

Measuring Progress Beyond Growth: A Gender-Sensitive Study of Women Educators in Goa



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Abstract

This paper explores the shortcomings of using GDP as an exclusive measure of development by understanding women teachers' life satisfaction in a gender-sensitive manner in Goa. The research builds on the non-GDP approach to well-being as advocated by Parikh and Nazrana and examines the role of non-monetary factors, such as autonomy, recognition, institutional support and socio-cultural norms, in shaping subjective well-being. Through a qualitative case-study approach, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were applied to gather insights from women in aided and government colleges. The research shows that although higher education employment offers women financial security and an identity, they also face a "double burden" of institutional and domestic responsibilities, which affects their overall well-being. Most interviewees do not believe that money makes women happy, but consider supportive institutional settings, work-life balance and career advancement opportunities as important factors. The research identifies that institutional policies, promotion practices and socio-cultural expectations are crucial determinants of women's well-being and the workforce attrition in academia. By recognising women educators as a vital component of human capital in developing economies, the paper calls for incorporating gender-sensitive well-being measures into higher education policies and strategies. It concludes that a multidimensional understanding of progress is essential for fostering inclusive, sustainable institutional development beyond traditional economic measures.

Keywords: Gender-Sensitive Well-Being; Women in Higher Education; Human Capital Sustainability; Institutional Support and Work-Life Balance; Beyond GDP Development Metrics

1. Introduction

Over several decades, economic development has been greatly quantitatively gauged in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or the overall economic output of a nation. Although GDP is a popular metric of growth, it has been increasingly criticised as being overly concerned with economic output, and is not reflective of other facets of human well-being, including social equity, mental health, quality of life, and environmental sustainability (Conceição, 2020). These constraints are especially important when gendered experiences are considered and, in this case, much of the work of women, particularly unpaid care work, household administration and community activities, do not feature in GDP measures. Consequently, GDP does not only give us an incomplete picture of development, but it also strengthens structural invisibilities, which marginalise the lived realities of women.

To counter these constraints, there have arisen other conceptions of development, attempting to add multidimensional elements of well-being. Wider development strategies now put more emphasis on the significance of health, education, psychological well-being, and social involvement, in addition to income (Conceição, 2020). Newer views also emphasize on subjective well-being, autonomy, recognition and access to opportunities as key aspects of progress (Parikh and Nazrana, 2025).

These frameworks are especially helpful in the interpretation of the experiences of women since they are able to capture more of life beyond working in a formal job and economic autonomy and provide a more comprehensive and realistic view of development.

Such multidimensional frameworks are particularly relevant when it comes to higher education institutions in the emerging economies such as India. These institutions are essential in the human capital formation, production of knowledge and long-term socio-economic growth. Women educators play a central role in this ecosystem, teaching, undertaking research and institutional governance. Their professional activities, however, tend to be mixed with socio-cultural demands that place most of the caregiving, home care, and family welfare responsibilities. The result of such dual role is so-called double burden that implies that women are forced to balance between work demands and family matters in the same way, which can be sometimes attained at the cost of themselves and their personal wellbeing.

As much as higher education employment in the form of financial security, social status and intellectual stimulation is apparently empowering, this does not necessarily increase life satisfaction of women. Gendered hierarchies can be reinforced by institutional structures, including the promotional structures, division of labor and the career growth

opportunities, which limit career growth (Morley, 2013; Winchester and Browning, 2015). In the meantime, societal norms and cultural pressures continue to play a role in the choices women make, their activity and time utilization.

These intersecting forces underscore a critical gap in comprehending how women feel well in academic settings and pose critical concerns about the sufficiency of income-based indicators in describing their life satisfaction.

Previous studies involving gender and higher education have always emphasized on the existence of inequalities in the academic institutions. Structural barriers tend to have an impact on the career progression, recognition, and access to leadership among women even in settings that seem to be meritocratic (Khanna and Mukherjee, 2024; Muralidhar and Ananthanarayan, 2024). These inequalities are further supported by patterns of gender disparity in enrolment, representation and participation especially in the Indian context (Bochare, 2025). Moreover, scholarship-based studies of educational systems indicate that there are still gender disparities in fields and career hierarchies (Jaramillo et al., 2025). Although the number of women in higher education has been on the rise, it has not eradicated any systemic inequalities nor provided equal opportunities (Vieira do Nascimento et al., 2021).

In addition to these structural problems, we are increasingly aware that rising levels of income do not always result in the same levels of improvement in subjective well-being. According to the so-called income-happiness paradox, money is not sufficient to guarantee a higher level of life satisfaction (Khalil, 2022, 2024; Kudrna and Kushlev, 2022). This supports the thesis of the importance of non-economic determinants of well-being, including autonomy, recognition, institutional support, and work-life balance, in the context of women who have to balance between various social roles.

Nevertheless, with the emerging literature in this field, there is still a gap of context, qualitative research to reflect on the lived experience of women educators in a regional context like Goa. Goa is a special case of socio-cultural and institutional context, with a comparatively liberal educational system and a deep-rooted culture. Knowledge on how women maneuver these overlapping forces can help shed some light on the overall state of gender, employment, and health in developing economies. Also, the analysis of these experiences can be included in the discussion of the institutional sustainability because the quality of life of educators directly influences productivity and engagement, as well as long-term performance in higher education systems (Mazmanian et al., 2013).

This paper aims to fill these gaps by taking a qualitative, gender sensitive case-study, approach to understand the satisfaction of women in aided

and government colleges in Goa working. It is concerned with the influences of institutional settings, work-family balance, socio-cultural demands, and opportunities accessibility on their well-being perceptions. Four main objectives guide the study and include: to investigate the connection between gender and life satisfaction among women teachers; to assess how the institutional environments contribute to their professional experiences and overall satisfaction; to understand how the socio-cultural expectations impact perceived well-being; and to examine the applicability of non-GDP well-being indicators in assessing life satisfaction in educational contexts.

This paper suggests that not only a personal concern but also a main element in achieving sustainable institutional growth and inclusive development, the welfare of women teachers is made the locus of human capital development with women teachers as the most important designers of human capital development. In addition to the traditional economic measures, the study assists in establishing a broader map of development that takes into consideration gender equality, social acceptance, and institutional facilitation. In this way, it will offer information that will be relevant to policymakers, educational administrators, and scholars interested in creating more inclusive and sustainable systems in higher education.

2. Research Methodology

The study is founded on qualitative case-study design in which the researcher shall explore the life satisfaction of women teachers in aided and government colleges in Goa. Qualitative approach will be appropriate in this research since one will be in a position to gain in-depth understanding of the subjective well-being, lived experiences, and socio-cultural problems that influence the lives of the women in their work and personal life.

2.1 Research Design and Sample

The study is based on the purposive sample of 52 women faculty members who were sampled in some few aided and government colleges. Sampling was conducted to bring out diversity in relation to academic disciplines, institutions and the level of career. Its sample of assistant professors, associate professors, and senior faculty members ensures that the sample represents various ranks of hierarchy within a higher institution of learning.

2.2 Data Collection

Primary data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, informal conversations as well as institutional observation. The semi-structured format was also loose in that it could incorporate the perceptions of the participants and also offered consistency to the key areas of work life balance, institutional support, career

progression and the socio cultural expectations. The answers of the interviews were put in to perspective using informal interactions and observational insights and this provided a more insightful view of the dynamics of the institutions.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. It was initially coded open and the common patterns and major ideas were identified and constructed on the basis of the answers of the participants. These codes were then grouped into bigger thematic blocks that were life satisfaction, professional identity, institutional support, autonomy and socio cultural norms. The qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo) was employed to assist with the systematic data coding, organisation and retrieval, promoting the analytical clarity and consistency.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The study is guided by a non-GDP, gender sensitive well being framework, which is founded on multidimensional indicators such as autonomy, recognition, social participation and access to opportunities. This framework enables us to assess the life satisfaction holistically and non-economically and aligns with the broader discussion concerning sustainable human capital and institutional performance.

2.5 Scope and Limitations

The researchers only sample aided colleges and government colleges in Goa and only female

teachers are analysed. Despite the fact that the findings provide a helpful context-specific information, it may not be applicable to other regions of the world or institutions. Nevertheless, the qualitative approach has the potential to present a deep holistic image that can be incorporated into the overall discourse of gender, well being and institutional sustainability in higher education.

3.0 Results

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The research involves 52 women teachers in aided and government colleges in Goa with various demography and professional backgrounds. As depicted in Table 1, most of the respondents are aged 46-55 years with a small group aged 25-35 years and this means that both the mid-career and early-career groups are represented. Regarding marital status, the majority of the participants are married, and a smaller number of participants are single. The distribution indicates that a considerable number of respondents will be juggling work and family. The table also suggests that the majority of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, and a smaller number of respondents are satisfied with their jobs at a neutral level. Notably, most of them do not equate income with happiness, and their institutions are perceived by most of them as supportive or highly supportive, which is why non-financial and organisational determinants of well-being are crucial.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Most Common Response	Secondary Trend
Age Group	46-55 years	25-35 years
Marital Status	Married	Single
Job Satisfaction	Satisfied / Very Satisfied	Neutral
Income Belief	Income ≠ Happiness	Maybe / Yes
Institutional Support	Supportive	Very Supportive

3.2 Belief in Income as a Determinant of Happiness

One of the major conclusions of the research is that income is highly rejected as the only cause of happiness. Figure 1 shows that just over three out of every four people (77.3%) said that income is not a guarantee of happiness. However, a lower percentage (18.2%) felt that income is a decisive factor whereas 4.5% were not sure. Such a distribution is a clear indication of a departure of the traditional economic views of well-being and the argument that life satisfaction is dependent on a wider range of factors than financial earnings.

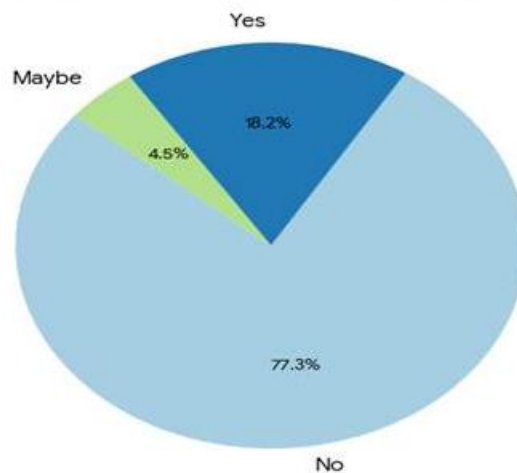


Figure 1. Belief that Income Alone Ensures Happiness

3.3 Overall Life Satisfaction

The interpretation of the overall satisfaction in life would show that there were positive but mixed answers among the respondents. The highest percentage of respondents (40.9%) was satisfied as was indicated in Figure 2 and 27.3% were very satisfied. Meanwhile, the same percentage (27.3%)

said they had no opinion, which indicates ambivalence in their life experience. A very small proportion (4.5%) were dissatisfied. These results show that the majority of women report moderate to high levels of satisfaction, but a small percentage of women are not sure, which shows the multifacetedness of well-being.

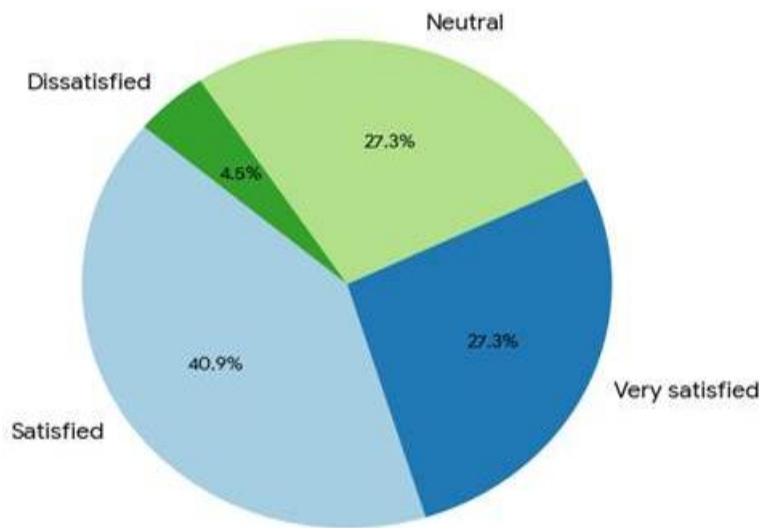


Figure 2. Overall Life Satisfaction

3.4 Satisfaction with Educator Role

The profession of teaching became a great source of satisfaction among respondents. Figure 3 indicates that most (45.5% satisfied and 36.4 very satisfied) of the sample felt positive about their work as educators, which, combined, comprised more than four-fifths of the sample. There was a smaller number (13.6%) who indicated neutral feelings, and only 4.5% said they were dissatisfied. These results indicate that teaching can give a person a sense of mission, acknowledgment and service to society, yet some may still be impacted by the institutional problems.

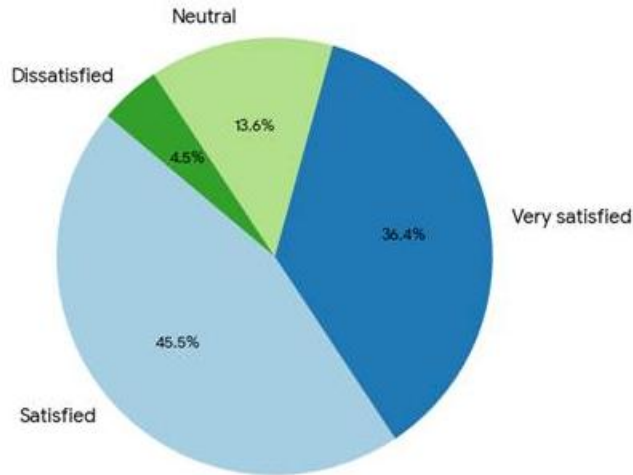


Figure 3. Satisfaction with Educator Role

3.5 Institutional Support for Work-Life Balance

The importance of institutional support is significant in defining the professional experiences and work-life balance. Figure 4 indicates that most respondents perceive their institutions to be supportive (40.9%), or very supportive (31.8%). However, 22.7% of the respondents expressed

neutral views and a small percentage (4.5) of the respondents said their institutions were not supportive. That means that institutional environments are not researched as negative; nevertheless, all the participants do not enjoy support mechanisms equally.

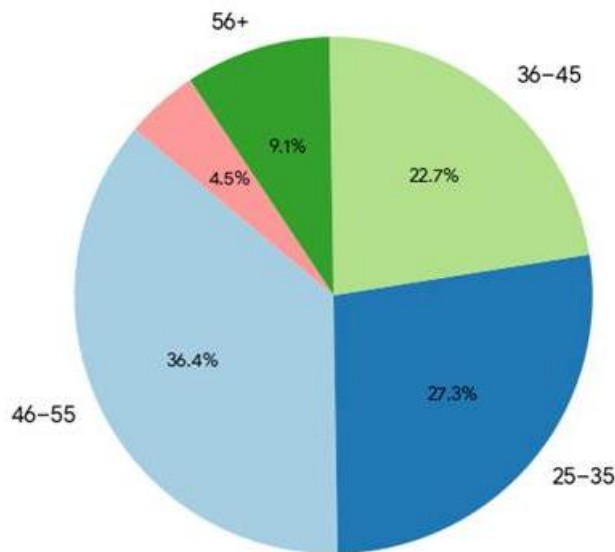


Figure 4. Institutional Support for Work-Life Balance

3.6 Marital Status Distribution

Figure 5 on the marital status of respondents offers insight into the personal contexts that have an impact on professional experiences. Most of the respondents (63.6%) are married, with 27.3% being single and 9.1% widowed. This distribution brings out the significance of family life in determining the work-life balance of women and their well-being, especially those who balance work with family life.

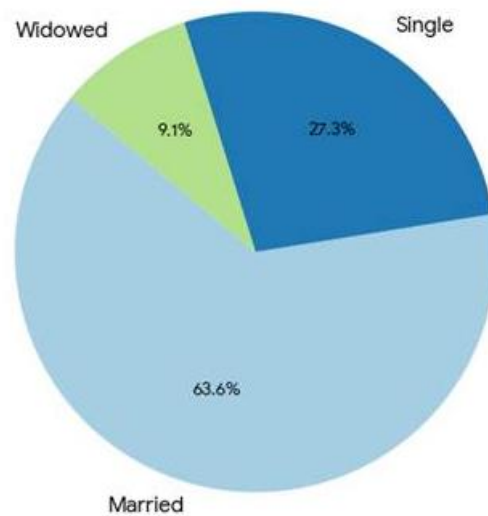


Figure 5. Marital Status of Respondents

3.7 Age Distribution of Respondents

The age distribution of the participants, as shown in Figure 6, depicts that the largest percentage (36.4%) is in the category of 46-55 years, then 27.3 in the category of 25-35 years and the last 22.7 in the category of 36-45 years. The percentage (9.1%)

within the 56+ age group is smaller, whereas 4.5% is within other age groups. The spread shows that views on well-being are not only dependent on various career stages, but the vast majority of respondents in the sample are mid-career professionals.

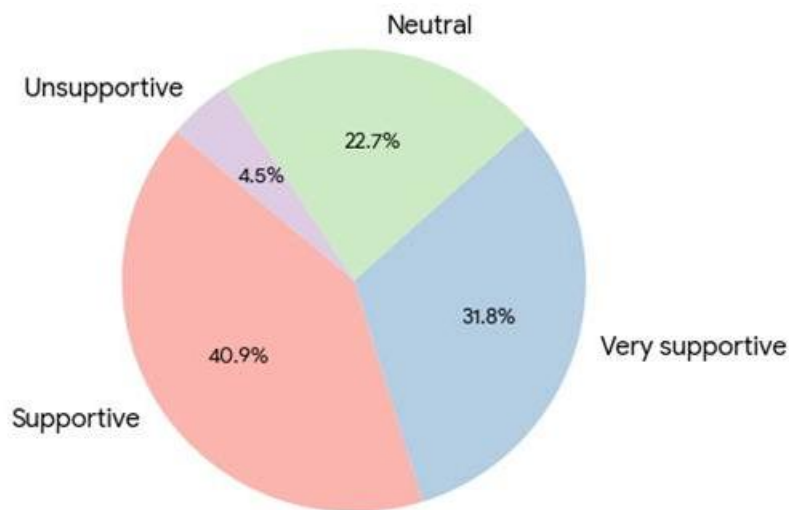


Figure 6. Distribution of Age Groups

3.8 Socio-Cultural Influences on Professional Identity

The socio-cultural expectations were found to have a considerable but disparate influence on the work lives of women. According to Table 2, most respondents (52.4%) said that cultural norms have a moderate impact on their professional identity. The overall influence of 23.8% was strong or very strong, and 28.6% reported slight or none. These results imply that although cultural expectations still influence the experiences of women, their influence is not general and can differ in some cases depending on the specific circumstances and institutional backgrounds.

Table 2. Influence of Socio-Cultural Expectations

Level of Influence	Frequency	Percentage
Moderately	11	52.4%
Strongly	3	14.3%
Very Strongly	2	9.5%

Slightly	3	14.3%
Not at all	3	14.3%

3.9 Work-Life Balance and Role Management

Other patterns that have been identified in the findings are the work-life balance and role management patterns among respondents. Nearly 85% of the participants reported that they were coping well or very well with their roles. This implies that women educators are very adaptive and resilient. The neutral responses however indicate that there are still certain difficulties associated with the workload, institutional expectations, and domestic responsibilities that continue to affect a part of the population.

4. Discussion

The findings of the study provide a strong empirical support on the hypothesis that the economic factors such as income by itself cannot be applied to explain the life satisfaction, particularly among women teachers in tertiary education institutions. These results indicate that income is certainly not the exclusive determinant of happiness and we need to move beyond economic measures to multidimensional notions of well being. This is in line with the wider views on human development that focuses on social, psychological, and institutional aspects of development as opposed to economic productivity.

One of the insights that come out of the findings is the centrality of institutional support in determining the level of professional satisfaction among women. Most of the respondents who responded as indicated in Figure 4 that their institutions are either supportive or very supportive, which implies that work environments do have a great impact on the well-being of the employees. Nevertheless, the fact that there are neutral and negative feedbacks shows discrepancies in implementation. Institutional structures tend to be embedded in larger gendered organisational systems, in which policies might be formal, but are not uniformly realized in practice (Acker, 2012). Correspondingly, gender equality organisational change initiatives can change the transformative objectives to managerial procedures that do not comprehensively include structural inequalities (Elomaki and Ylöstalo, 2021). These loopholes hold significant consequences related to institutional sustainability because a lack of equal support may influence motivation, engagement, and retention.

The results associated with the general life satisfaction (Figure 2) also depict the multifacetedness of the well-being. Although most of the respondents indicate that they are satisfied or even very satisfied, a significant percentage of them is neutral, showing ambivalence. This means

that even with income and financial stability, the intangible dimensions such as recognition, autonomy and institutional fairness might not be fulfilled to the optimum. The theoretical background on gendered organisational structures highlights the failure of formal equality to be transformed into lived equality, in particular, professions (Blackmore, 2016). This endorses the conceptualization that well being can be conceived as a construct that is multidimensional and affected by structural and experiential factors.

The fact that the educator role is ranked very high in terms of satisfaction (Figure 3) indicates that teaching is perceived to be an important and intrinsically rewarding occupation. This shows the importance of deliberate effort in building subjective well-being and profession. However, this inherent satisfaction is in harmony with structural issues. Women tend to have additional pressure on administrative tasks and expectations or other institutional practices, which limit them in terms of time and energy to carry out the research and reach career advancement (Heijstra et al., 2017). These dynamics highlight the duality of academic employment whereby occupational satisfaction is accompanied by invisible labour and unequal reward.

The second theme, which is prevalent in the results, is the problem of work-life balance and the problem of the double burden that female educators have to face. Despite the fact that most of the respondents assert that they are managing their roles, it is a sign of resilience and not absence of structural constraints. Family life continues to be a significant problem that influences the professional experiences as shown by the population profile (Table 1 and Figure 5) whose majority of the respondents are married.

The expanded care work literature underlines that unpaid caring duties have a disproportionate influence on the engagement and progress of women in the labor market (International Labour Organization, 2018). The unequal distribution of time, career advancement, and well being is still being perpetuated by this imbalance, which reproduces gendered disparities.

Table 2 shows that the findings are further complicated by the impact of the socio-cultural norms. Although the majority of respondents say that they are moderately affected, a large percentage of them claim strong or very strong influence. This implies that the influence of institutional environments cannot be enough to define professional experiences completely since external cultural demands still define the role and identity of women. Mentoring and leadership

development programs might be useful in overcoming these difficulties, however, in most cases, they are not effective enough when they fail to address structural inequalities (Dashper, 2019). This indicates the necessity of the combined solutions addressing the institutional and socio-cultural aspects.

The results also indicate the significance of career advancement and leadership roles in developing professional satisfaction of women. Access to leadership positions can be affected by institutional hierarchies and systems of promotion, and tends to build on gender inequalities. The study of female leadership in higher education suggests that women still face structural challenges such as network and decision-making opportunities, which influence their promotion (Thien et al., 2025). Likewise, women can be disadvantaged by informal recruitment habits and networking processes, which can further restrict the advancement channels (Herschberg et al., 2018). These issues need to be addressed to develop inclusive and equitable institutional settings.

In a broader sense, the research shows the importance of having women teachers as some of the most important contributors to sustainable human capital. Their health has a direct impact on the quality of teaching, productivity of research and student outcomes. The gender diversity of academic departments has also been identified to increase the innovation and generation of knowledge, which is also a crucial element to the effectiveness of an institution (Nielsen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, under the condition of gender inequalities, institutions may lose the opportunity to use the human capital they possess to its fullest extent and restrict their growth and innovativeness potential.

In general, the discussion shows that economic, institutional, and socio-cultural factors are complex and influence the well-being of women educators. Although money can be a basis of stability, it does not guarantee contentment where there is lack of supportive organisational environment, fair policies and appreciation of gendered roles. These results highlight that there should be a change towards multidimensional development methods that put human welfare in the frontline together with economic performance. This would be needed to build inclusive, sustainable institutions capable of effectively supporting a wider socio-economic development.

5. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the shortcomings of using economic measures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to comprehend well-being especially in the case of female educators in higher education. With a gender-sensitive, multidimensional approach, the study illustrates that income is not the sole determinant of life satisfaction, but other aspects of

life like institutional support, autonomy, recognition, work-life balance, and socio-cultural expectations as well shape life satisfaction. As the results show, the majority of the respondents are inclined to moderate and high levels of job and life satisfaction, which can be accompanied by numerous hidden issues connected with role conflict, disproportionate institutional support, and residual gendered roles. The existence of the so-called double burden highlights the fact that gender inequality is structural in nature, and the success at work does not mean an end of the household demands but rather contributes to them. On the institutional level, positive factors in well-being are created by positive environments, but discrepancies concerning implementation demonstrate the necessity of the more effective and inclusive policies. The research also determines that women teachers are the key players in the development of human capital and sustainability of the institutions since their well-being directly predicts teaching performance, knowledge creation and organisational performance. Hence, the enhancement of life satisfaction of women is not only an issue of equity but it is a strategic concern of sustainable development. The paper has concluded that changes in the way progress is measured, where GDP is replaced by non-GDP measures are necessary in an attempt to reflect the actual experience of women. A combination of gender sensitive politics, work arrangements, and recognition schemes can help create more inclusive and resilient higher education systems which would eventually lead to overall socio-economic development in the emerging economies.

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