

Sustainable Work Engagement: The Role of Work-Life Balance, Organizational Support, and Mental Well-Being (A Systematic Review)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to synthesize empirical evidence on how Work–Life Balance (WLB) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) sustain work engagement through mental well-being as a mediating mechanism. Following PRISMA 2020, a Boolean search across Scopus yielded 1,339 records; after systematic screening, 165 peer-reviewed articles (2020–2026) were included. Analysis reveals three key findings: (1) mental well-being is predominantly operationalized through deficit indicators (burnout, stress) rather than positive capacities (resilience, flourishing); (2) cross-sectional designs dominate, undermining temporal validity of "sustainability" claims; and (3) the JD-R framework prevails, yet cross-theoretical integration with COR and SET remains largely narrative. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of mental well-being typologies and methodological design patterns into a single explanatory synthesis regarding sustainable work engagement. These findings provide a foundation for evidence-based HRM interventions, longitudinal monitoring strategies, and policy alignment with SDGs 3 and 8, advancing understanding of work engagement as an organizational ecosystem phenomenon rather than a singular outcome.

Keywords:

Sustainable work engagement, work–life balance, perceived organizational support, mental well-being, systematic literature review

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mensintesis bagaimana Work-Life Balance (WLB) dan Perceived Organizational Support (POS) mempertahankan Work Engagement melalui mekanisme mediasi Mental Wellbeing. Dipandu PRISMA 2020, pencarian Boolean di Scopus menghasilkan 1.339 catatan; setelah penyaringan sistematis, 165 artikel yang telah melalui tinjauan sejawat (2020–2026) dimasukkan. Analisis mengungkapkan tiga temuan kunci: (1) kesejahteraan mental sebagian besar dioperasionalkan melalui indikator defisit (kelelahan, stres) daripada kapasitas positif (ketahanan, kemakmuran); (2) desain cross-sectional mendominasi, yang merusak validitas temporal dari klaim "keberlanjutan"; dan (3) kerangka JD-R mendominasi, namun integrasi lintas-teori dengan COR dan SET tetap sebagian besar bersifat naratif. Kebaruan studi terletak pada integrasi tipologi kesejahteraan mental dan pola desain metodologis dalam satu sintesis penjelasan. Temuan ini memberikan dasar untuk intervensi HRM berbasis bukti, strategi pemantauan longitudinal, dan penyesuaian kebijakan dengan SDGs 3 dan 8 yang meningkatkan pemahaman tentang keterlibatan kerja sebagai fenomena ekosistem organisasi daripada hasil tunggal.

Kata Kunci:

Keterlibatan kerja berkelanjutan, keseimbangan kerja-hidup, dukungan organisasi yang dipersepsikan, mediasi kesejahteraan mental, tinjauan literatur sistematis

INTRODUCTION

The sustainability of work engagement has emerged as a critical global issue amidst the acceleration of digital transformation, hybrid work arrangements, and increasing psychological pressures across various industrial sectors. Recent international reports indicate a rise in work-related burnout and a decline in employee well-being, particularly among younger generations who face increasingly blurred work-life boundaries and intensifying performance demands. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources Model, the balance between work and personal life, along with perceived organizational support, is conceptualized as a strategic work resource that can mitigate stress and foster sustainable engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). Further empirical studies demonstrate that mental well-being functions as a central psychological mechanism linking organizational practices to sustained engagement (Sonnentag, 2021; Guest, 2022; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2020). This issue aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3 and 8) and the OECD Well-Being Framework, which emphasizes the importance of healthy, productive, and resilient workplaces. Therefore, a systematic synthesis of evidence regarding how the balance between work and personal life and perceived organizational support shapes mental well-being to maintain work engagement represents a timely and globally relevant scientific endeavour.

Despite the growing academic attention to this topic, efforts to sustain work engagement through the balance of work and personal life and perceived organizational support still encounter theoretical and practical complexities. Prior research has revealed findings that are not always consistent regarding the strength and direction of relationships among variables, partly due to diverse theoretical approaches, including the Job Demands–Resources Model, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, mental well-being has been operationalized in various ways as emotional stability, psychological functioning, or social well-being, resulting in measurement heterogeneity and limiting cross-context comparability (Keyes, 2002; Sonnentag, 2021). Empirical evidence also encompasses private companies, public institutions, and hybrid digital work environments, where structural constraints and cultural norms influence the effectiveness of work-life balance policies (Guest, 2022; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2020). Nevertheless, digital human resource analytics and employee well-being monitoring systems present new opportunities to design data-driven interventions that strategically enhance mental well-being and promote sustainable engagement.

The existing literature has extensively examined work engagement as an outcome of work resources, particularly the balance between work and personal life and perceived organizational support, with consistent evidence that a supportive organizational climate enhances morale and dedication (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2020). Parallel research streams also link work-life balance to better psychological functioning and reduced emotional exhaustion (Guest, 2022), while perceived organizational support is associated with increased well-being through reciprocal exchange

mechanisms (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, mental well-being has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, and social components (Keyes, 2002; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). However, despite the increasing number of empirical studies, a systematic synthesis that positions mental well-being as a mediating mechanism connecting work-life balance and perceived organizational support with sustainable work engagement remains limited. Existing reviews tend to focus on separate dyadic relationships or specific sectors, thereby leaving conceptual and integrative gaps that necessitate a comprehensive systematic evaluation.

More specifically, three critical gaps remain unresolved in the existing body of literature. First, no prior systematic review has simultaneously examined Work–Life Balance (WLB) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as dual antecedents within a single integrated model that positions mental well-being as the mediating pathway to sustainable work engagement. Most studies treat these variables in isolation or test only one antecedent at a time, producing fragmented rather than integrative evidence. Second, the construct of mental well-being within mediational models has been operationalized almost exclusively through deficit-oriented indicators such as burnout, emotional exhaustion, and stress, while positive psychological capacities, including resilience, psychological flourishing, and self-determination, remain empirically underrepresented, thereby limiting the theoretical scope of what "sustainable" engagement truly entails (Keyes, 2002; Sonnentag, 2021). Third, the dominant reliance on cross-sectional research designs across the reviewed literature fundamentally undermines the validity of sustainability claims: without longitudinal or time-lagged evidence, work engagement risks being reduced to a momentary attitudinal state rather than a durable organizational outcome. These three gaps, integrative model absence, construct narrowness, and methodological inadequacy, collectively constitute the primary justification for the present systematic review.

The conceptual framework underpinning this study draws on an integrative logic derived from three complementary theoretical perspectives. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) provides the foundational architecture, positioning WLB and POS as work resources that buffer psychological demands and activate motivational processes leading to engagement. Conservation of Resources Theory (COR; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018) extends this by explaining how the accumulation and protection of personal and organizational resources, including psychological well-being, enable individuals to sustain their engagement over time rather than merely respond to momentary conditions. Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau, 1964; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020) further complements this framework by illuminating the relational dimension: when employees perceive genuine organizational support, they reciprocate through heightened commitment, psychological investment, and sustained behavioural engagement. Together, these three frameworks generate a coherent mechanistic logic in which WLB and POS function as dual resource inputs, mental well-being operates as the psychological transmission mechanism, and sustainable work engagement emerges as the organizational output. This tripartite integration moves beyond treating these theories as parallel

explanations and instead articulates how each addresses a distinct process, resource activation, resource conservation, and relational reciprocity within a unified explanatory sequence.

Building on the still-fragmentary but growing evidence base from academic research, we believe that a systematic literature review is required here to synthesize the theoretical and empirical insights into how work–family balance and perceived organizational support facilitate sustainable work engagement through mental well-being. While previous studies have found that work resources independently drive engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020), and that well-being is a critical psychological mechanism (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Sonnentag, 2021), no comprehensive integration of these constructs has been produced in an overarching explanatory framework. This is essential in academia, looking for conceptual clarity, practitioners wanting evidence-based human resource interventions, and policy makers who want workplace well-being strategies to align with SDGs 3 and 8. In doing so, by systematically charting dedicated theories/methods/findings across contexts (i.e., Guest, 2022; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2020; Keyes, 2002), the present study lays a solid groundwork for future policy decisions and theoretical advancements in addition to outlining future research avenues that may support management of work engagement within ever-more complex organisational contexts. Thus, this study has four specific aims: (1) to chart the operationalization of mental well-being as a mediating construct in the research literature which it was critiquing; (2) to assess whether the methodological designs allow sufficient tests of sustainability of engagement claims; (3) to determine whether theoretical integration across JD-R, COR and SET frameworks occurs within empirical models; and (4) to delineate any contextual or sectoral boundary conditions that moderate WLB, POS, mental well-being, and sustainable work engagement relationships.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) design, which prioritizes the structured synthesis of theoretical and empirical evidence over statistical aggregation. Unlike meta-analyses that quantitatively pool effect sizes, this qualitative SLR is designed to map conceptual patterns, identify methodological trajectories, and consolidate theoretical frameworks across a diverse body of peer-reviewed literature. This design is appropriate given the heterogeneity of operationalizations, research contexts, and analytical approaches observed across studies linking Work–Life Balance (WLB), Perceived Organizational Support (POS), mental well-being, and sustainable work engagement. The qualitative SLR approach has been increasingly adopted in organizational behaviour and HRM scholarship to produce integrative explanatory syntheses where statistical pooling would be inappropriate or misleading (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003; Jesson *et al.*, 2011).

This systematic literature review employs the framework of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigour in synthesizing evidence related to sustainable work engagement. Adhering to

established review standards (Page *et al.*, 2021), PRISMA delineates the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion using predefined Boolean queries: ("work life balance" OR "work-life balance" OR "work family balance" OR "work-family balance") AND ("perceived organizational support" OR "perceived Organizational support") AND ("mental wellbeing" OR "mental well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing" OR "mental health") AND ("sustainable work engagement" OR "work engagement"). This structured screening process facilitates a systematic mapping of research trends, dominant theoretical approaches such as the Job Demands–Resources framework and Conservation of Resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), the positioning of mental well-being within empirical models (Keyes, 2002; Sonnentag, 2021), methodological patterns, and the identification of conceptual gaps. By minimizing selection bias and enhancing analytical consistency, PRISMA provides a robust foundation for addressing integrative research questions within this study.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- RQ1 : How is mental well-being operationalized within the mediational model between Work-Life Balance, Perceived Organizational Support, and Sustainable Work Engagement (for instance, as stress/burnout, psychological well-being, flourishing, or resilience), and has there been a shift in the typology of operationalization over the past five years?
- RQ2 : To what extent are claims of "sustainable" work engagement supported by longitudinal, multi-level, or time-lagged designs compared to cross-sectional designs in studies linking WLB, POS, and mental well-being?
- RQ3 : What theoretical framework is most dominantly employed to explain the relationships among WLB, POS, mental well-being, and engagement (for example, JD-R, COR, Social Exchange), and to what extent is cross-theoretical integration genuinely implemented in empirical models?
- RQ4 : How do the distribution of geographical contexts and industrial sectors influence the patterns of relationships between WLB, POS, mental well-being, and engagement?
- RQ5 : Is there a shift from simple mediation models to more complex structural models (such as moderated mediation or multilevel mediation) in research concerning mental well-being and sustainable work engagement?

This systematic literature review focuses on the synthesis of empirical evidence regarding sustainable work engagement through the mediating role of mental well-being, which is grounded in the work-life balance and perceived organizational support. To ensure methodological rigour and transparency, this study adopts the PRISMA framework, which outlines the processes of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of studies (Page *et al.*, 2021). Literature was obtained from various reputable databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, Springer, Wiley, SAGE, IEEE, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, in order to maximize coverage and reduce publication bias. Through a predetermined Boolean search strategy and explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, the

PRISMA approach facilitates a systematic filtering of empirical studies that have undergone peer review and are relevant to the research question. This structured synthesis enables the mapping of theoretical foundations, methodological patterns, and empirical findings, while ensuring replicability and analytical consistency. By integrating various high-quality sources within a transparent protocol, this study provides a comprehensive and credible understanding of sustainable work engagement in the context of contemporary organizations.

To ensure the scientific quality of the included studies, a structured article quality assessment was conducted as an integral step of the screening process, applied before final inclusion decisions. Each candidate article was evaluated across four dimensions: (1) conceptual clarity, referring to the degree to which key constructs WLB, POS, mental well-being, and work engagement are explicitly defined and theoretically grounded; (2) methodological transparency, assessing whether the study clearly reports its research design, sampling procedure, measurement instruments, and analytical strategy; (3) relational validity, evaluating whether the study tests inferential, mediating, moderating, or structural relationships among the core variables rather than merely describing them; and (4) indexing and peer-review status, requiring that articles be published in Scopus-indexed or Sinta-accredited journals to meet minimum academic rigor standards. Articles failing to meet criteria across two or more dimensions were excluded from the final corpus. This quality assessment protocol is consistent with established SLR practice in Organizational research (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003; Okoli & Schabram, 2010) and with recent applications in HRM-focused systematic reviews (Malik *et al.*, 2023; Sypniewska *et al.*, 2023; Tjingovera *et al.*, 2025). The assessment was conducted independently by the primary reviewer, with a secondary review applied to borderline cases to reduce subjectivity and enhance decision consistency.

The methodological approach of this study is also informed by a growing body of recent SLR scholarship within adjacent domains. Bocean *et al.* (2023) demonstrated the utility of PRISMA-guided synthesis in capturing pandemic-era shifts in work-life balance and employee satisfaction, establishing a precedent for time-bounded systematic reviews in organizational sustainability research. Similarly, Sypniewska *et al.* (2023) employed a structured literature review framework to examine the intersection of work engagement and sustainable HRM practices among Polish employees, underscoring the value of sector-specific synthesis within a broader methodological protocol. In the healthcare sector, Sindu Bharathi and Sujatha (2024) applied systematic review methodology to evaluate how POS mediates the relationship between work stress and employee well-being, directly informing the mediational logic adopted in the present study. More recently, Tjingovera *et al.* (2025) utilized a qualitative SLR design to examine WLB, well-being, and engagement among working mothers in Namibia, highlighting the importance of contextual boundary conditions, an analytical concern that is explicitly addressed in RQ4 of this study. Taken together, these precedents validate both the methodological design and the

analytical agenda of the present review, while also situating this study within an active and evolving scholarly conversation on sustainable work engagement.

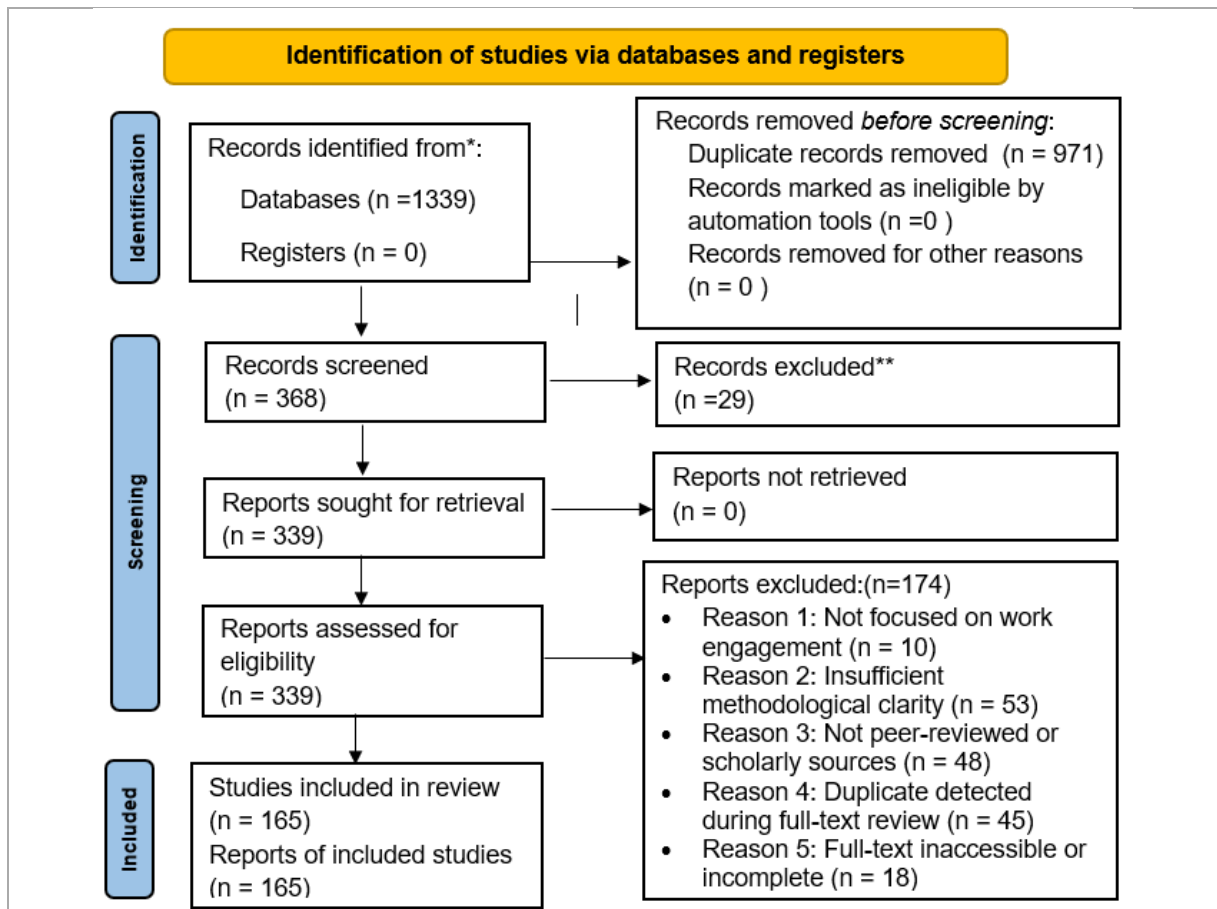


Figure 1. PRISMA Business Sustainability

Source: Authors' work

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The figure 2, shows well-being and life balance in the centre of the VOS viewer's network visualization where their importance is registered through the size of the node/growth & richness of interconnections. While mental well-being is connected with life balance, environment and systematic review, life balance is related to policy, productivity and pandemic context. The leadership, behaviour, organizational commitment and mediation clusters relate to the organizational mechanisms guiding work engagement. This model reflects that work-personal life balance and organizational support impact on work engagement through mental well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Keyes, 2002), underlining the mediating role in sustainable work engagement models.

The study selection was conducted using clearly defined eligibility criteria and screening processes to ensure conceptual relevance, methodological rigour, and empirical quality. Only articles that have undergone peer review and are indexed in Scopus or Sinta (from 2020 to 2026) that examine the relational model between work-life balance, perceived Organizational support, mental well-being, and work engagement were included. This structured screening process aligns with PRISMA standards (Page *et al.*, 2021). It reinforces theoretical integration within the Job Demands–Resources framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018).

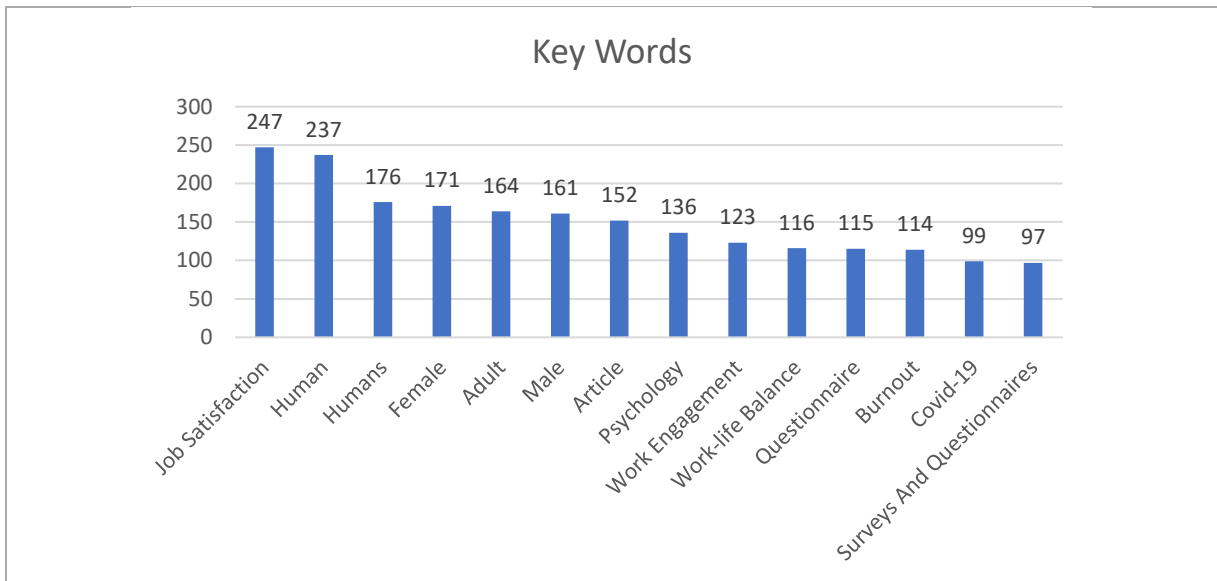


Figure 3. Keywords Distribution
Source: Authors' work

The distribution of keywords indicates that job satisfaction (247) and human (237) dominate the landscape of publications, followed by demographic categories such as female, male, and adult, reflecting an empirical focus on the adult worker population. The emergence of work engagement (123) and work-life balance (116) underscores their positions as central themes in contemporary Organizational literature, although they remain subordinate to the predominance of job satisfaction issues. The presence of burnout and COVID-19 also signifies a growing attention to psychological health in the context of a global crisis. This pattern aligns with the Job Demands–Resources framework, which positions well-being and work engagement as responses to job demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), as well as with findings that Organizational support and work-life balance play crucial roles in maintaining mental well-being and sustained performance (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018).

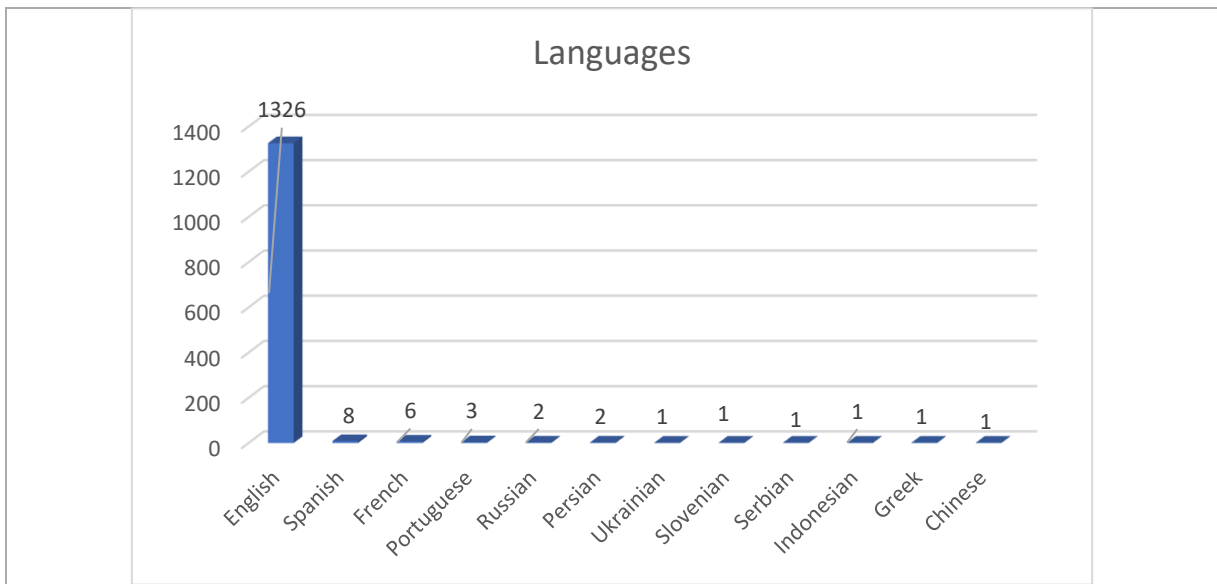


Figure 4. Language Distribution

Source: Authors' work

The distribution of publication languages demonstrates a highly significant dominance of English-language articles (1,326 documents) while contributions from other languages, such as Spanish (8), French (6), Portuguese (3), and others, remain at very marginal figures. This pattern indicates that the scientific discourse surrounding the topics of work-life balance, mental well-being, and work engagement is predominantly constructed in English as the academic lingua franca. This dominance simultaneously enhances international visibility and cross-national citations; however, it may potentially limit the representation of local contexts published in non-English languages. Thus, this linguistic mapping underscores the importance of an inclusive yet critical literature selection strategy in systematic literature reviews to maintain broad coverage without compromising scientific quality standards.

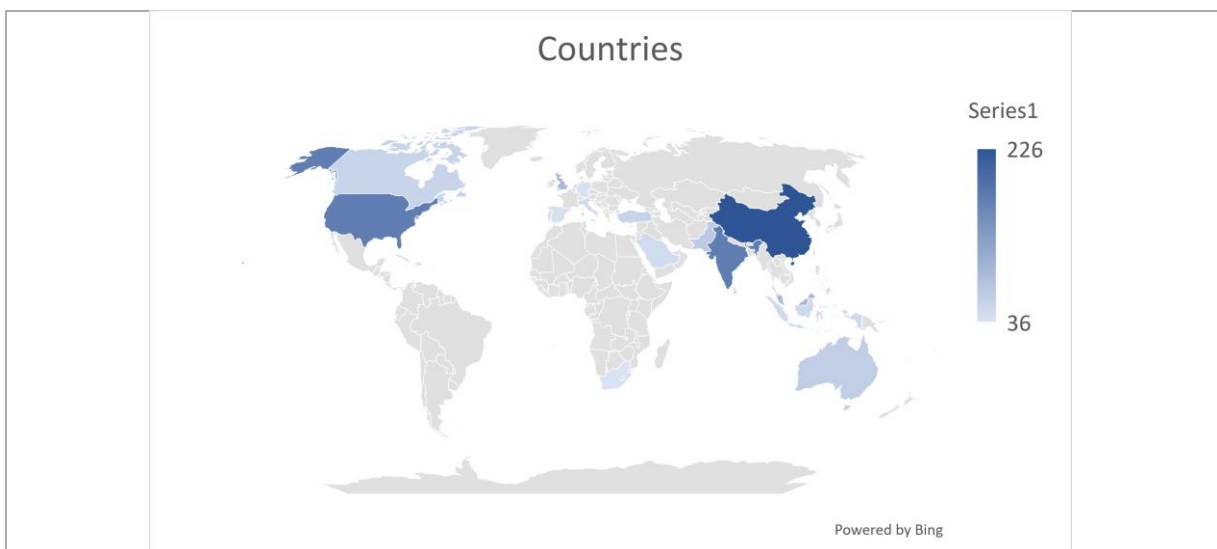


Figure 5. Researcher Countries Map

Source: Authors' work

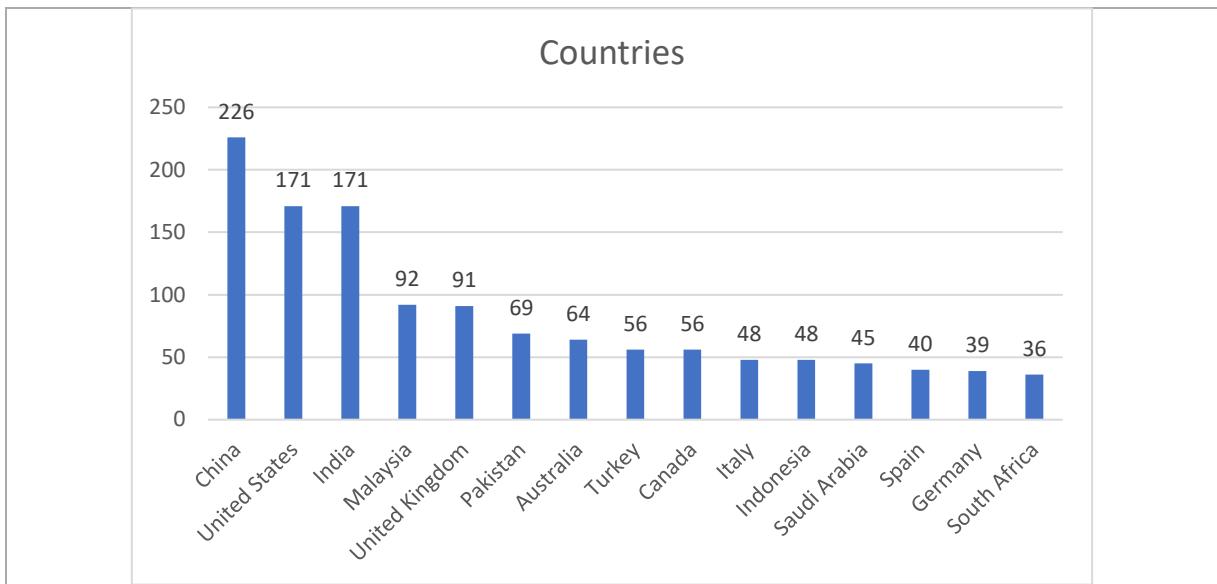


Figure 6. Researcher Countries

Source: Authors' work

The distribution of countries indicates that China (226) dominates publications, followed by the United States (171) and India (171), signifying a concentration of scientific production in large and rapidly developing economies. Significant contributions are also observed from Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and Pakistan. This pattern reflects the growing global attention to issues of labour attachment and mental well-being, particularly in the Asian region and in middle-income countries undergoing intensive Organizational transformation.

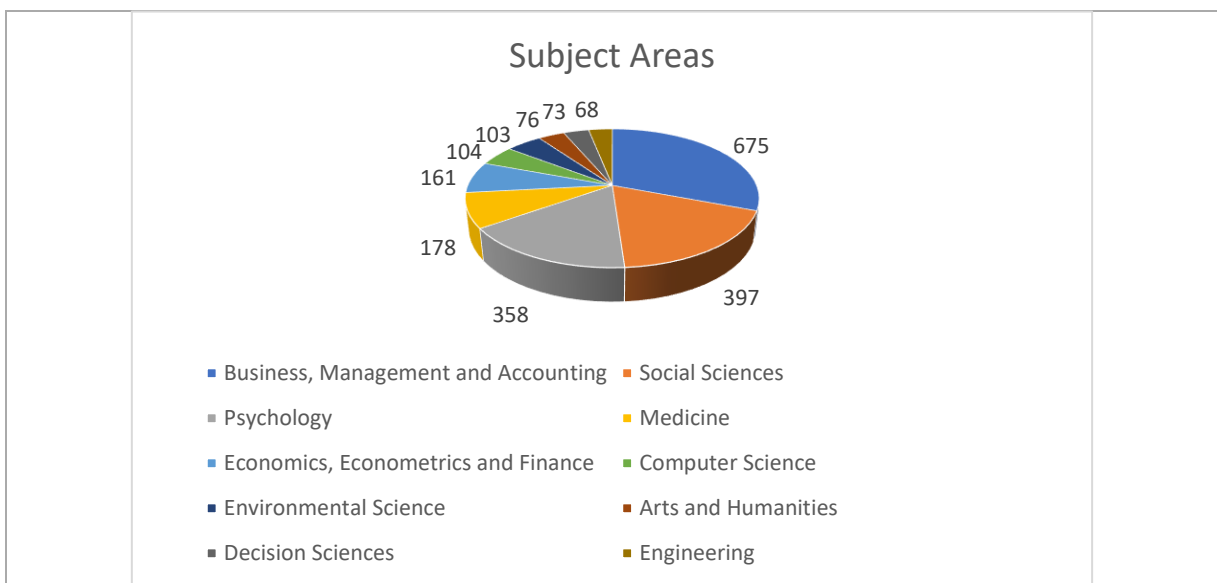


Figure 7. Subject Areas

Source: Authors' work

The Big 10 distribution of academic fields indicates a dominance of Business, Management and Accounting (675) and Social Sciences (397), followed by Psychology (358) and Medicine (178). This pattern underscores that the study of job attachment and mental well-being primarily evolves within

managerial and Organizational behaviour perspectives. The presence of other fields such as Economics, Computer Science, and Environmental Science highlights the multidisciplinary nature of this issue in responding to the dynamics of modern work and digital transformation.

The findings of this study indicate that Work–Life Balance and Perceived Organizational Support consistently function as strategic work resources that enhance employee engagement through the mechanism of mental well-being. Interpretatively, these results affirm that the sustainability of engagement is not solely determined by job design, but also by the Organization's ability to cultivate a psychological ecosystem that supports emotional stability and the psychological functioning of employees. This pattern aligns with the Job Demands–Resources framework and the Conservation of Resources theory, which positions resources as buffers against stress while simultaneously serving as triggers for work energy. Consequently, mental well-being acts as a conceptual and empirical bridge connecting human resource management practices with the sustainability of individual performance.

Unlike much of the previous literature, which generally reflects a dyadic approach, such as work–life balance and job satisfaction or Organizational support and employee engagement, this study presents an integration between multiple relationships with mental well-being at their center. Nonetheless, most of the studies included in this review use cross-sectional designs, which constrain causal impressions and validate claims on sustainability. In theory, longitudinal and multilevel investigations are necessary to account for the nuances of resource accumulation. From an implementation standpoint Organizations must incorporate work flexibility policies and psychological support mechanisms on the premises of sustainable performance management.

The 165 studies reviewed provide three complementary theoretical mechanisms in Organizational life. In this JD-R framework, WLB functions as a boundary resource that safeguards employees' cognitive and emotional reserves, which, in turn, maintains engagement as opposed to direct effects through mental well-being. At the relational level, POS engenders reciprocity founded on Social Exchange Theory; employees reciprocate by investing energy when their mental well-being is sustained. (1.) Systemically, the Conservation of Resources Theory explains synergistic interaction between WLB and POS over time, resulting in strengthening psychological reserves and sustainability of engagement. Considering mental well-being from a deficit perspective is biased by clinical traditions and underestimates its positive role in sustainable engagement. By employing cross-sectional designs, sustainability is ill understood, and therewith, “sustainable” as a term is used without contextual validity. Commonalities in the Stories Embedded in JD-R, COR, and SET: Discrepancies in Structural Embedding within Field-Based Empirical Frameworks. Although this study offers a comprehensive mapping, several limitations warrant attention. First, the variation in the operationalization of mental well-being leads to heterogeneity in findings and restricts cross-study comparability. Second, the dominance of English-language publications and specific geographical contexts may limit global generalizability. Third, reliance on secondary data constrains the exploration of more in-depth

contextual factors. Therefore, future research is recommended to develop an integrative model based on cross-cultural perspectives, utilize longitudinal designs, and adopt more multidimensional measures of well-being to strengthen the conceptual foundation of sustainable employee engagement.

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This systematic literature review offers five analytically distinct contributions to the domains of human resource management and organisational behaviour. It provides the first cohesive synthesis that identifies WLB and POS as dual antecedents in a single mediational architecture whereby mental well-being serves as the principal psychological transmission mechanism between organizational inputs and sustainable work engagement, thus establishing an integrative structure which surpasses the dyadic/specific-sector foci of previous reviews. It produces an empirically grounded typology of operationalizations of mental well-being that differentiates deficit-reducing constructs from positive capacity constructs, and shows that the current literature has only captured a small slice of the well-being continuum, thus providing far more limited empirical support for its full mediating power. It methodologically demonstrates via documented empirical mapping rather than theoretical hypothesis that the cross-sectional design endemic to the field creates a systematic validity gap in sustainability arguments and makes an evidence-based case for longitudinal and multilevel study designs as baseline requirements for future research invoking the sustainability construct. It charts terrain and sectoral boundary conditions that qualify the generalizability of existing findings, especially in Southeast Asian and public administration contexts, including those among Indonesian civil service settings, where bureaucratic cultures with collectivist norms may lead to unique mediational dynamics that have yet to be illuminated. It offers HR practitioners and policy makers a structured evidence base from which to design ecosystem-level interventions around WLB, POS and mental well-being simultaneously, as it shows that even big impact point interventions have no durable engagement effects if organization does not support its workers with a broader organizational infrastructure that enhances psychological capital by maintaining relational support structures at the same time.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This systematic literature review set out to synthesize how Work–Life Balance and Perceived Organizational Support sustain work engagement through the mediating role of mental well-being, and what emerges from the evidence is both encouraging and sobering in equal measure. Across 165 peer-

reviewed studies spanning diverse Organizational contexts and geographical regions, the data consistently affirm that WLB and POS function as strategic psychological resources whose effects on engagement are not direct but are channelled through the interior psychological life of employees. When people feel that their work and personal lives are manageable, and that their Organization genuinely values their contribution, they arrive at work not merely present but psychologically invested, and it is this investment, sustained by mental well-being, that constitutes the foundation of durable engagement. That much, the literature confirms with reasonable consistency.

What the literature also reveals, however, is that the field's understanding of this process remains incomplete in ways that matter. Mental well-being, despite its centrality to every mediational model reviewed, has been operationalised almost exclusively through deficit lenses such as burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion rather than through the positive psychological capacities that genuine sustainability requires: resilience, flourishing, and psychological growth. This matters analytically because a field that measures well-being only as the absence of breakdown will inevitably produce interventions designed to prevent collapse rather than build capacity, and will generate sustainability claims that are, at best, claims about survival rather than thriving. Compounding this is the persistent dominance of cross-sectional research designs, a methodological convention that renders the word "sustainable" in countless article titles something closer to aspiration than empirical description. Sustainability, by its own logic, demands evidence across time; yet the field has largely settled for evidence at a single moment, leaving the temporal dynamics of resource accumulation, depletion, and recovery largely unmapped. Similarly, while JD-R, COR, and SET are frequently cited together, their integration in empirical models remains more rhetorical than mechanistic frameworks are invoked in parallel rather than woven into a coherent explanatory structure that specifies how buffering, resource conservation, and reciprocal exchange interact within a unified process.

All together, these findings indicate a field that has made significant advances in establishing what can drive sustainable work engagement, but so far cannot demonstrate it due to a relatively underdeveloped methodological and theoretical infrastructure. The regional concentration in research (i.e., East Asian and Anglo-American contexts) and the sectoral focus on healthcare and private industry further restrict the extent to which existing conclusions are generalizable, particularly with respect to public administration settings in Southeast Asia or other institutional environments where differences in bureaucratic cultures, collectivist norms, and distinctive HRM frameworks may yield meaningfully different mediational dynamics. These are not just scholarly absences; they are real-world blind spots for decision makers and human resource professionals who need to create interventions within institutional settings that have been relatively neglected by the literature.

Theoretically, there are three directions that emerge as both necessary and urgent going forward. Future research should focus on longitudinal and time-lagged designs that allow for genuine tests of whether engagement is maintained over time rather than simply present at a snapshot in time. It

should also extend the operationalisation of mental well-being down to its most positive capacity constructs, like resilience, self-determination or flourishing, so that the mediational mechanism is assessed across its theoretical rather than merely accessible continuum. Indeed, it needs to head towards an amalgam of empirical models that formalise JD-R, COR and SET not as competing logics but as intersecting mechanisms, explicitly modelling the role in producing engagement trajectories at individual, team and Organizational levels of resource activation, conservation and relational reciprocity. For practitioners, the main implication is also clear: sustainable work engagement cannot be accomplished through some well-designed stand-alone intervention. It takes an Organizational ecosystem in which agile work modalities, managerial support and psychological capability-building work together and reinforcingly not as a set of discrete HR interventions (though there may be some elements of that), but as a coherent and perennial institutional commitment to the conditions in which people can truly flourish at work.

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