Research Article

Navigating Work-Life Balance in the Digital Age: A Comprehensive Review of Factors Impacting IT Industry Employees

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Introduction: Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical area of research, particularly in the context of the Information Technology (IT) industry, where the demands of a fast-paced, technology-driven work environment often intersect with personal life commitments. This review examines the intricate dynamics of WLB, drawing upon a wide range of theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to identify factors influencing the equilibrium between professional and personal domains. By highlighting the interplay of supportive organizational practices and the challenges posed by workplace stressors, this paper underscores the importance of achieving a sustainable balance to enhance employee well-being and organizational productivity. **Objectives**: The primary objective of this literature review is to explore the factors that contribute to or hinder WLB among IT industry employees. Specifically, the review aims to identify positive elements, that foster equilibrium. Conversely, it also examines adverse factors that disturb the equilibrium. By synthesizing existing research, the review seeks to provide actionable insights for designing interventions and policies tailored to the unique challenges faced by IT professionals. **Methods**: This review adopts a systematic approach to synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from a diverse array of studies on WLB within the IT sector. The methodology involved a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and academic publications using relevant keywords. Studies were selected based on their relevance to WLB in IT and their focus on both positive and negative factors affecting employees. Key themes were identified and categorized to provide a holistic understanding of the topic. This structured synthesis ensures a balanced representation of findings and facilitates the identification of research gaps for future exploration. **Results**: The findings of this review reveal a complex interplay of factors influencing WLB among IT employees. On the positive side, flexible work arrangements, supportive organizational cultures, and increased job autonomy significantly enhance WLB. These factors allow employees to better manage their professional and personal responsibilities, fostering higher job satisfaction and productivity. However, challenges such as high workload, persistent workplace stress, and the phenomenon of technostress—stemming from excessive reliance on and exposure to digital technologies—emerge as significant disruptors of WLB. These stressors not only diminish employee well-being but also adversely affect organizational efficiency, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions. **Conclusions**: The review concludes that achieving a synergistic equilibrium between work and life requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both supportive and disruptive factors. Tailored organizational policies, such as flexible scheduling, stress management programs, and technology usage guidelines, are essential for mitigating the challenges faced by IT professionals. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of future research in developing sector-specific interventions that account for the unique demands of the IT industry. By bridging the gaps in existing knowledge, organizations can better support their employees, ultimately enhancing both individual well-being and overall organizational performance.

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) constitutes a paramount issue within the contemporary discourse in the Information Technology (IT) industry **(Zaitouni et al., 2024; Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2020)**, with profound implications for both employee well-being and organizational productivity. Balancing the demands of professional duties with personal obligations while preserving optimal well-being is pivotal for reducing stress **(Kumar et al., 2023; Mohanty & Jena, 2016)** and preventing burnout **(Bulger, 2024; Jones et al., 2019)** among IT employees. Research underscores that individuals who effectively manage their work-life balance experience lower levels of strain and exhaustion, fostering enhanced well-being **(Khan & Singh, 2024; Chiang et al., 2010)**. Moreover, a supportive environment conducive to WLB promotes positive mental health outcomes, including increased resilience, creativity, and innovation among employees. Additionally, WLB correlates with better physical health, as employees with adequate time for rest, exercise, and relaxation are less susceptible to health issues **(Rashmi & Kataria, 2022; Brough et al., 2014; Lunau et al., 2014; Haar, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2012; Carlson et al., 2009; Greenhaus et al., 2003)**, ultimately contributing to a more robust workforce.

From an organizational perspective, WLB plays a central role in driving performance **(Fernandes, 2022; Gaur & Saminathan, 2018)** within the IT sector. Employees who attain a healthy work-life balance demonstrate higher levels of productivity **(Lyness & Judiesch, 2014)**, as regular breaks and time off enhance focus and job performance. Furthermore, prioritizing WLB fosters retention and loyalty **(Abebe & Assemie, 2023)**, with employees more inclined to remain with organizations that prioritize their well-being, thus ensuring greater stability and continuity. Additionally, a balanced life nurtures creativity and innovation, providing individuals with the opportunity to recharge and approach tasks from a fresh perspective, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Despite the abundance of research on WLB in the IT industry, a notable gap exists in the literature. Existing studies predominantly concentrates on quantitative analyses, gender-specific inquiries, and restricted geographical contexts, with industries primarily cantered around healthcare and construction, overlooking a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing WLB among IT industry employees as a whole. This study seeks to fill this void by conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify and analyze the critical determinants influencing work-life balance within the IT industry. Through this endeavour, it aims to advance scholarly understanding in this domain and offering insights to steer organizational policies and practices directed towards enhancing employee well-being and organizational productivity.

The study's purpose is to systematically identify and analyze the key factors influencing WLB among employees in the IT industry. Through a thorough literature review supported by relevant theories, the research aims to elucidate why these factors are particularly significant within the context of the IT industry. The identified factors were categorized into those positively affecting WLB and those with negative impacts, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding WLB in the IT industry. By illuminating these determinants, the study endeavours to provide invaluable insights pertinent to policymakers, the employers and the employees, facilitating the cultivation of an environment conducive to fostering work-life balance within the IT industry.

The paper will adopt a structured approach, beginning with an introduction to establish the study's context and rationale. This will be followed by a comprehensive literature review, focusing on existing research regarding WLB in the IT industry. The methodology section will provide information regarding approach used for data collection and analysis. Findings from the literature review will be thoroughly examined, supported by robust theoretical or conceptual models, to identify key factors influencing WLB and their impact on employee well-being and organizational productivity. Finally, the paper will conclude by summarizing the findings, discussing implications for practice, and proposing directions for future research in this domain.

Research Void Mapping

The prevailing trend in existing research on work-life balance has predominantly revolved around gender-based analyses **(Adamson et al., 2023; Lambrianou et al., 2022; Lingard & Turner, 2022; Lyness & Judiesch,**

2014; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Gronlund, 2007). While gender disparities in WLB experiences are undoubtedly significant, the exclusive emphasis on this aspect has resulted in a dearth of comprehensive studies exploring the multifaceted determinants of WLB that extend beyond gender considerations. Consequently, there exists a critical research gap wherein few studies delve into the general factors affecting WLB, especially in the context of the IT sector, where unique challenges abound. The landscape of research on WLB has predominantly focused on industries such as healthcare **(Fatima et al., 2023; Shahi et al., 2022; Dousin et al., 2022; Lambrianou et al., 2022; Dhingra & Dhingra 2021; Mohd Yusof et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2020; Humphries et al., 2020; Hannan Mone et al., 2019; Dousin et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2016)** and construction **(Oyewobi et al., 2022; Lingard & Turner, 2022; Zhang & Bowen, 2021; Tijani et al., 2021; Kotera et al., 2018; Lingard et al., 2012; Lingard et al., 2010; Lingard & Francis, 2006; Lingard & Francis, 2005)**, with limited attention given to the distinctive obstacles encountered by professionals in the IT sector. While studies on WLB in healthcare settings have explored the demanding nature of medical practice and its impact on physicians' well-being, and research in construction industries has highlighted the physical demands and irregular work schedules, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific factors influencing WLB among IT industry employees. The scarcity of research addressing WLB issues in the IT sector is concerning given the rapid growth and evolving nature of the industry, where professionals often grapple with high-pressure work environments, tight project deadlines, and the pervasive culture of 'always-on' connectivity. Moreover, the increasing reliance on remote work arrangements and digital platforms following significant global occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic, has further accentuated the need to understand the intricacies of WLB in the IT industry. Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive reviews and qualitative inquiries that delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms and determinants of WLB, providing nuanced insights into the experiences of IT industry employees. By adopting a holistic approach and synthesizing existing knowledge, researchers can uncover critical gaps, identify key factors, and develop targeted interventions to promote WLB and enhance employee well-being in the IT sector. Moreover, such research endeavours contribute to the advancement of scientific understanding, fostering evidence-based practices and policy recommendations that resonate with the complex realities of contemporary work environments. Thus, investing in research on WLB in the IT industry is not only essential for addressing current challenges but also imperative for shaping the future landscape of work and fostering sustainable organizational practices.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to systematically investigate the multifaceted factors that influence work-life balance (WLB) among employees in the Information Technology (IT) sector. By examining both facilitating and inhibiting elements, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how professional and personal spheres interact in this dynamic industry. Specifically, the research seeks to identify positive contributors, such as flexible work arrangements, organizational support systems, and job autonomy, which enhance employees' ability to harmonize their roles. Simultaneously, it explores adverse factors, including high workload, workplace stress, and technostress, that disrupt this balance. Through a synthesis of theoretical and empirical insights, the research endeavors to highlight actionable strategies and interventions that organizations can adopt to mitigate challenges, foster employee well-being, and improve organizational efficiency. The ultimate goal is to bridge existing gaps in the literature and offer a comprehensive framework for optimizing WLB in the context of the unique demands of the IT industry.

METHODS

This review employed a systematic approach to analyze factors affecting work-life balance in the IT industry.

Research Design

Type: The study adopted a systematic review to synthesize existing literature.

Scope: It included relevant peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and academic sources of repute.

Search Strategy: Databases like PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar were utilized with specific keywords.

Selection Process: Titles/abstracts were screened, and full-text articles were assessed for relevance.

Data Extraction: Data on authors, year, design, findings, and theoretical frameworks were gathered.

Quality Assessment: Methodological quality was evaluated using established criteria.

Data Synthesis: Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key factors impacting WLB.

Results Presentation

Findings were presented through narrative synthesis and thematic analysis.

Key factors influencing WLB in the IT industry and their implications were highlighted.

Limitations, such as publication bias and study quality variations, were acknowledged.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles, including confidentiality and proper citation, were upheld.

RESULTS

Factors affecting work-life balance positively

Extensive scrutiny of the literature substantiates the existence of determinants conducive to fostering an enhanced work-life balance for employees. A plethora of empirical investigations has underscored specific factors pivotal in promoting an optimal equilibrium between professional commitments and personal life. Among these determinants, flexible work arrangements (FWA) emerge as a prominent catalyst in affording employees the latitude to harmonize their professional commitments with personal obligations. Additionally, the provision of job autonomy empowers individuals with a sense of control over their work processes and schedules, facilitating greater alignment between professional responsibilities and personal pursuits. Complementing these initiatives, organizational support for work-life balance initiatives signifies a strategic commitment by employers to institute policies, programs, and resources aimed at facilitating WLB among employees. These determinants, meticulously identified through rigorous scholarly inquiry, serve as instrumental contributors to a more favourable WLB landscape. Notably, empirical evidence suggests that the following factors significantly contribute to fostering an environment conducive to WLB enhancement. By strategically addressing these factors, organizations can effectively mitigate the deleterious impacts of job demands, thereby fostering a more harmonious work-life dynamic.

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

Flexible Work Arrangements encompass a spectrum of policies and practices that afford individuals the flexibility to adjust the timing and location of their work activities **(Jimad et al., 2024; Maxwell et al., 2007)**. These arrangements, which include options like flextime, part-time roles, job sharing, compressed workweeks, and telecommuting, aim to cater to individual preferences and life obligations, fostering improved alignment between work and personal life commitments. Flexible work arrangements are instrumental in moulding the equilibrium between work and life for employees **(Adamson et al., 2023; West et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2016; Vaganay et al., 2016; Bharathi et al., 2015; Ter Hoeven & Van Zoonen, 2015; Golden et al. 2013; Kelly et al., 2011; Deery & Jago, 2009; Kreiner et al., 2009; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Ahuja & Thatcher, 2005; Batt & Greenhaus et al., 2003; Valcour, 2003; Hill et al., 2001; Baltes et al., 1999; Cox, 1993)**, particularly in the IT industry, where the nature of work often involves dynamic demands and technological advancements. Research by **Adamson et al. (2023)** underscores the significance of organizational policies, including FWA, in supporting WLB, highlighting their role in affording employees the flexibility to manage their professional and personal commitments effectively. **Lee et al. (2002)** demonstrated that 91% of employees who adopted reduced-load schedules reported heightened satisfaction in balancing their home and work responsibilities. This finding aligns with the research by **Lee et al. (2024)** and **Hill et al. (2004)**, highlighting the positive impact of such arrangements on achieving sustainable careers. FWA encompass various practices such as flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and remote work opportunities, which enable employees to transcend temporal and spatial constraints inherent in traditional work arrangements. As emphasized by **West et al. (2018)**, organizations stand to benefit from implementing supportive policies, including flexible scheduling, to enhance well-being and foster increased WLB. This aligns with the findings of **Kumar et al., (2023) and Mohanty and Jena (2016)**, who advocate for creating flexible environments to address rising stress and demands, particularly in the context of changing workplace dynamics and socio-cultural shifts.

In the realm of the Information Technology industry, the adoption of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) presents a promising avenue for enhancing work-life balance (WLB) among employees. Drawing from the Capability Approach **(Sen, 1980)**, Boundary Theory **(Ashforth et al., 2000)** and Grounded Theory, it becomes evident that FWAs can

positively influence WLB outcomes in this dynamic sector. The **Capability Approach** and its connection to flexible work arrangements and work-life balance was highlighted by **Brega et al. (2023)**, rooted in the philosophy of human development, underscores individuals' freedom to pursue lives they value. By offering employees autonomy in tailoring their work schedules and tasks, FWAs empower them to enhance their capabilities and achieve greater fulfilment in both professional and personal domains **(Luchman & Gonz´alez-Morales, 2013)**. This approach aligns with the demands of the IT industry, where agility and innovation are paramount, fostering a culture of empowerment and holistic well-being.

Additionally, **Boundary Theory** highlights the importance of managing boundaries between the interface of professional duties and personal affairs **(Clark, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2000)**. FWAs empower employees to establish distinct boundaries, including defining specific work hours and disconnecting from work-related communication beyond those designated periods. This proactive approach aids in alleviating work-life conflict by creating clear demarcations between professional obligations and personal time.

Furthermore, **Grounded Theory** propounded by **Glaser and Strauss (1967)** offers insights into the lived experiences of IT professionals navigating FWAs. Through qualitative inquiry employing grounded theory, **Ágota-Aliz (2021)** uncovers that customized and tailored flexible work arrangements facilitate the harmonization of professional and personal spheres of life. Concurrently, this research elucidates the emergence of knowledge workers empowered with authority and sway over their intellectual assets, accompanied by a wealth of personal autonomy and choices **Ágota-Aliz (2021)**. Using grounded theory, the underlying mechanisms, challenges, and facilitators of FWAs can be elucidated, informing organizational policies and practices to optimize WLB. Research in the ICT industry utilizing Grounded Theory has already generated new theoretical approaches connecting FWAs with WLB **(Ágota-Aliz, 2021)**, emphasizing qualitative experiences.

Job Autonomy

Within the IT industry, job autonomy, denoting an employee's capacity to wield discretion in task execution devoid of undue oversight or restrictions **(Gautam & Gautam, 2024; Bailey, 1993)**, emerges as a pivotal factor shaping work-life balance. Empirical investigations consistently underscore the favourable correlation between job autonomy and WLB **(Liu et al., 2024; Haar et al., 2019; Kaushal & Parmar, 2019; Gaur, 2018; Johari et al., 2018; Russo et al., 2016; Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Vera et al., 2016; Voydanoff, 2005; Ahuja & Thatcher, 2005)**, underscoring the significance of this organizational attribute in fostering employee well-being and satisfaction. **Kaushal (2021)** identified workplace factors influencing WLB among IT professionals, with work autonomy emerging as a significant predictor of WLB. Similarly, **Liu et al. (2024)** and **Haar et al. (2019)** revealed that job autonomy positively influences WLB, emphasizing its function in alleviating the adverse effects of occupational demands and familial obligations.

One theoretical framework that advocate the idea that job autonomy improves WLB, especially in the IT industry, is the **Conservation of Resources (COR)** theory **(Hobfoll, 1989)** as illustrated by **Badri and Panatik (2020)**. According to this theoretical framework, individuals actively pursue, uphold, and protect their resources, and stress ensues when these resources are threatened or depleted. Job autonomy can be seen as a valuable resource **(Vera et al., 2016; Bakker et al., 2014)** that allows IT professionals to flexibly allocate their time and effort **(Tausig & Fenwick, 2011)**, thereby reducing work-related stress and improving their ability to balance work with personal life **(Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Kohn & Schooler. 1982)**.

Another relevant argument comes from the **Action Regulation Theory (Hacker & Sachse, 2013)**, which suggests that job autonomy enables employees to self-regulate their actions and work processes as mentioned in the research by **(Baum & Rau, 2024)**. In the IT industry, where tasks can often be complex and varied, having the autonomy to choose how to approach work **(Thompson & Prottas 2006)** can lead to more efficient strategies, better performance **(Knudsen et al. 2003; Haar & Spell 2009)**, and a more satisfying work-life balance **(Johari et al., 2018; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012; Voydanoff 2005).**

These frameworks and arguments underscore the pivotal role of job autonomy in augmenting the well-being and WLB of Information and Technology industry employees. By affording them control and flexibility, job autonomy enables effective management of both professional obligations and personal responsibilities.

Organizational Support for Work-Life Balance Initiatives

Organizational Support for WLB Initiatives encompasses the deliberate strategies and policies enacted by an organization to facilitate the harmonization of employees' professional duties and personal life obligations **(Nassani et al., 2024; Sirgy & Lee, 2018)**. This support entails a variety of measures, such as flexible scheduling, telecommuting opportunities, parental leave provisions, and employee assistance programs. These initiatives are designed to promote the welfare of employees by mitigating conflicts between work and personal life and fostering a more equitable allocation of time and energy between professional obligations and personal pursuits.

Support from the organization for initiatives aimed at promoting work-life balance significantly contributes to enhancing WLB among employees **(Allen & French, 2023; Bourdeau et al., 2019; Keoboualapheth et al., 2017; Pradhan et al., 2016; Lingard & Francis, 2006; Burke, 2002)**, particularly within the Information and Technology IT industry. **Keoboualapheth et al. (2017)** underscore the significance of organizational support in mitigating work-family conflict, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of WLB. Additionally**, Nguyen and Haar (2024)**, and **Pradhan et al. (2016)** emphasize the importance of management support and employee-friendly policies in facilitating successful WLB initiatives and promoting positive workplace behaviours. Furthermore, pioneering human resource (HR) strategies, exemplified by flexible scheduling and family-oriented benefits, significantly influence employees' emotional states and perceptions of organizational backing **(Nguyen & Haar, 2024; Pradhan et al., 2016)**.

Bourdeau et al. (2019) reveal that the career impact of work-life policies varies based on policy type, with enabling policies positively affecting career outcomes such as higher wages, more promotions, and increased job satisfaction, ultimately leading to a better WLB. Moreover, support from the organization for WLB initiatives are preferred by both male and female, as noted by **Burke (2002)**, underscoring its universal significance in fostering WLB.

In the context of the IT industry, organizational support for WLB initiatives is particularly pertinent due to the unique demands and challenges faced by IT professionals**. The Social Exchange Theory** provides insights into how organizational support fosters reciprocal relationships between employees and their organizations, wherein supportive actions from the organization lead to increased commitment and engagement from employees **(Baral & Bhargava, 2010, 2011)**. This theory suggests that IT professionals, who often work in high-pressure environments with long hours and demanding deadlines, are more likely to thrive when they perceive organizational support for their WLB needs.

Moreover, according to the **COR theory**, individuals endeavour to attain and uphold valuable resources to manage stressors and augment their overall well-being **(Hobfoll, 1989)**. In the IT industry, where employees often face high levels of job demands and technological complexities, organizational support for WLB initiatives provides essential resources such as autonomy, flexibility, and emotional support, which are critical for maintaining a healthy WLB.

Hence, organizational support for WLB initiatives in the Information Technology industry is pivotal for fostering employee well-being and productivity. Drawing from Social Exchange Theory, such support cultivates reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations, leading to heightened commitment and engagement. Moreover, guided by Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, WLB support provisions crucial resources like autonomy and flexibility, essential for coping with the demands of the IT profession. These theoretical frameworks underscore the universal significance of organizational support in promoting WLB, particularly in industries marked by high pressure and technological complexity.

Factors affecting work-life balance negatively

The extant literature has illuminated various factors that disrupt the delicate equilibrium between work and life, underscoring the imperative for organizations to address these challenges effectively. Central to organizational strategy is the mitigation of these factors to ensure employees can operate optimally. Identifying these disruptive elements informs organizational priorities, directing attention to areas crucial for maintaining employees' work-life balance WLB. Key factors include high workload and job demands, workplace stress and burnout and technostress stemming from information overload leads to reduced well-being leading to a poor WLB. Excessive workload and job demand consume employees' time and energy, leaving them with limited resources to allocate to personal responsibilities and activities. This imbalance can lead to heightened stress levels, exhaustion, and burnout, ultimately eroding satisfaction and fulfilment in both professional and personal domains. Similarly, workplace stress

and burnout result from prolonged exposure to demanding work environments, contributing to physical and mental health issues and further exacerbating work-life imbalances. Additionally, technostress arising from information overload disrupts WLB by overwhelming individuals with incessant digital stimuli, impeding their ability to disconnect from work-related responsibilities and engage fully in personal pursuits. Collectively, these negative factors undermine the ability of individuals to achieve a harmonious integration of work and life, compromising overall well-being and productivity. Each of these factors represents significant challenges that, if left unaddressed, can detrimentally impact employee well-being and organizational performance. By recognizing and strategically addressing these factors, organizations can cultivate a supportive environment conducive to fostering a healthy WLB among employees.

High Workload and Job Demands

High workload and job demand in the IT industry are often characterized by the intensity and complexity of work tasks, tight deadlines, and the expectation to manage multiple projects simultaneously. These factors can lead to prolonged periods of high cognitive and emotional effort, which are associated with increased stress levels and potential burnout. For instance, **Theriou et al. (2024)** and **Bacharach et al. (1991)** discuss the concept of role overload, where the demands of the job exceed the individual's capacity to perform the work within the available time, leading to high workload and job demands.

High workload and job demands have been identified as significant factors that disturb work-life balance among employees **(Kinman, 2024; Haar et al. 2019; Cox, 1993)**, particularly in the information and technology IT industry. These demands consume employees' time and psychological resources, leading to resource depletion and subsequent difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities **(Ilies et al., 2007)**. Excessive work demand creates work life conflict **(Martineau & Trottier, 2024; Zhang & Bowen, 2021; Liao et al. 2019; Mohanty & Jena, 2016; Zhang & Liu, 2011)**, leaving fewer resources available for managing family responsibilities, thereby depleting work-life balance.

Moreover, the **Two-Way Model of Work-Family Conflict** given by **Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985)** highlights how workplace stressors, exemplified by elevated workloads and demanding job requirements, negatively impact both professional and familial spheres **(Liu et al., 2019)**. For employees in the IT industry, who often face long hours and high pressure to meet project deadlines, managing work-life boundaries becomes especially challenging. The constant connectivity and expectation for availability imposed by information and communication technologies ICTs further exacerbate this issue **(Ninaus et al., 2021)**.

Research specific to the IT industry underscores the unique challenges faced by employees in this sector. For instance, workplace tele-pressure, characterized by the urge to quickly respond to ICT messages, has been linked to poor physical and psychological health among IT professionals **(Barber & Santuzzi, 2015)**. Additionally, ICT demands in the work environment, such as increased workload and inner obligation for availability, contribute to burnout and negatively impact work-life balance **(Ninaus et al., 2021).**

The **Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)** model **(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)** provides useful insights on how high workload and job demands affect the WLB of employees working in the IT industry. According to this model, every occupation presents specific risk factors related to job stress, categorized into job demands and job resources. The high workload and job demands prevalent in the IT industry deplete employees' mental and physical resources, resulting in strain and decreased well-being, thus hindering their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance **(Chowhan & Pike, 2023)**.

Additionally, the **Effort-Recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998)** suggests that employees require adequate recuperation subsequent to episodes of work-induced exertion to replenish their resources. However, the high workload and job demands in the IT industry often leads to insufficient recovery time, contributing to chronic stress and health problems, which further disrupt work-life balance **(Macdonald, 2003)**. These challenges are pervasive in the IT sector, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing them for supporting employee well-being and promote a harmonious WLB.

In addition, the **Spillover Theory (Wilensky, 1960) c**an also be applied, which indicates that the stress and demands of the workplace can 'spill over' into personal life, causing work-life conflict **(Martineau & Trottier,**

2024; Zhang & Bowen, 2021; Liao et al. 2019; Mohanty & Jena, 2016; Zhang & Liu, 2011), especially in jobs with high demands such as those in the IT sector.

The IT sector presents unique problems regarding work-life balance. High workloads and job pressures contribute significantly. These demands drain employees' resources, making it difficult to fulfil family duties, causing work-life conflict. The Job Demands-Resources model and Effort-Recovery model provide insights into how these challenges impact employee well-being and work-life balance. Additionally, Spillover Theory shows how workplace stress can overflow into personal life, worsening work-life conflict, especially in demanding IT jobs. Tackling these issues is crucial for supporting employee well-being as well as promoting a harmonious WLB in the Information and Technology industry.

Workplace Stress and Burnout

Workplace stress encompasses the physiological and psychological responses elicited by perceived threats within the work environment or associated with work-related circumstances **(Goetsch, 2019)**. This form of stress manifests across multiple domains, affecting the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of employees. The distinctive array of personal attributes encompassing domestic, occupational, and individual traits of an employee can influence the degree of stress experienced **(Torres et al., 2023)**. In the IT industry, burnout is often the result of prolonged exposure to workplace stress. It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. The demanding and fast-paced nature of the IT sector, combined with high-performance expectations and long work hours, contribute significantly to burnout among IT professionals **(Kumar, 2021)**.

Workplace stress and burnout have been extensively linked to disturbances in work-life balance **(Bhattaru et al., 2024; Cameron et al., 2007)**. The excessive workloads, long hours, and high-intensity work environments prevalent in the IT sector often leads to chronic stressors, contributing towards burnout among employees **(Bhattaru et al., 2024; Campbell et al., 2001)**. Burnout, delineated as a psychological syndrome typified by emotional depletion and diminished feelings of personal efficacy, has significant implications for both individuals and organizations **(Bakker et al., 2006; Maslach & Jackson, 1981)**.

Furthermore, research specific to the IT industry underscores the unique challenges faced by employees in this sector. Constant stress and long working hours are common in IT and IT-enabled services ITES organizations, contributing to work-home conflicts and deteriorating WLB **(Mohanty & Jena, 2016)**. Moreover, technology overload, a consequence of the fast-paced and digitally driven nature of the IT industry, has been associated with higher levels of stress, burnout, and lower productivity **(Diaz et al., 2012; Tarafdar et al., 2010)**.

The **Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping**, elaborated upon by **Lazarus and Folkman (1984)**, offers insights into how workplace stress and burnout disturb WLB among employees, particularly in the IT industry. According to this theory, individuals appraise and cope with stressful situations through primary and secondary appraisal processes. In the context of the IT industry, employees may perceive high workloads, tight deadlines, and lack of support as significant stressors, leading to feelings of emotional exhaustion and reduced motivation. These stressors contribute to a negative appraisal of work-related situations, further exacerbating burnout and disrupting WLB.

Emotion-focused coping, a coping strategy identified within the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, becomes particularly relevant in understanding how workplace stress and burnout impact WLB among IT industry employees. As employees grapple with overwhelming work demands and mounting stress, they may employ emotion-regulation strategies targeting, regulating or reducing emotional distress **(Biggs et al., 2017)**. However, with respect to the IT industry, where work-related stressors are pervasive and persistent, emotion-focused coping may prove inadequate in addressing the root causes of burnout and restoring WLB.

Another framework is the **Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory (Kristof-Brown, 2017)**, which suggests that stress arises from a discordance between an individual's competencies, requirements, and principles, and the requisites of their job. In the IT sector, where the environment is dynamic and the pressure to stay current with technological advancements is high, a poor fit can lead to chronic stress and burnout, thereby negatively affecting work-life balance.

Therefore, workplace stress and burnout pose significant challenges to individuals in the IT industry, often resulting from high workloads, technological overload, and a mismatch between job demands and individual capabilities.

These factors disrupt work-life balance and expected to have disastrous effects on employees' mental and physical well-being. Employing coping strategies, such as emotion-focused coping, may offer some relief, but the persistent nature of stressors in the IT sector necessitates comprehensive organizational interventions to address root causes effectively. Additionally, frameworks like the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping and the Person-Environment Fit Theory provide valuable insights into understanding and mitigating workplace stress and burnout in the IT industry.

Technostress from Information Overload

Technostress, characterized by an individual's struggle to effectively adapt to emerging computer technologies, presents a substantial challenge within the information technology (IT) sector, often resulting in disruptions to employees' work-life balance (WLB). Conceptualized as a contemporary maladaptation syndrome stemming from inadequate management of novel computing tools, technostress encompasses techno-overload, techno-invasion, technocomplexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty as fundamental components **(Tarafdar et al., 2011; Brod, 1984)**. These stressors, pervasive in modern work environments, significantly contribute to job demands and exert adverse effects on WLB **(Tarafdar et al., 2019)**. In addressing the impact of technostress stemming from information overload on the WLB of IT industry employees, the **Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988)** emerges as a pertinent framework. This theory asserts that individuals possess a finite capacity for processing information, and exceeding this capacity can induce cognitive overload, detrimentally affecting both performance and well-being **(Stankevičiūtė, 2022)**. In the context of the IT sector, where employees often contend with vast amounts of rapidly changing information, cognitive overload becomes a significant contributor to technostress, thereby disrupting the equilibrium between work and personal life.

Furthermore, the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** proposed by **Davis (1989)** offers another valuable perspective. It implies that the perceived simplicity of utilization and utility of technology shape users' acceptance and utilization behaviours. When the volume and complexity of information overwhelm an individual's capacity to manage them effectively, technostress can ensue, subsequently jeopardizing the balance between professional responsibilities and personal life **(Bencsik & Juhasz, 2023)**.

Additionally, the **Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986)**, can also provide insight into this issue. It argues that communication media have different capacities to convey information effectively. In the context of the IT industry, the use of overly rich or complex media for communication can contribute to information overload and technostress, further impacting employees' ability to maintain a healthy WLB **(Wang et al., 2023)**.

The distinct challenges faced by IT industry employees, like increased work overload and invasion of privacy due to ICT use, further exacerbate technostress and its impact on WLB **(Srivastava et al., 2015; Ayyagari et al., 2011)**. Despite the productivity benefits of ICT, employees in the IT sector experience heightened technostress, resulting in decreased job performance and negative psychological responses **(Califf et al., 2020; Sumiyana & Sriwidharmanely, 2020)**.

Technostress, therefore can be attributed to a complex syndrome stemming from inadequate adaptation to emerging computer technologies, poses a significant challenge in the information technology sector, often disrupting employees' work-life balance. Rooted in the Cognitive Load Theory, which highlights the finite capacity for processing information, and augmented by the Technology Acceptance Model and Media Richness Theory, technostress reflects the strain caused by overwhelming information volumes and complexity. Despite the productivity gains associated with information and communication technologies (ICT), IT professionals face heightened technostress, leading to reduced job performance and adverse psychological outcomes. This underscores the imperative for tailored interventions to mitigate technostress and promote a healthier WLB in the IT industry.
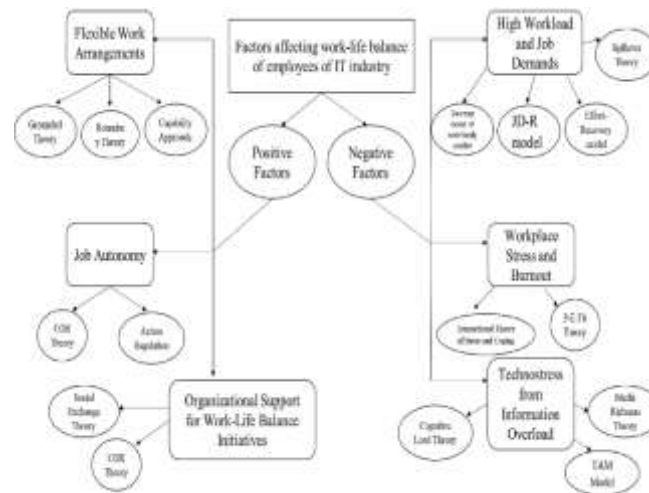
Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

DISCUSSION

The research comprehensively examines the factors influencing WLB among employees in the Information Technology industry, considering both positive and negative aspects. Three main factors positively affecting WLB are identified during the course of research i.e., flexible work arrangements (FWA), job autonomy, and organizational support for work-life balance initiatives, the factors having lesser influence were excluded while conducting review of literature. These factors provide employees with the flexibility, control, and resources necessary to manage their professional responsibilities and personal obligations effectively.

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) as discussed in detail, offer employees the opportunity to adjust their work schedules and locations to accommodate personal commitments, thereby enhancing WLB. Job autonomy empowers individuals to make decisions regarding task execution and work processes, reducing work-life conflict. Organizational support for work-life balance initiatives signifies a commitment to fostering a supportive work environment that prioritizes employee well-being and WLB. Conversely, factors negatively impacting WLB in the IT industry are also identified, including high workload and job demands, workplace stress and burnout, and technostress from information overload. These factors result in resource depletion, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty in balancing work and personal life responsibilities.

The study is not limited to the employees of IT industry, but the implications extend beyond its scope, having relevance for both organizations as well as employees in the IT sector. Organizations can leverage the positive factors identified to design and implement policies and practices that promote WLB, ultimately leading to improved employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. On the other hand, employees can utilize strategies to mitigate the negative factors, such as setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and seeking support from their organizations. For employees, understanding the factors influencing WLB can empower them to take proactive steps to manage work-related stressors effectively. Setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and seeking support from their organizations can help individuals maintain balance in their professional and personal lives.

Limitations and future scope of research

Although this review offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Variations in methodologies, sample sizes, and geographical locations among the included studies may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavours should strive to mitigate these limitations by embracing diverse methodologies and samples. Another limitation is that there is lack of in-depth quantitative data on the lived experiences of IT professionals navigating flexible work arrangements. While the review synthesizes existing research and theoretical frameworks, more quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to provide a deeper understanding of how IT employees perceive and experience WLB. The study is also limited in the aspect of specific factors influencing WLB in the IT industry, which may not capture the full complexity of the issue. Future research should take into account a more holistic approach that explores a wider range of factors and their interplay in shaping work-life balance among IT professionals.

Hence, there are several areas for future research in this area. Longitudinal studies could examine how WLB evolves over time and identify factors that contribute to sustained balance or imbalance. Qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the subjective experiences of IT professionals managing work-life balance. Additionally, comparative studies could explore cultural and organizational differences in WLB practices and their effectiveness. Furthermore, research could evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions aimed at improving work-life balance in the IT industry, identifying best practices that promote employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Overall, further research is needed to continue advancing our understanding of work-life balance in the IT industry and developing strategies to support employee well-being.

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