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Exploring Gender Differences in Achieving Work-life Balance: A Study of Hospitality Employees in the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract: In recent years, the hospitality industry has faced increasing challenges in retaining qualified staff, with work-life balance emerging as a critical factor in employee satisfaction and retention. Despite extensive research on work-life balance in various sectors, limited attention has been paid to the specific dynamics within the hospitality sector in developing economies. The objective of this research is to examine the impact of job and family demands, as well as work-family conflict, on work-life balance among employees in the hospitality sector in the Republic of Serbia, including an analysis of the moderating role of gender. Using Structural equation modeling, significant negative effects of these demands and conflicts on work-life balance were identified, with impacts being more pronounced among women. The innovative aspect of the research lies in the integration of moderating effects and analysis specific to the hospitality sector, providing insight into key employee challenges. The findings contribute to advancing academic discourse and provide guidelines for creating strategies that can improve human resource sustainability in the hospitality sector and employee work-life balance.

Keywords: *Work-life balance; job demands; family demands; work-family conflict; moderating role of gender.*

1. Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the successful integration of work and non-work domains, enabling individuals to effectively fulfill both their professional and personal responsibilities [1,2]. The understanding of WLB draws from three interconnected theoretical perspectives: Gender Role Theory, which suggests that societal expectations create different pressures for men and women; Work-family conflict theory, which explains how these pressures lead to incompatibility between work and family roles; and Boundary Theory, which examines how individuals manage boundaries between different life domains [3].

Work-life balance has become a key topic in contemporary research [1,2], particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as hospitality [4–6]. The hospitality sector presents unique challenges for WLB due to its operational demands that differ significantly from traditional nine-to-five industries [7]. While extensive research exists on WLB in general organizational contexts, the specific nature of hospitality work - including emotional labor, irregular shifts, and seasonal fluctuations - creates distinct patterns of work-life interaction that warrant specialized investigation [8]. While earlier studies found significant negative impacts of hospitality work characteristics on WLB [9], recent research presents a more nuanced picture. Some studies suggest the positive effects of job control [10] and emotional labor [11] on WLB, while others question the assumed benefits of workplace flexibility [12]. These seemingly contradictory findings might be reconciled by considering contextual factors and individual differences.

The understanding of job demands' impact on hospitality has evolved significantly. Recent studies have challenged traditional assumptions about job demands in hospitality. While earlier research predominantly emphasized the negative impacts of irregular schedules and high workloads [9], newer studies suggest more nuanced relationships [8,13]. A critical finding comes from McNamara et al. [12], who present evidence that the presumed flexibility in hospitality work is often illusory, as workers frequently face unpredictable schedule changes that create more stress than fixed schedules. Their study of hotel workers found that supposed schedule flexibility often translated into employer-centric adaptability rather than employee-beneficial flexibility.

Family demands represent a critical dimension in work-life dynamics, particularly in traditional societies. These demands, encompassing childcare responsibilities, household management, and elder care, can significantly strain an individual's resources [14,15]. Research shows that family-related responsibilities often create additional pressure on employees' capacity to maintain WLB [16,17], with this burden being particularly pronounced in societies where traditional family values remain strong.

The focus of recent research has shifted from merely identifying sources of work-family conflict to understanding effective management strategies. While previous studies documented the prevalence of such conflicts in hospitality settings [18,19], recent work highlights successful organizational interventions and individual coping mechanisms [6,20]. These findings are particularly relevant in contexts like Serbia, where alignment with European standards is gradually transforming workplace dynamics [21]. This evolution reflects broader changes in transitional economies, where rapid modernization intersects with established cultural norms.

Gender plays a particularly significant role in shaping WLB experiences within hospitality settings. Previous research found significant gender differences in how workers perceive and manage WLB [22,23], with women often facing greater challenges in reconciling professional and family responsibilities [24]. This pattern is explained by Gender role theory, which suggests that traditional expectations about family responsibilities create additional pressure for women in managing work-life boundaries. However, recent research presents a more nuanced picture, particularly in contexts of societal transition. Studies show that younger generations are developing new approaches to managing WLB [25], though traditional gender roles continue to influence these patterns [24].

The Republic of Serbia provides a particularly compelling context for examining WLB dynamics in hospitality. As a transitional economy, Serbia faces distinctive challenges where traditional management practices and cultural norms intersect with emerging international standards [26]. While research in this context remains limited [27–29], the rapid sector development, combined with the intersection of traditional gender roles and Western business practices, creates unique patterns in work-life dynamics [22,23]. Recent research has shifted focus from identifying conflict sources to understanding effective management strategies [18,19], with younger generations developing new approaches to managing WLB [25], despite the persistent influence of traditional cultural values.

While previous research indicates a significant impact of work and family demands on WLB, few studies address the specificities of hospitality in the Republic of Serbia. Additionally, the role of gender as a potential moderator of these relationships remains understudied, despite evidence that women often bear a greater burden in balancing professional and family obligations. This study fills

these research gaps by analyzing how job and family demands, as well as work-family conflicts, affect WLB, with a focus on gender differences.

The significance of this research lies in providing insights into key challenges faced by hospitality employees, as well as creating guidelines for improving working conditions. The results can contribute to the development of organizational policies and practices that promote a balance between professional and private life, thereby fostering the sustainability of human resources in the hospitality sector. Beyond practical significance, the study contributes to the theoretical discussion about the role of gender in the context of job and family demands, providing foundations for further research.

This study aims to analyze how job and family demands, as well as work-family conflicts, affect WLB in the Serbian hospitality sector, with particular attention to gender differences in these relationships. Building on the research literature, this study proposes four hypotheses to examine the relationships between WLB and its key determinants in Serbia's hospitality sector.

Job demands, characterized by long working hours, irregular shifts, and high workloads in hospitality settings, have been shown to significantly impact employees' ability to maintain WLB [4,30]. This forms the basis for hypothesis 1, suggesting a negative relationship between job demands and WLB among Serbian hospitality workers.

H1: Job demands have a negative and statistically significant impact on work-life balance among hospitality employees in the Republic of Serbia.

Similarly, family demands, including childcare responsibilities, household management, and elder care, can create additional pressure on employees' time and energy resources [14,15]. Previous studies have documented how these family-related responsibilities can strain an individual's capacity to maintain WLB [16,17], supporting the foundation for hypothesis 2.

H2: Family demands have a negative and statistically significant impact on work-life balance among hospitality employees in the Republic of Serbia.

The third hypothesis addresses work-family conflict, which emerges when work and family roles become mutually incompatible [31,32]. Research has consistently shown that such conflicts can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress, and poor WLB [31], particularly in demanding sectors like hospitality [6,33].

H3: Work-family conflict has a negative and statistically significant impact on work-life balance among hospitality employees in the Republic of Serbia.

Hypothesis 4 introduces gender as a moderating variable, building on evidence that women in the hospitality industry often face unique challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities [5,34]. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations in Serbia may amplify these differences [24,35], making gender a potentially significant factor in how employees experience and manage WLB challenges.

H4: Gender moderates the relationship between job demands, family demands, work-family conflict, and work-life balance in the hospitality industry of the Republic of Serbia.

This study contributes to the existing literature by examining how job demands, family demands, and work-family conflicts affect WLB in the Serbian hospitality sector, with specific attention to gender differences.

2. Materials and Methods

Research and questionnaire design

In designing the research and developing the questionnaire, we used modified statements based on previously established author models to ensure theoretical relevance and methodological precision. Modifications were made to align with the research context and its objectives, particularly concerning WLB and its impact on burnout and turnover intention.

The model we used is based on previous research and theoretical frameworks, notably including the work of Esthi and Panjaitan [36], who investigated the relationship between WLB and turnover intention, using factors measuring workload, family demands, and their impact on employee well-

being. Similarly, Yerkes et al. [37] explored gender differences related to workplace, childcare, and WLB, identifying key elements such as conflict between professional and family obligations. Additionally, Brooks et al. [38] analyzed the complexity of WLB patterns through the lens of gender and its impact on life satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of balancing both domains for overall well-being. Akçakese et al. [39] contributed to understanding through research on how participation in leisure activities can mitigate workaholic approaches, further illuminating the role of free time and balance in achieving healthy work and family relationships.

Our modified questionnaire is based on factors and statements adapted from these models, and the factors have been elaborated to ensure relevance to our study.

Sample and data collection procedure

The research was conducted from January to August 2024, using a quantitative approach by surveying employees in 4 and 5-star hotels in three key cities of the Republic of Serbia: Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Niš. These hotels were selected based on their reputation, business volume, and work environment specifics, enabling a deeper understanding of the impact of job and family demands on WLB in highly demanding professional environments.

Before the main research, a pilot study was conducted in January 2024 with a sample of 50 employees to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The pilot sample included employees from 4 and 5-star hotels in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Results showed that the questions were formulated and comprehensible, while reliability values (Cronbach α) were satisfactory (> 0.8 for all factors). Based on feedback, minor corrections were made to question formulations for precision. G*Power test was used to determine the sample size [40]. With a significance level of 0.05, test power of 0.95, and medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), the minimum required sample was 119 respondents. The collected sample of 639 respondents significantly exceeds this threshold, ensuring statistical reliability and result generalizability. Sample representativeness was further ensured by including employees from three key cities and various sectors within hospitality. The questionnaire was anonymous and included informed consent, adhering to ethical standards, and avoiding moral hazard. Hotel representatives and participants were informed in advance about research objectives and were assured privacy. Collected data were analyzed with strict adherence to confidentiality rules.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics.

Characteristics	Categories	Number of	Percentage (%)
		respondents (N = 639)	
Gender	Male	312	48.8
	Female	327	51.2
Age (years)	18 – 25	118	18.5
	26 – 35	203	31.8
	36 – 45	184	28.8
	≥ 46	134	21.0
Education	Secondary school	259	40.5
	College	211	33.0
	University	169	26.5
Work experience (years)	< 1	91	14.2
	1 – 5	223	34.9
	6 – 10	186	29.1
	> 10	139	21.8
Position	Reception	178	27.9
	Food and beverage services	278	43.5
	Administration	183	28.6

The sample included employees from various hospitality sectors, including reception, food and beverage services, and administration. Respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, with balanced participation of both genders and diverse age and educational structures (Table 1). Analysis of socio-demographic characteristics shows that the sample is balanced in terms of gender, with 48.8% men and 51.2% women. The majority of respondents belong to age groups 26 - 35 years (31.8%) and 36 - 45 years (28.8%). The educational level is dominated by secondary education (40.5%), while a significant proportion of respondents have college and university education (33.0% and 26.5%). The largest number of respondents have work experience in hospitality between 1 and 5 years (34.9%) and work in the food and beverage services sector (43.5%).

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two steps using appropriate software tools for different levels of statistical processing. The first step included descriptive and factor analysis, while the second step encompassed structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypothesis testing. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 23.0 was used for descriptive statistics and EFA factor analysis. Descriptive statistics provided insight into basic sample characteristics, including mean values, standard deviations, and data distribution [40]. Factor analysis was used to confirm the construct and assess the reliability and validity of latent factors, using the principal component analysis (PCA) extraction method and varimax rotation [40].

SEM was conducted using SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) version 4.0 software. SEM analysis enabled the assessment of relationships between latent constructs, as well as testing direct, indirect, and moderating effects in the model [41].

VIF (Variance inflation factor) values for all factors are below the threshold of 5, indicating the absence of multicollinearity problems and confirming that predictor variables are independent of each other [42]. Specifically, VIF values range from 2.8 for the family demands factor to 3.5 for the WFC factor. Determination coefficients (R^2) show the extent to which the model explains the variance of dependent constructs [42]. The highest R^2 was recorded for the WLB factor ($R^2 = 0.50$), indicating that the model explains 50% of this construct's variance. Job demands factor has $R^2 = 0.45$, while family demands and WFC explain 38% and 41% of the variance, respectively. Model evaluation using fit indicators showed that the model meets key criteria for a good fit. SRMR (Standardized root mean square residual) is 0.06, which is below the threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit to data [42]. The chi-square test (χ^2) has a value of 182.4 with 120 degrees of freedom (df), where p-value > 0.05, implying no significant deviation between expected and obtained data [40]. NFI (Normed fit index) is 0.91, which exceeds the threshold of 0.90, confirming model adequacy [42].

3. Results

Factor analysis identified four latent constructs with satisfactory levels of internal reliability ($\alpha > 0.85$), confirming their validity and consistency. Job demands factor ($\alpha = 0.89$) shows high mean values ($m = 3.95 - 4.20$), indicating pronounced overload and exhaustion among employees, with factor loadings (λ) ranging from 0.75 to 0.81. Family demands ($\alpha = 0.87$) have moderate mean values ($m = 3.70 - 4.00$), where participants often report fatigue after family obligations, with factor loadings ranging from 0.74 to 0.82. WFC ($\alpha = 0.85$) has somewhat lower mean values ($m = 3.25 - 3.60$), indicating the presence of conflicts but not their predominant influence, with factor loadings varying between 0.70 and 0.81. Finally, WLB ($\alpha = 0.91$) records high mean values ($m = 4.10 - 4.40$), suggesting that participants place significant importance on the balance between private and professional life, with factor loadings from 0.79 to 0.84. These results provide clear insight into key challenges faced by employees and emphasize the need for further research to develop strategies for improving the balance between professional and family obligations (Table 2).

Table 2. Measurement items, descriptive statistics, and reliability analysis for constructs.

Factor	Items	m	sd	α	λ
Job demands	I often feel exhausted	4.20	0.85	0.89	0.78
	I have too much work to do	4.10	0.90		0.81
	I need more time to complete work with quality	3.95	0.88		0.75
Family demands	I often feel tired after family/household duties	4.00	0.75	0.87	0.82
	I find it difficult to complete all family obligations	3.85	0.80		0.76
	I find it difficult to complete my family obligations with quality	3.70	0.78		0.74
Work-family conflict	I miss family activities due to the time I must devote to work obligations	3.60	0.95	0.85	0.77
	I am often preoccupied with work while at home	3.50	1.05		0.81
	Family obligations often interfere with my work duties	3.30	1.00		0.72
	I am often too tired at work due to family obligations	3.25	1.10		0.70
Work-life balance	I equally enjoy every part of my life	4.10	0.90	0.91	0.79
	Work-life balance is very important to me	4.40	0.85		0.84
	I manage to balance the demands of my personal/family life and work well	4.25	0.88		0.82

m: Arithmetic mean, *sd*: Standard deviation, α : Cronbach alpha, λ : Factor loadings

Factor analysis revealed reliable and valid constructs with satisfactory values of mean scores (m), standard deviations (sd), internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach α), and the proportion of variance (% of Variance) explained by each factor (Table 3). The job demands factor has the highest mean values (m = 4.08; sd = 0.88), indicating a pronounced perception of workload. This factor explains 32.47% of the total variance, with high reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$) satisfactory composite reliability (CR = 0.92), and average variance extracted (AVE = 0.68). Family demands show slightly lower mean values (m = 3.85; sd = 0.77), suggesting a moderate impact of family obligations on respondents. This factor explains an additional 27.31% of the variance, with a high level of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.87$) and reliability (CR = 0.90, AVE = 0.65). The WFC factor has lower mean values (m = 3.41; sd = 0.98), indicating occasional conflict between these domains. With a variance share of 21.56% and a total cumulative variance of 81.34%, the factor shows satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.85$, CR = 0.88, AVE = 0.61). The highest mean values are recorded for WLB (m = 4.25; sd = 0.87), suggesting that respondents place importance on establishing a balance between these spheres. This factor explains the remaining 18.39% of the variance, with the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$, CR = 0.93, AVE = 0.72). Overall, the results indicate a high level of internal consistency and factor validity, confirming that

the constructs are adequately operationalized. The findings highlight key challenges and the importance of establishing WLB, providing a foundation for further research and practical interventions.

Table 3. Measurement items, descriptive statistics, and reliability analysis for factors.

Factors	m	sd	α	% of Variance	Cumulative %	CR	AVE
Job demands	4.08	0.88	0.89	32.47%	32.47%	0.92	0.68
Family demands	3.85	0.77	0.87	27.31%	59.78%	0.90	0.65
Work-family conflict	3.41	0.98	0.85	21.56%	81.34%	0.88	0.61
Work-life balance	4.25	0.87	0.91	18.39%	99.73%	0.93	0.72

m: Arithmetic mean, sd: Standard deviation, α : Cronbach alpha, CR: Composite reliability, AVE: Average variance extracted.

The results of SEM analysis show a high level of reliability and validity of constructs within the model. Cronbach's alpha values for all factors exceed the threshold of 0.6, with values between 0.85 and 0.91, indicating high internal consistency. rho_A, an alternative reliability indicator, also shows satisfactory values for all factors (> 0.7), confirming the stability of the measurement construction. Composite reliability (CR) exceeds the threshold of 0.7 for all factors, with values ranging from 0.88 to 0.93, further confirming the reliability of latent constructs. The AVE, which measures convergent validity, is also above the recommended threshold of 0.5, with values ranging from 0.61 for the work-family conflict factor to 0.72 for the WLB factor. This indicates that the statements within each factor are consistent and adequately explain the latent constructs. These findings confirm that the model meets the standards of reliability and convergent validity, thus providing a basis for further analysis of relationships between factors (Table 4).

Table 4. Construct reliability and validity.

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.6)	rho_A (> 0.7)	CR (> 0.7)	AVE (> 0.5)
Job demands	0.89	0.87	0.92	0.68
Family demands	0.87	0.85	0.90	0.65
Work-family conflict	0.85	0.83	0.88	0.61
Work-life balance	0.91	0.89	0.93	0.72

The diagonal values, which represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor, are greater than the correlation values between factors, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 5).

Table 5. Checking of discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria.

Factors	Job demands	Family demands	Work-family conflict	Work-life balance
Job demands	0.821	0.092	0.156	0.118
Family demands	0.092	0.774	0.210	0.134
Work-family conflict	0.156	0.210	0.789	0.181
Work-life balance	0.118	0.134	0.181	0.840

The assessment of discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion showed that all values were below the threshold of 0.85, further confirming that the factors are differentiated and that each factor measures a unique concept within the model (Table 6).

Table 6. HTMT Criterion.

Factors	Job demands	Family demands	Work-family conflict	Work-life balance
Job demands	-	0.304	0.389	0.241
Family demands	0.304	-	0.426	0.319
Work-family conflict	0.389	0.426	-	0.378
Work-life balance	0.241	0.319	0.378	-

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships among the examined constructs. The job demands factor has a moderate positive correlation with family demands ($r = 0.412$) and WFC ($r = 0.587$) while showing a moderate negative correlation with WLB ($r = -0.482$). Similarly, family demands show a positive correlation with WFC ($r = 0.498$) and a negative correlation with WLB ($r = -0.405$). WFC has the strongest negative correlation with WLB ($r = -0.523$), confirming that increased conflicts further disrupt the balance between these domains.

These findings confirm theoretically expected relationships among constructs and indicate a significant impact of work and family demands, as well as conflict, on WLB (Table 7).

Table 7. Correlations among constructs.

Construct	Job demands	Family demands	Work-family conflict	Work-life balance
Job demands	1.000	0.412	0.587	-0.482
Family demands	0.412	1.000	0.498	-0.405
Work-family conflict	0.587	0.498	1.000	-0.523
Work-life balance	-0.482	-0.405	-0.523	1.000

The path analysis results (Table 8) indicate a significant negative impact of job and family demands, as well as WFC, on WLB among hospitality employees in the Republic of Serbia. Job demands have a significant negative impact on WLB ($\beta = -0.482$, $p < 0.001$), showing that increased work obligations significantly reduce employees' ability to harmonize work and private life (H1 confirmed). Similarly, family demands negatively affect WLB ($\beta = -0.405$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that increased family demands further disrupt this balance (H2 confirmed). WFC has the most pronounced negative impact ($\beta = -0.523$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that disagreements and overlaps between work and family obligations contribute most to disrupting WLB (H3 confirmed). The role of gender as a moderator showed that these negative effects are more pronounced in women than in men (moderated $\beta = -0.128$, $p = 0.003$), implying that women in the hospitality industry of the Republic of Serbia more frequently feel pressure and disruption of WLB due to job and family demands (H4 - moderation effect confirmed).

Table 8. SEM analysis and hypothesis testing results.

Hypot hesis	Path	Estimate	m	sd	D (β)	I (β)	t-statistics	p-value	Confirmation
H1	Job demands → Work-life balance	-0.482	-0.470	0.078	-0.482	-	6.18	<0.001	Supported
H2	Family demands → Work-life balance	-0.405	-0.400	0.069	-0.405	-	5.87	<0.001	Supported
H3	Work-family conflict → Work-life balance	-0.523	-0.515	0.072	-0.523	-	7.26	<0.001	Supported
H4	Gender (moderator)	-	-	-	-	-0.128	4.23	0.003	Supported (for women)

m: Sample mean, sd: Standard deviation, D (β): Direct effect, I (β): Indirect effect

Figure 1. shows the relationships between key factors in the model: job demands (JD), family demands (FD), work-family conflict (WFC), and work-life balance (WLB), including the moderating effect of gender (G). The lines display values of direct (β_{dir}), indirect (β_{ind}), and moderation effects (β_{mod}), illustrating the negative impacts of job and family demands, as well as conflict, on WLB.

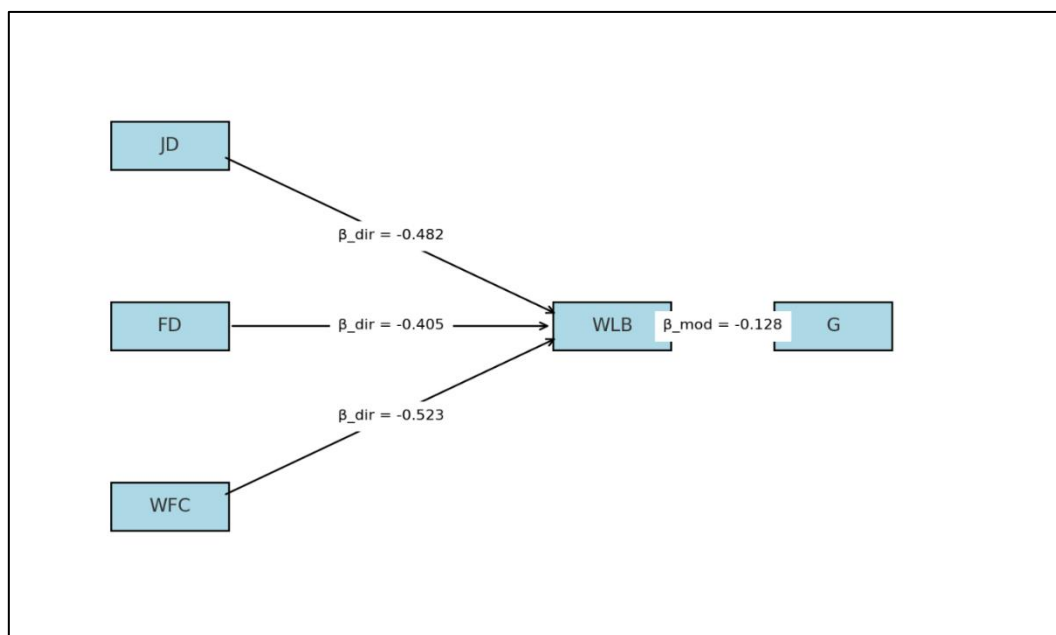


Figure 1. SEM path model.

4. Discussion

Our research aim was to analyze the factors influencing WLB and how these factors, including job and family demands, work-family conflict, as well as management support and technological infrastructure, affect overall employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. Additionally, we investigated how these variables impact employees across different industries and professions. Based on our data, we found that key factors such as flexibility in work arrangements, technological support, and balance between professional and personal obligations are essential for achieving WLB, which directly affects employee satisfaction and productivity.

These findings align with the results of other relevant studies that have explored similar topics, both in the context of the technology sector and across various industries worldwide. For example,

Rahman and Singh [43] investigated the impact of work environment, technological infrastructure, and WLB on employee productivity in multinational companies, with gender as a moderating factor. Their research emphasizes the importance of the work environment and technological infrastructure in achieving WLB. Similar to our results, Rahman and Singh [43] found that work environment and technology play a crucial role in enabling employees to better align these life spheres, which directly affects productivity. Our data confirms these findings, showing that technological infrastructure plays an important role in enabling employees to more efficiently WLB.

Brega et al. [1] analyzed flexible work arrangements and their impact on WLB from an international perspective. Through a capabilities-based approach, they emphasized that flexibility in working conditions enables employees to more easily align their professional and family obligations. Our results confirm this conclusion, as our data showed that flexibility in working hours and the workplace allows employees to better balance these life spheres, reducing stress and increasing satisfaction. Oberheide's [44] research on industrial relations and gender dynamics in the context of unions and WLB confirms the importance of organizational support and union initiatives in achieving work-family balance. Similarly, our findings suggest that management support, as well as collective initiatives, play a crucial role in enabling employees to more easily balance professional and personal obligations. Our research confirms that unions and organizational policy can play a key role in reducing work-family conflict, enabling greater balance in employees' lives.

Al Jumaan et al. [45] investigated the role of WLB in women's professional success in emergency medical services. They concluded that a successful balance between private and professional life enables greater professional success and emotional satisfaction. Our findings confirm this conclusion, as we found that employees who successfully balance all spheres of their lives show higher levels of work engagement and greater emotional well-being. Sasmaz and Fogarty [2] researched supervisor support in achieving WLB in the public accounting sector. They discovered that supervisors who provide support for employees' career advancement also enable better alignment of private and professional obligations. Our results confirm this assertion, as management support is crucial for reducing stress and increasing employee productivity, which directly reflects on their job performance.

Bhat, Yousuf, and Saba [46] investigated the impact of telecommuting on employee engagement and burnout, concluding that remote work can significantly reduce burnout levels and increase engagement. Our results, which show that enabling remote work can reduce stress and provide employees with greater control over their time, completely align with these findings. Ludera-Ruszel [47] examines the implementation of the European Work-life balance directive in Poland, emphasizing the importance of legislative initiatives in reducing gender inequality and promoting WLB. Our findings also confirm that legal initiatives and policies enabling balance are crucial for reducing work-family conflict and achieving better balance in employees' lives.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, this paper contributes to WLB literature by expanding the understanding of interconnections between key factors such as job and family demands, flexibility in work arrangements, and supervisor support. The paper contributes to global knowledge by providing a new perspective on the importance of technology in achieving balance and identifying specific strategies that organizations can implement to reduce work-family conflicts. This research also enriches theoretical WLB models, including contextual factors that often have not been considered in previous research.

Practically, the findings of this paper are relevant to managers, human resource professionals (HR), and policymakers. Managers and organizations can use this paper's recommendations to develop more flexible working conditions and employee support policies. Policymakers can rely on these findings to improve legal frameworks that promote a balance between professional and private obligations, thereby promoting greater satisfaction and workforce productivity.

Limitations and directions for future research

While this research provides significant insight into factors affecting WLB, certain limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. One key limitation is the focus on specific industries and work environments, which limits the ability to generalize results across a broader spectrum of sectors and geographic regions. The research was conducted in certain cultural and economic contexts, meaning results could differ in countries with different legislative frameworks, cultural norms, or development levels. For example, differences in WLB perception may vary significantly between countries with different labor laws and social policies. Furthermore, the research relies on self-reported responses through a survey questionnaire, which may lead to subjectivity and bias in responses. This limitation is particularly important when analyzing sensitive aspects, such as work-family conflicts, as respondents may answer in ways they believe are socially desirable. Future research could use multiple data sources, including qualitative methods such as interviews or case studies, to provide deeper analysis and data triangulation. Another limitation is that the research was conducted within a single timeframe, which limits the ability to understand the long-term consequences of identified factors on WLB. Longitudinal research could illuminate how changes in work arrangements, technological tools, or management support affect WLB over an extended period. Also, the research primarily focused on quantitative data, which may limit understanding of contextual factors and the depth of interpersonal relationships in the workplace that can significantly impact WLB. Future research could integrate qualitative methods to enrich the understanding of these complex phenomena. Additionally, the research did not include analysis of specific employee groups, such as those in lower positions, employees with irregular working hours, or those in informal sectors. Focus on these groups could provide additional insights into how different demographic and social characteristics shape WLB perception. Finally, while the research provided insight into the importance of technological infrastructure and management support, it did not deal in detail with technological challenges, such as digital stress and information overload, which can also affect WLB. Future research should focus on identifying specific technological barriers and their impact on employees across different industries.

Future studies should expand the analysis to different sectors, geographic regions, and cultural contexts to enable global comparative analysis. Also, research could include consideration of the effects of gender differences, generational differences, and socioeconomic status on WLB. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as longitudinal design, could provide deeper insights into WLB dynamics, enabling organizations and policymakers to develop more effective strategies and interventions.

5. Conclusions

This research provides a comprehensive insight into key factors affecting WLB, including job demands, family demands, conflicts between these spheres, and support from management and technological infrastructure. Our findings indicate the importance of these factors not only for increasing employee satisfaction and engagement but also for improving organizational productivity and well-being. Special attention was paid to understanding how these factors manifest in different work environments, enabling the application of conclusions in a broader global context. This paper contributes to theory and practice by providing new insights into the importance of flexible work arrangements, technological support, and organizational support for achieving WLB. The specific value of this paper lies in the integration of theoretical models and empirical findings, thereby advancing existing knowledge about WLB. The paper is intended for academic researchers, HR professionals, managers, and policymakers dealing with the improvement of working conditions. Academics will use the paper as a basis for further research in the field of WLB, while professionals and policymakers will be able to implement recommendations in practice. Readers will gain practical and theoretical insights from this paper that can improve working conditions and organizational efficiency. The paper has the potential to significantly contribute to academic research by expanding the theoretical understanding of WLB and opening new directions for future research. Industrially,

the results can serve as a guide for improving organizational policies and promoting flexibility in work environments, which will contribute to greater employee satisfaction and efficiency. Due to its significant contribution to theory and practice, this paper can be recommended to students, colleagues, and professionals who want to better understand the key factors of WLB and their application in various industrial contexts. Its clarity, methodological precision, and practical implications make it a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners in the fields of management, HR, and organizational studies.

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