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NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL: QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS INFLUENCES ON REMOTE WORK EFFICIENCY AMONG THAI EMPLOYEES DURING COVID-19

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a substantial rise in remote work, underscoring the importance of work-life balance and job stress on employee performance, particularly within Thailand's private sector. This study examines the effects of work-life balance and job stress on the job performance of remote employees in Thailand's private sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Involving 385 employees from various private companies in Thailand, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with SMART PLS. The analysis showed that work-life balance, in terms of work and family conflicts, significantly increases job stress (β = 0.793, p < 0.001) and directly decreases job performance (β = -0.332, p = 0.002). However, job stress did not have a significant impact on job performance (β = 0.021, p = 0.565). The results indicate that work-life balance, particularly work and family conflicts, significantly elevates job stress and directly reduces job performance among remote workers in Thailand's private sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the increase in job stress, it does not significantly affect job performance, emphasizing the need for interventions to effectively manage work-family conflicts to improve employee well-being and productivity.

Keywords: COVID-19, job stress, job performance, work-from-home work-life balance

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically transformed the way people work across the globe. One of the most significant shifts has been the transition from traditional office settings to remote work environments. The urgency and scale of this transition have been unprecedented, driven by the need to maintain social distancing and minimize the spread of the virus. As a result, remote work, which was previously considered a flexible work arrangement for a select few, became the norm for a large portion of the workforce.

The rapid shift to remote work during the pandemic has sparked considerable interest among researchers and practitioners alike. Studies have sought to understand the experiences, attitudes, and challenges associated with this new way of working. For instance, Zhang, Yu, and Marin (2021)

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analyzed over one million tweets related to remote work and found generally positive sentiments, despite concerns about cybersecurity, mental health, and work-life balance. Similarly, Wrycza and Maślankowski (2020) reported a significant increase in discussions about remote work on social media, with over 60% of users expressing approval of this work arrangement.

The shift to remote work has highlighted the importance of work-life balance and stress management. With the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, employees are finding it increasingly challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The constant presence of work in the home environment can lead to increased stress and burnout. Adekoya, Adisa, and Aiyenitaju (2022) emphasized the need for flexible working preferences, smart working practices, and self-discipline to facilitate effective remote working in the post-COVID-19 era.

The objective of this study is to explore how work-life balance and stress influence remote work efficiency among Thai private sector employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aims to provide insights into the specific challenges faced by these employees and offer recommendations for improving remote work practices. The study focuses on three main aspects: the background and context of remote work during COVID-19, the importance of work-life balance and stress management, and the specific impacts on Thai private sector employees.

Remote work, often referred to as telecommuting or telework, is not a new concept. It has been practiced in various forms since the advent of digital communication technologies. However, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated its adoption on an unprecedented scale. Prior to the pandemic, remote work was largely seen as a privilege or a perk offered to certain employees, primarily in knowledge-intensive industries. Estimates from late 2019 suggested that only about 5% of employees worked remotely on a regular basis (Leonardi, 2020). The pandemic, however, forced organizations worldwide to rapidly transition to remote work arrangements to comply with government-imposed lockdowns and social distancing measures.

This sudden shift posed numerous challenges for both employers and employees. Organizations had to quickly equip their employees with the necessary tools and technologies to work from home effectively. Many employees, on the other hand, faced difficulties in adapting to the new work environment. Issues such as inadequate workspace, lack of proper equipment, and distractions at home became common concerns. Additionally, the lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues and supervisors led to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020).

The importance of work-life balance cannot be overstated, especially in the context of remote work. Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between an individual's work responsibilities and personal life. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for overall well-being and productivity. When employees can effectively manage their work and personal lives, they are likely to experience lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and better overall health.

The transition to remote work during the pandemic disrupted this balance for many employees. The home, which traditionally served as a place of rest and relaxation, was now also a workplace. This dual role of the home environment made it difficult for employees to switch off from work, leading to prolonged working hours and increased stress. Kacprowska (2021) highlighted that the lack of direct contact with co-workers, the blurring of boundaries between private and professional life, and the constant presence of work were significant obstacles to remote work during the COVID-19

pandemic.

Stress management is another critical aspect of remote work. Stress is a natural response to challenging situations, but chronic stress can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic created an environment of uncertainty and fear, contributing to increased stress levels among employees. The sudden shift to remote work added to this stress, as employees had to navigate new technologies, manage work responsibilities in a non-traditional setting, and cope with the general anxiety associated with the pandemic.

Studies have shown that high levels of stress can negatively impact work efficiency. For instance, Ingusci et al. (2021) found that work overload and techno-stress were significant predictors of behavioral stress among remote workers. Their study also highlighted the role of job crafting, which involves proactive efforts to optimize work conditions, in mitigating the negative effects of stress. Similarly, Prodanova and Kocarev (2021) emphasized that while remote work can be productive, it is crucial for employees to achieve satisfaction with their work environment to maintain long-term efficiency.

In the context of Thai private sector employees, the challenges of remote work are compounded by cultural factors. Thailand, like many other Asian countries, has a collectivist culture that values close-knit relationships and teamwork. The shift to remote work disrupted these cultural norms, making it difficult for employees to maintain social connections and collaborate effectively. Additionally, the hierarchical nature of many Thai organizations posed challenges in terms of communication and decision-making in a remote work setting.

The present study aims to explore the specific impacts of work-life balance and stress on remote work efficiency among Thai private sector employees. By understanding these impacts, the study seeks to provide recommendations for improving remote

work practices and supporting employee well-being. The research focuses on three key areas: the challenges faced by employees in maintaining work-life balance, the levels of stress experienced during remote work, and the overall impact on work efficiency.

To achieve these objectives, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The quantitative surveys aim to gather data on employees' work-life balance, stress levels, and perceived work efficiency. The qualitative interviews provide deeper insights into the personal experiences and challenges faced by employees. This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and the development of practical recommendations.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the way we work, with remote work becoming a central feature of the new normal. While remote work offers several advantages, it also presents challenges, particularly in terms of maintaining work-life balance and managing stress. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on remote work and provide valuable insights for employers and policymakers in Thailand. By addressing the issues of work-life balance and stress, organizations can enhance remote work efficiency and support the well-being of their employees.

2. Work-Life Balance and Job Performance

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a pivotal element influencing job performance and overall employee well-being. The equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life activities is not just a luxury but a necessity in the contemporary work environment, especially

given the rapid changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following discussion expands on how work-life balance impacts job performance, integrating insights from recent research and empirical studies.

Work-life balance refers to the ability to manage and harmonize the demands of both work and personal life effectively. This balance is crucial for maintaining mental and physical health, which, in turn, affects job performance. The growing body of literature suggests that achieving a healthy work-life balance leads to higher job satisfaction, reduced stress levels, and improved overall performance. One comprehensive literature review highlights the various dimensions of work-life balance and its impact on employee performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The review underscores that work-life balance positively correlates with enhanced employee performance and reduced turnover rates (Otuya & Andeyo, 2020). The ability to balance work and personal life effectively allows employees to engage more fully with their job responsibilities, thereby boosting productivity and efficiency.

The importance of work-life balance is further corroborated by Udin (2023), who conducted a study within an Indonesian plywood manufacturing company. The findings revealed that work-life balance significantly enhances affective commitment and job satisfaction, both of which are critical mediators that boost employee performance. This indicates that employees who feel supported in their personal lives are more committed and satisfied with their jobs, leading to better performance outcomes. In another empirical study, Valery, Santati, and Hadjri (2023) examined the influence of work-life balance on employee performance in a hybrid working system. The study, conducted with employees from Telkomsel Regional Sumbagsel, demonstrated that work-life balance has a positive and significant impact on job performance. The study recommends organizational support

from superiors and colleagues to help employees achieve a balance between work and personal life, thereby enhancing their performance.

Work-life balance not only promotes job satisfaction but also psychological well-being, which is essential for optimal job performance. A study by Faisal, Hameed, and Aleemi (2022) developed a model to explore the direct and indirect effects of work-life balance on job performance. The findings confirmed that work-life balance promotes job satisfaction and psychological well-being, both of which are precursors to improved job performance. Furthermore, psychological well-being was found to mediate the relationship between work-life balance and job performance, highlighting the importance of mental health in the workplace.

The relationship between work-life balance and job performance is also influenced by various organizational factors such as job security, compensation, organizational culture, and working hours. Swaminathan and Rajeshwari (2023) conducted a survey at Wildcraft India Ltd, Bengaluru, and found that these factors significantly affect employees' ability to balance work and personal life, which in turn impacts their job performance. The study concluded that both management and employees play crucial roles in achieving work-life balance.

Moreover, the impact of work-life balance extends beyond job satisfaction and performance to include broader organizational outcomes. A meta-analysis by Wong, Chan, and Teh (2020) synthesized data from 202 records to evaluate the relationship between work-life balance arrangements and organizational performance. The analysis revealed that work-life balance positively affects career motivation, employee attendance, recruitment, and retention. These findings suggest that organizations that prioritize work-life balance can achieve better overall performance.

In the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Susanto et al. (2022) explored the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of family-supportive supervisor behaviors on the relationship between work-life balance and job performance. The study found that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship, while family-supportive behaviors moderate the effects, indicating that supportive workplace policies can enhance the benefits of work-life balance on job performance.

In conclusion, the evidence strongly supports the positive impact of work-life balance on job performance. Balancing professional and personal life leads to higher job satisfaction, improved psychological well-being, and enhanced overall performance. Organizations that implement supportive policies and foster a culture that values work-life balance are likely to see significant improvements in employee productivity and organizational outcomes. As the workplace continues to evolve, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritizing work-life balance will remain crucial for sustainable employee performance and well-being. This study measures work-life balance through two dimensions: family to work conflict and work to family conflict. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H1: Work-life balance (work & family conflicts) has a negative influence on job performance.

3. Work-Life Balance and Job Stress

Work-life balance (WLB) and job stress are two critical factors that significantly impact employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance. The equilibrium between professional and personal life is essential for maintaining mental and physical health, which can directly influence job stress levels. This expanded analysis explores the intricate relationship between work-life balance and job stress, integrating insights from recent research and empirical studies.

A study by Attar, Çağlıyan, and Abdul-Kareem (2021) highlights the moderating role of work-life balance in the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. Their research, conducted among employees in manufacturing SMEs, found that while work-life balance positively impacts job satisfaction, it does not significantly moderate the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. This suggests that although work-life balance can enhance job satisfaction, it may not directly buffer the stress experienced by employees.

The relationship between work-life balance and job stress is further examined by Maglalang (2020) in a study focusing on employees of private educational institutions. The research found that factors such as excessive workload, long work hours, and lack of family-friendly policies contribute significantly to job stress. Employees who managed to achieve a work-life balance reported lower levels of stress, indicating the importance of organizational support in mitigating stressors.

Emotional intelligence and its interaction with work-life balance are also critical in managing job stress. Ahmad et al. (2023) explored the role of emotional intelligence in helping working women balance their professional and personal lives, thereby reducing job stress. The study concluded that women with higher emotional intelligence were better able to manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance, which positively affected their job performance.

The impact of work-life balance on job stress is also evident in various occupational settings. Sharkey and Caska (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study comparing traditional work environments with those allowing a combination of workplace and home-based work. Their findings revealed that employees with

flexible work arrangements experienced greater job and life satisfaction, although perceived stress levels did not significantly differ between the two groups. This suggests that while flexible work arrangements can enhance satisfaction, they do not necessarily reduce job stress.

Dharmarajan and Ezhilarasi (2021) examined the correlation between work-life conflict and work-life balance among women employees in private organizations. Their study found that work-life conflict significantly increased job stress, which in turn negatively impacted work-life balance. The findings highlight the need for organizations to address work-life conflict to enhance employee well-being.

Furthermore, the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between job stress and career satisfaction is explored by recent studies. For instance, a study on high school teachers found that work-life balance significantly mediated the negative impact of job stress on career satisfaction. This indicates that improving work-life balance can mitigate the adverse effects of job stress on career satisfaction (Çobanoglu et al., 2023).

The systemic review by Otuya and Andeyo (2020) also emphasizes the various dimensions of work-life balance and its effects on employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The review suggests that effective work-life balance strategies are essential for reducing organizational stress and enhancing overall employee well-being.

The positive correlation between work-life balance and mental health is further supported by Liswandi and Muhammad (2023). Their systematic review revealed that work-life balance is associated with various positive mental health outcomes, such as psychological well-being, resilience, and lower turnover intentions. This underscores the importance of work-life balance in maintaining mental health and reducing job stress.

In conclusion, the evidence strongly supports the vital role of work-life balance in reducing job stress. Employees who maintain a healthy work-life balance tend to experience lower stress levels, which in turn enhances their job satisfaction, performance, and overall well-being. Organizations that emphasize work-life balance through supportive policies and flexible work arrangements can significantly alleviate job stress and improve employee outcomes. As the work environment continues to adapt, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining a focus on work-life balance will be crucial for sustainable employee well-being and organizational success. This study measures work-life balance through two dimensions: family to work conflict and work to family conflict. Therefore, it can be hypothesized as follows:

H2: Work-life balance (work & family conflicts) has a positive influence on job stress.

4. Job Stress and Job Performance

Job stress is a prevalent issue in modern workplaces and has a significant impact on employee performance. Understanding the relationship between job stress and job performance is crucial for organizations aiming to foster a productive and healthy work environment. This analysis explores various dimensions of job stress and its effects on job performance, drawing from recent research and empirical studies. Job stress refers to the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the job demands exceed the worker's capabilities, resources, or needs. It is often caused by factors such as role ambiguity, role conflict, workload, lack of control over work, and poor organizational support. These stressors can lead to both physical and mental health problems, which in turn affect job performance.

A study conducted by Latif et al. (2022) on sports officers in Malaysia revealed that role

ambiguity, role conflict, and workload significantly contribute to job stress. The research found a significant negative relationship between job stress and job performance, indicating that higher stress levels lead to decreased performance among employees. Similarly, Jamil et al. (2023) identified the root causes of job stress and their impact on employee performance. Their mixed-methods study highlighted that excessive workload, long work hours, and lack of control are major contributors to job stress, which adversely affects employee performance. The findings suggest that addressing these root causes can help mitigate job stress and enhance performance. Rahmat Rasheed et al. (2023) explored the impact of job stress on the performance of remote work employees. Their study found that job stress negatively impacts employee performance, but job crafting can moderate this relationship. Job crafting involves employees altering their job demands and resources to better fit their needs, which can help reduce the adverse effects of job stress.

The relationship between stress management and job performance is also significant. Altindag (2020) emphasized the importance of stress management in improving job performance. His study found that effective stress management strategies, such as providing support and resources, can mitigate the negative effects of stress on performance. Dehghani et al. (2020) conducted a study on the staff of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, which demonstrated that job stress is inversely related to job performance. High levels of stress were associated with low job performance, highlighting the need for improved communication and support within the organization to reduce stressors.

The impact of job stress on performance is also evident in the manufacturing sector. A study by Zainuddin et al. (2021) on employees of Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation found that factors such as time pressure and skill discretion significantly predict job performance. The study confirmed that job stress negatively impacts employee productivity and performance. Iskamto (2021) further confirmed the negative impact of job stress on employee performance through quantitative analysis. The study showed that job stress significantly reduces job performance, accounting for 78.3% of the variance in performance outcomes. In educational settings, Idris et al. (2020) found that job stress among faculty members adversely affects their performance. The study also highlighted the role of emotional intelligence in mitigating the effects of stress, suggesting that emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to handle stress and maintain high performance levels.

Overall, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the significant negative impact of job stress on job performance. Addressing job stress through effective management strategies, organizational support, and job crafting can help improve employee performance and well-being. Organizations must prioritize reducing job stress to foster a productive and healthy work environment.

H3: Job stress has a negative influence on job performance.

5. Methods

5.1 Participants

Based on 2020 population data from the Bank of Thailand, there were 14,943,430 private sector employees in Thailand with at least one day per week of work-from-home policy. Using Cochran's (1977) formula for a minimum sample size of 385 and Hair et al.'s (2019) recommendation of 10 to 20 times the number of observed variables, this study, which had fourteen observed variables, determined a sample size of 385 to be suitable for SEM analysis. The sample consisted of 111 males (28.8%), 267 females (69.4%), and 7 LGBTQIA+ individuals (1.8%). In terms of marital status, 300 participants (77.9%) were single, 82 (21.3%)

were married, and 3 (0.8%) were divorced or separated.

5.2 Measures

Work-life balance (WB) in this study was assessed using two dimensions: family to work conflict (FWC) and work to family conflict (WFC). Each dimension was measured using three items, designed to capture the extent of conflict between work and family responsibilities in both directions. The reliability of these measures was verified using Cronbach's alpha, with the FWC dimension showing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.891 and the WFC dimension showing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.862, indicating high internal consistency for both dimensions. These reliability values are consistent with established standards for social science research, where a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). The items were carefully formulated to ensure they accurately reflect the experiences of work-life conflict from both family to work and work to family perspectives.

Job stress (JS) in this study was assessed across six dimensions: Demand (DEM), Control (CON), Relationships (REL), Change (CHA), Role (ROL), and Support (SUP). Each dimension comprised three items. The reliability of these dimensions was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.821 for both DEM and CON, 0.905 for REL, 0.885 for CHA, 0.870 for ROL, and 0.799 for SUP. These values indicate a high level of internal consistency, aligning with the standards set forth in the literature, which suggest a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or higher is acceptable for reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Job performance (JP) was assessed using three dimensions: quality (QLY), quantity (QTY), and time (TIM), with each dimension consisting of three items. The reliability of these dimensions was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding values of 0.845 for quality, 0.787 for quantity, and

0.811 for time, demonstrating high internal consistency for each dimension (Hair et al., 2019).

5.3 Data Collection

The data for this study was collected through a structured survey administered to employees of private companies in Thailand who worked from home at least one day per week, according to the 2020 population data from the Bank of Thailand. The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula, recommending a minimum of 385 samples, and Hair et al. (2019), suggesting a sample size of 10 to 20 times the number of observed variables. With fourteen observed variables in this study, the sample size range was 140 to 280 participants. However, to ensure robustness for SEM analysis, a total of 385 respondents were selected. Participants were chosen using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across different demographic groups. The survey was distributed online to maximize reach and convenience. It included sections covering demographic information, work-life balance, job stress, job performance, and other relevant variables. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses to encourage honesty and accuracy. The data collected provided a comprehensive dataset for analyzing the relationships between job stress, work-life balance, and job performance using SEM via SMART PLS.

5.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SMART PLS to explore the relationships among the observed variables. Initially, data was screened for missing values and outliers, followed by the calculation of descriptive statistics to understand sample characteristics. The measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability by

examining factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), with acceptable thresholds being factor loadings > 0.70, CR > 0.70, and AVE > 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Once validated, the structural model was evaluated by analyzing path coefficients, R-squared values, and significance levels, with path coefficients considered significant at p < 0.05. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples provided robust standard errors and confidence intervals (Cochran, 1977). Model fit indices such as SRMR (<0.08) and NFI (>0.90) were used to assess overall model fit. The SEM analysis revealed significant direct and indirect relationships among variables, offering insights into factors influencing job performance and work-life balance, interpreted within the context of existing literature.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Prior to commencing the research, approval was obtained from the Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi's institutional review board (IRB). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were thoroughly informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants having the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the study. Participants' responses were anonymized to protect their identities, ensuring that individual data could not be traced back to any participant. Data was securely stored and was only accessible to the research team to prevent any unauthorized access. The survey included assurances that participants' data would be used exclusively for research purposes and would not be shared with third parties. Additionally, any potential conflicts

of interest were transparently disclosed to participants. The study adhered to the principles of beneficence, aiming to maximize benefits while minimizing any potential harm. Participants were not subjected to any physical or psychological harm during the data collection process. By following these ethical guidelines, the study ensured the protection of participants' rights and well-being, thereby upholding the highest standards of research integrity and ethics.

6. Results

6.1 Measurement Model

Table 1 presents the measurement model results for Job Performance (JP), Job Stress (JS), and Work-Life Balance (WB), indicating high reliability and validity for each construct. The Cronbach's alpha (CA) values for JP, JS, and WB are 0.802, 0.866, and 0.817 respectively, and the composite reliability (CR) values are 0.812, 0.863, and 0.823 respectively, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, thus demonstrating high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). The average variance extracted (AVE) values for JP, JS, and WB are 0.598, 0.575, and 0.700 respectively, indicating that the constructs explain a substantial portion of the variance of their indicators. The item loadings for JP range from 0.574 to 0.917, for JS from 0.601 to 0.816, and for WB from 0.768 to 0.900, confirming the validity of the measures. These results validate the use of these constructs in subsequent structural analyses.

Table 2 presents the discriminant validity assessment for Job Performance (JP), Job Stress (JS), and Work-Life Balance (WB), showing the latent variable correlations and the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE). The diagonal elements represent the square root of the AVE for each construct: 0.773 for JP, 0.718 for JS, and 0.837 for WB. For discriminant validity to be confirmed, these values must be greater

than the correlations between constructs. The results show that each construct's square root of AVE is higher than its correlations with other constructs (JP with JS at -0.243 and WB at -0.316, JS with WB at 0.793), indicating that each construct shares more

variance with its own indicators than with others. This confirms the discriminant validity, ensuring that JP, JS, and WB are distinct and valid measures of their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1. Measurement model

Construct	Loadings	Outer weights	CA	CR	AVE
Job performance (JP)			.802	.812	.598
QLY	.574	.294			
QTY	.790	.405			
TIM	.917	.470			
Job stress (JS)			.866	.863	.575
CHA	.696	.210			
CON	.816	.246			
DEM	.809	.244			
REL	.724	.218			
ROL	.601	.181			
SUP	.635	.192			
Work-life balance (WB)			.817	.823	.700
FWC	.768	.501			
WFC	.900	.586			

Table 2. Discriminant validity (latent variable correlation and square root of AVE)

	JP	JS	WB
JP	0.773		
JS	-0.243	0.718	
WB	-0.316	0.793	0.837

Table 3 shows the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values for the constructs Job Performance (JP), Job Stress (JS), and Work-Life Balance (WB), which is used to assess discriminant validity. The HTMT ratio compares the average correlations of indicators across constructs (heterotrait-heteromethod) with the average correlations of indicators within the same construct (monotrait-heteromethod). For discriminant validity to be established, HTMT values should typically be below 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). The table shows that the HTMT value between JP and JS is 0.243, between JP and WB is 0.317, and between JS and WB is 0.790, all of which are below the threshold of 0.90. These results confirm that the constructs JP, JS, and WB are distinct from one another, thereby demonstrating good discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3. HTMT (heterotrait–monotrait ratio)

	JP	JS	WB
JP			
JS	.243		
WB	.317	.790	

6.2 Assessment of Structural Model

Table 4 presents the fit indices for both the saturated and estimated models in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is 0.059 for both models, indicating a good fit as it is below the 0.08 threshold (Hair et al., 2019). The d_ULS and d_G values are 0.230 and 0.114, respectively, reflecting a low discrepancy between observed and model-implied correlations.

The Chi-square value is 221.809, which, while sensitive to sample size, suggests a reasonable fit when considered with other indices. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.889, slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.90, but still indicating an acceptable model fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). These results collectively suggest that the model fits the data well, with both the saturated and estimated models showing similar and acceptable fit statistics.

Table 4. Saturated model results

	Saturate model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.059	0.059
d_ULS	0.230	0.230
d_G	0.114	0.114
Chi-square	221.809	221.809
NFI	0.889	0.889

6.3 Structural Equation Modelling

Table 5 presents the results of the hypothesis testing for the relationships between Work-Life Balance (WB), Job Stress (JS), and Job Performance (JP). The beta coefficient (β) for each relationship indicates the strength and direction of the effect, with the mean, standard deviation (STDEV), and t-value provided to assess the statistical significance. Hypothesis H1 examines the effect of WB on JP, showing a negative beta of -0.332, a mean of -0.182, a standard deviation of 0.057, and a t-value of -3.166, which is significant at $p < 0.05$, leading to its acceptance. Hypothesis H2 tests the relationship between WB and JS, with a positive beta of 0.793, a mean of 0.795, a standard deviation of 0.037, and a t-value of 21.653, also significant at $p < 0.05$, resulting in its acceptance. However, Hypothesis H3, which explores the impact of JS on JP, has a beta of 0.021, a mean of 0.039, a standard deviation of 0.067, and a t-value of 0.575, which is not significant at $p < 0.05$, leading to its rejection. These results suggest that while WB significantly affects both JP and JS, JS does not have a significant direct impact on JP (See Table 5 and Figure 1).

Table 5. Hypothesis constructs

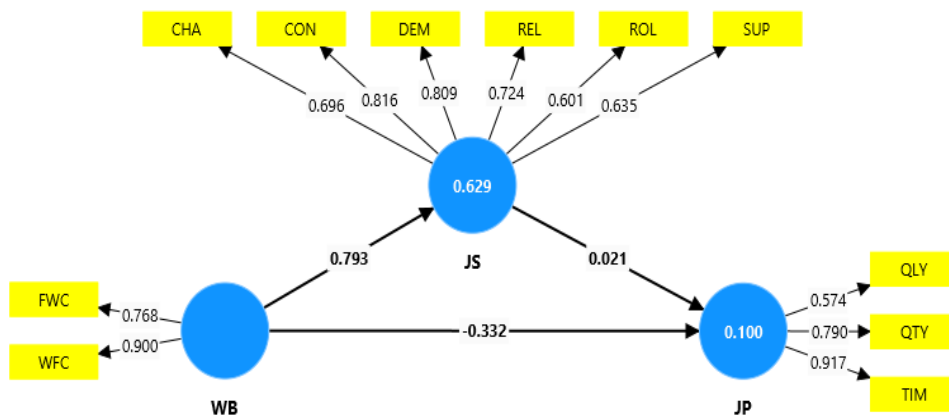| Effects	Relationships	Beta	Mean	STDEV	t-Value	Decision
H1	WB -->JP	-0.332	-0.182	0.057	-3.166*	Accepted
H2	WB -->JS	0.793	0.795	0.037	21.653*	Accepted
H3	JS -->JP	0.021	0.039	0.067	0.575	Not Accepted

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. PLS-SEM showing relationships in variables

7. Discussion

The present findings reveal that work-life balance, measured through family to work conflict and work to family conflict, negatively influences job performance, which contrasts with much of the existing literature. While numerous studies, such as those by Otuya and Andeyo (2020), Udin (2023), and Valery, Santati, and Hadjri (2023), underscore the positive impact of work-life balance on job performance, suggesting that effective management of work and personal life enhances job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and overall performance, the current study's results indicate that conflicts arising from balancing these domains can detrimentally affect job performance. This discrepancy highlights the complexity of work-life balance, where the potential for conflict might outweigh the benefits in certain contexts. It suggests that while a supportive work environment generally enhances performance, unresolved conflicts between work and family responsibilities can hinder employee productivity. Consequently, organizations must not only promote work-life balance but also actively manage and mitigate work-family conflicts to sustain employee performance and well-being in evolving work environments, particularly post-COVID-19.

The present findings indicate that work-life balance, specifically through the dimensions of family to work conflict and work to family conflict, has a positive influence on job stress. This contrasts with much of the existing literature, which generally highlights the benefits of work-life balance in mitigating job stress. For instance, Attar, Çağlıyan, and Abdul-Kareem (2021) found that while work-life balance enhances job satisfaction, it does not significantly moderate job stress, suggesting that achieving balance alone may not be sufficient to buffer stress. Maglalang (2020) reported that excessive workload and long hours contribute significantly to job stress,

and employees with better work-life balance reported lower stress levels. Ahmad et al. (2023) highlighted that emotional intelligence helps reduce job stress by facilitating better work-life balance. Sharkey and Caska (2020) also found that flexible work arrangements increase satisfaction but do not necessarily reduce stress. Dharmarajan and Ezhilarasi (2021) observed that work-life conflict increases job stress, negatively impacting balance. Çobanoglu et al. (2023) and Otuya and Andeyo (2020) underscored that effective work-life balance strategies reduce stress and enhance well-being. Liswandi and Muhammad (2023) further supported the positive correlation between work-life balance and mental health. Therefore, while the prevailing literature suggests that a healthy work-life balance generally reduces stress, the present study's findings highlight that unresolved conflicts between work and family roles can increase stress, emphasizing the need for targeted organizational interventions to manage these conflicts effectively.

The present findings reveal no significant relationship between job stress and job performance, which stands in contrast to much of the existing literature. Numerous studies have documented the detrimental effects of job stress on performance. For instance, Latif et al. (2022) found that role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload significantly contribute to job stress, which in turn negatively impacts performance. Jamil et al. (2023) identified excessive workload and long hours as major stressors that reduce employee performance. Rahmat Rasheed et al. (2023) noted that job stress adversely affects remote workers' performance, though job crafting can mitigate this effect. Additionally, Altindag (2020) emphasized the importance of stress management strategies to enhance performance, while Dehghani et al. (2020) linked high stress levels to poor performance among university staff. Studies in the manufacturing sector by Zainuddin et al. (2021) and Iskamto (2021) confirmed the

negative impact of job stress on productivity, and Idris et al. (2020) found that job stress diminishes faculty performance, with emotional intelligence playing a mitigating role. Despite these findings, the current study suggests that job stress may not directly influence performance in the studied context, indicating that other factors or coping mechanisms might be at play, which requires further investigation.

8. Conclusion

The findings of this study offer nuanced insights into the relationships between work-life balance (WLB), job stress (JS), and job performance (JP) among employees in Thailand's private sector. Contrary to much of the existing literature, which typically highlights the positive impact of work-life balance on job performance and the mitigating effect of WLB on job stress, this study found that work-life balance, particularly in terms of family to work conflict and work to family conflict, negatively influences job performance. This suggests that unresolved conflicts between work and family responsibilities can hinder employee productivity, underscoring the need for targeted organizational interventions to manage these conflicts effectively. Additionally, the study found that work-life balance has a positive influence on job stress, aligning with

some literature that indicates that achieving balance alone may not be sufficient to buffer stress without adequate support systems. This emphasizes the importance of comprehensive support mechanisms to help employees manage both their professional and personal responsibilities effectively. Interestingly, the study did not find a significant relationship between job stress and job performance. This diverges from numerous studies that document the detrimental effects of job stress on performance. It suggests that in the context of this study, other factors or coping mechanisms might mitigate the impact of stress on performance, indicating the complexity of the job stress-performance relationship and the need for further investigation. In conclusion, while the prevailing literature underscores the critical role of work-life balance in enhancing job performance and reducing job stress, the present findings highlight the complexities and potential conflicts inherent in balancing professional and personal life. Organizations must prioritize not only promoting work-life balance but also actively managing work-family conflicts and providing robust support systems to sustain employee performance and well-being. As the workplace continues to evolve, particularly post-COVID-19, maintaining a focus on these aspects will be crucial for sustainable employee performance and organizational success.

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