept extended hours as a rational short-term strategy, even where this comes at a cost to rest, leisure, and family contact.

Job and income insecurity. Contract-based, contractor-mediated, and seasonal employment arrangements, common throughout migrant industrial labour, generate chronic uncertainty about the duration and continuity of income.

This economic insecurity itself constitutes a source of psychological strain that interacts with, and often amplifies, the effects of long working hours: workers experiencing job insecurity have less capacity to negotiate reduced hours or refuse additional shifts, since doing so may jeopardise future engagement.

Supervisory and contractor relationships. Because much migrant industrial labour is mediated through labour contractors rather than direct employer-employee relationships, the quality of work-life balance experienced by migrant workers is heavily influenced by the disposition of the intermediary contractor, who typically controls scheduling, housing allocation, and — in advance-payment or debt-bonded arrangements — the worker's practical freedom to leave employment. Where contractors act as informal patrons providing genuine welfare support, migrant workers' overall quality of work life may be enhanced; where contractors exploit their intermediary position, workers face compounded vulnerability.

4.2 Spatial and Relational Factors

Family separation. For migrant workers who leave a spouse, children, or elderly parents at the place of origin, physical separation is the most direct and often the most emotionally significant challenge to work-life balance. Unlike conventional work-family conflict, which concerns the allocation of time and energy between co-located domains, migrant family separation removes the possibility of daily role performance altogether: a migrant father cannot be present for a child's daily routine; a migrant daughter cannot provide hands-on care for an ageing parent. Remittances and periodic communication substitute for, but do not replace, these forms of relational presence, and workers frequently report guilt, anxiety, and a persistent sense of role failure connected to this substitution.

Reunion and reintegration cycles. For circular and seasonal migrants, periodic return to the family home introduces its own work-life balance dynamic: reintegration into family and community life after weeks or months away can

be experienced positively, as a restorative period, but may also generate its own tensions, particularly where an extended absence has altered family roles and routines in ways the returning worker must renegotiate.

Household structure changes at the destination. Long-term migrants who relocate with their nuclear family face a related but distinct set of pressures: establishing childcare, schooling, and healthcare access in an unfamiliar location, often without the extended family support that would otherwise be available at the place of origin, shifting more of the burden of work-family reconciliation onto the migrant household itself.

4.3 Social Support Factors

Loss of informal support networks. Non-migrant workers typically draw on an extensive, taken-for-granted network of family, neighbours, and long-standing community relationships to manage everyday work-life tensions — arranging informal childcare, sharing household responsibilities, or simply providing emotional support during periods of stress. Migrant workers must reconstruct equivalent support largely from scratch, and the resulting deficit is one of the most consistently identified drivers of lower work-life balance among migrant populations relative to non-migrants in the same industry and role.

Peer and community networks among co-migrants. Where migrant workers relocate in groups from the same home region, or where they are able to form associations with earlier migrants from similar backgrounds, some of this lost social capital can be reconstructed. Shared housing arrangements, informal mutual-aid practices, and community or religious associations catering specifically to migrant populations have all been documented as partial substitutes for the family and community networks left behind, and their presence or absence appears to meaningfully affect reported work-life balance and overall psychological well-being.

Gendered access to support. Migrant women workers face a distinctive combination of support deficits: in addition to losing access to extended

family assistance with domestic and caregiving responsibilities, they frequently confront heightened safety concerns in unfamiliar destination environments, more restrictive social norms governing their mobility and independent social participation, and, in some sectors, a greater likelihood of workplace harassment or exploitation given weaker collective bargaining power. These compounded pressures explain why migrant women's work-life balance outcomes are consistently reported as more strained than those of migrant men in comparable industrial roles.

4.4 Legal, Institutional, and Policy Factors

Portability of entitlements. As discussed in Section 3.6, the tying of social security, healthcare, and welfare entitlements to a worker's domicile of origin, rather than their place of current employment, represents a structural policy failure that directly undermines migrant work-life balance, since it deprives migrant households of institutional support precisely where informal support is also weakest.

Weak enforcement of labour standards. Even where legislative protections nominally exist, weak enforcement — arising from limited labour inspectorate capacity, the informal and dispersed nature of much migrant employment, and workers' own reluctance to report violations for fear of losing employment or housing — means that statutory limits on working hours, minimum wage requirements, and housing standards are frequently not observed in practice for migrant industrial workers.

Absence of migrant-specific organisational HR policy. Corporate work-life balance initiatives, where they exist, are typically designed with a settled, often white-collar workforce in mind, and rarely extend to contract or contractor-mediated migrant labour, even where such labour constitutes a substantial share of a plant's overall workforce. This gap reflects both a governance issue (contractor-employed workers may formally sit outside the direct employer's human resource remit) and, in many cases, an attentional gap, wherein migrant workers' welfare is simply not considered part of mainstream HR strategy.

4.5 Cross-Cutting Observations

Several cross-cutting patterns emerge from the analysis above. First, migration does not uniformly worsen work-life balance relative to the counterfactual of remaining in the region of origin: several studies indicate that migrant workers experience improved overall quality of work life, associated primarily with better earnings and employment opportunity, even as they report specific and persistent deficits in the relational and psychological dimensions of well-being. Migrant work-life balance should therefore be understood not as a single deteriorating trend but as a trade-off structure, in which economic gain is frequently purchased at the cost of relational and social strain.

Second, gender consistently moderates the severity of work-life balance challenges, with migrant women reporting more acute strain across most of the dimensions examined, reflecting the intersection of migration-related and gender-related disadvantage.

Third, the informality of much migrant industrial employment — through labour contractors, seasonal arrangements, and housing tied to employment — means that work-life balance for this population cannot be addressed solely through conventional organisational HR interventions (flexible scheduling, leave policy, and so on) designed for formally employed, settled workforces; interventions must additionally address the structural and legal conditions of informal and intermediary-mediated employment.

Fourth, social support — whether reconstructed informally among co-migrants or provided through community, religious, or civil-society organisations — appears to function as the single most significant buffer against the work-life balance deficits associated with migration, suggesting that policy and organisational interventions aimed at strengthening migrant community infrastructure at destination locations may yield disproportionate benefits relative to their cost.

5. Discussion And Policy Implications

5.1 Implications for Policy

The analysis suggests several priority areas for policy intervention. First, the portability of social security and welfare entitlements across regional or state boundaries would directly address one of the most significant institutional gaps identified in the review, allowing migrant workers to access healthcare, food security, and social insurance benefits at their place of employment rather than only at their place of origin. Second, strengthened enforcement of existing labour legislation governing migrant and contract labour — including registration requirements for labour contractors, statutory limits on working hours, and minimum housing standards — would help close the gap between the protections nominally available and those actually experienced by workers. Third, investment in destination-based welfare infrastructure specifically oriented to migrant populations — including migrant resource centres, legal aid services, and childcare or eldercare support for accompanying family members — could substantially strengthen the social-support buffer identified as central to work-life balance outcomes.

5.2 Implications for Employers and Human Resource Practice

At the organisational level, employers and labour contractors engaging migrant industrial workers should consider extending existing work-life balance frameworks to explicitly include this population, rather than treating migrant labour as outside the remit of formal HR policy. Practical measures could include regulating and monitoring working hours even where wages are structured on a piece-rate or output basis; providing decent, adequately serviced housing where accommodation is employer-provided; facilitating communication with family at the place of origin, for instance through subsidised communication access; and recognising and, where feasible, supporting periodic return visits as a legitimate component of workers' overall welfare rather than purely as an operational inconvenience. Employers in sectors with a high proportion of migrant women workers should additionally attend to gender-specific safety,

harassment-prevention, and support needs, given the compounded strain documented among this sub-population.

5.3 Implications for Future Research

The existing literature on migrant work-life balance is characterised by a preponderance of cross-sectional, sector-specific studies, often based on modest sample sizes within a single industry or region. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs capable of tracking how work-life balance evolves over the course of an individual worker's migration cycle — from initial relocation, through periods of employment and possible return visits, to eventual long-term settlement or return migration — and from comparative studies capable of disaggregating outcomes systematically by migration pattern (long-term, circular, seasonal), sector, and gender, rather than treating "migrant worker" as an undifferentiated category. There is also a need for research examining the effectiveness of specific interventions — portable benefits schemes, migrant resource centres, and employer-provided welfare measures — in actually improving measured work-life balance outcomes, since much of the existing literature is descriptive rather than evaluative in nature.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the work-life balance of national migrant workers in the industrial sector through an integrated review of theoretical frameworks and empirical literature spanning multiple countries, industries, and migration patterns. The analysis indicates that migrant industrial workers experience a distinctive configuration of work-life balance challenges that extends well beyond the conventional determinants — working hours, workload, and supervisor support — examined in mainstream work-life balance research. Migration displaces the "life" side of the work-life equation across geographic distance, disrupts daily family co-presence, strips away the informal social support networks that typically buffer work-family tension, and frequently occurs within informal or contractor-mediated employment relationships that fall outside the scope of both statutory

labour protection and organisational human resource policy.

At the same time, the evidence reviewed cautions against a purely deficit-based narrative: for many workers, migration to industrial employment represents an improvement in overall quality of work life relative to the available alternatives at their place of origin, even as it introduces specific and persistent relational and psychological strains. Gender emerges as a consistently significant moderating factor, with migrant women workers experiencing compounded difficulty arising from the intersection of migration-related and gender-related disadvantage. Social support — whether reconstructed informally among co-migrants or provided through destination-based community and civil-society infrastructure — appears central to buffering the work-life balance deficits associated with migration, suggesting a high-value area for both policy and organisational

intervention.

Addressing the work-life balance needs of national migrant industrial workers will require action across multiple levels simultaneously: portability of welfare entitlements and stronger enforcement of labour standards at the policy level; extension of formal human resource welfare frameworks to migrant and contract labour at the organisational level; and investment in destination-based social support infrastructure at the community level. Given the scale and continuing growth of internal industrial migration in developing economies, and the essential economic contribution made by migrant industrial labour, closing the work-life balance gap experienced by this population represents not merely a matter of social equity but a significant, underexplored opportunity for improving labour productivity, retention, and overall industrial workforce welfare.

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