Review Article

Work Outcomes and Well-being Among Working Women: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The impact of work outcomes (work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and support) on the well-being of working women has been argued for decades. As the rate of employed women rises, the negative impacts of work outcomes on well-being require urgent investigation to retain employees. Thus, this review identifies the associations between work outcomes and psychological well-being among working women. Utilising seven databases (EBSCOhost Research Database, Scopus, Sage Publications, PubMed, Taylor and Francis Online, Google Scholar, and Wiley Online), a total of 13 quantitative studies and ten qualitative studies were included in the review. This review reported moderate links between work stress and well-being (r = -0.20 to -0.44), weak to strong links between work-life balance and well-being (r = 0.12 to 0.70), moderate links between workplace bullying and well-being (r = -0.21 to -0.24), and weak to moderate links between support and well-being (r = 0.20 to 0.38). The most thoroughly researched constructs were work-life balance, workplace bullying, and well-being. Leaders' characteristics, leadership style, employer maltreatment, and workplace bullying have harmed workers' well-being. Furthermore, job stress, workload, staff shortage, loss of privacy, and prejudice detrimentally impacted well-being. Notably, qualitative studies on work stress and support experience are lacking. Overall, studies on work outcomes and well-being among working females are limited. This review identifies the current gaps in work outcomes and well-being. It provides recommendations for future research directions and informs organisations on the importance of work outcomes on the well-being of these working women.

Keywords: Support, well-being, women, work-life balance, workplace bullying, work stress

INTRODUCTION

Women are becoming more prevalent in the labour force as the cost of living rises. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023), the percentage of working women in Malaysia increased from 47.7% in 2002 to 56.2% in 2021. The increase in working women from diverse backgrounds may be attributed to diverse reasons for working, including lifting financial burdens, obtaining financial independence, building a career identity, and valuing work and work-related achievements (Arshad et al., 2018; Singh & Vanka, 2021).

In Southeast Asia alone, the Malaysian female rate in the workforce ranked seventh out of 10 participating countries, with 52.74% of women currently in the workforce (The Global Economy, 2022). Although statistics showed an increasing trend of working women, recent studies showed that they face work outcome challenges impacting their psychological well-being. It is a matter of concern for organisations, as more than half of employees reported experiencing extreme stress, bringing about economic loss (Chua, 2020). Recent works of literature have attributed poor psychological well-being among working women to increasing work stress, having poor work-life balance, and being targeted as victims of bullying at work (Arabi et al., 2022; Mazumdar et al., 2022; Reid et al., 2020; Rosander et al., 2020).

Additionally, social support studies reported significant improvements in mental health as support increased, with bigger effects shown among older working women (Hamzah et al., 2023). With constant workloads, having supportive leaders enables employees to attain a better quality of working life, indirectly contributing to improved well-being (Abdul Rahman et al., 2019). Moreover, the presence of social support has been linked to improving levels of psychological well-being through the reduction of depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms (Ibrahim et al., 2021). In line with past literature, this review focuses on work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and support as work outcome elements.

In general, 29% of employees may be associated with well-being challenges through poor mental health (Chua, 2020). Well-being is commonly associated with two paradigms: the hedonic and eudemonic perspectives. According to the hedonic perspective, psychological well-being results from life satisfaction and the presence of pleasant emotions, in addition to the absence of negative emotions (Diener, 1984). Several examples of hedonic well-being include measures of emotional well-being and psychological health. Simply, hedonic well-being pertains to how an individual feels. On the other hand, the eudemonic approach to well-being emphasises self-actualisation that promotes human development, including mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and relationships (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In simpler terms, it is more complex than hedonic well-being, which relates to how an individual thinks, uses opportunities in life, engages in a meaningful social relationship,

and can function with maximum potential. This research identifies the impact of work outcomes on well-being comprising both hedonic and eudemonic perspectives to provide a comprehensive review.

These studies showed these constructs' relevance in impacting working women's psychological well-being. Yet, the current trend of these constructs and their relationships with psychological well-being is to be known. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the findings regarding work outcomes and psychological well-being among working women. With that, the researcher has formulated the following question:

Research question 1: What is the link between work stress and women's well-being?

Research question 2: What is the link between work-life balance and women's well-being?

Research question 3: What is the link between workplace bullying and women's well-being?

Research question 4: What is the link between support and women's well-being?

Research question 5: What are working women's experiences with job stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, support, and well-being?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria must be met for a study to be included in the review: (1) studies published between 2018 and 2022,

(2) studies that investigated the relationships between work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, support, and well-being, (3) studies from a sample of working women, (4) studies that utilised either one or both quantitative and qualitative approaches, (5) primary studies, (6) peer-reviewed and grey literature studies, (7) studies on work-related synonyms for work-life balance, workplace bullying, support, and well-being, and (8) studies that were published in English, Malay, and Indonesia, which the researcher comprehends. Accordingly, we did not consider studies that (1) were not conducted in English, Malay, or Indonesia languages, (2) review articles, (3) published before 2018, (4) had results that were not specific to working women, and (5) focused on women who did not actively participate in the labour force. It is important to note that this review only focused on studies published in the recent five years to ensure the relevance of the constructs and their relationships, issues surrounding the constructs, and the identification of current findings and methodological approaches.

Procedures

This review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines developed by Page et al. (2021). Beginning in October 2022, the researchers conducted a systematic literature review in several research databases, including EBSCOhost Research Database, Scopus, Sage Publications, PubMed, Taylor & Francis Online, Google Scholar, and Wiley Online,

to locate studies on work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, support, and well-being among working women around the world.

Firstly, phrased searching was conducted using specific keywords with the inclusion of Boolean operators OR and AND, as follows: ("work stress" OR "job stress" OR "occupational stress" OR "work-related stress" OR "workplace stress" OR "work-life balance" OR "work-life imbalance" OR "work-family balance" OR "workplace bullying" OR "workplace violence" OR "workplace abuse" OR "workplace harassment" OR "aggression" OR "workplace aggression" OR "counterproductive workplace behaviour" OR "workplace mistreatment" OR "supervisor support" OR "supervisor support" OR "workplace support" OR "social support" OR "organisational support") AND ("psychological well-being" OR "well-being") AND (female OR women OR employees OR worker OR "working mother" OR "working women"). Noteworthy, phrase searching was also conducted in one grey literature, Google Scholar, to identify relevant work outcomes and well-being studies. A total of 4078 articles emerged as a result of the phrase searching.

Then, these articles were screened for duplicates and automation tools for ineligible studies. From that, 2590 articles were screened following their titles and abstracts. Two thousand four hundred fifty-one abstracts were irrelevant to work outcomes and well-being constructs and were removed. The remaining 139 articles were assessed for eligibility by full text, whereby the researchers assessed the content of the articles to ensure they fit the inclusion criteria. A total of 116 articles were removed for several reasons, such as not being relevant, articles in languages beyond the researchers' knowledge, and using different populations. Finally, 23 studies fully met the inclusion criteria and were included in this review. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA framework and procedure of this review.

Critical Appraisal

A total of 23 articles were reviewed, 13 of which were quantitative and 10 of which were qualitative. The Quality Assessment Checklist for Survey Studies in Psychology (Q-SSP; Protogerou & Hagger, 2020) was used to appraise the quantitative studies. The Q-SSP comprises 20 criteria, categorised into four sections: introduction, participation, statistics, and ethics. As a rule of thumb, a 75.0% or higher score indicates a well-written study. If the study meets more than five "Not Stated Clearly" criteria and receives a "No" or a score of 75.0% or lower, the quality of the research is called into doubt. Table 1 shows the criteria for methodological appraisal based on Q-SSP.

From the appraisal, only two of the 13 articles are considered high-quality (Alrawadieh et al., 2022; Kim, 2022). Based on this checklist, most articles, which is 11 out of 13 articles in the systematic review, are of questionable quality. Detail-wise, one article reported a quality of 95.0%, which
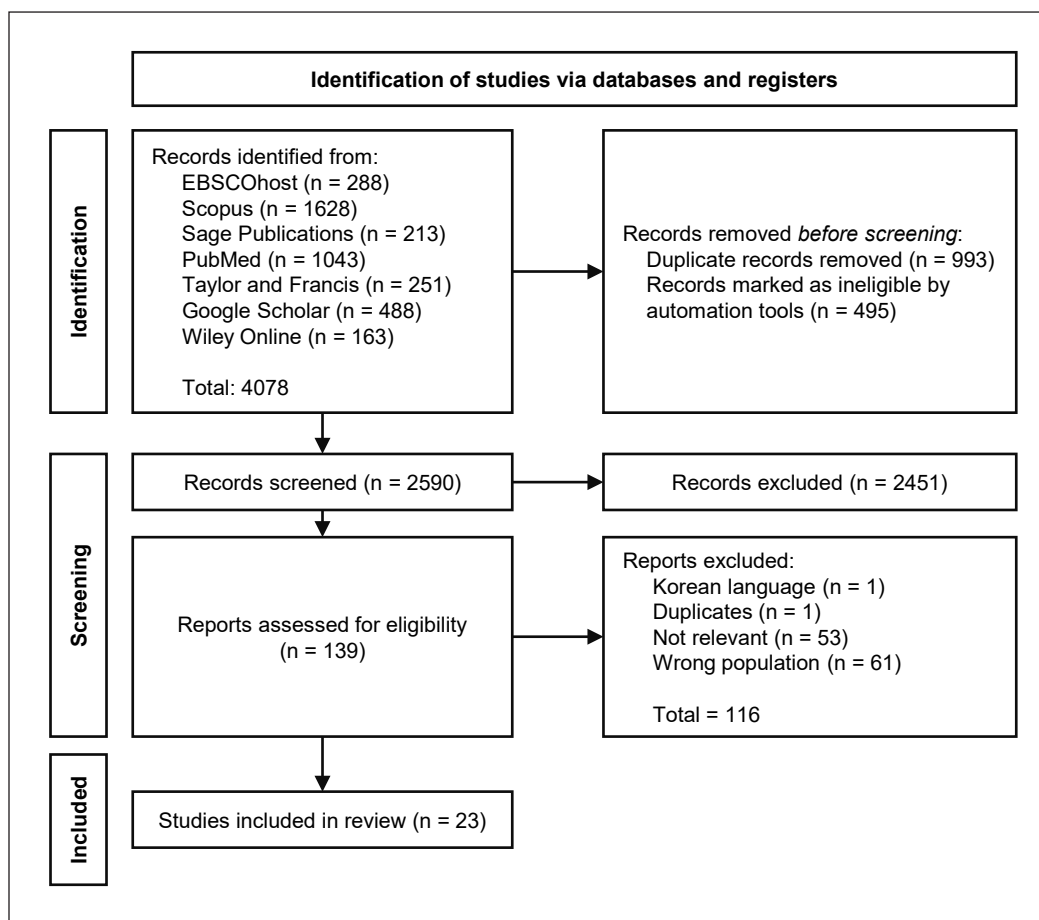
Figure 1. PRISMA framework
Source: Page et al. (2021, p. 5)

Table 1
Q-SSP criteria for critical appraisal

Dimension	Criteria
Introduction	1. Was the problem or phenomenon under investigation defined, described, and justified?
	2. Was the population under investigation defined, described, and justified?
	3. Were specific research questions and/or hypotheses stated?
	4. Were operational definitions of all study variables provided?
Participants	5. Were participant inclusion criteria stated?
	6. Was the participant recruitment strategy described?
	7. Was a justification/rationale for the sample size provided?
Data	8. Was the attrition rate provided?
	9. Was a method of treating attrition provided?
	10. Were the data analysis techniques justified (i.e., was the link between hypotheses/aims/research questions and data analyses explained)?

Table 1 *(continue)*

Dimension	Criteria
	11. Were the measures provided in the report (or a supplement) in full?
	12. Was evidence provided for the validity of all the measures (or instruments) used?
	13. Was the information provided about the person(s) who collected the data (e.g., training, expertise, other demographic characteristics)?
	14. Was the information provided about the data collection context (e.g., place)?
	15. Was the information provided about the data collection duration (or start and end date)?
	16. Was the study sample described in terms of key demographic characteristics?
	17. Was the discussion of findings confined to the population from which the sample was drawn?
Ethics	18. Were participants asked to provide (informed) consent or assent?
	19. Were participants debriefed at the end of data collection?
	20. Were funding sources or conflicts of interest disclosed?

Source: Protogerou and Hagger (2020, p. 7)

is the highest quality paper, followed by another paper with a score of 75.0%. A total of four out of 13 articles received a score between 60.0% and 70.0%, followed by two articles receiving a score between 50.0% and 60.0%, four articles received a score between 40.0% and 50.0%, and only one article received a score of 15.0% or less. Noteworthy, the scores are solely based on the chosen critical appraisal tool. Hence, other quality analysis checklists may produce different scores for the included articles.

Most papers fulfilled the introduction criteria 1–4, while criterion 3 (stating research ideas or hypotheses) scored the lowest. No item fulfilled all 13 criteria. Over half of the articles scored lower in criteria 7 (justification for sample size), 8 (attrition rate), 9 (method for treating attrition), 13 (information of person collecting data), 15 (duration of data collection), and 16 (essential demographic characteristics of participants: age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status).

The complete quality assessment scores of the 13 included studies are found in Table 2.

Meanwhile, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; 2018) was adopted for qualitative studies as it is frequently used to assess qualitative studies in systematic reviews (Long et al., 2020). Ten qualitative articles were included for appraisal. CASP comprises ten criteria grouped into three aspects: (1) validity, (2) results, and (3) contribution. Table 3 shows the criteria for methodological appraisal following CASP.

From the appraisal, three out of ten articles evaluated fulfilled all criteria, indicating high-quality papers. Most of the articles satisfied most of the evaluation criteria, except for a paper that failed to satisfy four criteria: 3, 6, 8, and 9. More than half of the included articles did not meet criterion 6 of the evaluation, whereby there was no identification of the researcher-participant relationship. Table 4 shows the results of the critical appraisal for the qualitative studies.

Table 2
Critical appraisal for quantitative studies

Author (Year)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Total (%)
Akram & Ch (2020)	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	40.0
Alrawadieh et al. (2022)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	75.0
Chawla & Sharma (2019)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	68.4
Cuéllar-Molina et al. (2018)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	63.2
Dirfa & Prasetya (2019)	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	50.0
Jabeen et al. (2021)	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	50.0
Kapoor et al. (2021)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	75.0
Kim (2022)	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	95.0
Lucia-Casademunt et al. (2018)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	60.0
Mensah (2021)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	61.0
Prasad & Vaidya (2021)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15.0
Shui et al. (2020)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	55.0
Wang et al. (2020)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	65.0

Source: Author's work

Table 3
CASP criteria for critical appraisal

Num.	Criteria
1.	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?
2.	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?
3.	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?
4.	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?
5.	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
6.	Has the relationship between the researcher and participants been adequately considered?
7.	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
8.	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?
10.	How valuable is the research?

Source: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018, pp. 2-6)

Table 4
Critical appraisal for qualitative studies

Author (Year)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Quality
Antoshchuk & Gewinner (2020)	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	N	Y	CT	N	Y	Moderate
Bertola et al. (2022)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	High
Boakye et al. (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Moderately high
Dousin et al. (2022)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Moderately high
Faghihi et al. (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	High
Hall et al. (2019)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Moderately high
Lekchiri & Eversole (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	High
Lorber et al. (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	CT	Y	Y	Moderately high
Uddin (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Moderately high
Wadsworth et al. (2019)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Moderately high

Note. Y = Yes; CT = Cannot Tell; N = No
Source: Author's work

RESULTS

Study Characteristic

Within the 23 included articles, most participants were from China (three articles), European countries (three articles), and India (three articles). Notably, only one article was obtained from the qualitative study, while no article from the quantitative study was found for participants within Malaysia.

Furthermore, for five years, from 2018 to 2022, there is an increasing trend of articles published from 2018 to 2021, with a slight reduction of articles in 2022. It is important to note that this review was conducted in 2022. Hence, the number of articles published for that particular year may not reflect the number published by the time of this publication. From the included articles, the

sample sizes for the studies were between 12 to 15,486 participants. Noteworthy, studies conducted in European countries mainly used the data obtained from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Survey (Cuéllar-Molina et al., 2018; Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018; Mensah, 2021), hence the large number of participants. Supplementary Tables 1 and 2 show the information for the included studies in this review, which can be found in the APPENDIX section.

Work Stress and Well-being Among Working Women

The first research question examines the relationship between work stress and well-being among working women. Four studies were conducted in India, South Korea, and Europe (Kapoor et al., 2021; Kim, 2022; Mensah, 2021; Prasad & Vaidya, 2021). Among working women, two articles reported a moderate negative association between work stress and well-being (Kapoor et al., 2021; Kim, 2022), one article reported a low correlation (Mensah, 2021), and one article reported a strong correlation (Prasad & Vaidya, 2021). These results are in line with a past study indicating that perceived work stress, occupational stress, and stress from psychological threats were among the determinants of low well-being (Hirschle & Gondim, 2020).

Although all articles reported significant associations between work stress and well-being, the studies obtained different scores during the critical evaluations. Specifically, Kim (2022) scored 95.0% for the appraisal,

failing only one critical appraisal criterion, indicating a high-quality article. Similarly, Kapoor et al. (2021) failed to state the inclusion criteria for participants, sample size, or sample research features and obtained a score of 75.0%, indicating a high-quality paper. Next, Mensah (2021) obtained a lower score as justification for the sample size, and sufficient demographic information was not provided, resulting in a 61.0% score. Lastly, Prasad and Vaidya (2021) calculated an exceedingly low score for the paper, which scored 15.0% out of 100.0% in the quality rating, failing to meet most criteria. Therefore, according to the Q-SSP, the results of this article are considered dubious, and one should take extra caution when referring to the study.

Next, the included studies used several theoretical foundations to support the link between work stress and well-being, namely, the Conservation of Resource Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the Job Demand-Control Theory (Karasek, 1979), and the Effort Reward Imbalance Theory (Siegrist, 1996). To start, the Conservation of Resource Theory suggests that individuals struggle to acquire and maintain their resources, which are categorised into four groups: objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies, and that the loss of resources has a greater impact than their acquisition. Thus, resource scarcity causes tension, and tension is regarded as adversity. In return, adversity influences people to invest in their resources to safeguard other resources.

The next theory, the Job Demand-Control Theory, asserts that stress is strongest when

demand exceeds control (Karasek, 1979). Job demand revolves around workloads, conflict between employees, and time management, while job control primarily revolves around skill discretion and decision authority. With high job expectations, employees can take control by strengthening workplace social support and improving well-being. Finally, a study on occupational stress and well-being used the Effort Reward Imbalance Theory (Siegrist, 1996). This theory suggests that an employee's effort to meet workplace demands is not logical and does not weigh the same as a reward. In other words, workload, work hours, and time pressures do not equal job stability, compensation, and career progress.

Work-Life Balance and Well-being Among Working Women

The second research question examines the relationship between work-life balance and well-being among working women. A total of six studies were conducted in Lahore, European countries, China, India, and Indonesia (Akram & Ch, 2020; Cuéllar-Molina et al., 2018; Dirfa & Prasetya, 2019; Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018; Prasad & Vaidya, 2021; Shui et al., 2020). All studies found significant positive relationships between work-life balance and well-being.

While they showed significant positive relationships, the strengths of the relationships varied. For example, two studies reported a strong correlation between work-life balance and well-being (Akram & Ch, 2020; Dirfa & Prasetya, 2019), while one study reported a moderate correlation

(Cuéllar-Molina et al., 2018), and another study reported a weak correlation (Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018). Furthermore, this review showed an increasing trend in work-life balance and well-being studies from 2018 to 2020. The associations between work-life balance and well-being were supported by past literature showing an upward trend in work-life balance and support between 1998 and 2020 (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022).

Although all studies reported positive associations, the quality of the papers must be considered due to the low scores obtained in the critical appraisals using the Q-SSP, which ranged from 40.0% to 63.2%, falling short of the 75.0% required for high-quality papers. The low scores obtained were further amplified by the lack of theoretical foundations among the studies, as theoretical support was mentioned only in one of the six included papers. Lucia-Casademunt et al. (2018) explained the work-life balance phenomenon supported by the Role Stress Theory. The theory posits that elevated expectations elicit stress, and assuming additional responsibilities intensifies stress levels. According to the theoretical framework, mothers responsible for greater shares of domestic and occupational roles than fathers are likely to encounter role strain and experience diminished overall well-being.

Workplace Bullying and Well-being Among Working Women

The third research question examines the relationship between workplace bullying

and the well-being of working women. Two studies from Turkey and Pakistan reported the relationship between workplace bullying and well-being (Alrawadieh et al., 2022; Jabeen et al., 2021). In these studies, workplace bullying was measured in terms of sexual harassment and poor workplace behaviors perpetrated by individuals. The findings of the studies reported a moderately negative and significant link between workplace bullying and well-being.

Specifically, Alrawadieh et al. (2022) reported negative associations between being a victim of sexual harassment and psychological well-being. Meanwhile, Jabeen et al. (2021) reported negative associations between workplace bullying, which was the experience of harassment and psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with prior research among female and male employees, which found that workplace bullying significantly influences employee well-being (Boudrias et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Hayat & Afshari, 2020).

In addition to the significant findings, the quality appraisal reported minimal to questionable qualities for the studies. For instance, Alrawadieh et al. (2022) did not incorporate the sampling recruitment approach, assuming biases. However, it scored 75.0%, indicating a high-quality paper. A lower score was obtained by Jabeen et al. (2021) since the paper did not specify the inclusion criteria, sampling technique, sample size, or participant demographics. Furthermore, the ethical procedures are also considered dubious due to the lack of informed consent, conflict of interest,

and debriefing statements. Thus, the paper obtained a quality analysis score of 50.0% and was deemed questionable. Notably, only one theory was found to be the basis of the article, similar to work stress, which is the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) adopted by Jabeen et al. (2021).

Support and Well-being Among Working Women

The fourth research question examines the relationship between support and well-being among working women. The support construct in this review consists of organisational, social, and supervisor support. A total of five studies found a positive association between support and well-being in female employees (Alrawadieh et al., 2022; Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018; Mensah, 2021; Wang et al., 2020). These studies incorporated samples from China, European countries, and Turkey. The findings of these studies showed that higher social support obtained increased mental well-being. One study reported that support moderated the association between occupational stress and mental well-being (Mensah, 2021).

Specifically, other types of support and family support were associated positively with subjective well-being, whereas friend support was not. In detail, family support was reported to moderate the effects of emotional exhaustion on subjective well-being (Wang et al., 2020). Surprisingly, one study found a negative relationship between social support and subjective well-being; however, it was not statistically significant (Chawla

& Sharma, 2019). The significant findings of these studies are supported by past studies that found significant connections between social support and mental health in female-headed households (Khazaeian et al., 2017). Furthermore, a recent systematic evaluation found a substantial impact between organisational support and a pleasant mood, an aspect of subjective well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

In magnitude, the findings of working women's support and well-being in this review reported weak positive associations. The papers received scores between 60.0% to 75.0%, indicating questionable to high-quality papers. The diverse scores were obtained due to insufficient information, such as no justification for sample size, absence of data collection procedures, demographics, or inclusion criteria.

Furthermore, two theoretical foundations were adopted regarding workplace bullying and well-being. Firstly, Wang et al. (2020) adopted the Job Demand-Supports-Constraints model (Payne & Fletcher, 1983) to examine female doctors' subjective well-being and perceived organisational support. According to the model, social support reduces stress and strain, while support and resource limits increase stress. The Job Demand-Supports-Constraints model was supported by the study's direct positive correlations between social support and well-being and family support's moderation effect between emotional fatigue and well-being (Wang et al., 2020). Next, supervisor support for employee well-being was explained and assessed using the Organisational Support Theory in the study by Lucia-Casademunt et al. (2018). The theory states that supervisor support is the extent to which an organisation recognises and values employees' efforts and promotes their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Experience of Job Stress, Work-life Balance, Workplace Bullying, Support and Well-being Among Working Women

The fifth research question examines the qualitative experience among working women on work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, support and well-being. For the qualitative papers, the most extensively studied work outcomes factor is work-life balance, which has been the subject of six studies (Antoshchuk & Gewinner, 2020; Bertola et al., 2022; Boakye et al., 2021; Dousin et al., 2022; Lekchiri & Eversole, 2021; Uddin, 2021), followed by working women's experiences of well-being, which have been the subject of three studies (Hall et al., 2019; Lorber et al., 2021; Wadsworth et al., 2019), and experience of workplace bullying with one study (Faghihi et al., 2021). Unfortunately, using the seven databases, our review could not locate qualitative studies on work stress and support experiences among working women.

Firstly, this review found that working women face issues with work-life balance, which influences their well-being. Findings from the work-life balance studies reported that stigma, spillover, and injustice prevented working women from achieving work-life

balance. The lack of employees, limited time for work and home matters, socio-cultural and family conventions, gender stereotypes, and the weight of dual obligations interrupted these women's work-life balance. Adequate support from the workplace and family was integral in permitting working women to attain an optimal balance between their work and personal lives. In order to do so, many strategies were employed, including facilitating the engagement of oneself and one's partner in work-life affairs. Alternatively, working women reported to have engaged in a variety of strategies for attaining work-life balance, such as promoting job flexibility, seeking support and assistance from other individuals, proactive planning, stress management, and prioritising crucial activities.

Importantly, only one study in this review examined working women's views on workplace violence, whereby interpersonal and organisational coercion caused physical and verbal violence in the workplace, such as high job expectations, limited social support, and inadequate facilities. Besides that, studies on well-being investigated the experiences, factors influencing well-being, and facilitators that improve the well-being of employed women. Qualitative findings on well-being indicated that social support impacts the workforce's well-being, with high social support increasing well-being and vice versa (Hall et al., 2019; Lorber et al., 2021; Wadsworth et al., 2019). According to the findings of the three included studies, the well-being of employed women focused on management

and workplace leaders. Leaders' traits, expertise, abilities, and leadership styles are critical in preserving well-being, and employer maltreatment and workplace bullying have harmed workers' well-being. Furthermore, job stress, workload, staff shortage, loss of privacy, and prejudice were all issues that had a detrimental impact on well-being.

Several theoretical approaches were the fundamentals of these qualitative studies, with no theory being the most prominent, as each theory is mentioned only in the respective paper. Specifically, all theories were utilised in studies relating to work-life balance, including the Capabilities and Agency Framework to Work-Family Balance and Life Course Institutionalisation Theory (Antoshchuk & Gewinner, 2020), Social Role Theory and Work-Life Spillover Theory (Bertola et al., 2022), Ecological Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory (Boakye et al., 2021), and Conflict Theory and Role Theory (Lekchiri & Eversole, 2021). Although these studies revolve around work-life balance, their approaches to its definition remain wide, as each theory is only mentioned in the respective paper.

To start, the Capabilities and Agency Framework to Work-Family Balance and Life Course Institutionalization Theory, for example, defines work-life balance in terms of role-specific natures, which asserts that the ability to successfully carry a role is determined by the mother's cultural, structural, and institutional environments, which are nationally bound. These theories

are similar in the ways that they posit that individual factors (i.e., income, gender, demographic information), societal factors (i.e., community, media), and institutional factors (i.e., childcare services, workplace culture, autonomy) are interconnected and simultaneously influence the mother's work-life balance.

Meanwhile, the social role theory states that men and women have respective roles that remain the same across time and conditions, and both genders are expected to fulfil their gender roles, such as women caring for the household and men working for the family. The Work-Life Spillover Theory states that work matters influence the worker's personal life in such a way that the organisation's favour of work-life balance policies instils a guilty feeling in the worker, which forces the worker to work overtime or disengages herself from thoughts about work while being at home due to feelings of obligation for receiving work-life balance support from the organisation. Furthermore, the Ecological Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory work together in such a way that the ecological theory argues that work-life balance is achievable when mothers can balance between work and non-work matters, and to do so, the conservation of resources theory argues that mothers seek to maintain work-life balance by using the environmental resources that are available in the workplace. Poor resources may influence the imbalance of work and family matters.

On the other hand, the Conflict Theory posits that conflict will arise when the mother participates more in one domain than the other. While both work and home domains are connected, they are essentially contradictory. Finally, Role Theory is also used to explain work-life balance. This theory posited that women may compensate for their expected social roles by achieving a high position in the workplace; however, even by achieving a respectable position, women are still bound by their gender roles in the workplace. These incongruences may lead to negative perceptions of women by other employees in the workplace.

Finally, most qualitative studies were assessed as high-quality papers compared to the conflicting findings of the overall quantitative papers. However, Such a comparison is impossible due to the differences in procedures and instruments used to appraise qualitative and quantitative studies.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review examined an initial 4078 studies and selected a finalised 23 studies for synthesis to investigate the relationship between work outcomes (work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying), support, and well-being of working women from quantitative and qualitative lenses. Results showed significant negative associations between work stress and well-being, significant positive relationships between work-life balance and well-being, negative and significant links between workplace bullying and well-being, and positive associations between social support obtained and well-being, with one study reporting a moderation association

between support, occupational stress, and mental well-being. Furthermore, results from qualitative studies explained the difficulties working women experienced regarding work-life balance, well-being, and workplace bullying.

The relationship between work outcomes, support, and well-being showed significant results regardless of the sample population. It indicates that a high work-life balance, low work tension and workplace bullying, and high workplace support are paramount for female employees from diverse backgrounds. Work-life balance is the most researched relationship between work outcomes and well-being, followed by support, work-related stress, and workplace bullying. The impact of work stress on well-being could only be determined between 2021 and 2022, with studies unable to show a single trend due to the diversity of magnitudes of the impact of work stress on well-being. For work-life balance, this review found not only an increasing trend in the studies published but also an increasing magnitude of association between work-life balance and well-being, suggesting the increasing importance of work-life balance on well-being in recent years.

Due to the limited findings, the trend of the impacts of work outcomes on well-being could not be accurately determined. Similar to work stress, only two studies on workplace bullying were reviewed; hence, the data obtained is too little to identify the trends of the findings. However, both studies mentioned a moderate impact of workplace bullying on well-being,

indicating a consistent trend of impacts. No further deduction can be made due to the limited findings. All studies from 2018 to 2022 on support and well-being showed weak associations, suggesting a consistent magnitude of weak positive impacts. Finally, qualitative studies on supervisor support and psychological well-being among working mothers, especially in Malaysia, are scarce. In contrast, quantitative studies from Malaysia are unable to be located within the included studies.

From this review, it can be deduced that work-life balance showed the strongest impact and is presumed to be the most important, while support showed the weakest impact. Although these constructs have been extensively studied, the fact that this review only focuses on working women may explain the scarcity of quantitative investigations. This systematic review found only three studies on workplace bullying in five years, so more research on workplace bullying and women's well-being is required. In contrast, increased research on work-life balance and support shows that these variables sufficiently promote the well-being of female employees.

To sum up, quantitative and qualitative measures reported the significant impacts of work outcomes on well-being, except qualitative studies on work stress and support constructs that were unavailable in this review. However, the construct of social support was found in the qualitative studies on the well-being outcomes of working women. Though this review found no specific article on support experience,

it discovered the impact of high and low social support on well-being (Hall et al., 2019; Lorber et al., 2021; Wadsworth et al., 2019). Moreover, it is worth noting for future researchers that qualitative studies on work outcomes and well-being have shown other variables not assessed in this review as determinants of well-being. These include leadership styles and organisational-related factors, including staff shortages, prejudice, and work overload. Compared to quantitative measures that explicitly evaluate the impacts of the intended work outcomes on well-being, the findings from the qualitative studies provide a new direction for future research endeavours.

The present systematic review represents an initial endeavour to gain a deeper comprehension of the impact of work stress, work-life balance, bullying at work, and support on the well-being of female employees. The review's notable strength is rooted in the observation that the associations among support, work outcomes, and well-being are consistently significant across most studies. Moreover, this systematic review has effectively bypassed any potential biases in the evaluation by employing systematic methodologies and conducting thorough analyses of the results.

However, it is important to note that certain constraints present in most quantitative research analyses may affect the findings' significance. The sample size was deemed to be insufficient by the quality assessment, which raises concerns about the results' significance. In addition, the respondents' demographic information was absent, and no other information about the participants besides their employment was provided. Furthermore, certain studies failed to include crucial elements such as the recruitment methodology, informed consent protocol, and debriefing process, potentially resulting in biased presumptions.

Notably, this review is not without limitations. The most prominent flaw in this systematic review is the small number of conclusions reached due to incorporating only five years of data. Given the constraints of this study, additional information regarding past trends of the observed significant outcomes remains unknown. Hence, it is recommended that upcoming research endeavours incorporate a comprehensive systematic review spanning the last decade pertaining to the work outcomes and well-being of employed women to gain a more nuanced understanding of the patterns and variations surrounding these phenomena.

Notably, the systematic review was conducted solely on seven databases, which may constrain the scope of related studies to those available to the researcher through the university library subscription. Thus, forthcoming research endeavours may consider seeking endorsement from multiple academic institutions and research organisations possessing diverse database subscriptions, thereby enabling more extensive and all-encompassing research outcomes. Finally, the researchers did not utilise wildcards and truncations in the searches; thus, the number of studies that emerged may differ from those that

utilise these search strategies. In an effort to maximise the searches, similar terms and phrases were used, such as work-life balance, work-family balance, and work-life imbalance. With all our limitations, we hope that the findings will benefit all relevant parties.

CONCLUSION

This review provides insights regarding women's work outcomes and well-being in the workforce. Significant relationships exist between work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, support, and well-being among working women. All variables have been actively researched for the past five years, confirming the significance of all variables to be examined in this research. Second, searching the respective databases for quantitative studies conducted in Malaysia over the past five years reveals a paucity. A single qualitative study was discovered regarding the work-life balance experience among female physicians and nurses, thus presenting opportunities for further research regarding work outcomes and well-being in Malaysia. This review, which included both quantitative and qualitative studies, supported the positive associations between work-life balance and support for well-being, as well as the negative impacts of work stress and workplace bullying on well-being.

Implication for Theory and Practice

This review, conducted using recent 5-year published studies, reveals several gaps in the literature regarding work outcomes and well-being among working women. These gaps may aid researchers in further delving into the relationship between work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and support for well-being among working women. This review likewise provides an overview of the current work outcomes and well-being studies from seven databases, their methodologies, sample size, and theories, which aid researchers in identifying key concepts and research gaps. From this review, contributions can be made to identify new and important research areas to be investigated.

Furthermore, this review provides theoretical contributions in terms of summarising existing knowledge surrounding work outcomes and their impacts on well-being, as well as aiding in developing a new theoretical framework using a mixture of work outcome elements included in this review. Compiling commonly used theories provides a diverse and integrative view of the constructs, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of them and their influences. Subsequently, the systematic review highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each included paper by evaluating the quality of the research paper following the specific appraisal tools. The review critically evaluates the methodological rigour of the included studies. It enlightens researchers on the included research paper's quality and opportunities for further methodological advancements in research design, participants, measures, ethical procedures, and data analysis.

Accordingly, the findings from this review contribute to the integration of practical decision-making from a theoretical standpoint and aid in transforming theoretical insights into real-world applications by stakeholders, policymakers and other practitioners. This review carefully identifies the link between work outcomes and psychological well-being and advocates for implementing women-friendly policies, such as work-life balance policies. The challenges regarding work-life balance that are immensely reported in this review serve as a guideline for the crucial work-life balance policies, such as the focus on improving flexible work arrangements, as well as reducing gender stereotypes and stigma towards working women. Subsequently, the positive association between support and psychological well-being asserts the importance of training programmes for supervisors that emphasise the strategies to maintain well-being and provide work-related support to subordinates. Supervisor training, work-life balance policies, workplace bullying policies and stress management programmes are essential to positive organisational change.

However, the absence of studies from the Malaysian population in this review demonstrates a theoretical and practical gap. The limited studies on work outcomes and psychological well-being among working women in Malaysia are insufficient to support the development of women-friendly policies in the workplace. Future research may benefit from this review by designing mixed-method research, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches regarding work outcomes and psychological well-being from the perspectives of working women and organisations to provide comprehensive and clearer findings regarding these relationships in Malaysia. Such studies, particularly those that identify the impacts of work outcomes on psychological well-being from different ethnicities, will provide detailed descriptions of experiences that further contribute to developing actionable strategies to improve work outcomes and psychological well-being that cater to working women from diverse backgrounds.

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APPENDIX

Supplementary Table 1
Included quantitative studies for review

No.	Author (Year)	Country	Sample	Theoretical approach	Instrument	Outcome
1	Akram and Ch (2020)	Lahore	Female teachers $N = 410$	Not mentioned	Work-family conflict (Carlson et al., 2000) General health questionnaire (Goldberg, 1979)	Work-family conflict significantly correlates positively with psychological well-being ($p < 0.000$, $t = 16.374 > 1.96$); path coefficient 0.556 shows a positive correlation between work-family conflict and psychological well-being. It shows that teachers having work-family conflict are also having depression and anxiety, which reflects their poor mental health and psychological well-being.
2	Alrawadieh et al. (2022)	Turkey	Female tour guides $N = 221$	Not mentioned	Sexual harassment scale (Murry et al., 2001) Psychological well-being scale (Diener et al., 1985) Perceived social support scale (Zimet et al., 1988) Perceived organisational support scale (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006)	Significant positive correlations between perceived social support and organisational support with psychological well-being were reported, and a significant negative correlation between sexual harassment and psychological well-being. Besides that, sexual harassment significantly and negatively affects psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.224$, p < 0.0001).
3	Chawla and Sharma (2019)	India	Managers $N = 433$ (201 women)	Not mentioned	Social support scale (Marcinkus et al., 2007) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988) Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985)	For women, findings reported a negative, non-significant correlation between social support and well-being, whereby higher social support leads to lower well-being levels.

Supplementary Table 1 (*continue*)

No.	Author (Year)	Country	Sample	Theoretical approach	Instrument	Outcome
4	Cuéllar-Molina et al. (2018)	European countries	Female managers $N = 575$	Social production function theory Job demand – resource model Warr's model of well-being	European Working Conditions Survey (Eurofond, 2015), which consisted of the following: 1. A 3-item measure for subjective well-being 2. A single-item for work-life balance	A significant positive effect was reported between work-life balance and female managers' subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.215$, p <0.001).
5	Dirfa and Prasetya (2019)	Indonesia	Female lecturer $N = 40$	Not mentioned	Work-Life Balance Scale (Fisher, 2009) Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1995)	The results showed a significant positive correlation that $r = 0.702$ with a significance value of 0.000 ($p<0.05$), which means that psychological well-being will be high with a higher work-life balance.
6	Jabeen et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Female nurses $N = 350$	Conservation of resource theory	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised scale (Einarsen et al., 2009) General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972)	Workplace bullying has a negative impact on psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.209$, p < 0.01).
7	Kapoor et al. (2021)	India	Working mothers $N = 326$	Conservation of resource theory	Psychological Well-Being Scale (Diener & Diener, 2008) Perceived stress scale (Cohen et al., 1983)	An inverse association was found between perceived stress and psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.32$, p <0.01),
8	Kim (2022)	South Korea	Women service worker $N = 135$	Not mentioned	Modified job stress tool (Lee, 2009; Beehr & Newman, 1978) Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989)	On the other hand, psychological well-being showed negative correlations with job role stress ($r = -0.43$, p <0.001), interpersonal stress ($r = -0.41$, p <0.001), job environment stress ($r = -0.40$, p < 0.001), interactional stress ($r = -0.20$, p = 0.019), job stress ($r = -0.44$, p <0.001). Psychological well-being factors include job role stress ($\beta = -0.24$, p <0.001).

Supplementary Table 1 *(continue)*

No.	Author (Year)	Country	Sample	Theoretical approach	Instrument	Outcome
9	Lucia-Casademunt et al. (2018)	European countries	Female employees $N = 664$	Perceived Organisational Support Theory Warr's model of well-being Role stress theory	Working Conditions Survey (Eurofond, 2012) which consisted of: 1. WHO-5 Questionnaire Index (World Health Organisation) 2. A single-item measure for supervisor support 3. A single-item measure for work-life balance	Correlations between work-life balance and job well-being are positively significant ($r = 0.118$, $p<0.01$) and between supervisor support and job well-being ($r = 0.200$, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, a significant and negative impact was found for the interaction effect of work-life balance and supervisor support on job well-being, in such a way that at low perceived work-life balance, supervisor support increases the job well-being of women. However, supervisor support was less relevant and important in increasing well-being and achieving a high work-life balance.
10	Mensah (2021)	European countries	Working women $N = 15,486$	Job demand-control theory Effort reward imbalance theory Job demand resources model Transactional process model	Working Conditions Survey (Eurofond, 2015), which consisted of: 1. WHO-5 Questionnaire Index (World Health Organisation) 2. A single-item measure of Job Stress 3. A short version of the social support scale	Findings showed a weak and negative significant correlation between job stress and mental well-being among women ($p = -0.248$) and a positive correlation between social support and mental well-being ($p = 0.273$). In addition, social support significantly mediated the relationship between mental well-being and job stress ($\beta = -0.0052$, 95% *CI*: $-0.0081–0.0024$)
11	Prasad and Vaidya (2021)	India	IT sector female employees $N = 255$	Not mentioned	Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1995) Self-developed stress and a work-life balance scale	There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and psychological well-being, and a significant relationship between occupational stress and all elements of psychological well-being (autonomy, positive relations, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance)

Supplementary Table 1 *(continue)*

No.	Author (Year)	Country	Sample	Theoretical approach	Instrument	Outcome
12	Shui et al. (2020)	China	Rural working women $N = 380$	Not mentioned	The household survey (China Rural Development Survey Group in Sichuan Province, 2016).	Work-interfering-with-family conflict and work-family balance impacted the subjective well-being of rural working women in China.
13	Wang et al. (2020)	China	Female doctors $N = 120$	Job demand-supports-constraints model	Perceived Social Support Scale (Zimet et al., 1988) Subjective Well-being Scale (Duan, 1996)	Perceived social support and its dimensions of other support and family support positively correlate with subjective well-being. In contrast, a non-significant correlation was found between friend support and subjective well-being. Furthermore, family support moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being.

Source: Author's work

Supplementary Table 2
Included qualitative studies for review

No.	Author	Country	Variable	Objective	Sample	Theory	Findings
	Antoshchuk and Gewinner (2020)	Soviet Union	Work-life balance	To examine the work-life balance strategies of Russian-speaking female academics after migration.	Female academics $N = 22$	Capabilities and agency framework to work-family balance Life course institutionalisation theory	Working mothers engaged in three strategies: family-oriented, compromise and career-oriented. The most common is compromise, followed by career-oriented and family-oriented. Two types of institutional and cultural contexts shape these strategies: self-reliance and partner involvement.
	Bertola et al. (2022)	Italy	Work-life balance	To explore the work-family backlash phenomenon in the Italian working mother work context.	Italian working women $N = 15$	Social role theory Work-life spillover theory	Mechanisms of work-family backlash, including stigma, spillover, inequity, and strategic mechanism of work-family backlash, triggered a vicious cycle of perceived inequity that leads to job dissatisfaction and low work motivation.

Supplementary Table 2 (*continue*)

No.	Author	Country	Variable	Objective	Sample	Theory	Findings
	Boakye et al. (2021)	Ghana	Work-life balance	To explore the experiences of working mothers currently studying and working on achieving work-life balance.	Working mothers *N* = 6	Ecological theory Conservation of resources theory	Working mothers maintain work-life balance through work flexibility, co-worker support, supportive supervisor, supportive family, and programmed work-life schedule.
	Dousin et al. (2022)	Malaysia	Work-life balance	To explore the experiences of female doctors and nurses in Malaysia and the factors impacting their work-life balance.	Women doctors and nurses *N* = 26	Not mentioned	Three themes emerged from the interview: the burden of carrying dual responsibilities disrupts work-life balance; collegiality at work facilitates work-life balance and reduces work-life balance conflict; and staff shortages increase work-life balance conflict.
	Faghihi et al. (2021)	Iran	Workplace bullying	To describe the components of workplace violence against nurses from the perspective of working women.	Female nurses *N*= 21	Not mentioned	Workplace violence against women occurs at two levels, namely interpersonal violence, including physical and verbal violence, patient ingratitude, and organisational coercion, such as work demands, low support, and lack of facilities.
	Hall et al. (2019)	China	Well-being	To explore the experiences of Filipino female domestic workers in China regarding working conditions and risk factors for poor health.	Female domestic workers *N* = 22	Not mentioned	Findings reported factors affecting well-being, such as employer abuse, lack of privacy, language barriers, discrimination, lack of protection, and low social support.

Supplementary Table 2 *(continue)*

No.	Author	Country	Variable	Objective	Sample	Theory	Findings
	Lekchiri and Eversole (2021)	Morocco	Work-life balance	To explore the perception of professional Moroccan working women on work-life balance.	Working women $N = 45$	Conflict Theory Role Theory	Work-life balance was viewed as equal fulfilling professional and personal responsibilities. 67% of participants faced difficulties balancing their professional lives and families. Most the companies did not have work-life balance programmes for the employees. Finally, participants stated that they received a good support system from their families.
	Lorber et al. (2021)	Slovenia	Well-being	To identify workplace factors that influence the well-being of nurses.	Female nurses $N = 12$	Not mentioned	Factors influencing the well-being of nurses include leadership style, personal qualities and knowledge and skills of the leader, workplace stress, satisfied patients, and organisation-related factors such as co-workers, workload, lack of staff, and safety culture.
	Uddin (2021)	Bangladesh	Work-life balance	To identify the challenges of work-life balance among working women in Bangladesh.	Working women $N = 22$	Not mentioned	Analysis showed that motivations for work-life balance include flexibility, homeworking, and receiving support from family, spouse, and organisation. Meanwhile, challenges faced by working women were limited time, socio-cultural and family norms, and gender stereotypes. Lastly, strategies used by participants include effective time and stress management, keeping the household happy, managing professional and personal lives equally, and prioritising.
	Wadsworth et al. (2019)	United States of America	Well-being	To explore the definition, barriers, and facilitators to the occupational well-being of sexual assault victims/ survivors.	Working women $N = 22$	Not mentioned	Diagnosed with mental disorders and having symptoms, substance abuse, inflexible attendance policies, and workplace bullying were barriers to occupational well-being. Meanwhile, personal coping strategies and receiving organisational and social support were facilitators of occupational well-being.

Source: Author's work