

1 **Government Interventions And Work–Life Balance: A** 2 **Comparative Study Of India And Sweden**

3

4

5 **Abstract**

6 This paper examines how government policies in India and Sweden shape work–life
7 balance (WLB) outcomes. Work–life balance describes the ability of individuals to meet
8 professional responsibilities without compromising personal life, health, and well-being.
9 Governments play a critical role in facilitating or impeding balance through legislation,
10 policy frameworks, employment regulations, and social support systems. Using
11 secondary data from government sources, global indexes, and scholarly publications, This
12 comparative study analyses the nature, scope, and effectiveness of government
13 interventions in India and Sweden. India represents a developing economy with emerging
14 WLB initiatives facing implementation challenges, while Sweden offers a mature welfare
15 model with comprehensive family-friendly policies. Through a review of existing
16 government policies, labour laws, social welfare frameworks, and secondary data, this
17 paper highlights differences and similarities in approaches, evaluates impacts on
18 employment outcomes and wellbeing, and provides policy implications for both contexts.
19 The study concludes that Sweden’s institutionalised WLB regime significantly
20 outperforms India’s in terms of reach and effectiveness, but evolving Indian reforms
21 present opportunities for better work–life integration.

22 **Keywords:** work–life balance, government policy, India, Sweden, labour laws, parental
23 leave, flexible work.

24

25 **1. Introduction**

26 Work–life balance (WLB) is broadly explained as the state in which an individual can
27 successfully manage professional responsibilities alongside personal and family
28 obligations, leisure, and caregiving roles, including maternity and paternity duties
29 (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Achieving effective WLB has been linked to numerous
30 positive outcomes, including improved psychological well-being, increased job

31 satisfaction, higher organizational commitment, and enhanced economic participation
32 (Verma & Bhargava, 2025). On the other hand, Poor WLB is associated with elevated
33 stress levels, burnout, and decreased productivity, which can have long-term
34 consequences for both employees and organizations (Allen et al., 2013).

35 Government interventions play a critical role in shaping the work–life environment
36 through legislation, social welfare entitlements, and regulation of employer practices
37 (OECD, 2018). These interventions may include parental leave policies, flexible work
38 arrangements, anti-discrimination laws, and minimum standards for working hours.
39 Countries vary considerably in the extent and effectiveness of such measures, reflecting
40 differences in economic development, labour market structure, and cultural expectations
41 regarding work and family.

42 The aims of this comparative study are to (a) identify and describe key government
43 policies related to WLB in India and Sweden, (b) evaluate the impacts of these policies on
44 labour markets and wellbeing, and (c) draw policy implications for both countries.

45 **2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

46 Work–life balance (WLB) is shaped by a complex interaction of socio-economic factors
47 including labour regulations, cultural norms, organisational practices, and social welfare
48 systems. The theoretical framework of social determinants of health posits that labour
49 conditions and policies are critical determinants of mental and physical wellbeing (Björk-
50 Fantetal., 2023). Governments are positioned to shape these determinants through
51 different policies and initiative programmes.

52 Existing literatures identifies several policy instruments that contribute to WLB, such as
53 flexible working arrangements such as flexitime and remote work, parental and family
54 leave provisions, childcare support, paid leave entitlements, and statutory safeguards such
55 as the right to disconnect. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these
56 policies vary widely across nations.

57 **Government Interventions in India**

58 The Government of India has enacted and proposed several legislative and policy
59 measures that influence work–life balance by shaping employment benefits, regulating
60 working conditions, and expanding worker protections. These interventions aim to

61 support workforce wellbeing, protect rights, and respond to changing patterns of work,
 62 though implementation and impact may vary across sectors which are discussed below.

63 **i. Consolidated Labour Codes and Worker Protections**

64 In November 2025, the Indian government notified four major labour codes that
 65 unify 29 older labour laws into streamlined frameworks covering wages, industrial
 66 relations, social security, and occupational safety and working conditions.
 67



68
 69 Fig 1 : (Government of India, Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2025, Figure 1)
 70

71 These codes aim to simplify compliance, extend social security to gig and
 72 platform workers, and standardise core employment terms such as written job
 73 contracts and working hours. While not all provisions are directly labelled as
 74 work–life balance policies but the reforms collectively promote work–life balance
 75 by strengthening worker welfare, improving safety, and encouraging sustainable
 76 labour market participation.

78 **ii. Enhanced Maternity leave**

79 Under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, the duration of paid
 80 maternity leave for women employees was increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks,
 81 with provisions allowing up to eight weeks' leave before delivery and the
 82 remainder thereafter. The legislation also encourages flexible options such as
 83 work-from-home arrangements after maternity leave, subject to mutual agreement
 84 between the employer and employee. This reform is intended to help women
 85 sustain employment while fulfilling caregiving responsibilities.

87 **iii. Workplace safety and working conditions**

88 The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHWC) Code,
89 2020enforced in 2025replaced multiple earlier statutes (including the Factories
90 Act, 1948) and sets uniform standards for workplace safety, health, and conditions
91 of employment across sectors. The Code includes provisions on work hours, rest
92 intervals, paid leave eligibility, and employer obligations for worker welfare,
93 contributing indirectly to improved work–life balance through regulation of work
94 demands.

95 For instance, The Code sets a maximum of 8 working hours per day and 48 hours
96 per week, with a mandate for minimum rest intervals of one hour after five hours
97 of work, and restricts overtime beyond these limits. It standardizes paid leave
98 entitlements, including earned leave and casual leave, ensuring workers can take
99 time off for personal or family needs without forfeiting pay.

100

101 **iv. Proposed Right to Disconnect Initiative**

102 In 2025, a ‘Right to Disconnect Bill’ was brought before the Indian Parliament as a
103 private member’s bill by NCP MP, Supriya Sule. It aims to give workers the legal
104 right to disconnect from work-related calls, emails, messages or other
105 communications outside official working hours or on holidays. The Bill would
106 require employers to set clear policies about after-hours communication and protect
107 employees from any disciplinary action if they choose not to respond. This proposal
108 was motivated by concerns about digital burnout, stress, and the blurring of
109 personal and professional time in an always-connected work culture.

110

111 **v. Sectoral and State-Level Adjustments to Work Hours**

112 Indian states are revising labour rules to align with central labour codes, including
113 permitting women to work night shifts with consent and safety safeguards, and
114 updating provisions on working hours and weekly rest. These reforms reflect efforts
115 to introduce greater flexibility while protecting workers’ well-being and improving
116 work–life balance.

117

118

119 **Government Interventions in Sweden**

120 Sweden is renowned for its outstanding work–life balance, ranking 6th globally in the
121 2025 ‘Global Life-Work Balance Index’ and consistently appearing among the top
122 countries in the ‘OECD Better Life Index work–life balance dimension’. This reflects a
123 culture that genuinely values well-being, family time, and sustainable work practices that
124 can be seen through its policies as discussed below.

125

126 **i. Working hours**

127 Swedish labour laws set clear standards to protect workers’ time and promote a
128 healthy work–life balance. Full-time workers are generally expected to work 40
129 hours per week, typically spread across eight hours a day, five days a week with
130 providing strong protections for workers’ rights and work–life balance.

131 Employees are guaranteed at least 25 days of paid annual leave each year,
132 regardless of industry, ensuring significant time off for rest and personal life.

133 Overtime is strictly controlled, with a maximum of 200 hours allowed per year,
134 and weekly overtime is restricted so that the average total working time does not
135 exceed 48 hours per week over a four-month period. At the same time, Sweden
136 widely encourages flexible and hybrid work arrangements, allowing employees to
137 adjust their schedules or work remotely as needed.

138 **ii. Parental Leave :**

139 A key feature of Sweden’s WLB framework is its parental insurance system,
140 which provides a total of 480 days of paid leave per child, typically divided
141 equally between both parents. The system encourages fathers to take leave,
142 promoting shared caregiving and supporting gender equality in the workforce.

143 Research shows that parental leave policies in Sweden promote gender-equal
144 uptake, with incentives designed to encourage fathers to take leave, contributing to
145 shared caregiving responsibilities and gender equity in labour
146 participation (Chakraborty, 2016)

147

148 **iii. Child care facility**

149 Sweden provides extensive state-supported childcare services beginning at the age
150 of one, with fees set at affordable levels relative to household income. This system
151 ensures that families have access to high-quality early childhood education and
152 care, which is professionally staffed and regulated to maintain consistent

153 standards. By making childcare widely accessible and financially manageable,
154 these provisions allow parents both mothers and fathers to return to work after
155 parental leave without compromising their child's care or development. The
156 availability of reliable childcare also reduces the stress and uncertainty often
157 associated with balancing professional responsibilities and family needs, thereby
158 strengthening overall work–life balance and supporting sustained labour market
159 participation. (OECD employment strategies, 2015).

160 **iv. Recent Reforms and Innovations**

161 Sweden has recently updated its parental leave policies to allow parents to transfer
162 up to 45 days of their leave to other caregivers, such as grandparents or other
163 family members. This change provides additional flexibility for families, making
164 it easier for parents especially single parents or those with limited support
165 networks to manage childcare responsibilities while continuing to work. These
166 measures go beyond traditional nuclear family models, supporting a broader
167 definition of work–life balance and ensuring that children receive care while
168 parents can participate fully in the labour market.

169

170 **3. Comparative Analysis**

171 **i. Parental Leave**

172 Sweden and India differ sharply in parental leave policies. Sweden offers 480 days of
173 paid parental leave per child, shared between both parents and designed to
174 encourage fathers' involvement, supporting gender equality and work–life
175 balance. In contrast, India provides 26 weeks (182 days) of paid maternity leave
176 for mothers but offers very limited paternity leave which is only about 15 days,
177 mainly for government employees, with no nationwide requirement for the private
178 sector. This places greater childcare responsibility on mothers and can negatively
179 affect overall work–life balance.

180 Comparison highlights a significant gap, showing that Indian parents receive considerably
181 fewer days to care for and bond with their newborn. This shorter leave can make it harder
182 for families to share childcare responsibilities and maintain a healthy work–life balance.

183 **ii. Flexible Work Arrangements**

184 Sweden has well-established flexible and hybrid work practices supported by
185 strict labour regulations, including a standard 40-hour workweek and clear limits
186 on overtime, which help employees maintain work–life balance (Sweden.se, n.d.).
187 In contrast, flexible work arrangements in India are mostly limited to sectors like
188 IT and BPO, with uneven adoption. Employees may avoid using these options due
189 to career concerns, and the lack of comprehensive national regulations reduces
190 their effectiveness in promoting work–life balance (Chambers, n.d.; Press
191 Information Bureau [PIB], n.d.).

192
193 According to this point, Sweden’s approach is more effective in supporting work–life
194 balance. It creates an environment where employees can balance professional and
195 personal responsibilities without fear of negative career consequences. India’s limited
196 sectoral adoption and weaker regulatory support mean that flexible work arrangements
197 are less reliable and less impactful in achieving similar outcomes.

198
199 **iii. Paid Annual Leave and Holidays**

200 Sweden guarantees all employees at least 25 days of paid annual leave per year,
201 which applies to full-time, part-time, and most private- and public-sector workers.
202 Some sectors or collective agreements may offer even more, but 25 days serves as
203 the minimum statutory entitlement, ensuring that nearly all employees have
204 sufficient time to rest and maintain a healthy work–life balance.

205 In India, annual leave entitlements vary significantly depending on the sector,
206 employment type, and state regulations. For example, workers covered under the
207 Factories Act, 1948 receive 12 days of paid leave per year, while employees
208 governed by the Shops and Establishments Acts typically receive 12–20 days,
209 depending on state-specific laws and working hours. Central government
210 employees are generally entitled to 30 days of earned leave, whereas many
211 private-sector employees outside these frameworks receive leave according to
212 company policies, which may be less generous or inconsistently enforced.

213 As a result, compared to Sweden’s universal minimum of 25 days, many Indian
214 employees have fewer guaranteed leave days, making it more difficult to achieve a
215 balanced distribution between work and personal life.

216

iv. Child Care Support

218 Sweden offers universal, subsidized childcare from age one, with capped fees and
219 high-quality standards, enabling widespread affordable access and strong support
220 for work–life balance (SDG16+, 2023).

221 In contrast, India’s public childcare system is more limited; while ICDS and
222 Anganwadi centres provide basic early education and welfare services, they are
223 not designed as full-day childcare. As a result, families often depend on private or
224 employer-based options, which vary in cost and quality and make balancing work
225 and caregiving more challenging, particularly for mothers (UNICEF, 2023).

226 Overall, Sweden’s childcare system clearly provides stronger institutional support for
227 work–life balance, offering both accessibility and affordability, while India’s system,
228 though improving, remains insufficient for most working parents to fully integrate
229 professional and caregiving responsibilities.

230

v. Policy Implementation and Coverage-

232 Sweden applies labour and social policies consistently across sectors, backed by
233 strong institutional enforcement mechanisms such as labour inspection authorities
234 and municipal oversight, ensuring employees can reliably access their entitlements
235 and maintain work–life balance (SWEA, n.d.; Lexology, 2022).

236 In contrast, India’s labour policy implementation is uneven, particularly within
237 the large informal sector, and fragmented enforcement by central and state
238 authorities, along with weak monitoring, limits the practical effectiveness of legal
239 protections related to working hours, leave, and workplace flexibility (Amulya
240 Charan, 2025; Times of India, 2022).

241

242 Sweden clearly provides stronger and more reliable support for work–life balance, thanks
243 to uniform policies and effective enforcement across sectors. while India’s fragmented
244 implementation and weak enforcement, particularly in the informal workforce, limit
245 employees’ access to statutory protections.

6. Discussion

247 Through comparing India with a country that has a well-established work–life balance
248 framework, this study helps to identify gaps in existing policies and highlights specific
249 areas where improvements are needed to enhance work–life balance. The analysis
250 highlights following points.

- 251 • First, expanding paternity leave and promoting gender-neutral parental benefits can help
252 share childcare responsibilities more equally, reducing the burden on mothers and
253 supporting sustained workforce participation.
- 254 • Second, wider adoption of flexible and hybrid work arrangements across sectors,
255 supported by clear legal guidelines and organisational acceptance, allows employees to
256 manage professional and personal commitments without fear of career penalties.
- 257 • Third, accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare is essential for parents to return
258 to work confidently, and integrating full-day daycare options with existing government
259 programs could strengthen support for working families.
- 260 • Fourth, effective implementation and enforcement of labour laws, particularly in
261 informal sectors, ensures equitable access to leave, regulated working hours, and
262 workplace flexibility.
- 263 • Finally, fostering a culture that values work–life balance, shared caregiving
264 responsibilities, and organisational incentives enhances the practical effectiveness of
265 policies. Overall, a holistic approach combining legislation, institutional support,
266 organisational practices, and cultural acceptance is necessary to enable meaningful
267 work–life balance.

268 **7. Conclusion**

269 Government interventions play a vital role in supporting effective work–life balance.
270 Sweden’s comprehensive policies demonstrate how coordinated strategies can enable
271 employees to balance professional and personal responsibilities successfully. India’s
272 evolving framework shows significant potential for growth, and with expanded, well-
273 enforced, and inclusive policies, it can better support diverse worker groups. By adopting
274 adaptable and innovative work–life balance strategies, countries can enhance employee
275 wellbeing, promote gender equity, and foster sustainable economic growth.

276

277 **References**

- 278 Greenhaus, J. H., & Allen, T. D. (2011). *Work–family balance: A review and extension of*
 279 *the literature*. In J. C. Quick & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of Occupational Health*
 280 *Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 165–183). American Psychological
 281 Association. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259280583WorkFamilyBalanceAReviewand_Extension_of_the_Literature
- 283 Verma, A., & Bhargava, J. (2025). *India’s Work Life Imbalance: A Comparative Analysis*
 284 *With New Zealand and Pathways for Sustainable Work Culture*. *Asian Journal of*
 285 *Economics, Business and Accounting*, 25(8), 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2025/v25i81919>
- 287 Allen, T. D., Johnson, R. C., Kiburz, K. M., & Shockley, K. M. (2013). *Work–family*
 288 *conflict and flexible work arrangements: Deconstructing flexibility*. *Personnel*
 289 *Psychology*, 66(2), 345–376. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12012>
- 290 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)(2018), *Good Jobs*
 291 *for All in a Changing World of Work: The OECD Jobs Strategy*, OECD Publishing,
 292 Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264308817-en>.
- 293 Björk-Fant, J. M., Bolander, P., & Forsman, A. K. (2023). *Work–life balance and work*
 294 *engagement across the European workforce: A comparative analysis of welfare states*.
 295 *European Journal of Public Health*, 33(3), 430–
 296 434. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckad046>
- 297 Government of India, Ministry of Labour & Employment. (2025, November 21). *India’s*
 298 *labour reforms: Simplification, security, and sustainable growth* (Press release). Press
 299 Information Bureau. <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2025/nov/doc20251121701501.pdf>
- 301 Government of India. (2017). *Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017* (No. 6 of 2017).
 302 Ministry of Labour & Employment. https://labourcommissioner.Assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/public_utility/maternity_benefit_amendment_act2017_.pdf
- 305 Government of India. (2020). *The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions*
 306 *Code, 2020* (Act No. 37 of 2020). Ministry of Law and Justice.
 307 https://dglasli.gov.in/public/Admin/Cms/AllPdf/OSH_Gazette.pdf
- 308 Right to Disconnect Bill, 2025, Bill No. 51 of 2025 (India). (2025). Parliament of India.
 309 Retrieved from *Digital Sansad*. <https://sansad.in/getFile/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/Asintroduced/51%20of%202025%20AS125202592416PM.pdf>
- 311 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2020). *How’s Life?*
 312 *2020: Measuring well-being* (OECD Better Life Initiative) (ISBN
 313 978-92-64-72844-8 pdf).
 314 OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/03/how-s-life-2020_b547d82c/9870c393-en.pdf
- 316 *Global life-work balance index 2025*. Remote. <https://remote.com/hubfs/Remote%20Website%20-%202025/%28Approved%29%20Other%20Page%20Content/Documents/Global%20Life-Work%20Balance%20Index%202025.pdf>
- 319 Chakraborty, L. (2016). “*Parental leave*” as fiscal policy: *The empirical evidences from*
 320 *Sweden*. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. <https://www.nipfp.org.in/publication-index-page/blog-index-page/parental-leave-as-fiscal-policy-the-empirical-evidences-from-sweden/?year=2016>

- 323 Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA). (n.d.). *Working hours act*. <https://www>
324 [.av.se/en/work-environment-work-and-inspections/acts-and-regulations-about-work-](https://www.av.se/en/work-environment-work-and-inspections/acts-and-regulations-about-work-environment/about-the-working-hours-act/)
325 [environment/about-the-working-hours-act/](https://www.av.se/en/work-environment-work-and-inspections/acts-and-regulations-about-work-environment/about-the-working-hours-act/)
- 326 Chambers, D. (n.d.). *Legal challenges to flexible work arrangements in India*.
327 <https://chambers.com/articles/legal-challenges-to-flexible-work-arrangements-in-india-7>
- 328 Press Information Bureau (PIB). (n.d.). *Occupational Safety, Health and Working*
329 *Conditions Code*. <https://www.pib.gov.in/FactsheetDetails.aspx?Id=150520>
- 330 SDG16+. (2024). *Universal childcare model: Sweden*. Retrieved from [https://ww](https://www.sdg16.plus/policies/universal-childcare-model-sweden)
331 [w.sdg16.plus/policies/universal-childcare-model-sweden](https://www.sdg16.plus/policies/universal-childcare-model-sweden)
- 332 UNICEF. (2023). *Early childhood education in India*. <https://www>
333 [.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/early-childhood-education](https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/early-childhood-education)
- 334 Lexology. (2022). *Working hours and leave regulations in Sweden*. <https://www>
335 [.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=7ae45dee-59e6-4202-a414-57481c4c46d2](https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=7ae45dee-59e6-4202-a414-57481c4c46d2)
- 336 Amulya Charan. (2025). *India's labour codes: Implementation status and the way*
337 *forward*. <https://www.amulyacharan.com/2025/06/29/indias-labour-codes-imple>
338 [mentation-status-and-the-way-forward/](https://www.amulyacharan.com/2025/06/29/indias-labour-codes-implementation-status-and-the-way-forward/)
- 339 Times of India. (2025, December 1). *New labour codes: Paradigm shift in India's*
340 *employment regulation but key is implementation*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>
341 [business/india-business/new-labour-codes-paradigm-shift-in-indias-employment-](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/new-labour-codes-paradigm-shift-in-indias-employment-regulation-but-key-is-implementation/articleshow/125690438.cms)
342 [regulation-but-key-is-implementation/articleshow/125690438.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/new-labour-codes-paradigm-shift-in-indias-employment-regulation-but-key-is-implementation/articleshow/125690438.cms)