SYNTHESIZING WORK–LIFE BALANCE ACROSS LEVELS: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW FROM A JOB DEMANDS–RESOURCES PERSPECTIVE*

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Received 21 September 2025; Revised 1 October 2025; Accepted 3 October 2025

Abstract

In an environment of technological acceleration and "always-on" connectivity, the stacking of work demands and family responsibilities has made work–life balance (WLB) an important topic in both scholarship and practice. This paper defines WLB as "a subjective overall evaluation composed of substantive engagement in both the work and non-work domains and a lower level of cross-domain conflict," and, under the job demands–resources (JD–R) framework, conducts a narrative integrative review that connects micro (individual–family), meso (job–organization), and macro (institutions–culture) evidence (without cross-scale conversions under heterogeneous measures, but with cautious interpretation under a unified definition). Main findings: First, resource-type factors (e.g., time/location control, family-supportive supervisory and social support, recovery and psychological resources) are, on the whole, associated with higher WLB; demand-type factors (e.g., long hours and

Citation:

* Lijun Wang, Nittaya Wongyos and Richeng Huang. (2025). Synthesizing Work–Life Balance Across Levels: An Integrative Review From A Job Demands–Resources Perspective. Modern Academic Development and Promotion Journal, 3(6), 1255-1277.; DOI: https://doi.org/10.

https://so12.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/MADPIADP/

unpredictable scheduling, after-hours contact pressure, caregiving and commuting burdens) often reduce WLB via work–family conflict (WFC). Second, macro-level policies and culture can transform nominal flexibility into usable resources only when "availability, non-punitive use, and implementation quality" are in place, thereby improving individual health and organizational outcomes along the pathway of "reduced interference/enhanced recovery, decreased WFC, and increased work-to-family enrichment (WFE)." Third, day-level and multi-wave evidence supports a virtuous cycle of "positive emotions—resource expansion" (Broaden-and-Build Theory), while social exchange mechanisms explain attitude and performance improvements through "organizational support—employee reciprocation." The contribution of this paper lies in: providing a reusable unified definition; integrating fragmented evidence within a cross-level JD–R framework; clarifying the key conditions for converting "nominal resources into usable resources"; and proposing a research agenda suited to Asian contexts characterized by long working hours and long commutes.

Keywords: work–life balance (WLB); job demands–resources (JD–R); work–family conflict (WFC); work-to-family enrichment (WFE)

Introduction

Amid technological acceleration and intensifying competition, organizational requirements for employee "availability and intensity" continue to rise; hybrid work and "always-on" connectivity have become the norm; caregiving and commuting pressures stack simultaneously—together making work–life balance (WLB) a core issue in labor markets and management research. Over more than half a century, academic attention to WLB has moved from "spillover–compensation" and "conflict/enrichment" toward an independent discussion of "balance." Against the backdrop of global policy

reforms and demographic shifts (aging, dual-earner households, and single-parent households), individuals face greater difficulty coordinating between work and life, further underscoring the importance and urgency of WLB research (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). At the national and industry levels, WLB is closely related to labor force participation, health and well-being, gender equality, and organizational competitiveness (Kelly et al., 2014). Its improvement concerns not only individual well-being and family functioning but also the stability of human resources and output efficiency (Moen et al., 2016).

Existing studies exhibit heterogeneity in concepts and measures; “same label, different constructs/different labels, same construct” is common (Casper et al., 2018). At the definitional level, many recent studies incorporate “substantive engagement in both domains” and “lower cross-domain conflict” into the subjective overall evaluation of WLB (Sirgy & Lee, 2017). In terms of evidence form and context, three shortcomings remain to be noted:

(1) Inconsistent measurement specifications: practices include overall evaluations, single-item satisfaction, and the use of WFC/WFE as proxy indicators, which increases the difficulty of cross-study comparisons;

(2) Fragmented cross-level evidence: there is a lack of integrative reviews under the JD–R lens that connect individual and family—job and organization—institutions and culture;

(3) Insufficient evidence for Asian contexts: under long working hours, long commutes, and gendered division of labor, systematic evidence and comparisons remain insufficient, and the external validity boundaries of existing institutional quasi-experiments require further testing (Harknett et al., 2021).

The purpose of this paper is, first, to explicitly define WLB as a subjective overall evaluation of “substantive engagement in both domains plus lower cross-domain conflict,” and, on this basis, to use the JD–R lens to integrate

literature at the micro (individual–family), meso (job–organization), and macro (institutions–culture) levels, systematically sorting its antecedents and outcomes and clarifying the scope of conclusions. The JD–R model is suitable as the framework for this study because it can categorize multi-level factors uniformly into "demands" and "resources," thereby providing a coherent explanatory logic for evidence from the micro to the macro levels. Methodologically, this paper adopts a narrative/integrative review; it does not perform cross-scale conversions or group comparisons by scale type, but rather interprets the evidence cautiously under a unified definition.

The contributions of this paper are mainly reflected in three aspects: first, it provides a reusable definition and clearly distinguishes WLB from related constructs such as work–family conflict/enrichment, thereby offering clear boundaries for subsequent research; second, taking the JD–R model as the main thread, it systematically links micro–meso–macro evidence and summarizes a consistent relational pattern: resource factors are generally associated with higher WLB, whereas demand factors often lower WLB by increasing WFC, further affecting outcomes at the individual, organizational, and societal levels; third, in light of Asian contexts characterized by long working hours and long commutes, it proposes a research and policy agenda including the four-day workweek/shorter hours with no pay cut, predictable scheduling, and right-to-disconnect norms.

Definition of Work–Life Balance

1960s–1990s: Problem emergence and foundations. The public agenda of WLB was first raised by working mothers in the United Kingdom during the 1960s–1970s, entered the U.S. policy agenda in the 1980s, and by the 1990s had diffused into a global human resource management topic (Bird, 2006). With changes in women's labor force participation and family structures, as well as

shifts in technology and cultural attitudes, academic research grew rapidly (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Conceptually, early research mostly adopted the "spillover–compensation" perspective, positing that emotions, energy, and skills flow between work and life: positive experiences bring benefits (positive spillover), while stress and fatigue cause interference (negative spillover), laying the foundation for subsequent moves from "conflict/enrichment" toward the definition of "balance" (Staines, 1980).

Late 1990s–early 2000s: From roles and boundaries to subjective evaluation. "Role balance" emphasizes being present across multiple roles (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). "Boundary theory" understands balance as the effective functioning and satisfaction of the two domains under minimal cross-domain conflict (Clark, 2000). Subsequent research shifted from "structural arrangements" to "individual perceptions," proposing subjective balance (Guest, 2002), a "parity orientation" based on time/investment/satisfaction (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003), and holistic assessments situated in the demands–resources framework (Voydanoff, 2005). The internal logic of this shift lies in the fact that "objective role configurations" alone cannot explain differences among individuals under similar conditions; subjective evaluation better captures the combined result of cross-domain resource–demand matching and conflict (synthesizing Clark, 2000; Guest, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Voydanoff, 2005).

Mid-2000s to present: From satisfaction/expectations to integration and configuration. Under the satisfaction/expectation perspective, studies operationalize WLB as "overall satisfaction with meeting work and family demands" and emphasize shared expectations formed through negotiation with significant others (Valcour, 2007; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). At the evidentiary level, WLB has been shown to be distinct from conflict/enrichment and to have incremental explanatory power for work and

family outcomes (Carlson et al., 2009). A “jingle–jangle” review of conceptual conflation shows: 290 papers report 233 definitions grouped into five categories, but overall they support “balance” as an independent construct (Casper et al., 2018). In the direction of integration, a two-dimensional definition treats “participation in both domains” and “low cross-domain conflict” as core (Sirgy & Lee, 2017), while a “configurational perspective” further explains differences in “balance” and cross-level manifestations through different combinations of enrichment and depletion (Rothbard et al., 2021).

Definition adopted in this paper . Work–life balance (WLB) is a subjective overall evaluation in which an individual maintains substantive engagement in both work and non-work (primarily family in this paper) domains and cross-domain conflict remains at a lower level (Sirgy & Lee, 2017). On this basis, this paper maps “engagement–conflict” onto JD–R’s “resources–demands,” in order to unify evidence at the micro, meso, and macro levels. The rationale for adopting this definition is threefold: first, it aligns with JD–R and can connect influences and outcomes at different levels within the same logic; second, it reduces conceptual confusion, maintaining clear boundaries with adjacent constructs such as conflict/enrichment, thereby addressing “jingle–jangle” issues; third, it facilitates cross-level comparability—centering on an overall evaluation of “substantive engagement × low conflict,” it covers perceptions at the individual/family level and can also link with job/organizational practices and institutional–cultural environments, serving the cross-level review objective of this paper.

Antecedents of Work–Life Balance

1.Individual and Family Factors

At the micro level, individual-side resources and demands influence work–life balance (WLB) through two pathways—“conflict” and “enrichment.”

In this paper, work–family conflict and work-to-family enrichment are denoted as WFC and WFE, respectively, while the family-to-work direction of conflict is denoted as family-to-work conflict (FWC).

(1) Personal resources. Stronger role-switching and time-allocation abilities, mindfulness and recovery, effective time management, and higher psychological capital (HERO) are generally associated with higher WLB, primarily via decreased WFC and increased WFE (Kossek et al., 2012; Kiburz et al., 2017; Althammer et al., 2021; Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah, 2017; Aeon et al., 2021; Karatepe & Karadas, 2014). From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, rest and self-care during non-work time can serve as "resource replenishment," buffering the depleting effects of family-side interruptions in remote work contexts (Perry et al., 2022).

(2) Individual demands. Pressure for immediate response, workaholism, and perfectionism (concern/strivings) increase exhaustion and interference, thereby elevating WFC and lowering WLB. Synthesized evidence also shows that neuroticism, long hours or overload, and job insecurity are negatively associated with WLB, while extraversion, psychological capital, autonomy or schedule control, and social support are positively associated with WLB. The operating pathways can be summarized as: demands↑ ⟶ WFC↑ ⟶ WLB↓; resources↑ ⟶ WFE↑ ⟶ WLB↑ (Barber & Santuzzi, 2019; Clark et al., 2016; Vaziri et al., 2022).

(3) Family resources. Partner support, available caregiving, and neighborhood/community networks are stably associated with higher WLB and more WFE, with partner support typically showing larger effect sizes and stronger effects among women. At the level of daily interactions, "high-quality time with children" significantly enhances the sense of balance, suggesting that "time quality matters more than time quantity" (Russo et al., 2015; Ferguson et al., 2012; Kelley et al., 2021; Milkie et al., 2010). According to Boundary Theory,

segmentation/integration preferences and boundary control moderate the operation of these resources; when organizational contact/disconnect norms align with individual preferences, cross-domain interference is more readily suppressed (Kossek et al., 2023).

(4) Family demands. Intensive caregiving and long commutes are major "demands" on the family side. Longitudinal evidence shows that caregiving intensity harms subsequent mental health through persistently elevating WFC or FWC; the longer the commute, the higher the conflict and the lower the WLB (Kayaalp et al., 2021).

Beyond the four categories above, WLB exhibits a "baseline and sensitivity" that vary with family stage—i.e., a cross-temporal moderation under the life-course perspective: different family stages alter the magnitude and direction by which factors (1)–(4) affect WLB via WFC/WFE. In the early parenting stage, "time quality outweighs time quantity," and "expectation–reality congruence" between partners matters more than "who does more." The negative impacts of "sandwich generation" caregiving burdens on WFC/FWC and mental health are more persistent; institutional accessibility (childcare, paid leave) determines the early-stage "starting line"; women in low-control jobs are more likely to bear unpredictable family demands and face a higher risk of imbalance (Milkie et al., 2010; Shockley & Allen, 2017; Stertz et al., 2017; Kayaalp et al., 2021; Gordon & Rouse, 2013; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Valcour, 2007).

2. Job and Organizational Factors

At the meso level, on the demands side, the pathway primarily operates as "time squeeze ⟶ increased emotional exhaustion ⟶ impaired recovery," which raises WFC and lowers WLB. After-hours communication and pressure to respond immediately—associated with "always-on" connectivity—undermine psychological detachment and relaxation after work;

unstable/unpredictable schedules are linked to poorer sleep quality and psychological distress and are consistently associated with higher conflict across multi-country samples (Pak et al., 2022; Barber & Santuzzi, 2019; Choi et al., 2023).

By contrast, on the resources side, the most robust evidence concerns time/location control, supportive leadership (family-supportive supervisor behaviors, FSSB), and well-governed flexible arrangements. Organization-level randomized controlled trials (STAR) show that enhancing schedule or location control and implementing FSSB can sustainably reduce conflict, increase the sense of "enough family time," and bring higher satisfaction and lower burnout. The mechanism can be summarized as "increased sense of control ⟶ decreased interference or increased recovery." Enhancing shift autonomy can simultaneously improve objective and subjective sleep (Moen et al., 2016; Olson et al., 2015). Method note. Compared with cross-sectional studies, organization-level RCTs better mitigate selection bias and reverse causality; therefore, their findings have stronger causal persuasiveness and external validity for practice (Moen et al., 2016). Practical implications. Organizations should prioritize FSSB training and the institutionalization of schedule autonomy and include "after-hours online time does not count as a performance plus" in appraisal rules, so as to convert nominal flexibility into usable resources, lower WFC, and improve WLB (Guo et al., 2024; Kossek et al., 2011; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). From a boundary-control perspective, policy effectiveness depends on "availability × non-punitive use × implementation quality," which is the precondition for converting "nominal resources" into "usable resources" (Kossek et al., 2023).

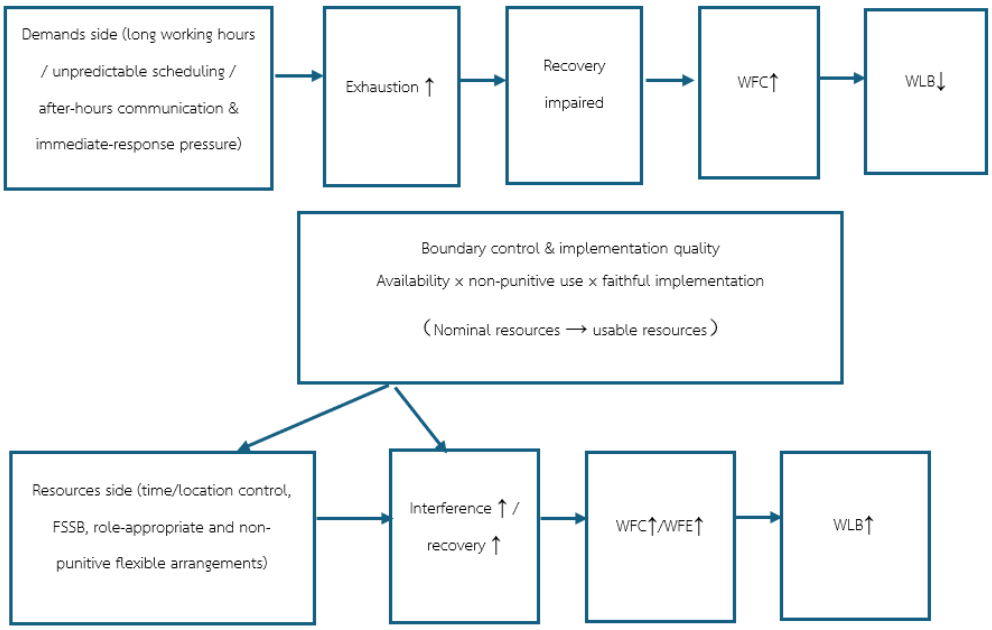

Figure 1. Job/organizational-level "demands–resources–outcomes" transmission chain (JD–R perspective) (the text already explains this clearly; given space constraints, the figure may be removed).

The upward pathway (demands side) increases WFC and reduces WLB via "exhaustion ⟶ impaired recovery."

The downward pathway (resources side) reduces WFC and increases WFE and WLB via "lower interference / improved recovery."

"Boundary control and implementation quality" determine whether "nominal resources" can be converted into "usable resources."

3. Macro Institutions and Culture

At the macro level, policy strength and complementary measures determine whether job/organizational practices can become truly "usable resources." Multilevel evidence across Europe shows that WFC declines

significantly only when flexible arrangements are paired with family policies such as childcare; excessively long maternity leave may be associated with higher conflict among men, reflecting a "policy × gender roles" interaction. Comparative analyses based on policy pilots further indicate causal support for "greater schedule predictability ⟶ higher WLB." Cross-national evidence also shows that the availability, replacement rate, and flexibility of parental leave are more clearly associated with reduced conflict among fathers, whereas improvements for mothers depend more on societal gender-equality attitudes (Chung, 2024; Harknett et al., 2021; Hsiao, 2023).

From an implementation perspective, institutional designs such as boundary control and non-punitive use are preconditions for flexible policies to take effect. Meanwhile, cultural norms explain "the same policy with different effects": collectivism attenuates the negative association between conflict and satisfaction, and gender equality at both national and individual levels is associated with lower bidirectional conflict (Allen et al., 2020; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2019; Le et al., 2020).

Limits of evidence and localization. Existing studies are predominantly based on Western samples, with relatively limited longitudinal data in Asia, so generalization boundaries remain. In Asian contexts, it is advisable to incorporate commuting norms, extended-family caregiving, and disconnection norms into evaluation and to conduct longitudinal studies (Kossek et al., 2023; Gao & Ruan, 2022).

In sum, macro culture or regulation ⟶ organizational implementation quality and non-punitive use (meso-level resources) ⟶ individual boundary control and fewer interruptions (micro level) ⟶ WFC↓ / WFE↑ ⟶ WLB↑, which is consistent with the conditions under which "nominal resources ⟶ usable resources."

Outcomes of Work–Life Balance

1. Individual and Family Outcomes

At the individual level, higher WLB is typically accompanied by higher job and life satisfaction and lower anxiety/depression (Haar et al., 2013), and this has been validated in multi-country samples (Allen et al., 2020). From the "reverse indicators" angle, work–family conflict (including W⟶F and F⟶W) is stably negatively associated with job/family/overall satisfaction and mental health, with a "stronger within-domain" pattern (Amstad et al., 2011). Randomized controlled evidence on organizational interventions shows that increasing scheduling and location control and implementing family-supportive management can significantly reduce WFC and enhance the "sense of sufficient family time," and improve recovery via "greater scheduling autonomy ⟶ lower after-hours contact burden ⟶ better sleep and recovery" (Kelly et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015).

Consistent with a "positive experience–upward spiral," recent results show that, in day-level data, WFE (both W⟶F and F⟶W) increases daily positive affect and suppresses some negative affect, whereas both types of WFC have the opposite effects (Çetin et al., 2022). Further multi-wave experience-sampling research shows that the positive chain "thriving at work ⟶ (via WFE) ⟶ family role performance" holds and is stronger when FSSB is higher (Yang et al., 2023). The above chain of "positive affect ↑—resource expansion ↑—functioning ↑" accords with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (B&B): positive affect broadens individuals' momentary thought–action repertoires and, over time, builds more enduring psychological and social resources; in this study's context, this manifests as WFE enhancing daily positive affect and thereby further promoting family role performance (Çetin et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2023).

At the family level, WFE improves not only the focal individual but also the spouse's marital satisfaction, suggesting additional gains from "bringing positive work experiences home" (van Steenbergen et al., 2014). Evidence during the pandemic indicates that low WLB often co-occurs with high parenting stress and marital conflict, with mothers more likely to fall into a vulnerable "mid/low balance + low support" group (Chung et al., 2023), and the negative association of FIW with family-domain outcomes is particularly pronounced (Amstad et al., 2011).

Potential bidirectionality and contextual differences warrant attention: higher subjective well-being and performance may increase individuals' bargaining space to obtain more flexibility and support, which in turn further improves WLB. Therefore, when inferring causality, longitudinal/experimental or multi-source designs should be prioritized, with explicit tests of key moderators (e.g., personality, boundary preferences, occupation type); moderating evidence for FSSB has been observed in multi-wave studies (Yang et al., 2023). Overall, the evidence jointly outlines an actionable pathway: increase control and support ⟶ conflict decreases / recovery increases ⟶ higher subjective well-being and relationship quality (Kelly et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015).

2. Organizational Outcomes

The overall pathway is clear: when job/organizational-level resources increase, employees' WLB rises and WFC declines, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviors, which ultimately appear in HR outcomes such as attendance, retention, and performance (Amstad et al., 2011; Moen et al., 2016; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2020). An organization-level RCT (STAR) shows that increasing scheduling/location autonomy and advancing family-supportive management reduce burnout and psychological distress and improve job satisfaction, achieved in part via higher perceived control, lower after-hours interference, and improved recovery (Moen et al., 2016). FSSB

training for frontline managers likewise shows that improving day-to-day managerial interactions can increase performance and satisfaction and reduce turnover intention (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2015). Meta-analytic evidence on WLB-related arrangements and organizational performance also finds an overall positive association, especially robust for indicators such as attendance, recruitment, and retention (Wong et al., 2020).

A recent meta-analysis grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) further clarifies the mechanisms: the effects of FSSB on "work outcomes" (e.g., task performance, job satisfaction) are mainly mediated by leader–member exchange (LMX), whereas effects on health/burnout align more with a resource perspective (mediated by conflict/enrichment). This provides quantitative support for the exchange logic "organization-directed support ⟶ employees reciprocate with attitudes and performance" (Guo et al., 2024). The pattern holds in high-demand contexts: in long-term care, FSSB is positively associated with men's safety compliance, OCB, and sense of sufficient family time, and is linked to better sleep among multiple caregivers (DePasquale, 2020).

Limitations must also be acknowledged: current organizational-level research still relies mainly on subjective attitudes/self-reported behaviors, with insufficient objective performance/financial and multi-source indicators, and effects are moderated by occupation type, schedule predictability, and boundary norms. Future work should combine RCTs/quasi-experiments with administrative data to mitigate potential reverse causality (e.g., "higher-performing teams more easily obtain flexibility and resources") and common-method bias. Based on existing evidence, practice can institutionalize time/location control and FSSB training (covering four dimensions: emotional/instrumental support, role modeling, and creative work–family management), and implement "non-punitive use and no credit for after-hours online activity" in performance appraisal, thereby converting "nominal

resources" into "usable resources" (Moen et al., 2016; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2015; Guo et al., 2024).

3.Macro-level Outcomes in Institutions and Culture

Macro policies provide "institutional resources" that, by changing schedule predictability and caregiving accessibility, improve overall well-being and safety and create better boundary conditions for organizations and individuals: fair workweek ordinances increase advance notice and stability of scheduling and improve subjective well-being, sleep quality, and economic security (Harknett et al., 2021); the length of paid maternity/parental leave is associated with lower infant/neonatal/under-five mortality (Nandi et al., 2016; Khan, 2020); national WLB levels are positively associated with men's and women's life satisfaction (Noda, 2020); availability of paid parental leave or frequent use of working from home helps narrow the gender gap in parental time (Gao & Ruan, 2022). Policy effects are strongly moderated by culture: reductions in fathers' conflict depend more on the flexibility and replacement rate of parental leave, whereas improvements for mothers depend more on societal gender-equality attitudes (Hsiao, 2023).

Corresponding to JD–R, macro policies (institutional resources) lower individual-level "demands" (after-hours interference, unpredictability) and increase "resources" (sense of control, recovery) via organizational-level "availability × non-punitive use × implementation quality" (meso-level resources), improving WLB and health through the WFC↓/WFE↑ pathway. The direct implication for HRM is that quasi-experimental and cross-national evidence at the societal level not only demonstrates public-health and well-being benefits but also forms a business case for corporate investment in WLB (employer brand, recruitment and retention, risk management, and long-term value). Organizations can align this "policy–practice–outcome" evidence chain

with board and budgeting decisions to achieve a win–win of social value and long-term firm value (Harknett et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020).

Conclusions

1. Main Findings

(1) Unified definition and main line. WLB is specified as a subjective overall evaluation of "substantive participation in both domains + low cross-domain conflict," and evidence across micro (individual–family), meso (job–organization), and macro (institutions–culture) levels is integrated under the JD–R framework.

(2) Stable relations between resources and demands. Resources such as time/location control, FSSB, family/community support, psychological capital, and recovery are generally associated with higher WLB; demands such as long hours, unpredictable schedules, after-hours contact pressure, and caregiving/commuting burdens tend to depress WLB via WFC↑.

(3) Cross-level transmission mechanism. Macro policies and culture, as institutional resources, need to be converted into usable resources via organizational-level "availability × non-punitive use × implementation quality," then improve WLB and health along the WFC↓/WFE↑ pathway by increasing control and recovery and reducing interference.

(4) Outcome map. At the individual/family level: higher subjective well-being and life satisfaction, lower anxiety/burnout, and improved marital/parent–child relationships; at the organizational level: higher satisfaction and commitment, lower turnover intention, and improved HR indicators such as attendance and retention; at the societal level: gains in public health and gender equality.

2. Contributions

Given the diversity of measures, this paper consistently defines WLB using "participation × low conflict" and distinguishes it from adjacent constructs such as WFC/WFE. Using JD–R as the main line, it systematically links micro–meso–macro evidence, summarizes the consensus pattern that "resources are generally beneficial and demands are generally harmful via WFC," and further identifies that converting "nominal resources ⟶ usable resources" hinges on the organizational-level condition of availability × non-punitive use × implementation quality. In Asian contexts (long hours, long commutes, gendered division of labor), it proposes testable topics such as the four-day week/100–80–100, predictable scheduling, and disconnection norms, forming a research agenda that is comparable, assessable, and implementable. This synthesis builds on existing JD–R literature and reviews; the contribution lies in the combined presentation of a unified definition + cross-level linkage + contextual agenda. For practice, we recommend institutionalizing time/location control and FSSB training, and embedding "no credit for after-hours online activity and zero-penalty flexibility/leave" in policies and appraisals, converting nominal flexibility into usable resources and jointly improving retention, attendance, and performance via WFC↓/WFE↑.

3. Limitations and Future Research

Limitations. (1) Coverage is mainly English-language and recent databases, which may understate local and non-English evidence; (2) organizational-level indicators still over-rely on subjective attitudes/self-reports, with insufficient objective performance/financial and multi-source indicators; (3) macro-level evidence varies across cultures and institutions, so generalization still requires validation across countries/industries; (4) potential bidirectionality (e.g., performance/well-being ⟶ flexibility and support ⟶ WLB) and common-method bias require stronger identification strategies.

Future research. (1) Measurement and causality: advance harmonization of WLB definitions and tests of scale equivalence; prioritize longitudinal/(quasi-)experimental/multi-source designs; explicitly model reverse causality and key moderators (e.g., personality, boundary preferences, occupation type). (2) Asian longitudinal and localization: under East Asia's long hours, long commutes, and extended-family structures, incorporate variables such as commuting norms, accessible care, and disconnection norms; build long-term tracking and policy-evaluation datasets. (3) Working-time reform: around the four-day week/shorter hours with no pay cut (100–80–100), shift from "feasibility" to "how to normalize" and "which institutional/cultural conditions are more resilient," and conduct joint evaluations with predictable scheduling, non-punitive use, and process/meeting redesign to avoid compensatory intensity compression. (4) Technology and diversity: systematically examine the double-edged effects of AI and remote collaboration tools on demands/resources and boundary governance; focus on vulnerable mechanisms of WLB and the effectiveness of inclusive policies among gig/atypical workers, older workers, and persons with disabilities.

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