Systematic Literature Review of Work-life Balance

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Abstract. This paper seeks to explore both theoretical and practical aspects of work-life balance by systematically reviewing existing literature and developing a comprehensive understanding of work-life balance and its association with various forms of work-related behavior and individual, or-ganizational, and social factors. Additionally, this study aims to identify research gaps and propose future research directions. Fifty-four research studies published between 2018 and 2023 have been included in this systematic literature review. The selected studies have been classified based on publication year, geographical distribution, authorship, key indicators, and variables related to work-life balance. This paper examines the various concepts, components, and influential factors that have significantly contributed to the field, specifically focusing on individual, organizational, and social factors influencing work-life balance. Moreover, the study highlights existing research gaps and outlines potential areas for future ex-ploration, particularly concerning flexibility at work and work-life balance. The findings reveal critical gaps in the systematic review and classification of work-life balance research, particularly about demographics, theoretical frameworks, and key influencing factors at personal, organizational, and social levels. Fur-thermore, the review identifies that most research on this topic has been conduct-ed in India, the United Kingdom, and Finland.

Keywords: work-life balance, work-family balance, flexibility, theory, indicators, variables, method.

1 Introduction

Flexibility is essential for workers, particularly for the millennial generation and those that follow. Organizations must prioritize flexibility to sustain work stability and enhance performance. The COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant shift in work systems, making digitalization inevitable. Remote work has become a norm, allowing employees to maintain a work-life balance. The challenge of balancing professional and personal life is often associated with gender, as women are generally perceived to have greater demands. The ability to work while fulfilling responsibilities as mothers and parents is a common aspiration among women. In its literal sense, work-family balance (WFB) refers to reducing work commitments to dedicate more time to family [1].

Workers' psychological well-being plays a fundamental role in their preparedness to engage in social life, including professional responsibilities. A healthy mental state

fosters strong social skills, enabling individuals to work according to their talents, make meaningful contributions, and receive fair compensation or recognition. Im-plementing work flexibility policies which cover aspects such as work hours, location, and methods of task completion while ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in achieving organiza-tional objectives is becoming a key competitive advantage. A flexible work culture is often compelling for employees, as it aligns with their personal needs and supports work-life balance. Over the past five decades, research on the work-life interface has expanded significantly due to evolving trends in gender roles, family structures, work environments, and career paths [2]. Social support from extended family, community networks, friends, and hobby-based groups is crucial in facilitating work-life balance. The availability of strong social support systems contributes to increased workplace productivity, allowing indi-viduals to engage in their social roles and contribute mean-ingfully to their communi-ties. A work environment that is safe, comfortable, and ful-filling enhances effective time management, making it easier for individuals to achieve a desirable balance between their professional and personal lives [3].

2   Methods

This research employs a literature review analysis, theoretical review, and existing gap analysis of previous studies conducted between 2018 and 2023 regarding work-life balance. The review begins by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1. What factors influence work-life balance?

RQ2. In which geographical regions have work-life balance studies been conducted?

A systematic review was performed by sourcing relevant research articles on work-life balance from multiple academic platforms, including Emerald, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, and SAGE. Using search terms such as work-life balance, work-family bal-ance, flexibility, theory, indicators, variables, and method, 1,000 articles related to work-life balance were identified, all published within the period 2018–2023. The first step in the review process involved analyzing article titles to select those most closely aligned with work-life balance, narrowing the pool to 193 articles. The second step entailed examining article abstracts, which further refined the selection to 54 articles deemed relevant to this review's objectives. The third step involved a comparative anal-ysis of the selected articles, focusing on the title, abstract, theoretical framework, and key variables associated with work-life balance. The systematic review methodology and theoretical analysis applied in the research are as in **Fig. 1**:
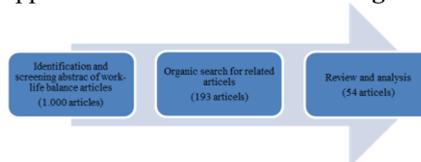

Fig. 1. Systematic review methodology and theoretical analysis

3   Result and Discussion

Research on work-life balance encompasses various theoretical work-family models. Although studies on this topic have significantly expanded, there are still substantial gaps in understanding work-family dynamics [2]. A review of articles examining work-life balance reveals that researchers have employed different models and variables to assess it. [3] define work-life balance as "the individual's perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities." Additionally, work-life balance is described as "a self-defined, self-determined state of well-being that a person can reach, or can set as a goal, that allows them to manage effectively multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in their community; it supports physical, emotional, family, and community health, and does so without grief, stress, or negative impact" (Canadian Department of Labor, as cited in [4]. The implementation of work-life balance offers notable advantages to employees and organizations, as meeting employees' work and social needs enhances their productivity, thereby positively influencing their performance. Employees who experience greater flexibility perceive themselves to have an improved work-life balance [5], even if this perception does not always reflect reali-ty. Furthermore, higher levels of happiness and well-being among employees lead to stronger organizational commitment. From the various models and constructs analyzed across 54 articles focusing on work-life balance, the factors influencing this concept can be categorized into three main groups: personal, organizational, and social.

Personal factors

The first group analyzed consists of personal factors, encompassing variables that are inherently part of individual workers, including psychological and demographic aspects. Demographic variables cover aspects such as age, gender, and marital status. At the same time, other personal factors include psychological empowerment, indi-vidual characteristics, mindfulness, availability, accessibility, work-life conflict, trust, respect, motivation, cognitive control, burnout, and overall well-being. Several theo-ries and prior research findings on work-life balance related to personal factors ex-plore aspects such as work-life balance and personal demands, work-life balance and family demands, and work-life balance and an individual's ability. High work pressure and significant family demands negatively impact an individ-ual's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being [6], which raises concerns among employers as these issues contribute to lower productiv-ity and higher absenteeism rates [7]. Regarding work-life balance and family demands, employees often spend a significant portion of their time commuting [8] or fulfilling work and family responsibilities. For dual-career couples in nuclear families, balancing professional and personal life becomes particularly challenging without domestic assistance [9][10].

Organizational factor

Numerous theories and previous research findings discuss the relationship between work-life balance and organizational factors, including the connections between work-life balance and organizational demands, work-life balance and productivity, work-life balance and burnout, work-life balance and support systems, work-life balance and employee perceptions, work-life balance and job satis-faction, work-life balance and or-ganizational commitment, work-life balance policy utilization, and work-life balance

and organizational culture. Organizations implement work-life balance policies to support their employees [11]. Studies suggest that employee-friendly policies contribute positively to work-life balance [12]. However, organizations often expect employees to multitask, which can lead to role overload [13]. Additionally, the increased intensity of work and tight deadlines have negatively impacted work-life balance [14]. Organizational productivity can significantly improve when work-life balance practices are effectively integrated with teamwork design [15].

Social factors

Social factors represent the third category identified in the literature review analysis. These factors include family life, partnerships, social support, culture, returning to rural settings, crime rates, social roles, labor market conditions, work-home conflict, national context, external challenges, technological factors, and territorial behaviors. In general, social factors are external influences that shape an individual's role as a worker and a social being. The ability of employees to effectively manage responsibilities outside of their professional commitments plays a crucial role in fostering work-life balance. Several theories and previous studies have explored the relationship between work-life balance and social factors, particularly the impact of societal demands and social support on work-life balance. Research has found that societal demands play a significant role in predicting work-life balance [16]. Beyond categorizing factors into personal, organizational, and social dimensions, additional analysis has been conducted based on journal publisher classifications, the number of publications per year, and the geographical distribution of the research. The results of the analysis are presented in **Fig. 2**.
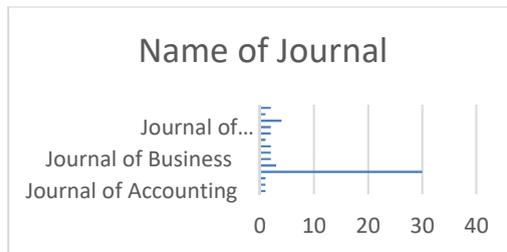

Fig. 2. Analysis Results Based on Journal Name

The findings from previous research on work-life balance indicate that scholarly articles on this topic have been published across 14 different journals. Among these, management journals have made the most significant contribution, accounting for 30 articles or 55% of the total publications. If we look at the number of publications, it can be seen in **Fig. 3**.
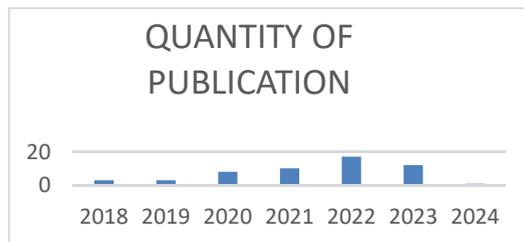

Fig. 3. Quantity of Publication

The highest number of publications was recorded in 2022, with 17 articles. In comparison, the number of studies published in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, and 2024 amounted to 3, 3, 8, 10, 12, and 1, respectively. This distribution of articles across the years highlights an upward trend in research activity, as depicted in Figure 4.
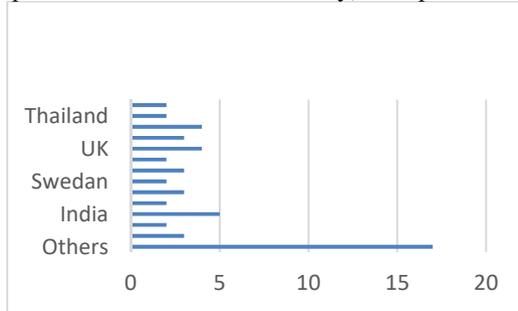

Fig.4. Publications by Country

The analysis of the distribution of research across 28 countries reveals that India, the UK, and Finland made the most significant contributions, accounting for 24% of the total publications on work-life balance research. **Fig. 4** visually represents the contributions of various countries to this field of study.

4   Conclusions

This literature review analyzed 54 scholarly articles on work-life balance, drawn from 14 publisher journals between 2018 and 2023, covering 28 countries. Among these, India, the United Kingdom, and Finland emerged as the most frequently studied regions. A detailed examination of models and variables related to work-life balance revealed three primary influencing factors: personal, organizational, and social. Each category encapsulates various elements that collectively shape an individual's ability to balance professional and personal life.

Personal factors include demographic aspects such as age, gender, marital status, psychological and behavioral characteristics like psychological empowerment, individual traits, mindfulness, availability, accessibility, work-life conflict, trust, respect, motivation, cognitive control, burnout, and overall well-being. Meanwhile, organizational factors revolve around structural and workplace dynamics, including flexibility, communication, collaboration, task allocation, work environment, institutional support, career growth, teamwork, rewards, employee retention, work engagement, job satisfaction, job characteristics, employee management, ICT implementation, job demands, job resources, productivity, type of organization, and workload. On the other hand, social factors represent external influences that shape an individual's role as a worker and a social being. These include family life, partnerships, social support, cultural background, relocation to rural areas, crime rates, societal roles, labor market conditions, work-home conflict, national policies, external challenges, technological advancements, and territorial behaviors. These factors collectively illustrate how work-life balance is influenced by an intricate interplay of personal attributes, workplace structures, and broader societal dynamics, all of which contribute to an individual's capacity to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

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