

WORK-LIFE BALANCE- A SYSTEMATIC LITERATUR REVIEW

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Abstract

This study presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on *Work-Life Balance (WLB)* published between 2020 and 2025, using the PRISMA model to ensure a transparent and structured selection process. A total of 61 open-access articles were reviewed from Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. The findings show a sharp increase in WLB research after 2022, largely influenced by digital transformation, flexible work arrangements, and post-pandemic adjustments.

The results indicate that quantitative methods dominate the field, followed by qualitative, bibliometric, and mixed-method studies. Geographically, most research originates from Asia and Europe, focusing on the education, healthcare, and corporate sectors. Theoretical foundations commonly used include the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, Boundary Theory, and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, all emphasizing the balance between job demands, personal resources, and organizational support.

The review identifies key research gaps across three dimensions. At the individual level, more studies are needed to explore how psychological abilities interact with demographic factors. At the organizational level, future work should examine how leadership, culture, and technology influence WLB policies. At the social level, limited attention has been given to cultural norms, community support, and the risks of digital burnout. The study concludes that WLB has evolved into a strategic, multidisciplinary issue integrating individual, organizational, and social perspectives in the digital era.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Organizational Behavior, Digital Transformation, Employee Well-being.

1. Introduction

The urgency of research on work-life balance (WLB) is increasingly prominent due to complex changes in the global work structure, digital transformation, and growing awareness of workers' psychological well-being. WLB is now seen not only as a personal issue, but also as an important determinant of organizational performance, mental health, and career sustainability in various sectors.

First, changes in work patterns such as remote work and flexible hours blur the boundaries between personal and professional life, leading to risks of burnout and role conflict (Bonifacio et al., 2025; Herrera-Ballesteros et al., 2025; Biju et al., 2022). Second, various studies highlight that organizational climate and social support play an important role in creating a healthy balance between work responsibilities and personal life (Fayaz & Gulzar, 2024; Dube & Ndofirepi, 2023). Third, cross-cultural perspectives show that WLB is influenced by gender, cultural values, and social roles—particularly for women, workers with family care responsibilities, and professionals in intensive sectors (Sahni et al., 2025; Mosolena et al., 2025; Riemma et al., 2025).

Furthermore, in the context of the post-COVID-19 pandemic, digital technology has proven to be ambivalent: on the one hand, it increases flexibility, but on the other hand, it extends working hours and erodes personal boundaries (Suhail Kusairi et al., 2022; Kuralová et al., 2024). Recent research also confirms a significant relationship between WLB and subjective well-being and intrinsic motivation (Hasan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2025), as well as its contribution to organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Nomusa Dube & Ndofirepi, 2023; Barnett et al., 2022).

Thus, research on work-life balance is crucial because this phenomenon represents the intersection of individual psychology, organizational dynamics, and socio-economic policies. In an increasingly digitized and demanding work environment, understanding the mechanisms of WLB means understanding how people maintain well-being, productivity, and meaning in work within the modern workplace.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Grand Theory.*

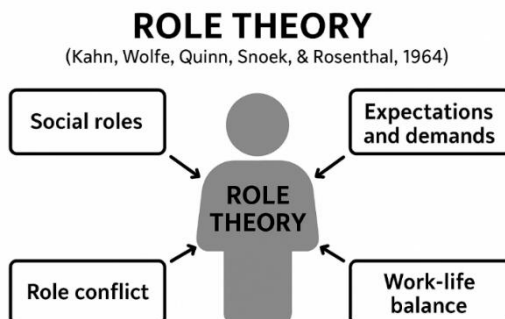


Image 1. *Role Theory.*

source: Kahn et al., (1964).

The grand theory in organizational behavior studies that underlies the understanding of work-life balance is rooted in three main theories, namely Role Theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Role Theory explains that individuals perform multiple social roles simultaneously—such as employee, parent, and community member—each with different demands and expectations. When these demands conflict, role conflict arises, disrupting the balance between work and personal life. Therefore, organizations need to provide flexible policies, managerial support, and an inclusive culture to minimize role conflict. Meanwhile, Conservation of Resources Theory focuses on how individuals strive to conserve resources such as time, energy, and social support; stress arises when these resources are depleted or insufficient. This theory emphasizes the importance of organizational support in maintaining resource balance to prevent burnout and improve performance. The Social Exchange Theory views work-life balance as the result of a reciprocal relationship between the organization and employees, where management support for work-life balance will be rewarded with commitment and positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (Kahn et al., 1964; Hobfoll, 1989; Blau, 1964).

2.2. *Middle Theory*

At the intermediate theoretical level, Boundary Theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000), Spillover Theory (Staines, 1980), and the Work-Family Enrichment Model (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) emerged, bridging broad concepts with empirical phenomena in the workplace. Boundary Theory highlights how individuals manage boundaries between work roles and personal life through segmentation or integration approaches, each of which impacts the level of role conflict. Spillover Theory emphasizes how experiences and emotions in one domain of life can spill over into other domains, either positively or negatively, in line with the Conservation of Resources Theory view that resource balance must be maintained. Meanwhile, the Work-Family Enrichment Model provides a positive view that interactions between roles can enrich each other; skills and support in one role can improve quality in other roles, in line with the concept of role accumulation in Role Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000; Staines, 1980; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

2.3. *Apply Theory*

At the applied level, these major theories are applied through models such as the Work-Family Conflict Model (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000), and Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The Work-Family Conflict Model explains the imbalance between work and personal life due to overlapping conflicts of time, pressure, and behavior. The Work-Life Border Theory emphasizes the importance of individual strategies in negotiating and managing the boundaries between work and personal life according to context and needs. Meanwhile, the Job Demands-Resources Model focuses on the balance between job demands and available resources to prevent stress and improve performance. These three models provide practical guidance for organizations to manage role conflicts, strengthen psychological well-being, and improve work effectiveness in a sustainable manner (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Clark, 2000; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

3. Material and Method

3.1. Design Study

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) model guidelines to ensure transparency and replicability of the literature review process. This approach allows researchers to systematically and structurally select, evaluate, and synthesize various empirical studies related to work-life balance (WLB). The literature search process was conducted through four leading academic databases, namely Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar, using the main keyword “work-life balance” and limiting the publication range between 2020 and 2025. With this time frame, this study seeks to capture the latest developments in the issue of work-life balance, both in terms of theory and application in various industrial and cultural contexts.

The SLR approach was chosen because it provides a strong methodological foundation for understanding research trends, dominant theories, methodological approaches, and variables frequently examined in WLB studies. In addition, through comprehensive literature analysis, this study also seeks to identify existing research gaps and opportunities for further study. In line with the findings of Zaitouni et al. (2024), SLR helps to show how organizational factors, social support, and work flexibility affect work-life balance in various industrial sectors. Meanwhile, Verma et al. (2024) emphasize that the use of SLR in WLB studies can strengthen the validity of findings by filtering data from various cultural and geographical contexts, thereby providing a broader picture of WLB dynamics in the modern workplace. Thus, the use of the PRISMA-based SLR method is an appropriate approach to achieve a holistic and evidence-based understanding of the work-life balance phenomenon in the post-pandemic era.

3.2. Data Analysis

The results of the literature review were analyzed using the PRISMA model with the steps shown in Figure 1 below:

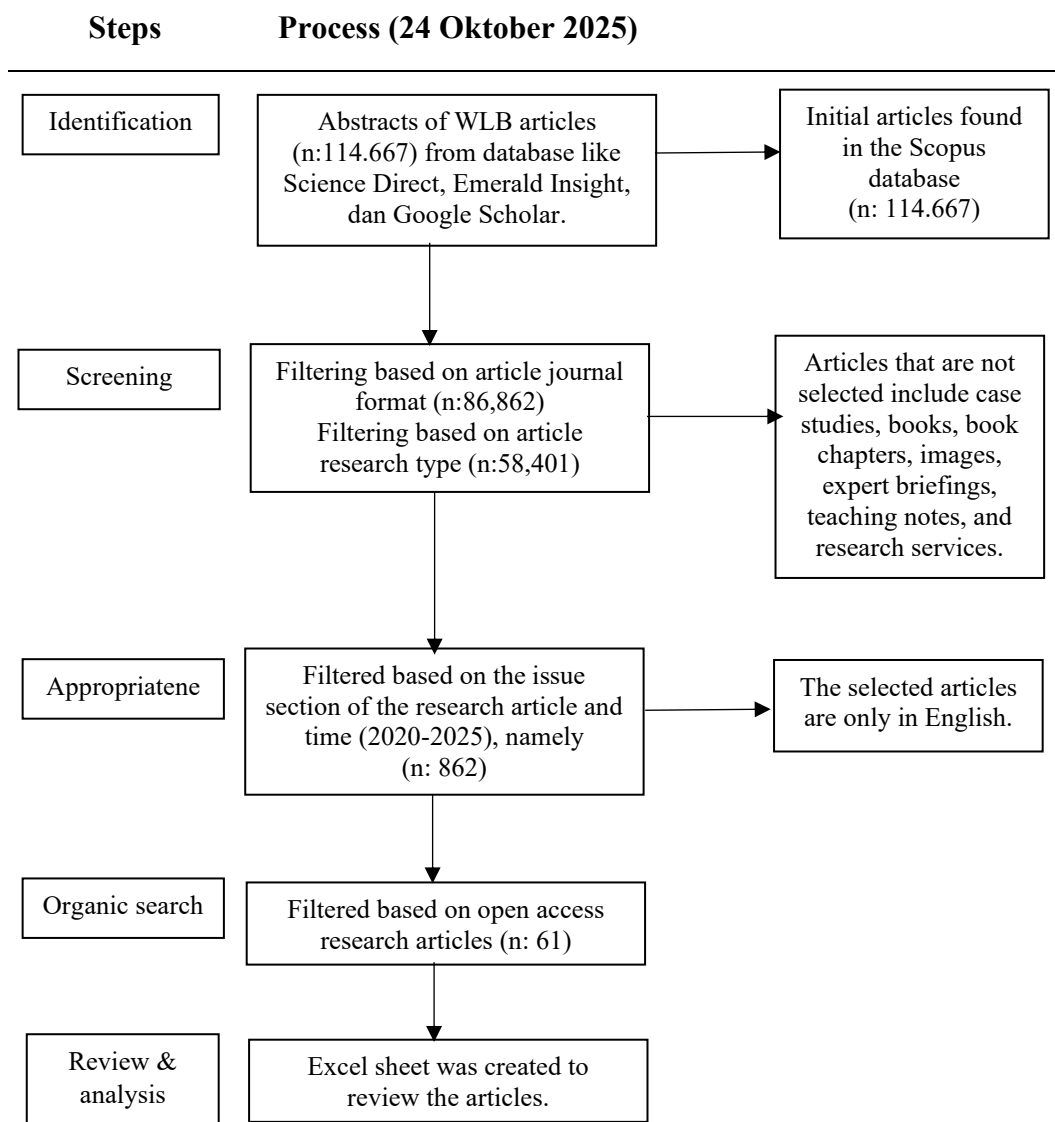


Image 2. PRISMA
source: Author (2025).

The literature review process in this study was conducted systematically through five main steps as described in Figure 1. In the first step, the researchers reviewed the abstracts of articles obtained through the ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar databases, considering publications from well-known publishers such as Elsevier, Emerald Insight, Helion, Sage, and MDPI. The literature search was conducted using the keyword “work-life balance” with a publication period of 2020–2025, and was carried out on October 24, 2025, resulting in 114,667 relevant articles. The inclusion criteria were set for English-language scientific articles discussing work-life balance (WLB) and published in Scopus-indexed journals, while the exclusion criteria included non-English articles, unpublished articles, and publications from journals not listed in Scopus. In the second step, screening was conducted based on scientific journal format, reducing the number of articles to 86,862, which were then screened again based on research

type, leaving 58,401 articles. The third step focused on selection based on issue section and publication period (2020–2025), resulting in 862 relevant articles. Next, the fourth step was carried out with additional organic searches to find relevant articles that were not directly indexed in the initial results, which ultimately produced 61 final articles as listed in Table 1 of the Appendix. In the fifth step, the researchers compiled a worksheet in Microsoft Excel format to conduct a structured review of each article based on various categories of analysis, such as the theory used, research methodology, main variables, and empirical findings relevant to the issue of work-life balance.

4. Result

Distribution of articles by year of publication

Based on an analysis of publication trends on Work-Life Balance (WLB) from 2020 to 2025, there appears to be a significant increase in academic attention to this topic. In the early 2020–2021 period, the number of publications was still very limited, with only one article per year, generally addressing subjective well-being and work stress as a result of role imbalance. However, since 2022, there has been a surge in research, primarily driven by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the workplace to adapt to work-from-home (WFH) systems and digital technology. Many studies during this period have highlighted how workers attempt to balance the demands of work and personal life amidst these sudden changes.

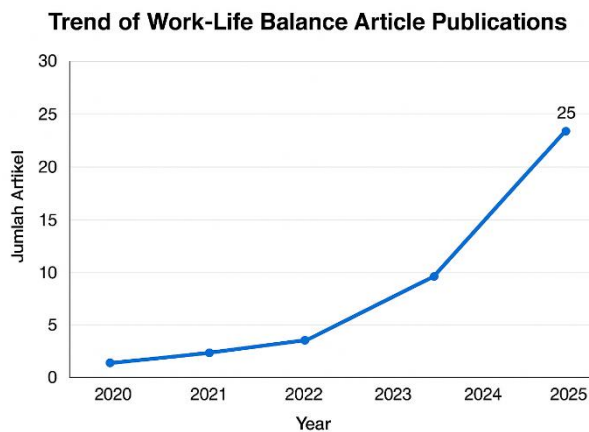


Image 3. PRISMA
source: Author (2025).

Entering 2023, although the number of publications has decreased slightly, research directions have become more diverse and in-depth, encompassing cross-cultural approaches, mindfulness-based interventions, and gender equality issues in work-life balance. A significant surge occurred in 2024, peaking with 27 articles in 2025, indicating that work-life balance has become a global issue attracting widespread attention across various disciplines, from human resource management and organizational psychology to public policy. Research themes during this period have become increasingly complex, such as the role of artificial intelligence in

improving work-life balance, social and digital innovation in supporting work-life balance policies, and the relationship between work-life balance and employee psychological resilience.

Overall, this trend indicates that research on work-life balance has evolved from a purely personal issue to a multidisciplinary, strategic and global topic. This development aligns with the growing awareness of the importance of a balance between professional and personal life in maintaining productivity, mental health, and organizational innovation in the digital age. With the increasing number of publications and diverse research approaches, it is expected that work-life balance will continue to be a major focus in management and work psychology research in the future.

Basic Classification

A basic classification analysis of the 61 Work-Life Balance (WLB) articles contained in the SLR table can be performed by grouping the research based on several main dimensions: (1) research methodology, (2) geographic distribution, (3) industrial sector, (4) theory used, and (5) research gap. The following is an explanation of the classification analysis:

1. Classification Based on Research Methodology

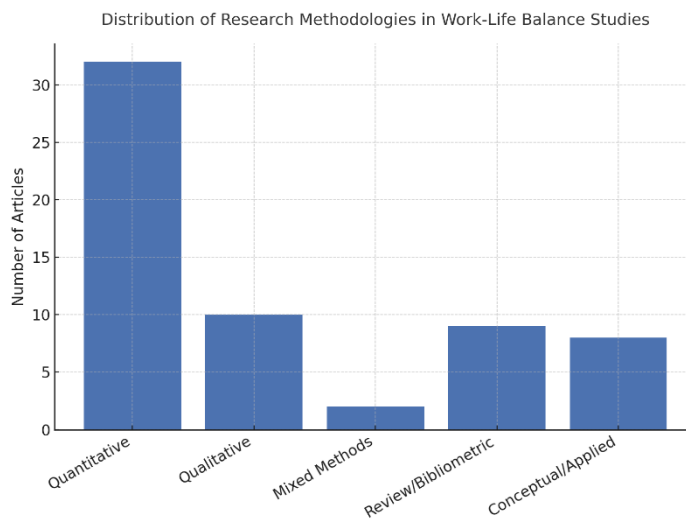


Image 4. PRISMA
source: Author (2025).

Here's the bar chart showing the **distribution of research methodologies** across the *Work-Life Balance* studies. The chart highlights that **quantitative research** dominates the field, followed by **qualitative** and **review/bibliometric** approaches, while **mixed methods** and **conceptual/applied** studies are less frequent.

The methodological classification indicates a predominance of quantitative approaches, used in more than half of the articles ($\pm 52\%$). Most quantitative research uses survey methods and statistical analysis such as SEM, PLS-SEM, or linear regression.

Furthermore, approximately 20% of articles are qualitative, using methods such as semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis.

In addition, 12 articles ($\pm 20\%$) are literature reviews or bibliometrics, indicating a growing number of studies mapping the conceptual development of WLB globally.

2. Classification of geographic distribution

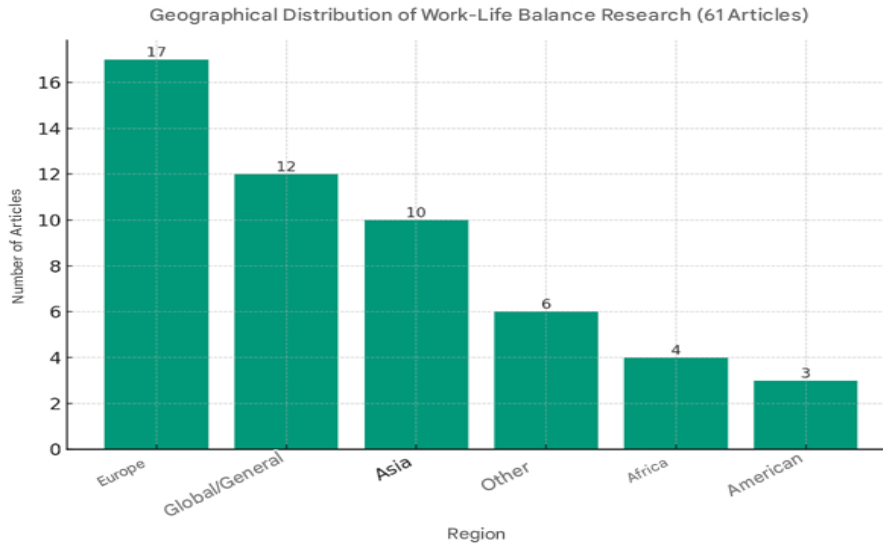


Image 5. PRISMA
source: Author (2025).

The following graph shows the distribution of research methodologies from 61 articles on Work-Life Balance. It can be seen that quantitative approaches dominate (more than half of the studies), followed by qualitative approaches and various forms of literature reviews such as scoping reviews and bibliometrics. This indicates that WLB research still focuses strongly on empirical analysis based on survey data, with a slight trend towards mixed methods and conceptual exploratory methods.

Research on Work-Life Balance has a very broad geographic distribution, reflecting its global and cross-cultural nature. Asia tops the list in terms of the number of studies, dominated by research from India, Malaysia, China, and Japan. This demonstrates the growing attention to work-life balance in developing countries facing social and economic changes brought about by digitalization. Europe ranks second, characterized by multinational studies, such as those in Norway, Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom, which focus heavily on flexible work policies and employee well-being. Research from Africa and Australia is emerging, focusing on gender equality in the construction and aviation sectors, while global or bibliometric research provides a cross-continental overview. Thus, it can be concluded that WLB studies are no longer focused on one region but have become an international discourse adapting to the social and economic context of each country.

3. Classification of papers based on sector

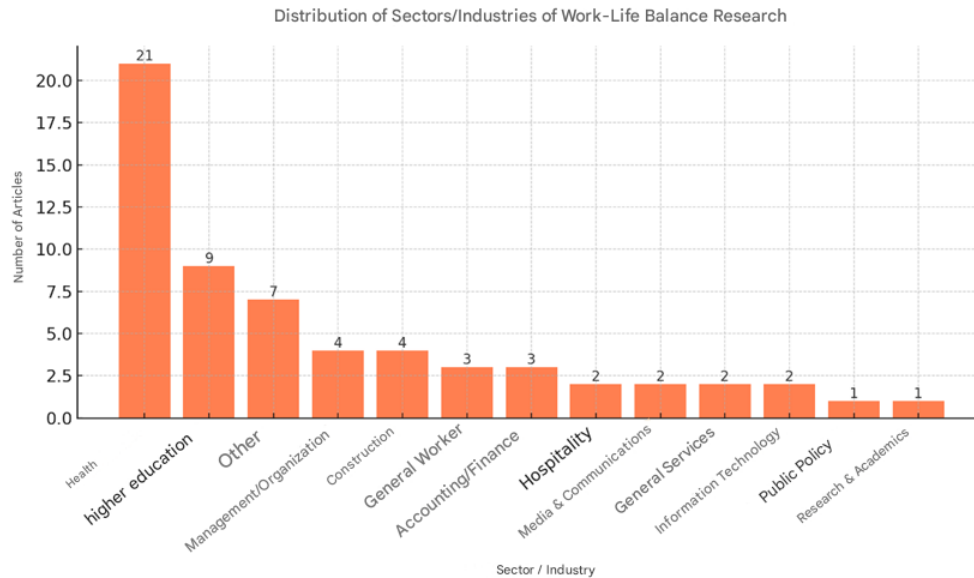


Image 6. PRISMA
source: Author (2025).

The following is a graph showing the distribution of sectors/industries researching work-life balance.

It can be seen that most research comes from the health and higher education sectors, followed by management/organization, construction, and hospitality.

The dominance of the health and education sectors indicates that work-life balance remains a major issue in professions with high emotional and time demands. Fields such as IT, media, and accounting are beginning to increase their contributions, signaling an expansion of research focus to other sectors affected by digital transformation and work flexibility.

The classification results show that research on Work-Life Balance (WLB) covers a wide range of sectors, reflecting its relevance across nearly all professional fields. Approximately 25% of the total articles focused on the education and academic sector, involving lecturers, researchers, and international students. Research in this category generally highlighted high workloads, publication pressure, and the challenges of maintaining a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life in a university environment. Meanwhile, approximately 20% of the articles addressed the healthcare and public service sectors, such as nurses, midwives, doctors, and radiologists. Studies in this group often highlighted the psychological stress caused by long working hours, ethical responsibilities towards patients, and the high risk of burnout, making Work-Life Balance a crucial factor in maintaining the well-being of medical personnel.

Furthermore, the largest sector—approximately 35% of the total publications—was the corporate and general industry sectors, including information technology, construction, hospitality, journalism, and management. Research in this category largely examined the impact of flexible work systems, remote work, and technological advances such as Robotic Process Automation

(RPA) on employee productivity and work-life balance. In addition to these three main sectors, a number of studies are cross-sectoral or public policy-oriented, focusing on social innovation, flexible work policies, and digital transformation in the workplace. This diversity demonstrates that work-life balance is no longer an issue confined to specific fields but has become a universal aspect recognized as crucial for sustained productivity, psychological well-being, and organizational effectiveness across various professional contexts.

4. Based on the Theory Used

An analysis of the theories used shows that Work-Life Balance research tends to be firmly rooted in psychological and organizational theories. Some of the most frequently used theoretical frameworks include the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Social Cognitive Theory, Boundary Theory, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Person-Environment Fit Theory. The JD-R Model, for example, is often used to explain the balance between job demands and personal resources that influence stress, burnout, and well-being. Meanwhile, COR and Self-Determination theories are widely used to explore how individuals manage energy and intrinsic motivation to maintain work-life balance. Boundary Theory is used to understand boundary management between work and personal life. The dominance of these theories indicates that WLB research still focuses on the psychological and behavioral dimensions of individuals in an organizational context, although recently new approaches have begun to emerge that link it to digital innovation, gender studies, and public policy.

5. Research gap

a. Individual factors

Research on individual factors in Work-Life Balance has largely highlighted the relationship between WLB and demographics, such as gender, age, marital status, and number of dependents. However, a research gap remains because most studies are only descriptive and have not explored the psychological mechanisms underlying these demographic differences. For example, how age and career stage influence strategies for managing work and family roles has not been widely studied longitudinally. Furthermore, the relationship between WLB and individual abilities such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, resilience, and time management skills also requires in-depth exploration. Although numerous studies have demonstrated that psychological abilities play a crucial role in maintaining work-life balance, limited studies have examined mediation and moderation models between individual abilities, work stress, and well-being outcomes. Future research should examine how the combination of demographic factors and personal abilities can strengthen adaptation to work pressure, particularly in the increasingly complex context of hybrid and digital work.

b. Organizational factors

From an organizational perspective, most research focuses on work flexibility policies such as remote working, flexible hours, and family-supportive policies. However, a research gap remains in understanding how organizational culture and leadership style moderate the effectiveness of

these policies. Many studies assume that implementing flexible policies automatically improves work-life balance, when in fact, its impact is highly dependent on managerial support, internal communication, and role clarity within the organization. Furthermore, little research explores the relationship between WLB and organizational performance and employee innovation, particularly in the context of the digital economy. Another underexplored aspect is the impact of technology and automation on work-life balance, such as how the implementation of AI and Robotic Process Automation changes workloads and employees' perceptions of work-life balance. Therefore, further research is needed to link organizational policies, technology, and performance outcomes in a more integrative manner to understand WLB holistically.

c. Social factors

Social factors are a crucial dimension that is often overlooked in WLB research. Most research focuses on the individual or organizational level, while the impact of the social environment, cultural norms, and community support on WLB has not been thoroughly studied. For example, there are still few studies examining how differences in cultural values (collectivist vs. individualistic) shape perceptions of work-life balance. Similarly, the role of social networks and family support is often measured in general terms, without considering the different forms of emotional and instrumental support that differ across cultures. In the context of globalization and digital transformation, new social challenges have emerged, such as digital burnout, social alienation due to remote work, and societal expectations for high productivity. This research gap opens up opportunities for interdisciplinary research linking WLB to socio-cultural dynamics, changing work values, and collective well-being.

5. Discussion

The analysis of 61 articles in the SLR table shows that Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a multidimensional topic that continues to develop and is increasingly relevant across various professional contexts. Overall, WLB research experienced a significant surge from 2022 to 2025, as global awareness of the importance of employee well-being increases amidst rapid changes in the workplace due to digitalization and the COVID-19 pandemic. The following discussion examines the interrelationships between three main factors—individual, organizational, and social—that serve as the foundation for understanding WLB dynamics, as well as the implications and remaining research gaps.

Individual Factors

Individual factors are the most fundamental dimension in understanding Work-Life Balance because work-life balance begins with a person's perceptions, abilities, and personal circumstances. Previous research has often linked WLB to demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, and family responsibilities. Findings indicate that women and workers of productive age often face greater challenges in managing work and family roles. However, existing research is still limited in explaining how these demographic factors interact with psychological mechanisms

such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, or resilience. An individual's ability to manage time, manage stress, and maintain emotional boundaries often determines how effectively they balance the demands of work and personal life. Therefore, further studies are needed that explore the dynamic interactions between psychological capabilities and the modern work context—especially in the hybrid, digital, and cross-cultural work environments that are now the new norm.

Organizational Factors

At the organizational level, research confirms that flexible work policies, leadership support, and a supportive organizational culture are key determinants of WLB achievement. However, the effectiveness of these policies is highly dependent on the organizational climate and leadership style. Studies show that work flexibility, such as remote working or flexible hours, is only beneficial if accompanied by trust and open communication between superiors and employees. On the other hand, the adoption of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Process Automation, also presents new dilemmas—while increasing efficiency, they can increase time pressures and extend the workspace into the home, blurring the boundaries between personal and professional life. Thus, future research needs to develop a more comprehensive model to understand the balance between organizational efficiency and employee well-being, and assess how leadership behavior and organizational culture can act as moderators in this relationship.

Social Factors

Social factors provide a macro context for Work-Life Balance that is often overlooked in previous research. Cultural norms, societal value systems, and social support from family and community play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of work-life balance. In countries with collectivist cultures, for example, commitment to family often takes priority over professional achievement, while in individualistic cultures, autonomy and work achievement tend to be emphasized more. However, little research has examined how social values and societal expectations influence work behavior and WLB experiences across cultural contexts. Furthermore, emerging social phenomena such as digital burnout, alienation from remote work, and social pressure to be productive increasingly demand a broader understanding of the impact of the social environment on work-life balance. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach involving sociological, anthropological, and technological perspectives is urgently needed to broaden our understanding of the social aspects of WLB.

Integrative Insight

The interrelationship between individual, organizational, and social factors in WLB suggests that work-life balance is not simply a personal issue, but rather the result of a complex interaction between organizational structure and social context. Individuals with strong self-regulation skills may still fail to achieve balance if they work in an organization with an overwork culture or if their social environment demands extreme productivity. Conversely, organizational policies that support work-life balance will be more effective if accompanied by individual empowerment and adequate social support. Thus, future WLB research needs to focus on integrative and multi-level analytical models that combine psychological,

managerial, and socio-cultural aspects to comprehensively understand work-life balance in the digital and global era.

6. Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendation

Recent research on Work-Life Balance (WLB) shows a significant paradigm shift from a general approach to a more contextual, in-depth, and practical solution-oriented analysis. Globally, WLB research is widespread but centered in Europe and Asia, particularly in India and Malaysia, with a strong sectoral focus on higher education institutions, the construction industry, and healthcare services. Methodologically, there is integration between quantitative approaches such as SEM and PLS-SEM with qualitative approaches through in-depth interviews to understand the meaning of WLB, as well as intervention studies such as mindfulness and technology use management. The substance highlights the important role of psychological variables such as self-efficacy, grit, and psychological capital, which function as mediators in improving subjective well-being. In addition, technological advances and the implementation of flexible working arrangements such as teleworking and flexible working hours pose new challenges and opportunities for work-life balance. Attention to demographic contexts has also increased, with a focus on vulnerable groups such as women, freelancers, and caregivers, while the concept of WLB has been expanded through the ideas of Work-Life Fulfilment and Work-Life Integration.

The implications of these findings emphasize the important role of organizations in creating work policies that are adaptive to individual needs, such as the implementation of hybrid work models, training to increase psychological capital, and mental health support based on psychological interventions. Practically, organizations are advised to develop a humanistic and inclusive work culture by utilizing technology wisely, strengthening social support systems in the workplace, and periodically assessing the effectiveness of WLB policies to maintain employee well-being while promoting long-term performance and productivity.

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