

The implications of telecommuting on work-life balance: Effects on work engagement and work exhaustion

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many workers to telecommute, and the public sector is no exception to it. Working from home has resulted in a work overload in personal places. This has eroded the line between personal and professional life, increasing the risk of conflict. The impact of remote working on the balance between life and work is unknown. This article reviews the existing research on work-life balance. It further examines the impact of remote work and telecommuting on work-life balance. The study found that work-life interaction and workplace factors influence employee engagement and exhaustion. Work-related expectations, such as emotional and time demands, must be addressed to decrease work-family conflict and create a good work-life balance. Human resource managers in the sector should develop work-life balance policies and practices. This review adds to the body of knowledge by establishing the importance of work-family conflict and work-life balance for remote employees. This review produced two scholarly contributions to work-life balance. Beginning with an overview of existing research topics and organized work-life balance concepts, second, it identified crucial study areas to understand distant work-life balance better. Implications for practice and future research directions are discussed as well.

Highlights

- The Covid-19 pandemic created a disruption in the day to day life of an individual while working from home.
- Individuals compromised both on official as well as on social/personal fronts.
- This study explores the ramifications caused due to work from home and its impact on the work-life balance.
- An extensive but precise review about the negative effects of work-from home given this pandemic situation is discussed in this study.

1. Introduction

Work-life interaction can be viewed as an interface between the realms of work and non-work. The concepts of work-life balance and work-family conflict are linked to work-life interaction and are often used as synonyms. Work-life harmony is affected by both work-life strife and work-life improvement. The association between life and work areas has been researched by scholars, which for decades has been called work-life literature. Work-family conflict is defined as a form of interpersonal conflict in which work and family domains' role pressures are somewhat mutually incompatible.' While the field primarily emphasizes the tensions that substantial work prerequisites can cause in the family arena, the study of the bi-directional association eventually extended, with studies considering both family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict. The literature has recently extended its focus to consider the tensions between work and family needs. Also, the enhancement that can be generated for each other by the two domains (Greenhaus et al., 2003) and the benefits of accomplishing a specific equilibrium between them

(Jain & Nair, 2013). The interrelationship between work and home regarding positive and negative effects is a significant issue for research (Lourel et al., 2009; Bulińska-Stangrecka et al., 2021).

At the beginning of this review, it is essential to define the term “work-life balance.” Work-life balance is a term that refers to the link between an individual’s professional obligations and personal life (Kelliher et al., 2019). Work-life equilibrium can be defined as a favorable appraisal of a person’s integration of several aspects of his or her life, including family and job, and minimization of conflict between their various responsibilities (Bulińska-Stangrecka et al., 2021). According to Brough et al. (2014), this concept refers to an employee’s impression of the congruence of various activities and the support for self-development and achieving one’s life goals. Clark’s (2000) concept also highlights the importance of minimizing the strife between an employee’s dedication to family and work commitments. Thus, reducing friction between work and non-work responsibilities is called work-life equilibrium or a sought state of human fulfillment (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

There are two perspectives on work-life balance that define the research. The first relates to enhancing personal life, while the second relates to reducing the professional role (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). The conceptual analysis in this paper is focused on establishing the work engagement as well as minimizing the work exhaustion due to role conflict that emerges from remote labor. As a result, a perspective has been established for the analysis, assuming the necessity of minimizing work-life conflict while also providing satisfaction and optimizing the management of resources (Fisher et al., 2009).

Several explanations have been presented to explain this phenomenon over the history of the work-life balance discipline. The established study on work-life balance ideas has focused on positive and negative spillover (Zedeck, 1992). The *Spillover Model* was proposed by Wilensky (1960) and assumes that there is an ‘extension’ of experiences from the domain of work to non-work so that the social experience of the spheres of work and non-work is effectively boundary-less (Parker, 1971). proposed the *Conflict Theory*, which states that achieving one goal necessitates sacrificing another. This assumes that the two worlds of life and work are essentially incompatible and have different rules and requirements. *Boundary Theory* focuses on how workers build, Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) maintain, and change boundaries to simplify and classify their world (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). The boundary hypothesis is based on Nippert (1996a) Eng’s sociological studies on how people reconcile work and home life. According to boundary theory, there are psychological, physical, and behavioral distinctions between work and non-work areas of an individual’s life (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014).

Work-life balance studies have historically been conflict-oriented, but academics are now looking into the potential symbiotic relationship between work and life. Powell & Greenhaus (2006) developed *Enrichment Theory* to understand how job and family enrich each other. Enrichment occurs when experience in one role increases the quality of life in another. It can also be characterized as the spillover of psychological resources from one role to another (Carlson, Ferguson, Kacmar, Grzywacz, & Whitten, 2011). Researchers have found that family-to-work enrichment occurs as well as work-to-family enrichment. Voydanoff (2004a) proposed the *Facilitation Theory*, “A sort of interaction in which resources tied to one job assist or

facilitate participation in the other.” Frone (2003) defines it as how participation in one job leads to new experiences, abilities, and opportunities in another. Facilitation theory states that participating in another role makes performing in one simpler.

The *Segmentation-Integration Continuum Theory* is a paradigm with high role integration and high role segmentation as poles. As stated in the segmentation model, work and non-work do not influence each other (Guest, 2002). According to Piotrkowski (1979), people repress job-related moods, behaviors, and habits in the life domain and act similarly at work by restricting personal behaviors, feelings, ideas, or pleasures. Segmentation is the complete separation of work and life. Mathew & Natarajan (2014) put forward the *Compensation Theory*, where they believe that individuals seek compensation in another sphere when they are unfulfilled in one. This notion also states that job and family balance each other out in the same environment (Mathew & Natarajan, 2014). The compensation has been regarded as a work-family conflict. It is called negative because unpleasant experiences in one domain lead to positive perceptions.

Based on the idea of scarcity, *Resource Drain Theory* asserts a negative association between labor and life. The expenditure of resources in one domain reduces available resources of the other (Morris & Madsen, 2007). Lack of resources (time, energy, money) causes stress and burnout (Frone, 2003). The difference between compensation and resource drain is that compensation aims to determine the outcome of discontent in one domain, while resource drain solely seeks to determine the transfer of resources without regard for incentive. According to Rothbard & Edwards (2003), resource drain theory is similar to ‘time-based conflict,’ highlighting the similarities between the two theories. *The Congruence Theory* suggests a similarity between work and family, mediated by genetic, psychological, or socio-cultural factors (Zedeck, 1992). A third component, such as genetics or community cohesion, could positively impact work and family domains (Mathew & Natarajan, 2014).

The *Ecological Systems Theory* describes work-life balance by looking at the worker’s ecosystem (Pocock, Skinner & Ichii, 2009). Worker ecosystems are microsystems within larger ecosystems. It implies that Work and Family are products of the process, person, environment, and time that add to work and life experience (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000b). According to Bird (2006), the *Ladder Theory* posits two sides to work-life balance: the individual and the organization. Employees have obligations to the company, whereas employers have obligations to their employees. Profits, Revenue, Commitment, Customer Service, Morale, Productivity, Retention, and Recruitment connect the two legs. The employee’s journey finishes at step (Profits) while the employer begins at recruitment. Both legs must work well for balanced work and life. Other approaches, such as Human Capital Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Role Theory, can be gleaned from the literature.

The background and implications of strife between life and work have been extensively contemplated. Various studies consider a co-relation between work-life conflict and job engagement. Many kinds of research on the conflict between work and life have focused on workers with family commitments, hypothesizing that only those employees with a specific degree of work-family contention will respect

family-oriented strategies or change their attrition intentions. It is believed that an organization that empowers people to settle their personal and professional lives would be considered the best organization for individuals who have family responsibilities and those who do not have any family commitments.

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) is a term used to describe the circumstance where the employee's claims of time spent and stress meddles with day-to-day lives. WFC estimates the degree to which the job impacts an individual's life adversely outside the workplace, and high degrees of Work-Family Conflict is commonly correlated with adverse results (Fein & Skinner, 2015). Various research is investigating the effect of Work-Family Conflict on employee performance has concentrated on full-time employees and concluded that long hours of working anticipate elevated levels of WFCs which may have adverse health effects (Adkins & Premeaux, 2012). Research has also explored the connections between Work-Family Conflict and work engagement (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2015; Weale et al., 2019). Though there are certain discrepancies between the studies, higher work-family conflict is generally connected with lower work engagement. Work-life equilibrium is also related to work-life interaction. There is considerable discussion about the term *balance* and whether the equilibrium between the realms of work and non-work is alluring or feasible (Tim Thames et al., 2015). Some people will be happy with the work-life balance, although they might use more resources in one of the areas contrasted with the other at specific phases of their life. Work-life balance is a structure that adds to the optimum stability of work-life. Achieving greater work-life fit is essential to ensure sustained work commitment; it can prolong working life and defer retirement (Tim Thames et al., 2015).. Various approaches and practices are needed throughout life that empower workforce participation and commitment; hence policies and practices that help the fruitful association of work and non-work realms need to be considered.

We conducted an all-inclusive literature review on work-life balance for this paper. Despite our extensive literature assessment, we narrow our attention to remote-working and its effect on work-life balance. We have been able to identify significant areas in which further empirical study is needed in the domain of remote working and work-life balance. Main arguments and contributions include identifying important areas contributing to better work-life balance among telecommuting employees and examination of vital topics which require a future study on the issues of personal and professional life balance in a remote working situation. Worldwide telecommuting and epidemiological limits need the development of guidelines on how best to sustain a work-life equilibrium when telecommuting from home.

Some articles are "theoretically informed, empirically grounded" in this journal. They talk about how technology has influenced employees in every part, from their jobs to families. As technology has progressed, ideas about "new" have changed. It is essential to encompass a broad opinion of novel innovations, but at the same time, it is essential to recognize that the ramifications of these inventions are all because of individual action. To figure out how the current labor process and research on work/jobs have shown these changes over time, we need to look at how these changes have been shown in the past literature. It is important to think back to Marx's early thoughts, which said: "the worker feels

himself only when he is not working; when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working” (Marx, 1975).

This review gives a quick overview of some most important debates going on for a long time that should be looked at again in the modern world. Without wearing rose-tinted glasses and reminiscing, it is vital to be reflective and take both a factually and academically informed stance on how technologies will affect the current pandemic and the world in the long run. It is thought that people who already know about these things will better understand the current changes as they acclimatize to the changed surroundings.

In the context of the theoretical premises discussed above, it appears important to recognize the changes that occurred in the development processes in organizations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic concerning work-life balance. In a broader sense, there is a lack of data on specific tools to maintain work-life balance satisfaction for workers who work from home during a pandemic. Therefore, it is important to analyze the literature to diagnose conceptual clusters and identify which areas need to be developed to provide valuable guidance on remote working.

The sections presented below are an attempt to fill this research gap. The scientific knowledge gap prevents designing and implementing tailored management interventions that allow dealing with the multifaceted implications of working from home on the ability of remote employees to handle the work-life interplay. The article intends to contribute to filling in this gap in the literature, proposing an empirical examination of the consequences of home-based telecommuting on work-life balance. The following research questions inspired the development of this study:

RQ1. Does telecommuting from home affect the work engagement ability to manage the work-life interface?

RQ2. What are the implications of home-based teleworking on work-related exhaustion?

A systematic literature review can not only summarize existing information, identify gaps, and provide a new viewpoint on a topic but also spark new interests and direct future practice. So a systematic review was used to answer the research questions. A reflective literature analysis was designed to provide a tentative answer to these research questions. The article is organized as follows. Section 2 proposes the conceptual background against which this literature was established. Section 3 and 4 depict the study design and the methodology applied in this research. Section 5 reports the work-life interface. Section 6 critically discusses the literature findings and advances this research's main conceptual and practical implications, which are outlined in Section 7.

2. Conceptual Background

The coronavirus outbreak posed a significant obstacle to the work of public entities (Palumbo, 2020). Telecommuting is generally adopted from home to ensure consistent delivery of services, adhering to social distance standards provided by national and international health organizations to avert the

transmission of the disease (Palumbo, 2020; Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020). Besides that, traditional methods that work remotely to address extraordinary challenges create opportunities for many issues that researchers and practitioners have not yet recognized.

Although home-based telecommuting has been contended to be more uncommon in the public sector (Palumbo, 2020), the coronavirus pandemic has made it a common practice for public entities around the globe (ILO, 2020). Since various researchers had emphasized that remote working activities are emerging among public sectors as well (Langa & Conradie, 2003), recent research (De Vries et al., 2019) asserted that technical alienation and low organizational engagement had eroded the advantages of telecommuting in the public sector. Two significant aspects delineate telecommuting. First, individuals work in addition to their regular work environment, and next, a link between office and home exists. Amidst information and communication technology (ICT) application, information exchange and collaboration with peers are achievable (Palumbo, 2020). Besides, the research asserts that workers want a proper job plan for operating from home. It is more appropriate to work from home for information-based undertakings, limited face-to-face encounters, and a higher choice.

Literature is inconsistent when exploring the ramifications of telecommuting on work-life fit. It is believed that remote working, as an adaptable administration of work, improves command over the workplace of representatives, which in turn expands the productivity of operational activities (Breaugh & Farabee, 2012). In light of this strong cognition of the dedication to work and the opportunities to work in an accustomed and comfortable environment, people who work away from home face more productive and fewer working life conflicts (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). In addition, as an employee-based human resource exercise, it is widely recognized that home-based telecommuting can limit the feeling of strain between private life and employment, and thereby enhance the equilibrium between lives and work (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020). Subsequently, this equilibrium has both immediate and circuitous beneficial outcomes for associations, including enhanced social trading initiatives, less turnover, and expanded profitability (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Palumbo, 2020). Telecommuting also determines disengagement between telecommuters and traditional office workers, creating a negative inclination towards personal work errands (Collins et al., 2016). This is particularly relevant when telecommuting is embraced in response to an unpredictable and a catastrophic event, such as unforeseen and disaster situations (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; Weale et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020). In short, telecommuting is expected to have some detrimental effects on telecommuters' working conditions which can adversely impact their work-life balance (Troup & Rose, 2012; Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020).

An alternate view is that telecommuting is an institution-based HR exercise that reduces operating expenses. Instead of giving employees better command over the interface of work and life, work from home incorporates increasing work intensity (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) and expanded managers' technical control over telecommuters (Bathini & Kandathil, 2020; Uqba & Bhat, 2020; Palumbo, 2020). Daily life events lead to work-life tensions through the invasion of work-related stress in regular daily existence exercises (Sarbu, 2018). Furthermore, working remotely can decide work expansions and the

overlap between work obligations and personal life (Hyman & Baldry, 2011). This makes more disruption between personal lives and work, which, rather than avoidance, will prompt clashes in work and life (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Fonner & Stache, 2012).

The social exchange theory states that workers' conduct towards the organization is firmly impacted by their impression of its conduct towards them. It is opined that when workers believe that they can manage their life and work commitments, they will react by being pleased with their organization. In essence, corporate confidence will increase the work satisfaction of workers. Handling work-life strife is a significant problem for associations and organizations (Weale et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2012; Uqba & Bhat, 2020; Palumbo, 2020). Past exploration indicates that significant levels of work-life strife are correlated with coercive leadership (Wu et al., 2012; Tepper et al., 2011).

On the contrary, person or group self-sufficiency has traditionally been recognized as a predecessor of work-life balance. Autonomy replicates the level to which a work allows the worker's self-assurance, the opportunity to arrange or decide its work (Weale et al., 2019). Extended control would give members authority to respond further to how, where, or when their day-to-day job is characterized. As per Grzywacz and Marks (2000), a lower degree of autonomy, a metric that attains facets of both assortment and autonomy, is related to decrease job and life enhancement levels. In this context, autonomy implies a low degree of strife between life and work since workers can pick the ideal approach to work.

Support from the supervisor is another essential aspect relevant to the work-life balance of employees as it produces a feeling of reciprocity in employees, who then perform better (Baral & Bhargava, 2010). Support at work is perhaps the critical determinant of reliance and relationships at the job (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Ahmed et al., 2013). Work-life balance has repercussions for employees' insights, propensities, and prosperity and affects operational performance. This fact has driven enterprises to introduce the concept of social and supervisory support. Reflections of supervisors on workers' work-life balance often plays a significant part in employees' professional advancement. According to Mas-Machuca et al. (2016), workers who consider their bosses supportive experience elevated job engagement. Multiple studies have been carried out to analyze the outcomes of remote working in diverse areas like business, psychology, and economics over the past three decades (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Over the past decade, progress in information and communication technologies (ICT) has led to the increased pervasiveness of working from home (Palumbo, 2020). The likelihood to telecommute enhances the autonomy of workers to plan, coordinate and enrich their job. Individuals with the more excellent choice have the more potent inner inspiration and are thus more committed to their job (Weale et al., 2019).

Furthermore, firms can hire and hold profoundly talented and dedicated employees by providing apt working conditions (Weale et al., 2019). From a theoretical perspective, the effect of telecommuting on the working efforts of employees is questionable. Since organizations have fewer prospects to screen their workers, telecommuting may prompt evasion, thus reducing the individual effort to work (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020). Nevertheless, the likelihood to work from home enhances

workers' independence, and hence their inherent drive (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). Thus, telecommuters might have an increased devotion and react with 'extra' work commitment.

There is also a dearth of uniformity in the research when analyzing the influence of telecommuting on work-life equilibrium (Palumbo, 2020). The primary benefits of remote work are suggested as the ability to handle obligations more effectively and prevent role conflict more quickly due to the enhanced flexibility of the home setting (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Examining the detrimental effects of remote work on work-life balance reveals empirical evidence that remote employment reduces job engagement (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Remote work can disrupt the work-life balance by lengthening actual work hours and overlapping personal and professional responsibilities (Hyman & Baldry, 2011). Additionally, it may result in increased friction between work and non-work responsibilities (Fonner & Stache, 2012), having a detrimental effect on work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020). Given that research indicates that remote work has a detrimental effect on work-life equilibrium (Felstead & Henseke, 2017), it is critical to ascertain the elements which impact work-life balance.

Another disadvantage of remote work is the difficulty of acclimating people to the organization's culture and its socializing and control procedures (Popovici & Popovici, 2020). This demands managers devise novel ways to allow for supervision and blending of employees while maintaining their individuality.

There is a dearth of evidence on specific tools for employees who work from home during the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain satisfying work-life stability. Therefore, it is critical to conduct a literature review to determine theoretical clusters and determine which areas require further development to provide valuable recommendations on telecommuting.

3. Methodology

The article does bibliometric analysis utilizing VOS viewer and the Scopus database tools. Recent advances in bibliometric software and scientific databases like Scopus and Web of Science and cross-disciplinary pollination of the bibliometric methodology from information science to business research have increased the popularity of bibliometric analysis in business research (Donthu et al., 2020b). It is also helpful in managing significant volumes of scientific data and creating an excellent research effect. It is used to detect developing trends in article and journal performance, collaboration patterns, and research elements, as well as to investigate the intellectual structure of a specific area in the existing literature (Donthu et al., 2021a, Verma and Gustafsson, 2020, Donthu et al., 2020c). Its interpretations often rely on subjective (thematic analysis) and objective (performance analysis) evaluations established through informed techniques and methods. This means bibliometric analysis can help make sense of enormous amounts of unstructured data to decode and trace accumulated scientific knowledge and evolution.

Despite its benefits, bibliometric analysis is still relatively new in business research, and its application often falls short of its full potential. This happens when bibliometric studies use a limited selection of data and procedures to create a fragmented knowledge of the area (Brown, Park, & Pitt, 2020).

Unauthoritative guides to bibliometric analysis in business research are lacking, posing a substantial obstacle to business researchers who seek to learn more about bibliometric methodology and its use for business research. Although authoritative instructions on systematic literature review exist (Palmatier et al., 2018, Snyder, 2019), they lack bibliometric technique breadth and depth. Descriptive analysis characterizes bibliometric investigations (Donthu, Reinartz, Kumar, & Pattnaik, 2020). This is because reviews commonly present the performance of different constituents of research (e.g., countries, institutions, authors, and journals) in the field, which is similar to the profile or background of participants in empirical research but more analytical.

Research elements are linked in science mapping (Baker et al., 2021; Cobo et al., 2011; Ramos-Rodrigue and Ruz-Navarro, 2004). The study examines the structural and intellectual relationships between the constituents of research. It uses citation analysis and other techniques to map the science of words and citations. Combining these tools with network analysis helps reveal a study field's bibliometric and intellectual structure (Baker et al., 2020a, Tunger and Eulerich, 2018).

The scope of the study should be substantial enough to support bibliometric analysis (Ramos-Rodrigue & Ruz-Navarro, 2004). Scholars might assess the number of papers available in the targeted research field to establish the study's breadth. If a research field has hundreds (500 or more) or thousands of papers, bibliometric analysis can be used. The search for peer reviewed publications was conducted on 13 January, 2022 in Elsevier Science Scopus. For this analysis, the Scopus database provides a wide-ranging and high-quality list that includes information on social sciences. According to Elsevier, Scopus is the largest database of summaries and quotations from the peer-reviewed research literature. The bibliometric review described in this article is primarily based on the database of Scopus and a randomly chosen sample of articles that contain the key phrases "Work-life balance." The category "Business, Management, and Accounting" was chosen to include articles on work-life balance solely. A total of 1026 papers were exported and used for further research from 2010 to 2020. The bibliometric analysis employed the following techniques: the co-occurrence of words and cluster analysis and the mind-mapping approach. The VOS viewer, XMind, and data-analysis tools accessible in the Scopus database were also utilized. The primary search yielded the identification of 1026 sources in our literature evaluation.

4. Results

This part summarises the findings of a review of the identified papers during our search for "work-life balance." Motivation to research work-life balance studies continues to grow year after year. Figure 1 depicts the annual number of publications released between 2010 and 2020. As in 2010, there were only 50 publications on this subject, increasing to 106 in 2016 and 171 in 2020. The growing research in work-life balance results from an increased focus on the employee's demands in the organization and when telecommuting from home.

'Insert Figure-1 here.'

Geographically, research in the examined area was diverse. As illustrated in the following figure (Figure-2), this subject received the most attention from scholars in the USA, UK, Australia, and India. Two hundred twelve articles were published in the USA. Canada, Spain, and Germany are among the countries where approximately 50 papers have been published. Figure 2 depicts country-wise publication between 2010 and 2020. The topic of work-life balance is a subject taken up by researchers from 51 countries.

'Insert Figure-2 here.'

The top 8 journals with the largest number of publications are as follows: Personnel Review (31-publications), International Journal of Human Resource Management (42-publications), Human Resource Management (23-publications), Work Employment and Society (27-publications), Gender Work and Organization (22-publications), Employee Relations (21-publications), and Gender in Management (22-publications) are the top eight journals with the most publications (See Table.1). Every one of the 1026 papers analyzed is a scientific article.

'Insert Table-1 here.'

The next phase in the literature analysis process was to create a plot of the co-occurrence grid. The preliminary procedure of text data-analysis in VOS reader created 20324 cumulative terms, comprising the title, keywords, and abstract text. All words with fewer than ten talks were then eliminated. Just 811 circumstances met this criterion. We devised computations for the degree to which a cut-off date is specific and valuable or vague and non-useful based on the VOS viewer's hit ratings (Van Eck et al., 2013). The results scoring in the top 50% of relevance ratings were chosen, lowering the total items to 463. The results were then manually reviewed to eliminate any references to the research process (e.g., keywords, article, date, author, Scopus) or to nations like India, Germany, or the United Kingdom. After eliminating such broad terms, we were left with 242 results.

5. Work-life Interface

The work and life interface can be considered the meeting point for work and non-work spheres. Numerous, sometimes contradictory, notions of work-life interaction have been employed in prior studies (McMillan et al., 2011; Guest, 2002). For instance, work-life equilibrium, coordination, and interaction are all notions about the work-life interface. These ideas are frequently used reciprocally, and McMillan et al. (2011) stated that they must be appropriately elucidated and inferred before they can be employed efficiently to improve human resource management. Due to the lack of generally accepted definitions for work-life interface-related ideas, numerous attempts have enumerated its various factors. While work-life conflict measures have typically been engaged to review the work-life interaction, some researchers have noted that the two concepts are distinct (McMillan et al., 2011).

McMillan et al. (2011) presented a helpful outline for understanding the links between the factors affecting work-life interaction. They maintained that work-life conflict and enrichment affect work-life harmony (as they coined the term). Thus, work-family conflict is not an antonym for work-life equilibrium

in their concept; instead, it adds to work-life fit. We used the term “work-life balance” interchangeably with “work-life harmony” as defined in the McMillan et al. (2011) model. Two measures of the work-life interface were used in this study: work-family conflict and work-life balance.

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a word that refers to a situation in which the overall demands of the job, the time commitment required, and the strain generated by the employment intermingle with personal life (Frone et al., 1992). Work-family conflict quantifies the amount to which the work harms an employee’s life outside of the job, and an increased work-family conflict is often connected with unfavorable results (Fein & Skinner, 2015; Allen et al., 2012). The majority of research on the effect of work-family conflict on employee performance has focused on full-time employees and has discovered that long working hours are associated with high levels of work-family conflict, which can harm health (Adkins & Premeaux, 2012). Additionally, research has examined associations between job satisfaction and work-family conflict (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2015; Bruck et al., 2002) and associations between work-family conflict and turnover intentions (Bruck et al., 2002).

Work-life balance is defined in this study as a comprehensive assessment of an employee’s perceived ability in managing several life spheres – for example, work and non-work domains – in such a way that they complement rather than compete, regardless of the resources or time allotted to each (Timms et al., 2015). The work-life interface is also related to work-life balance. There is a considerable dispute concerning the term ‘balancing’ (McMillan et al., 2011; Guest, 2002; Timms et al., 2015) and whether it is desirable or attainable to balance work and non-work realms of life. Certain employees may be content with their work-life equilibrium, even though they may devote more energy to one of the spheres than the other at different phases of their lives. The work-life imbalance has been linked to various undesirable outcomes, including job burnout and decreased job satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Guest, 2002).

Work-life balance is one aspect of the overall work-life fit aspect. Poor work-life balance, or the inability of personal and professional domains to coexist together, is a persistent issue in workplaces throughout the globe. Work-life balance issues persist – notwithstanding recent revisions in employment rules granting certain employees the right to flexible work environments and leave – and are especially problematic for working mothers and caregivers (Skinner & Pocock, 2014). Skinner and Pocock (2014) state that, despite alterations in the workforce structure and an increased female labor force participation, diverse patterns of work and caregiving persist – males are viewed as wage earners, while women are viewed as caregivers. Due to this gendered model, women experience bad work-life outcomes at a higher rate than their counterparts, irrespective of the number of hours they have worked (Skinner & Pocock, 2014).

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is crucial for sustaining job engagement; Atkinson and Sandiford (2016) proposed that it may even lengthen professional life and postpone superannuation. According to Skinner et al. (2014), various policies and practices are required to promote employee engagement and participation across the life course. Hence, the focus should be on policies and practices that facilitate the successful interplay of personal and professional realms. On the contrary, Parkes and Langford (2008) concluded that the evidence for an association between work-life fit and employee engagement

and retention is mixed; implying that other organizational factors such as career advancement opportunities or succession planning policies may have a more significant impact upon employee engagement and their turnover intentions than work-life fit. Oakman and Wells (2015) stated that adaptable policies are necessary to acclimatize employees at various phases of life and thereby postpone retirement.

Work-life balance is critical, especially for women. Organizations must implement such programs and policies to manage the work-life interaction to increase the interface between professional and personal areas. According to Zheng et al. (2015), employees' usage of such initiatives and policies coexists with their tactics for juggling competing areas of their life. A better understanding of the work-life interface enables the management to affect individual and organizational outcomes in ways that traditional workplace-centric approaches do not and is an important subject that warrants additional study.

Additionally, research has concentrated on the issues of teleworking as an employee-selected mode of work. However, little attention has been paid to telecommuting and remote-working due to this pandemic, which requires both employees and employers to adapt to new working methods. Work-life balance was discussed in nine papers included in Table 1.

The majority of studies on Work-life balance and telecommuting have been quantitative. These studies include statistical data analysis from extensive international surveys (Germany, USA, and the UK) or the European Working Conditions Survey. Despite their publication year of 2020, the surveys analyze statistical data from 2015 to 2016, omitting the distant working conditions induced by the epidemic. Remote work is undertaken at the employee's request and with their approval.

Studies examining the impact of home-office work on work-life balance have also documented the disadvantages of such work arrangements. These findings indicate that homework has a detrimental effect on employees' work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020). Additionally, they believe that telecommuting makes it much more difficult for employees to unplug and take breaks, undermining work-life balance in the long run (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Additionally, research posits that there is a risk of exacerbating the role conflict due to familial and professional responsibilities (Thulin et al., 2020; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). The findings of this research underscore the importance of developing clear employee policies to accommodate workers who work remotely (McDowall & Kinman, 2017).

To conclude, research on the connection between remote work and work-life balance demonstrates the difficulties organizations confront in providing an adequate support structure for employees. The work intensification, increased time spent in front of the laptop; more significant role conflict; and the consecutive burden of technological overwork are all real issues related to telecommuting. As a result, it is critical to discover potential solutions to these difficulties through suitable management techniques in firms.

5.1 The implications of telecommuting on work-life balance

The ramifications of telecommuting and remote employment on the balance of life and work are being examined in the literature, contending that telecommuting probably increases the versatility of working operations, which enhances balance in work and life (Sullivan, 2012). However, it is stressed that the merits of working from home are questionable (Bloom et al., 2015) since they solely rely on social and economic factors (Aguilera et al., 2016). Telecommuting can prompt a few drawbacks, which concerns both disabled administrative exposure because of a de-contextualization of working practices (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Uqba & Bhat, 2020) and an imbalance between personal matters daily and work responsibilities (Allen et al., 2012).

The capacity of telecommuters to explore the work-life interface is adversely affected by tainting among work and life. Home-based teleworking, on the one hand, can trigger an 'illusion of time flexibility' in other members of the family, who might perceive that time expended at home can be utilized for family output without deviating from the duration on paid labor (Weale et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020). The collocation of personal affairs and job-related obligations creates tension and time distribution, which sabotage the benefits of telecommuting in terms of life and work equilibrium and foster contradictions between life and work (Wheatley, 2012).

On the other hand, home-based telecommuting involves both an imposed and a deliberate work escalation. In particular, the intensity of work is achieved with the consent of remote workers, which exchanges greater task versatility with more outstanding work commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Speeding up efforts can lead to work-life conflicts when combined with an impaired capacity to turn off from work as it perpetuates the onslaught of work-related issues in daily life (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Palumbo, 2020). In short, home-based telecommuting has a few detrimental impacts on employees' capacity to successfully manage the work-life interaction, leading to stress on work-life equilibrium.

5.2 Telecommuting and work engagement

The subject of work engagement is of great interest among scholars studying work-life balance. The research covers the employee's work-life balance activities that will help retain the employee in the organization through career development opportunities and training (Sheehan et al., 2019). The main focus of the investigation was on the impact of work-life balance on employee engagement resulting in improved work-related outcomes (Dilmaghani, 2020; Hutagalung et al., 2020), organizational commitment (Oyewobi et al., 2020), and supervisor support (Rahim et al., 2020). In an endeavor to build a better work-life balance, home telecommuting is the latest working method that enables workers to harmonize family and work-related commitments' (Morgan, 2004). Therefore, home-based telecommuting is supposed to positively impact work commitments (Uqba & Bhat, 2020). In general, the concept of work commitment is a beneficial, stable, and satisfying state of mind linked to work marked by vitality, commitment, and immersion (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Palumbo, 2020). Although scholars are skeptical about the potential benefits of home-based telecommuting related to work commitment (Liao et al., 2019), this has been maintained that at the end of the day, remote working can mitigate the sense of fatigue (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Weale et al., 2019; Uqba & Bhat, 2020). Furthermore, it

encourages work-related passion, commitment, and the enthusiasm of telecommuters', owing to greater control in managing individual working environments.

The perception of life-to-work and work-to-life clashes caused by the corrosion of work-related responsibilities and daily life activities (Van der Lippe & Lippenyi, 2020; Palumbo, 2020) is expected to be minimized by increased work participation. Home-based telecommuting eliminates the tension induced by overlapping work and family requirements (Palumbo, 2020) and increases the equilibrium in the lives of remote workers entailing to lower levels of psychological and physical discomfort. Work-related passion, dedication, and enthusiasm enhance job contentment (Karatepe & Demir, 2014; Mas-Machuca et al., 2016) and augment employees' optimistic self-assessment, which in turn increases the thrill of the individual's capacity to handle the interrelationships between life and work (Lu et al., 2016).

5.3 Telecommuting and work-related exhaustion

The studies suggest that home-based telecommuting can reduce work-related exhaustion by eliminating daily commuting (Anderson et al., 2001). As it considers work obligations in the day-to-day setting, working from home can prompt an inadvertent convergence of work-related obligations and family exercises, escalating the feeling of weariness among employees working remotely (Kim et al., 2015; Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). Remote working induces expansion and intensification of work which contributes to maximizing the work-related endeavors of telecommuters (Heiden et al., 2018), henceforth leading to more exhaustion. This impedes the benefits of telecommuting in terms of greater versatility in organizing work (Weale et al., 2019; Vesala & Tuomivaara, 2015; Palumbo, 2020).

The higher the commitment of remote workers to work, the better their perspective towards the job (Zheng et al., 2015). Subsequently, their understanding of work-related exhaustion will be less (Kim et al., 2018; Palumbo, 2020; Uqba & Bhat, 2020). To wit, work-related passion, determination, and enthusiasm increase workers' ability to recuperate from exhaustion and increase the employee's ability to enhance work-life fit by job redesigning (Lu et al., 2014). A substantial opportunity to incorporate nonworking and working exercises conversely allows recuperation from work-related exhaustion (Sonnentag, 2003).

Perceived exhaustion undermines the capacity of workers to effectively handle work-life interactions, jeopardizing the equilibrium of life and work. Home-based telecommuting may increase the urge to work during irregular hours, like evenings or day-offs (Garcia-Sierra et al., 2016; Weale et al., 2019). This, indeed, can have adverse effects on the telecommuters' work-life equilibrium (Weale et al., 2019). Work participation, as previously expected, requires greater fatigue tolerance and greater work demands, decreasing the detrimental impacts of exhaustion on the apparent work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020; Garcia-Sierra et al., 2016).

6. Discussion

Technology is critical in promoting work-life balance in remote working environments. As the empirical study on remote working has demonstrated, technology can improve communication with co-workers and

allow supervisors to watch work closely (McDowall, Kinman, 2017; Popovici, Popovici 2020). Assuring employee socialization through the appropriate use of technology is critical for improving the work-life balance for remote workers (Dolot, 2020). This is especially important given that study indicates that workers felt depersonalized and isolated during the Covid-19 epidemic (Almonacid-Nieto, Calderón-Espinal, & Vicente-Ramos, 2020). A critical aspect of work-life balance research is employee engagement, which significantly impacts productivity during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Telecommuting from home has an adverse influence on remote workers' work-life balance. While working from home has been widely viewed as a means of achieving a more balanced work-life balance through increased flexibility in work arrangements (Felstead et al., 2002), the overlapping of work commitments and personal affairs that results from working from home has a detrimental effect on employees' ability to manage the boundaries between work and life (Crosbie & Moore, 2004). This is especially true for those exposed to familial responsibilities, such as parents and caregivers for elderly relatives (Wheatley, 2012). Working from home facilitates both work-life and life-to-work conflicts, jeopardizing home-based telecommuters' ability to manage the interplay of work and ordinary life (Visser & Williams, 2006). This demonstrates the inherent inconsistencies of remote work, which may jeopardize rather than improve remote employees' work-life balance (Johnson et al., 2007).

Despite these concerns, teleworking from home had a beneficial effect on remote workers' job engagement. Individuals who worked from home demonstrated increased levels of work-related concentration, devotion, and vitality (Palumbo et al., 2020). Teleworkers' greater work engagement is facilitated by their perceived organizational support, often connected with work arrangement flexibility (Jin & McDonald, 2017). Additionally, job engagement occurs due to a better match between individual needs and organizational requirements, improving individual commitment to work (Zafari et al., 2019).

Work engagement alleviates the sense of conflict and inconsistency between work-related obligations and daily life (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). It is believed to lessen the perceived severity of work-life and life-to-work conflicts and to increase organizational commitment from this vantage point (AlMehrzhi and Kumar Singh, 2016). In other words, work engagement mitigates the detrimental effects of home-based telecommuting on work-life balance by sustaining employees' self-reported ability to handle work-life conflict (Attridge, 2009).

It is worth noting that telecommuting from home entailed broadening and deepening work. Home-based telecommuting is frequently associated with an overwork culture (Walsh, 2005), which fosters increased work efforts and, as a result, increased work-related weariness (Tremblay, 2002). On the other hand, work-related weariness suggests a diminished capacity to manage an individual's workload due to frequent and severe time constraints, undermining the individual's work-life balance (Nilsson et al., 2017). According to these views, work tiredness has a detrimental effect on the interaction between telecommuting from home and work-life balance, resulting in more conflicts between work and personal responsibilities (Kossek et al., 2013).

Work involvement entails a more favorable view of work among those who choose to telecommute from home, facilitated by a more outstanding commitment to job-related responsibilities (Muller and Niessen, 2019). By increasing individual perceptions of self-efficacy at work, job engagement is intended to lower perceived work-related weariness and mitigate the emotional and physical exhaustion associated with remote working from home (van den Heuvel, 2013; Fujimoto et al., 2016). Work engagement and work-related weariness were discovered to mediate the effects of telecommuting serially from home on work-life balance, reducing perceptions of work-to-life and work-to-life conflicts caused by the overlap of work-related commitments and everyday living activities (Palumbo et al., 2020).

Regarding workplace engagement in remote working conditions, the literature study results corroborate actual studies on people working from home during the pandemic, implying that remote working - particularly at the start - significantly boosts job satisfaction (Hashim, Bakar, Noh, & Mahyudin, 2020). Keeping employees engaged during remote work hours is another significant difficulty (Pattnaik, Jena 2020). Given that engagement is one of the work-related outcomes of work-life balance, an additional study should be conducted to examine processes that reinforce work-life balance to develop engaged remote workers.

The review above of the literature made two scientific contributions to the work-life balance idea. To begin, it summarised existing study domains and structured work-life balance conceptualizations. Second, it suggested critical areas for more research in order to gain a better knowledge of work-life balance in remote work situations. Additionally, it included a set of prescriptive recommendations for additional development and work-life balance research.

6.1 Originality

Our research is unique in two ways. To begin, it provides a comprehensive review of the links between work-life balance variables. According to Carlson et al. (2019), a significant gap in work-family research is the absence of theoretical foundations connecting work-life balance to organizational facts such as work-related weariness and engagement. The study of these constructs is novel, as no prior work has devoted sufficient attention to these relationships. We extend our understanding of work-life balance's effects by evaluating whether employee work-life balance promotes work engagement and work-related tiredness.

Second, the review has practical implications for businesses considering work-life policies. Flexible work hours, employee autonomy in decision-making, employee engagement, and supervisor support increase employee work-life balance.

The majority of study on work-family conflict has been conducted on full-time employees. This review contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating the critical nature of the work-life interface, more precisely, work-family conflict and work-life balance, for remote employee outcomes. It is critical to develop comprehensive models that conceptualize the links between work and non-work elements and

outcomes to properly understand how workplaces might affect work engagement, job satisfaction, and tiredness.

6.2 Implications for practice

Work design is a critical component of human resource management to increase performance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. Historically, job design has placed a premium on job qualities such as degree of autonomy and relevance of job activities.

However, this study demonstrated the critical role of work-life interaction and workplace characteristics in determining employee engagement. Work engagement may be increased by minimizing workplace stressors and aiding employees in achieving a satisfying fit between work and non-work realms. Zheng et al. (2015) observed that both the availability and utilization of organizational initiatives that aid employees in managing work-life balance aid employees in minimizing their stress levels. Specific work practices, such as giving employees more discretion over when they work and how many hours they work, have been demonstrated to enhance work-life balance, resulting in beneficial outcomes for employers and employees (Weale et al., 2019).

Achieving a healthy work-life balance requires addressing work-related expectations, such as emotional and time pressures, which can help reduce work-family conflict and promote a healthy balance of work and life. Human resource managers in the sector should leverage this in their recruitment strategies and continue to develop policies and practices that support a healthy work-life balance, such as allowing more staff members in diverse roles to utilize flexible working arrangements, such as resident schedules changes and shift changes. Additionally, augmenting the number of employees in a facility may improve shift liability, but it ought not to be possible owing to the associated expenses or difficulties hiring rightly skilled personnel for specific tasks (King et al., 2012). Another strategy to facilitate a robust work-life balance is policies and practices that foster a supportive work environment. To assist staff in coping with emotional demands associated with remote work, consideration should be given by recognizing the difficulties inherent in this line of work and implementing policies and practices that ensure employees are braced within the work environment and do not require outside support for demands related to work. Additionally, building an environment where employee health and safety are taken seriously and viewed as a critical organizational aim will contribute to a positive safety climate. This is another way to enhance work-life balance.

7. Conclusion

Work mobility permits workers to be agile in their time and work management. This opportunity assists in balancing family interests with time spent at work. There is a shared benefit and harmony in this equilibrium for both the organization and employees. Autonomy provides greater adaptability for workers in their routine work, expanding the degree of work-life balance. The literature further affirms prior research on the linkages between employee balance of life and work; and managers' work-life balance support. It would be convenient for employees to understand an elevated level of work-life harmony if

managers have confidence in and uphold all the means of life and work. Family-supportive work practices were by and large about worker accomplishment. Specifically, if administrators render independence in making decisions and supervisory aid to employees, the work environment and employee outcomes will increase. Hence, in assessing the equilibrium of work-life and job satisfaction, considering the supervisor as a pioneer that assists workers in their work plays a significant role.

Past reviews have given us a good look at how the literature has changed eventually (Howcroft & Taylor, 2014; Baldry, 2011). This review is not as wide-ranging as it could have been. Instead, it has focused on improvements in New Technology, Work, and employment concerning this pandemic. Contemplating these arguments is essential as employees learn how this pandemic has changed and shaped work spheres. Key workers have to deal with technological issues that make it hard to control and keep an eye on them. This review has then explained how these same issues affect people who work from home. We do not know if there will be substantial modifications to how work will be organized and managed or remain the same. The fact is that whether people work in physical places or at home, papers in this journal can help with this critical question. There have been more debates recently about what the future of work will look like and how artificial intelligence will change jobs. However, we do not have to limit ourselves by how we think now. Another way is possible. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, there is a chance to look at the future of work differently. We can look at talent and work value differently (Hodder, 2020; Martinez Lucio & McBride, 2020). As per Winton and Howcroft (2020), "In light of the current crisis, a major change in how work is valued both socially and financially is needed, which will lead to policies that make sure that key workers are paid and protected in a way that reflects their important role in society."

When reviewing the study areas described above in light of the pandemic of Covid-19 and the requirement to remote-work, it is worthwhile to investigate which management techniques will support enhanced work-life balance when telecommuting. Determining the most critical factors of assisting employees in realizing work-life balance and sustaining mental health when working remotely is a significant knowledge resource for remote workers and managers. Technology is critical in promoting the work-life equilibrium in telecommuting environments. As empirical studies on telecommuting have demonstrated, technology can empower improved communication with co-workers and allow supervisors to watch work more closely (Popovici & Popovici, 2020; McDowall & Kinman, 2017). Assuring employee socialization by using technology is critical for improving work-life balance for remote workers (Dolot, 2020). This becomes more important given that research indicates that employees had a sense of depersonalization and isolation during the outbreak of Covid-19. A critical topic of research into work-life balance is employee career development. The chance for employees' development and training is critical in determining their good perception of a business and willingness to stay. This is consistent with Wolor et al.'s (2020) study, which indicates that e-training significantly impacted staff productivity during the Covid-19 crisis.

This review emphasizes from a philosophical point of view that home-based telecommuting can restrict the ability of employees to manage their interaction between life and work. Telecommuting from home

nurtures role uncertainty by blurring the limits between work obligations and private exercises, furthering work and life conflicts. This convergence of work and life can make remote workers feel fatigued as it creates intensification and expansion of work and non-work endeavors. It is noteworthy that people who are deeply committed to work might be unconscious of the infringement of work into their daily lives. Since they perceive low levels of work-life clashes, they may be overworked, which imperils their capacity to aptly address the interface of life and work, thus endangering their well-being.

From a realistic perspective, it can be asserted that the structure of resilient work practices which allow employees to telecommute should require a detailed analysis of the interaction between life and work. Tailored steps need to be taken to prevent working life issues into daily life practices from the greater autonomy of workers over the spatial-temporal sense of work. This is particularly true for certain types of individuals that show a greater sense of concentration, vigor, and commitment associated with work. In reality, workers with a strong job commitment are likely to ignore the work-life one-sidedness created by telecommuting, making them vulnerable to work overload and fatigue.

This review also indicates that telecommuting will intensify the employee's sensation of work-related exhaustion by adopting a managerial angle. Currently, at irregular periods, it requires significant eagerness to work, which can be the tacit consequence of the failure of the telecommuters to handle the interface of work and life. Explicit HRM strategies adapted to the exigency of telecommuters should be developed to cope with this situation, understanding the unique challenges that impact the activities and outcomes of individuals operating remotely from home.

The previous literature review made two scientific contributions to the work-life balance idea. First, it summarised the research topics and conceptualizations of structured work-life balance found in the literature. Second, it suggested critical areas for more research to enrich the knowledge of work-life balance in remote work situations. Moreover, it included a set of established endorsements for additional development of work-life balance research. In summary, this review emphasizes the significance of delving further into work-life balance when working from home.

Our findings highlight the need for a more empirical study on work-life concerns related to remote working. We make two main arguments and contributions: identifying key areas contributing to enhancing WLB among remote employees and analyzing critical fields requiring more research on the difficulty of managing work and personal life. Work-life balance is impacted negatively by remote working because of the global spread of remote working and epidemiological limits.

This study aimed to demonstrate the importance of work-life balance, including work engagement and work-related exhaustion. This research has shown how both WFC and work-life balance influences the relationship between work engagement and fatigue. This can be improved by recognizing that the work-life interface is not just an issue for individual employees; rather, it is also affected by workplace stressors and impacts personal and organizational outcomes. This research demonstrates the importance of work-life fit in relationships between workplace engagement and exhaustion. Developing comprehensive

models to conceptualize relationships between work and non-work factors and outcomes is important to fully understand how workplaces can influence outcomes such as job engagement.

Declarations

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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Table 1

Table 1 is available in the Supplementary Files section.

Figures

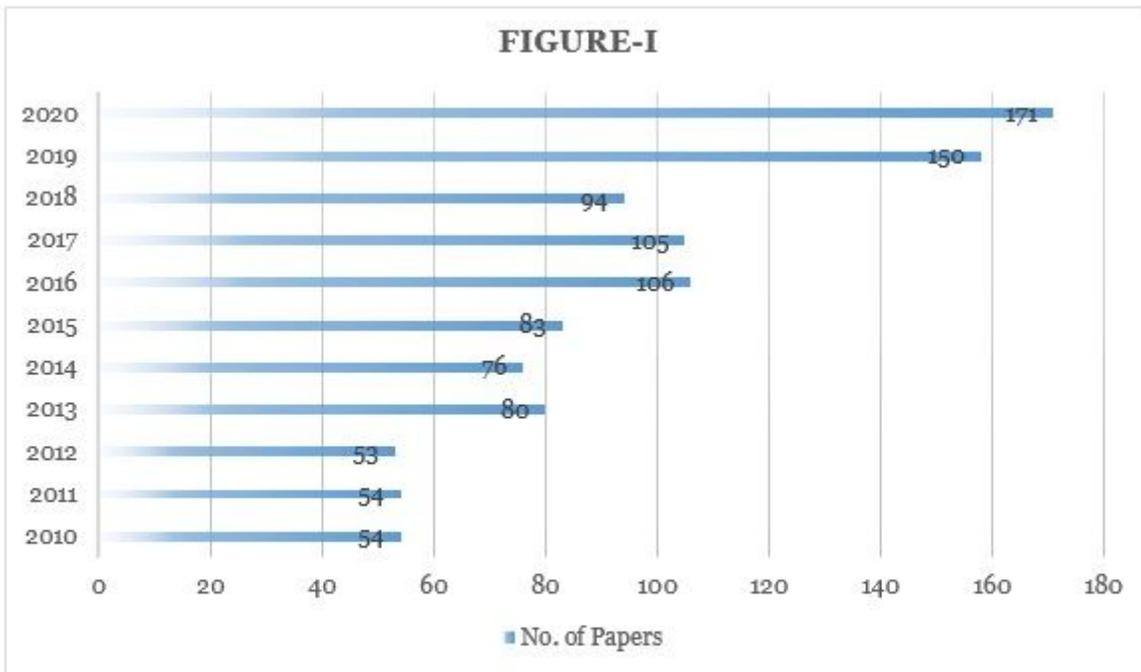


Figure-I: Number of publications from 2010-2020.
Source: Scopus database: Authors calculations

Figure 1

Number of publications from 2010-2020.

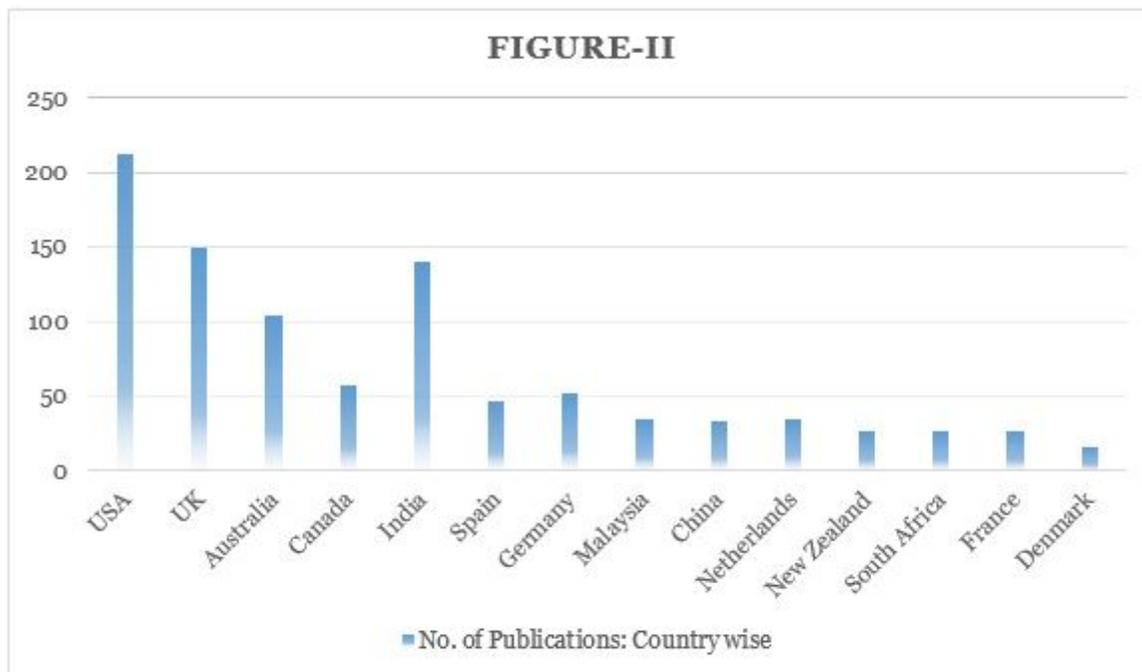


Figure-II: Country-wise no. of publications on work-life balance
Source: Scopus database: Authors calculations

Figure 2

Country-wise no. of publications on work-life balance.

Supplementary Files

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