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Work-Life Balance: A Systematic Literature Review

Shefali Nandan[1] and Aqsa Khan[2]

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The study aims to review the literature to delineate the conceptualization of work-life balance, investigate the key variables associated with it, and examine the bibliometric characteristics of WLB research.*

Methodology: *This study conducted a systematic review of the literature, including studies indexed in Web of Science. Peer-reviewed studies published between 1995 and 2024 were included. The review followed the PRISMA framework.*

Findings: *The studies were extracted, reviewed, and synthesized, revealing that WLB is a multidimensional concept shaped by workplace dynamics, demographic shifts, technological advancements, and family structures. Developed economies have made a substantial contribution to WLB research, with a focus on the service sector.*

Implications: *The study offers scholars insights into gaps in the existing corpus of WLB research, thereby identifying a future research agenda. Practitioners can gain information on the impact of technology and on emerging concerns regarding WLB.*

Originality: *The study synthesizes WLB research published over nearly three decades and classifies the literature into themes. It integrates diverse perspectives on WLB, identifies emerging trends and research gaps, and helps shape a research agenda for the future.*

Limitations and directions for future research: *This study relied on a single database and was limited to English-language journal articles. Future studies may draw on multiple databases, multilingual sources, and a broader range of research documents. Additionally, research may focus on developing economies and underrepresented sectors.*

Keywords: *Work-life balance; systematic literature review; PRISMA; remote work.*

[1] Shefali Nandan, University of Allahabad, India (*Corresponding author*)
Email: eshefali@allduniv.ac.in

[2] Aqsa Khan, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj, India
Email: aqsakhan28396@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the extent to which an employee maintains a steady level of satisfaction across their family, work, and personal responsibilities (Kakar et al., 2022). Changes in work dynamics and organizational operations have inevitably disrupted employees' ability to maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal lives (Palumbo, 2020). Professionals across diverse fields are grappling with work stress in demanding work environments. With advancements in social, cultural, demographic and work patterns, the concept of WLB has also undergone significant changes over time. These shifts have been driven by factors such as changing gender roles, the rise of dual-career families, and the increase in single parents in the workforce (Duan et al., 2023). With technological advancements, work dynamics and patterns are continuously evolving, placing greater demands on employees (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). Also, market competitiveness requires high levels of employee engagement, which disrupts the work-life balance (Stephen et al., 2024). A balanced lifestyle leads to higher overall productivity and better performance outcomes for the organization. To achieve this objective, organizations are prioritizing the enhancement of work-life quality by integrating recreational and leisure pursuits (Park et al., 2022).

Research on the work-life interface has expanded significantly over the years and continues to evolve without reaching saturation (Khatri & Shukla, 2022). However, the existing studies remain scattered across sectors, economies, themes, and methodological approaches. An integration and synthesis of the current body of research are therefore needed to identify the evolution of the concept, understand the dominant research themes, and outline the bibliographic features of WLB research. Thus, the purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) and synthesize WLB research from 1995 to 2024. Specifically, the study aims to examine major themes and variables related to WLB, publication patterns, methodologies, and the sectoral distribution of studies. This study contributes by integrating and structuring the growing body of literature on WLB and provides a blueprint for future research.

The study addresses the following research questions:

- How is the concept of WLB understood?
- What are the key variables associated with WLB?
- What is the impact of technological advancement on WLB?
- What are the bibliometric characteristics of WLB research in terms of publication trends, research methodologies, countries, journals, sectoral distribution, and type of economy?
- What are the potential areas of research in the field of WLB?

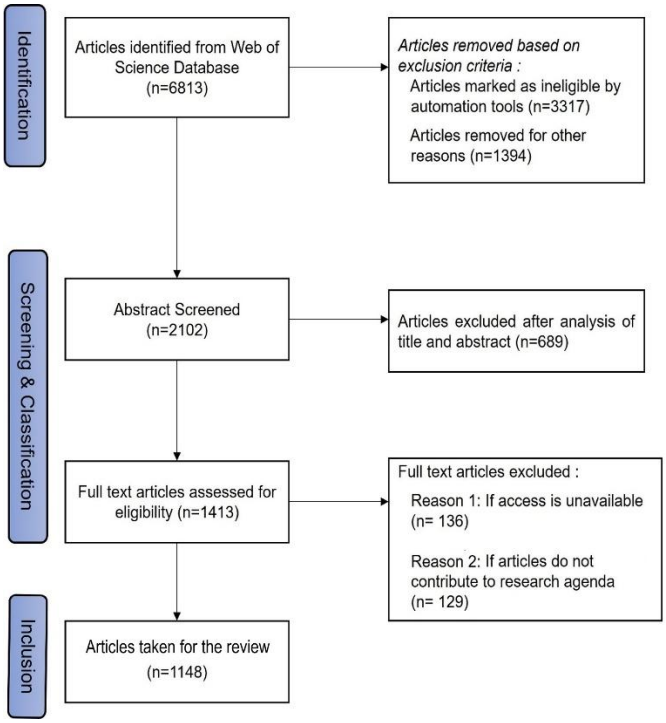
The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was employed to identify and screen the papers.

The next section outlines the study's methodology, including the PRISMA framework and the criteria for selecting studies. This is followed by a bibliometric overview and a discussion of the reviewed studies, covering major themes, trends, and emerging issues in WLB research. The final section presents the conclusion, implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An SLR was conducted to identify and review relevant research papers to comprehensively examine the concept, antecedents, and constructs related to WLB. SLR is a useful research method as it enables the identification and analysis of all available studies on a specific topic (Davis et al., 2014). By employing this method, the study aims to gain insights into the patterns and characteristics of WLB research. Further, the study followed the PRISMA guidelines (PRISMA, 2023) to delineate the systematic steps of the review process, as shown in Figure 1. PRISMA is a widely used guideline for reporting SLRs (Choudhary & Jain, 2025). Thus, the review process adopted in this study was guided by the principles of transparency, replicability, and minimization of selection bias associated with systematic literature reviews.

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram



The following steps were followed to conduct the SLR:

Step 1: Identification of Studies

A literature review was conducted using the Web of Science database, which provides extensive coverage of peer-reviewed, high-quality scholarly publications. Articles from publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley, Springer, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, and Emerald Insight were reviewed. Keywords such as "work-life balance," "work-family balance," "work-life interface," and "domains of work and life" were used in the database search. A comprehensive search identified 6813 research papers.

Inclusion Criteria: To select articles for the study, we applied four specific criteria, including articles that were predominantly focused on WLB, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, articles based on empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods), including theoretical papers and comprehensive literature reviews, articles published within the timeframe spanning from 1995 to 2024, and articles that were written in English.

Exclusion Criteria: Master's and doctoral theses, conference proceedings, working papers, textbooks, and unpublished papers were excluded from the review. Conference proceedings and working papers were excluded because many do not undergo rigorous peer review and often present preliminary findings. Similarly, theses, textbooks, and unpublished studies were omitted to ensure consistency, academic quality, and comparability of the reviewed literature. Thus, the study considered only journal articles, which constitute certified knowledge and are therefore reliable (Danvila-del-Valle et al., 2019). During the search process, the database automatically excluded papers that did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Step 2: Screening of Abstracts

A total of 3317 articles were eliminated based on exclusion criteria, and another 1394 were removed for other reasons, including incomplete bibliographic information, inaccessible documents, and studies unrelated to WLB despite keyword matches. A preliminary screening was conducted by assessing the titles, abstracts, and aims of the research papers. The abstracts were systematically screened using predefined criteria aligned with the study objectives to ensure that articles clearly addressed WLB or related constructs and added value to the field. Studies that only superficially addressed WLB were excluded at this stage. 1413 articles were retained at this step and then assessed for relevance and suitability for full-text analysis. The study independently reviewed articles at each stage and subsequently reached a consensus. The use of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria throughout the screening process helped reduce subjective bias and improve consistency in article selection.

Step 3: Classification of Studies

The articles were classified by key concepts, conceptual models, article type (conceptual or empirical), and research methodology. The studies were then sorted based on the themes they covered. 136 articles were omitted from further analysis because their full texts were unavailable. After a comprehensive review of the shortlisted articles, 129 were excluded for not aligning with the research objectives. Although these articles met the preliminary abstract screening criteria, a full-text examination found that certain studies had only a limited focus on WLB or did not offer a substantial conceptual or empirical contribution. Thus, a total of 1148 articles were finally considered for review.

Step 4: Review and Analysis of Studies

Required information from the shortlisted articles was recorded in an Excel sheet for final review. Variables

from the shortlisted studies, such as title, publication year, journal, country of origin, sectors, and economy, were examined. Finally, a structured data analysis was conducted as part of the SLR process. The next step involved a descriptive analysis that provided an overview of the included articles, followed by an analysis of the selected studies to investigate key findings, emerging trends, and gaps in the literature, and to identify directions for future research.

Thus, to enhance methodological rigor and minimize bias, the study adopted a structured procedure for selecting papers, using predefined criteria at every stage of the review process.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents an analysis of the results from the review of selected papers. The results are presented in two sections: Bibliographic overview and Conceptualization of WLB.

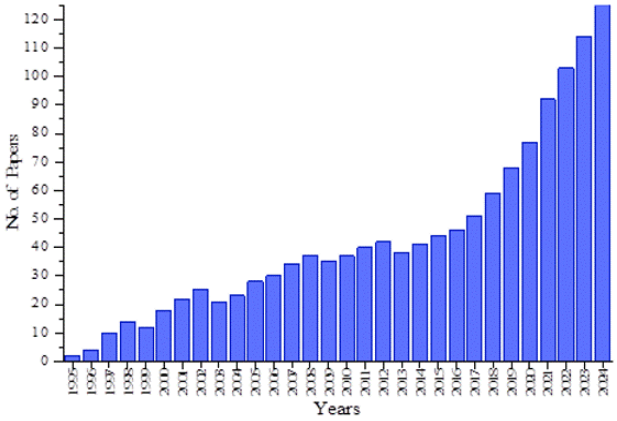
Bibliographic Overview

Publication pattern in terms of years

Table 6 presents regression results examining how annual report readability, along with control variables, influences the cost of capital. The regression model has an R-squared of 0.7028, indicating that annual report readability, firm size, financial performance, and firm growth explain approximately 70% of the variation in WACC. The coefficient for FRE is negative and significant (-0.0008996, P < 0.1), suggesting that enhancing the readability of annual reports reduces investor uncertainty, thereby lowering the expected rate of return demanded by capital providers.

Although the study encompasses research on WLB from 1995 to 2024, only a few studies were published in the early years. However, the number gradually increased over time. Between 2020 and 2024, the highest number of papers (513 in total) was published, with 127 in 2024 (Figure 2). This trend shows a rising interest among scholars in WLB research, indicating that WLB has evolved from a fringe HR issue into a core aspect of managing employees.

Figure 2: Research Articles Published during 1995-2024



WLB research grew after 2015, coinciding with the rise of the platform economy and remote work, both of which had implications for WLB. The scope of research expanded beyond traditional work–family issues to include work-life fusion. The most significant increase occurred during and after the pandemic (2020–2024), with 513 publications appearing in just five years. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated widespread transitions to remote and hybrid work, making WLB issues both universal and urgent.

Most productive journals

Initially, leading HR and organizational behavior journals did not consider WLB a key research area. The top 10 journals (Table 1) accounted for 46% of the total research output. The top three journals with the most studies on WLB are Community, Work and Family; International Journal of Human Resource Management; and Journal of Managerial Psychology. These journals span multiple domains, including sociology, managerial and occupational psychology, organizational behavior, social sciences, psychology, and sustainability, indicating that WLB is highly interdisciplinary. This suggests that WLB is not limited to the HR domain; rather, it is an intricate and multidimensional construct that requires a broad range of perspectives to be understood holistically.

Table 1: Top 10 Publishing Journals on Work-Life Balance

Sl. No.	Journal Name	Publisher	No. of Articles
1	Community, Work and Family	Taylor & Francis	116

2	International Journal of Human Resource Management	Taylor & Francis	93
3	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Emerald Group Publishing	76
4	Gender, Work and Organization	John Wiley & Sons, Inc	64
5	Human Relations	Sage Publications	51
6	Academy of Management Review	Academy of Management	43
7	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Elsevier	32
8	Personnel Review	Emerald Group Publishing	21
9	Work, Employment and Society	Sage Publications	19
10	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	John Wiley & Sons, Inc	14

It was also found that journals focusing on organizational psychology and human resource management had the largest share of publications, suggesting that WLB research is largely organization- centric.

Articles categorization based on type of economy

Most studies (78%) were conducted in developed economies, while developing countries accounted for only 22%. This pattern likely reflects more structured workplace policies, which make WLB a research priority in developed economies. Theoretical frameworks developed in Western literature may not be applicable in developing countries due to different socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, there is a need for more context-specific and comparative research on WLB.

Sector-based categorization of articles

The majority (53.66%) of the studies focused on specific sectors, while the rest (46.34%) examined the general population (Table 2). The service sector appears to attract greater scholarly attention, including IT services, education, finance, healthcare, retail, and hospitality. This pattern suggests that WLB issues are increasingly important in these sectors, likely due to the greater prevalence of flexi-work, remote work, and digital communication.

Scholarly attention was largely limited to other sectors, such as manufacturing, which accounted for 0.44% of total studies, despite high operational demands and the fact that these sectors employ a significant share of the workforce in many developing countries. Similarly, the defense and public service sectors received very limited scholarly attention. This indicates that the concept of WLB in the literature is largely shaped by professional and knowledge-sector perceptions.

Table 2: Sector-Based Categorization of Research Articles

Sectors	No. of Papers	(%)
General population	532	46.34
IT services	193	16.81
Education services	154	13.41
Financial services	87	7.58
Healthcare services	68	5.92
Retail	39	3.40
Hospitality	27	2.35
Manufacturing	5	0.44
Defence sector	7	0.61
Public sector	9	0.78
Managers	16	1.39
Others	11	0.96

Most productive countries

The reviewed papers were sourced globally and encompassed research from 24 countries. An overview of the top 10 countries, shown in Table 3, accounts for 773 of 1148 published articles (67.33%) on the topic. The United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom were the leading contributors to WLB research, together accounting for 33%.

Table 3: Top 10 Publishing Countries

Sl. No.	Countries	No. of Articles
1	USA	142
2	Australia	127
3	England	113
4	Canada	92
5	Spain	77
6	Netherland	63
7	Italy	52
8	New Zealand	46
9	India	38
10	Japan	23

Factors that contribute to the dominance of American and European countries in WLB research include high levels of industrialization and early adoption of work-life policies such as telework, parental leave, and flexible work arrangements (Kelliher et al., 2018). These factors have sustained scholarly interest in WLB in these regions (Powell et al., 2019). Additionally, the expanding Indian economy has reshaped work dynamics, prompting organizations to focus on work-life strategies (Munn & Chaudhuri, 2016), making India an important contributor to WLB research.

A deeper analysis reveals that country-level publication patterns are closely linked to the sectoral distribution of research. Studies from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada were primarily focused on IT services, higher education, healthcare, and managerial occupations. These sectors involve knowledge-intensive work and greater flexibility. This indicates that WLB research has predominantly focused on service-sector employees in industrialized countries.

Conceptualization of WLB

Methodology-based categorization of articles

The majority (73%) of studies were empirical, while 27% were conceptual. This indicates growing scholarly interest in examining WLB using quantitative variables. Conceptual studies focused on advancing concepts and theories, formulating conceptual models, and examining organizational practices. Yet the methodological distribution suggests limited theoretical advancement within the WLB domain. This pattern suggests that the domain has accorded greater importance to managerial concerns than to deeper conceptual understanding. This may be related to the geographical and sectoral imbalance identified earlier in the study. Most empirical studies have been conducted in organizational settings in developed economies, likely due to higher levels of industrialization and the need to sustain organizational growth. For this reason, existing WLB theories may insufficiently capture the experiences of workers in developing countries, particularly in labor-intensive industries and culturally diverse contexts.

Concept of balance

In recent years, a global definition of balance has gained acceptance, distinguishing it from enrichment and conflict (Khatri & Shukla, 2022). The global approach treats balance as a single, unidimensional concept, in contrast to the previous component-based approach (Casper et al., 2018). The broad concept of balance encompasses a holistic view or general evaluation of the relationship between work and family (Fan et al., 2021). This comprehensive definition of balance aligns with Gestalt psychology's tenets by emphasizing the whole rather than its constituent parts (Jäkel et al., 2016). The concept of balance has also evolved from a narrow work–family perspective to a broader work–life perspective that incorporates social, psychological, and leisure dimensions of life (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Concept of WLB

Brough et al. (2020) defined work-life balance as a concept that encompasses all facets of people's identities and roles in their personal and professional lives. In the early phase of WLB research, the concept was narrowly interpreted as “work–family conflict” (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). Powell et al. (2019) proposed the term ‘work-non-work balance’ as a more comprehensive representation. WLB is commonly characterized as a dynamic, evolving process in which people move along a continuum between their personal and professional lives at any time (Jayasingam et al., 2023). WLB was previously viewed as the absence of conflict between work and family life (Haar & Brougham, 2022), but from a broader perspective, it also encompasses an individual’s social life and leisure activities (Weale et al., 2020). The theoretical understanding of WLB has been influenced

by several theories, including role theory, spillover theory, border theory, and conservation of resources theory (Clark, 2000). Role Theory explains that individuals perform multiple roles simultaneously, which may create role conflict and affect balance. Spillover Theory suggests that experiences in one domain of life may positively or negatively influence another domain, whereas Border Theory explains how individuals manage boundaries between work and non-work life. These theories collectively indicate that WLB is multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent.

The linkages between work and personal life are shaped by variables such as job demands, resources, and behaviors (Leslie et al., 2019). We have identified factors that affect WLB and classified them into three categories: individual, organizational, and societal variables.

Individual Variables and WLB

WLB is considerably influenced by age, gender, marital status, and emotional intelligence. Most empirical studies examining individual variables emphasize demographic and psychological determinants of WLB, although findings vary across cultural and occupational settings.

Gender

While achieving a harmonious WLB is important for both genders (Reverberi et al., 2022), women are held to a strict standard for fulfilling their familial duties, which makes attaining WLB easier for men (Sahni et al., 2023). In many developing countries, employment dynamics are structured around traditional gender roles (Young et al., 2023). This entrenched system is expected to result in significant WLB challenges (Nair et al., 2021). Long hours, strict work schedules, and a negative work environment can lead to work-family conflict and affect career-focused women more than men (Kim et al., 2024).

Age

Employees across age groups may have different work experiences due to age-related factors. Work attitudes and cultural values influence WLB across all age groups (Ferdous et al., 2023). Age and the extent to which work affects personal life are significantly correlated (Richert-Kaźmierska & Stankiewicz, 2016). While senior employees typically focus on managing work alongside personal obligations (Finkelstein et al., 2021), younger employees may prioritize balancing work with other activities, such as travel, study, volunteering, leisure, and hobbies (Klimchak et al., 2019). These preferences can affect WLB's work and non-work outcomes (Gragnano et al., 2020). Work-family conflict is likely to rise in the middle of a career but decline as one approaches retirement (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014). However, several studies examining age and WLB use cross-sectional designs, limiting understanding of how WLB changes across career stages over time.

Marital status

Marriage is an important factor that affects WLB (Aziz & Aman-Ullah, 2023). Married employees often struggle to achieve WLB due to work pressures and caregiving obligations (Denson & Szelényi, 2022). For dual-earner couples, partners' growing responsibilities across work and personal domains pose challenges; this complexity can make it difficult to maintain a fulfilling WLB (Crawford et al., 2019). On the other hand, employees are more likely to attain a healthy WLB when their spouses are not working and are cooperative (Kowitlawkul et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence (EI)

There appears to be a considerable impact of EI on achieving WLB (Soliman et al., 2023). EI and its significance in work life have garnered increasing attention in recent years (Dias & Rebecca, 2024). In professional environments, EI plays a pivotal role in determining job satisfaction (Suleman et al., 2021), thereby enhancing WLB. Higher levels of EI not only make employees more productive, committed, efficient, and motivated in the workplace, but they are also vital to sustaining a healthy balance between work and personal life (Henning et al., 2021). Although emotional intelligence has emerged as an important predictor of WLB, empirical evidence remains fragmented.

Societal Variables and WLB

The cognitive processes and priorities of an individual or organization vary as their beliefs and preferences are shaped by contextual factors, including family dynamics, community norms, and societal influences.

Societal culture

Societal culture plays a crucial role in shaping the adoption of WLB policies and an individual's self-efficacy in both work and personal life (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). Collectivism, gender norms, and power

distance have consistently and significantly influenced employees' use of WLB policies (Brown et al., 2021). Women's efforts to attain WLB are often hindered by deeply embedded patriarchal norms within the culture (Brue, 2019). Rising work pressures often leave employees struggling to meet the expectations of friends, relatives, and society, as societal demands play a significant role in shaping WLB.

Family structure

Family structure influences an individual's WLB (Xian et al., 2022). Dual-career couples struggle to achieve a harmonious WLB, particularly in nuclear families (Srinivasan & Sulur Nachimuthu, 2022). The extended family system enhances family resources and supports employees in achieving a better WLB (Jongruck & Vyas, 2024). In this context, family support can improve employees' satisfaction with their WLB (Landolfi et al., 2021). However, caregiving for elderly members in some extended families can be challenging (Powell et al., 2019), leading to family responsibilities that can adversely affect WLB.

Studies on societal variables focus on collectivist cultures and family obligations, but there are few from developing economies and on non-traditional family structures.

Organizational Variables and WLB

Organizational factors include organizational structure, corporate culture, and job demands. Many organizations have a working-from-home (WFH) policy. The impact of WFH on employees varies by contextual factors, particularly organizational support, perceived emotional and social support at work, and job autonomy (Sok et al., 2014). Several studies have identified organizational variables as the most significant predictors of employee WLB.

Job demands

Job demands are the physical and psychological efforts required to complete assigned tasks (Jayasingam et al., 2023). They include workload, complex tasks, work pace, limited autonomy, and extended working hours (Bakker & Vries, 2021). High job demands over a prolonged period may lead to permanent fatigue and burnout (Bunjak et al., 2021). Demanding jobs may take up a large share of personal time, leaving employees little time for meaningful engagement in family life (Ugwu et al., 2024). The need to attend to work-related emails and messages beyond working hours significantly affects WLB (Bunjak et al., 2021).

Organisational culture

Organizational culture is the primary determinant of work processes, performance standards, and employee behavior. Occasionally, employees do not use WLB policies even when they exist in the organization (Cannizzo et al., 2019), which may be due to a non-supportive organizational culture (Fontinha et al., 2019) and inadequate information about WLB strategies (Brown et al., 2021). A hostile work culture can harm employee well-being (Boudreau, 2022). Previous studies have focused on a single organization or a sector, limiting their generalizability.

Technology and WLB

The boundaries between work and personal life are blurred by the adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) tools (Derks et al., 2021). Work digitalization, remote work, and technology-enabled flexibility are emerging themes in WLB literature.

Technology and work

Technological advancements are reshaping perceptions and understanding of WLB (Khatri & Shukla, 2022). Digital tools can help employees address a range of WLB issues and improve their work, health, and well-being (Wepfer et al., 2018). They can also facilitate better teamwork through improved communication and collaboration among coworkers (Duan et al., 2023), which can save time in job performance. Technology can also enhance work flexibility and connectivity between work and personal life (Kusairi et al., 2023). However, an inability to detach from work due to ICT can lead to stress and burnout (Palm et al., 2020), thereby adversely affecting WLB (Lee et al., 2023).

Work from home

Organizations are moving towards virtual and remote work environments in which employees must always be available and responsive (Harris et al., 2022). At the same time, many employees use technology to balance their family and personal commitments during work hours (Harris et al., 2022). The existing literature presents a duality of viewpoints regarding the impact of remote work on employee WLB (Limanta et al., 2023). Positive aspects of WFH include reducing

commuting time, sustaining operational effectiveness (Palumbo, 2020), and enabling greater work flexibility, thereby facilitating the attainment of a harmonious WLB (Harris et al., 2022). Undesirable outcomes include the diversion of personal time toward work-related commitments (Oseghale et al., 2024). Work-life fusion arising from working from home entails skillfully handling the obligations of work and personal life simultaneously (Harris et al., 2022). Most technology-related studies were conducted during or after the COVID-19 period; therefore, the long-term implications of technology-enabled work arrangements on WLB remain underexplored.

Gig Work and WLB

The gig economy is characterized by short-term jobs, contracts, and projects, in which gig workers offer services to consumers through online platforms (de Janasz et al., 2022). A key benefit of gig work is its flexibility in working hours (Berger et al., 2019), which provides gig workers with autonomy to decide the type, amount, and timing of work (Warren, 2021), the location of work, and the duration of engagement with any particular work provider (James, 2024). These aspects significantly contribute to maintaining WLB. However, the challenges of job insecurity and work-life fusion for gig workers require proactive strategies to help them maintain a healthy, sustainable balance between their personal and work lives (Warren, 2021). Although gig work offers flexibility and autonomy, empirical findings remain mixed regarding its impact on WLB.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review analyzed the evolution and emerging themes in WLB research published from 1995 to 2024. The findings indicate that WLB is a multidimensional and dynamic construct. Although the number of publications increased considerably over time, the focus remained primarily on descriptive examinations of stress, flexibility, and work-family conflict. Only a few studies have attempted to develop integrated conceptual frameworks or longitudinal models to explain changing work-life dynamics across contexts.

Recent changes in work and work methods, such as remote work, platform-based employment, and gig work, have blurred these boundaries and created new challenges in managing work and personal responsibilities. The review confirms previous studies linking WLB closely to employee well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Amid changing social structures and work patterns, WLB has become increasingly important for employees, who prefer an organizational environment that supports it, as argued by Kossek and Ollier-Malaterre (2020). The present review further strengthens this understanding by synthesizing diverse studies.

The study found an increase in WLB research publications after 2020, which may reflect changes in family and work structures. Consistent with previous scholars' observations, the study emphasizes that growth in WLB literature can be linked to the decline of extended family support systems, the increasing participation of women in the workforce, the rise of dual-earner families, and the expansion of knowledge-intensive and service-sector employment (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). It also notes a rise in technological advancements, as noted by Lewis et al. (2007). This indicates that publication growth was influenced not only by scholarly interest but also by contextual factors.

The review also found that empirical and quantitative methods dominate WLB research. While quantitative approaches provide measurable insights into WLB antecedents and outcomes, the limited use of qualitative approaches constrains understanding of the evolving features of WLB. Therefore, the study highlights the need for more mixed method approaches to gain deeper insight into WLB. Moreover, previous studies have emphasized that country culture and organizational environment impact individuals' ability to achieve WLB (Hobson et al., 2011). The findings show that WLB research has evolved, focusing on service-sector professionals in developed economies, highlighting the need for contextual and cross-cultural research and broader industry representation.

CONCLUSION

The study integrates the WLB literature from 1995-2024 and identifies the pattern and direction of the research. The study's theoretical contribution is that it shows WLB has evolved beyond being understood solely as the 'separation of work and personal life'. Evolving themes related to cognitive processes, work-life integration, cultural influences, and work-life fusion highlight the need for more comprehensive theoretical frameworks.

The study's findings have practical implications. It highlights the importance of organizational support in achieving WLB. Supportive leadership, flexible work arrangements, employee well-being initiatives, and family-friendly organizational policies play a crucial role in improving employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. However, the studies also indicate that these practices succeed only when supported by a strong organizational culture and aligned with socio-cultural conditions. Therefore, organizations should focus on designing context-specific policies that address employees' work and personal-life needs rather than adopting generalized approaches.

This review was limited to studies in the Web of Science database. Future studies can draw on multiple databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and others. The review focused solely on peer-reviewed journal articles and excluded other scholarly sources, which could be included in future studies to provide additional insights. Future research should develop more comprehensive theoretical and methodological approaches to WLB. Comparative studies across developed and developing economies may help clarify cross-cultural variations in WLB. Because qualitative and conceptual studies are relatively few, researchers should adopt longitudinal, qualitative, and experimental designs to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of WLB. Furthermore, there is a need to develop robust measures of work-life integration and work-life fusion. The study also calls for research on the impact of gig work, the platform economy, and hybrid work models on employees' work-life experiences.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest pertaining to the publication of this article.

AI Usage Disclosure

The authors declare no AI was used in the creation of this research article.

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