

# Job Demands, Job Resources, And Work-Life-Balance Among Academicians In Egypt: The Role Of Personal Resources

Ingy Mohamed Sameh Selim <sup>1</sup>, Daisy Mui Hung Kee <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia; Email: ingyselim@student.usm.my*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia; Email: daisy@usm.my*

## Abstract

*There is always a high competition among private universities in Egypt, this creates a burden on academicians and increases their work demands. Therefore, this study aims to review the academicians' perception of their ability to balance between their work and life. Because finding a way that could help individuals create barriers between those two important domains is challenging; this goes back to the heavy demands arising from work, home, and society at large. The study provides a review of the JD-R model, personal resources and work-life balance for the past 10 years. This paper proposes that personal resources could be a potential moderator on the relationship between job demands, job resources, and work-life balance. This paper focuses on psychological job demands, supervisor support and coworker support, and social support*

**Keywords:** *Work-Life Balance; Personal Resources; Supervisor Support; Co-worker Support.*

## 1 Introduction:

The current situation the world is facing is very challenging; every country is doing all the efforts to fight the COVID-19. One of the main decisions taken by most nations is to allow working from home to minimize the infection rate. This decision had a great impact on employees' work-life balance (WLB). Because working from home can be a double-edged weapon, as employees may find it a great chance to work while taking good care of their families, while on the other side it may create additional burden and stress because they cannot work while providing care to their families. "Reference [1] argued that work-life balance is very challenging and working from home can increase its difficulty because at this time the lines between home and work will diminish".

Moreover, Changes in the demographics such as now women are working to help their husbands in the obligations which are known as dual-career earners, this made them quite difficult to fulfill the needs of their family responsibilities and work at the same time; so either their work conflicted with the family or family conflicted with work [2], [3]. Further, many organizations are now downsizing, either to save costs or because of the increase of automated jobs, in this scenario employees are always doing their best at work and are devoting their life to save their work which further leads to high conflict between their work and life [2].

## HRM in Egypt

Egypt currently is developing in most of the industries [4]. This development has created a stressful working environment for the employees such as long working hours, inflexible schedules, and workload. These factors have affected the employees' ability to balance their work and their life. As a result, work-life balance is now considered an important topic for both researchers and practitioners in the human resource management field in Egypt (HRM) [5]. Additionally, several things need to be changed in the HRM practices in Egypt, the most relevant ones to the current study are as follows: firstly, HRM in Egypt focuses its role on the admirative tasks only while neglecting the strategic role of HRM in the

organization. Secondly, the HRM in Egypt should set policies and regulations that help the employees' rights. Thirdly, the importance of introducing work-life balance policies in Egyptian organizations [6].

All the above-mentioned reasons have created interest among researchers and academicians to study the factors that enhance or affect the academics' working life balance.

## **Academicians in Egypt**

The academicians' job is the most stressful one among other professions; it affects academicians' physical and psychological health [7]. For academicians to achieve a balance between their work and their life it's currently considered to be a horrible challenge because of the multiple tasks required from them such as teaching, researching, supervising students, publication, producing a higher quality of graduates, pressure to grow, administrative tasks and consultation [7]–[9]. Those tasks utilize loads of energy that prevent them from fulfilling their obligations towards their society and family because they are mentally and physically tired and exhausted [10]. Moreover, time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict are three types of work-family conflict among academics that were identified [11].

- Time-based conflict happens when time pressure in one task does not allow the individual to accomplish the other task, this conflict is faced by academicians because they work for longer hours, around 55 hours per week to grow in their career which further affects their time spent on other obligations such as their families and social lives [9], [12].
- Strain-based conflict occurs when the individual is stressed from a certain task and this affect his performance in other tasks, this conflict affects academicians because of the multiple job demands that are required from them, they are always striving to work on competing demands in a single role and multiple roles too [9].
- Behavior-based conflict happens when behaviors from one role are unable to get along with behaviors in another role, this conflict influence academicians because of working at home on work-related tasks would affect the role of being a spouse or a husband or a mother [9].

“Reference [13] reported that academicians are facing health problems because of the stress they are facing, and despite this fact still there's little or no attention in the job stress literature among university staff members [10]”. “Reference [14] confirmed in their study among academics in Egypt to assess the level of occupational stress. They found that occupational stress has an impact on several aspects, one of them is work-life balance”.

Importantly, the presence of COVID-19 in Egypt has affected many sectors. The higher education system accordingly is now relying on the e-learning method because of the lockdown. The e-learning is relatively new to most of the academics as well as the students, as a result, it creates psychological demands because of the workload and mental demands since academics are trying to understand the new system to provide the required learning outcomes.

## **2 Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Work-life balance**

The concept of WLB first began in the United Kingdom in the 1970s. In the 80s and 90s, it was the beginning of its implementation in the United States [15]. There are several definitions for the term WLB, but the literature shows that there is no agreement on a universal definition for the term [16]. But most definitions refer to the harmonization between an individual's work and personal life [15]. Therefore,

WLB is defined as the extent to which the employee can manage multiple roles in his/her life, including work, family and other major responsibilities [17]. This definition was chosen to support the study because the individual is not only surrounded by a family, but there are other things that he/she is responsible for such as friends, sports, studying, leisure time [15], [16]. Moreover, the term WLB is often used interchangeably with work-family balance, and for the current paper, the researcher will use WLB because it's more general and includes all of the aspects in the individuals' life [18], [19].

Organizations are providing WLB practices that could help employees find a proper balance between their work and life, those practices are like telecommuting, on-site child care, flexible schedules, job sharing, and part-time worker; these programs are very helpful to the employees, but on the other hand, they may have some disadvantages, such as telecommuting may prevent the employee from being part of the organization, and also lack of supervision over the employees. Additionally, job sharing may have some problems such as difficulties in communication between employees [2].

## **2.2 Psychological Demands**

Psychological job demands include factors such as time pressure, mental workload, coordination of responsibilities, workload, and pace of work [20]. It has a negative effect on work-life enhancement. "Reference [21] in his/her study on the hospital nurses in Belgium confirmed that psychological demands affect employees WLB". "Reference [22] in the study among hospital nurses in Taiwan confirmed that high psychological demand at the workplace will lead to work-life conflict and confirmed that psychological demands should be reduced among nurses to be able to achieve career development".

### **2.2.1 Workload**

Currently, the study of workload among employees in the organization is very important and requires great attention [23]. One reason for this is that it's considered one of the most important components of job demands, and it's believed that it's a major indicator of workplace stress [24]. Especially among human service organizations [25].

Multiple studies defined workload as the number of tasks needed to be accomplished within limited resources and capabilities [26]–[28]. Moreover, the workload can be divided into two main categories: quantitative overload and qualitative overload, as for the quantitative overload arises when there are multiple tasks to be achieved, while the qualitative overload occurs when those tasks are too challenging [23]. Another study classified workload into mental and physical workload; stating that physical workload mostly affects operating employees while mental workload affects the managerial levels [29]. Also, the workload is one of the work stressors components [30]. It is considered as one of the hindrances demands in the JDR model, and this is because it is a positive relationship with the maladaptive consequences (e.g. emotional exhaustion) and its negative relationship with the adaptive consequences (e.g. job satisfaction) [29].

Besides, since this study is talking about the academia field, therefore, it should be mentioned that several authors defined workload among teachers as the number of responsibilities, duties, and tasks performed by the teachers either within or outside the workplace; these responsibilities include teaching, attending meetings, preparing the curriculums, and researching [31]. It affects all occupations and it is a common stressful problem among teachers [32]. This problem makes them deeply think all day of how and when to accomplish the tasks they have. Also, it leads the teachers to work outside their workplace and beyond their working hours to be able to accomplish what's required from them and to be productive [31].

### **2.2.2 Mental Demands**

Studying mental demands is new to the literature especially their effect on the employee wellbeing, this might be because recently work environments are very mentally demanding, this case has aroused the importance of studying how do mental demands affect an individual [33]. Currently, digital workplaces have created a need for individuals to learn and manage things they didn't know about; these are mental demands that may affect the individual's wellbeing, which will be a very important factor among the working population [34].

Moreover, mental demands can be termed as learning or cognitive demands and they are used interchangeably. Both are defined as those types of demands that need to learn new things, gain the knowledge and skills required to conduct the job [35].

Individuals at work might face mental overload demands, it occurs when there is too much to do and there is a lack of abilities and skills among individuals to be able to fulfill those demands [36].

So, for individuals to overcome the pressure caused by mental demands, it is important to have cognitive abilities because currently, the workplace relies heavily on them [37].

Job demands are not always considered hindrances, but sometimes can be a challenge and this all depends on how the individual perceives it. Therefore, mental demands are one type of working conditions that might lead to individuals' stress because of their psychological and physiological costs [34]. On the other hand, a reduction in mental demands would have a negative impact on employees' health and well-being because employees would neglect their skill development and their learning process [38].

### **2.3 Supervisor Support**

Supervisor support can be defined as the degree of support and appreciation provided by supervisors to their employees [39]. Supervisors are considered the employees' gatekeepers as they should care for the employees' family commitments [2]. The support given to the employees from their supervisors can be either formal or informal, and in both cases, it enhances the employee's well-being and help them achieve a proper balance between their work, life, and family. Moreover, supervisors can provide support to their employees from an emotional aspect such as listening to their problems, being careful towards their family responsibilities. This type of support was found to be very effective towards the employees [40].

It was found that supervisors not only affect the employee's ability to balance between their work and life but also, they have a very important role in helping employees easily benefit from the available WLB initiatives provided by the organization [2]. As a result, employees will feel that they are safe because they are working in a place that cares for their psychological well-being [40].

### **2.4 Co-worker Support**

Coworker support is defined as the informal social support given to the employees by their co-workers at the workplace [41]. In other terms co-worker's social support consists of providing co-workers with tangible aid, giving them useful information or advice and caring about them [42]. Despite this definition of coworker support that shows that this kind of support is very important in the work-life literature, but there is a lack of research conducted in this part [43].

“Reference [43] whose aim was to add two new dimensions to the work-life culture concept in order to extend the work of [44]”. “Reference [43] study was conducted on employees in a large state government department in Australia, and it was found that the role of coworkers as informal support is very effective to enhance employees' wellbeing, and this proves that the coworkers' support is very beneficial in work-life literature”. Therefore, according to study conduct by “Reference [2] found that supervisors should

support employees to support each other and to understand each other's family obligations to enhance the wellbeing”.

## 2.5 Personal Resources

Personal Resources can be defined as the individual's attributes that can be natural, cognitive, and social which help the individual to resist several types of demands [45]. This definition implies that personal resources can be used as a moderator in the JDR model [46]. This view was confirmed earlier by several studies such as [47]–[49]. While other studies refuted this view and argued that personal resources are better to be used as a mediator in the JDR model [50]. This shows that the position of the personal resources in the JDR model needs to be examined [45], [47], [50].

Besides, most of the previous studies that included personal resources in the JD-R Model, tested three main personal resources namely (self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism). Those studies neglected the importance of the social support factor [47], [50], [51].

### 2.5.1 Social Support

Social support refers to the support that comes from outside the work, it may come from an employee's spouse or partner, parents, siblings, children, extended family, and friends [52]. It's considered an important factor that can boost the ability of an individual to respond to stressful situations because the networks surrounding the individual can play a crucial role in enhancing the employee's well-being [47]. “Reference [3] found that the support received from family and friends is considered a good source that could help employees decrease the level of work-life conflict”. Therefore, social support is proven to have a role in helping individuals to pass through stressful situations, and to believe in one's self.

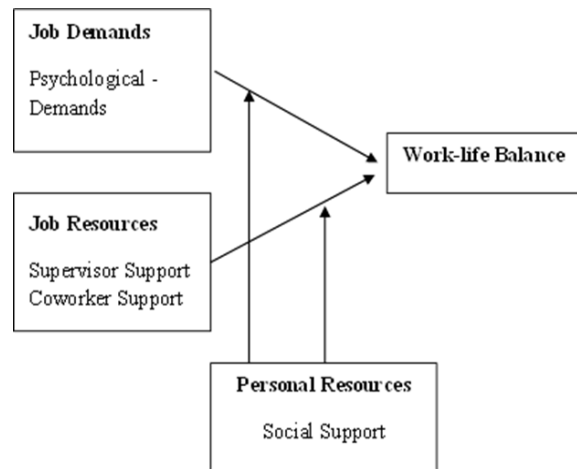
## 3 Job Demands & Resources Model

The reason behind choosing the Job Demands & Resources model (JDR- Model) is that it was adopted previously by several studies, and proves its successful results [25], [45], [47], [50], [53]–[58]. Moreover, it was suggested to extend the JD-R model to another aspect which is the WLB, because there is a lack of studies discussing the effect of the JD-R on WLB among the employees [58].

Additionally, The JD-R model is considered a good tool that can be used to understand different settings at the workplace to be able to understand what factors are considered stressful (Job demands) and what factors are considered to be motivational (Job resources). The most important feature of the JD-R model is that it deals with each work environment differently and that occupations have their characteristics; this enables a better understanding of how to promote the employees' wellbeing [57], [59]. Therefore, two main aspects arise in any occupation: Job demands & Job resources. Job demands refer to “those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (i.e., cognitive or emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs”.

While job resources refer to “those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that either (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) are functional in achieving work goals; (3) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development” [60]. In supporting this, the researcher represents the theoretical framework in Fig. 1.

## 4 Theoretical Framework



**Fig.1** Research Model

## 5 Purpose of the Study

The ability of academics to balance between their work and life should be the main concern in the HRM in Egypt. Therefore, the purpose of the current paper is to provide a theoretical understanding of the WLB, job demands, job resources, and personal resources. Moreover, this study aims to add to the literature by extending the JDR model to the WLB concept. Besides, the role of personal resources as an extension to the JDR model is quite important, therefore the current study strengthens the research model by adding personal resources and discusses the role of social support as a personal resource. Social support is an important variable to be added because individuals in Egypt value their families, friends and the support given from them will help the individual to resist occupational stress.

## 6 Methodology

The current study firstly discussed the HRM in Egypt and specifically the academic field. Secondly, it reviews literature in WLB, job demands (psychological demands), job resources (supervisor support & coworker support), and personal resources (social support). Thirdly, it reviews the past literature to understand if job demands and job resources have an impact on WLB, moving to the literature review that supports the idea of adding personal resources as a moderator on the relationship between job demands, job resources, and work-life balance. The current study used 61 research papers majority of them were during the last 10 years.

## 7 Conclusion

There are two main reasons why this study will add to the literature in this part. The first reason is that it's important to mention that the majority of work-life balance researches are conducted in developed nations such as the Western countries and North America which have different cultures, traditions, values, and customs than the MENA region, so organizations and their management should adapt these Western-based conclusions to their own [5], [6], [61].

The second reason is that there is a lack of studies conducted in the human resource management field because it has been difficult to conduct human resource management researches on organizations, especially in Egypt, the reason behind this might be because managers do not allow their subordinates to join these types of researches as it might affect the company's performance [4]. Therefore, this makes it interesting for practitioners and academics to understand that HRM systems in Egypt

As a result, the current study contributes to the understanding of work-life balance, but this doesn't eliminate the limitations. The prime limitation in the current study is that it relies on quantitative analysis of the framework., therefore it's recommended to conduct an empirical analysis for the mentioned framework in the future.

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