

Systematic literature review of work-life balance strategies

Hazuana Zulkiflee*

*Department of Postgraduate and Professional Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Shah Alam, Selangor*

Email: hazuana@uitm.edu.my

Wan Edura Wan Rashid

Institute Business Excellence, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor

Email: wanedura@uitm.edu.my

Norfadzilah Abdul Razak

*Department of International Business and Management Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Puncak Alam, Selangor*

Email: norfadzilah0438@uitm.edu.my

** Corresponding Author*

Abstract

Purpose: The study's purpose aims to explore the systematic literature review of work-life balance strategies applicable to practice by single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Design/methodology/approach: The methodological-based articles on systematic literature reviews (SLRs) on work-life balance strategies to address the issues raised by researchers about the lack of strategy references in SLR.

Findings: The finding discussed the work-life balance strategies of recent literature review in SCOPUS databases.

Research limitations/implications: The limitation of this study is the period of literature review from 2019 to 2023 and concentrated to single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Practical implications: The finding implies to identify the most effective discussion of work-life balance strategies related to single mother entrepreneur and recommend the best model.

Originality/value: The originality of this paper is one of early attempts to highlight the potential of systematic literature review to serve as solutions for work-life balance strategies among single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia, this study provides novel insights into the strategies applicable to practice from the work-life balance strategies perspective.

Keywords: Single Mother Entrepreneurs; Work-Life Balance; Work-life Balance Strategies, Business Management

Introduction

Work-life balance refers to the degree to which an individual, regardless of gender, can successfully juggle the demands of their professional and personal lives. According to Wheatley (2012), work refers to labour conducted for compensation outside of the house. (Haar, Ruso, Sue, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). Research has shown that when parents can strike maintain a healthy balance between their personal and work lives, they report higher levels of life satisfaction, which in turn has a beneficial effect on their mental and physical health.

Meanwhile, a work-life balance strategy is a planning in managing family and business with the concept of enrichment. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), the work-life balance

strategies consist of Work-Family Enrichment and Family-Work Enrichment. The two strategies mentioned by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) is aiming to balance the work and family and added the concept of enrichment explain to help the single mother in her action to improve or enhance the way they manage their family and business. However, they need to have support not even from the family members, but also from people or community surrounding them.

The tactics of maintaining a healthy work-life balance have been addressed and implemented by single mother to reduce the overall imbalance in their lives. According to Priya (2023), an increasing number of scholars who study the relationship between work and family have found dominant themes relating to work–family and the conflict of life. Most research that focusses on the conflict viewpoint operates under the assumption that people who participate in numerous roles, such as job and family, would unavoidably suffer conflict and stress, both of which will subtract from their quality of life.

Single mother realized the importance of identifying and implementing strategies to help them achieve a good work-life balance to lessen the overall sense of imbalance in their lives. According to Priya (2023), an increasing number of academics who study the interaction between work and family have discovered common themes relating to the conflict of life and the work-family relationship. Most studies that focus on the conflicting viewpoint operate under the concept that people who participate in various responsibilities, such as employment and family, will necessarily endure conflict and stress, which will contribute to a reduced quality of life. With this situation, single mother must prepare themselves to work-life balance strategies to manage between family and ensure the business are survive for support their family. Therefore, this study aims to explore the systematic literature review of work-life balance strategies applicable to practice by single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Work-life balance concept holds considerable significance, particularly for single mothers who frequently encounter the task of harmonizing their professional obligations with their responsibilities as primary carers. Recently, there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the distinct difficulties single mothers encounter in attaining equilibrium between their professional and personal lives, prompting the necessity to formulate approaches to tackle these obstacles. Systematic literature research is crucial in thoroughly comprehending a particular subject matter. Researchers can assess and understand all pertinent studies accessible in literature by adhering to the systematic literature review technique (Johari et al., 2022). This approach facilitates a systematic and impartial evaluation of the current collection of literature under a predetermined protocol. Ankem (2008) asserts that systematic literature reviews offer a systematic and transparent approach to discovering, assessing, and amalgamating the existing body of information on a specific research query, area of focus, or issue. By implementing a systematic literature review, researchers can ascertain that their conclusions are grounded in a comprehensive assessment of pertinent studies. This methodology additionally aids in mitigating bias by adhering to a pre-established search strategy and inclusion/exclusion criteria, thereby guaranteeing the inclusion and analysis of all relevant papers.

Utilizing the PICO framework can serve as a beneficial strategy in formulating an appropriate research question. The PICO framework is valuable for formulating precise and answered research inquiries. The PICO framework, an acronym for Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome, provides researchers with a systematic approach to structuring their research question and identifying the essential components that require consideration. In addition, utilizing the PICO framework enables researchers to determine if their research question possesses clarity, specificity, and relevance to the subject matter under investigation.

Moreover, utilizing the PICO framework in the formulation of a research topic also aids in the establishment of a well-organized and targeted inquiry, emphasizing essential components. From the concept above, the primary search terms are foundational in generating pertinent research for acquiring primary and secondary materials. This study practices the first element of Population (P), in this study the population refers to the single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Second is intervention (I) considered as work-life balance strategies and Comparisons (C) among the articles in recent 5 years and outcomes. This paper presents the research topic established for the systematic literature review (SLR) to thoroughly assess the existing body of literature concerning work-life balance strategies employed by single mothers. The research question formulated is as follows:

Research question 1: What is the highest citation cited journal for research on work-life balance strategies among single mother entrepreneurs?

Research question 2: What are the challenges of work-life balance among women entrepreneurs, various strategies and initiatives could be implemented discussed by the literature review underlying single mother entrepreneurs?

Hypothesis Development

Hypothesis 1: Work-life balance strategies have a positive effect on applicable to practice by single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Methods

Step by Step Conducting Systematic Literature Review

A systematic review was carried out step by step in accordance with the standards established in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement. The step begins with screening titles, abstracts, and subjects, and applying relevant keywords based on the specified database search terms. The literature gathered throughout the search phase will go through multiple screening and classification processes. Screening is a procedure in which the writer establishes inclusion and exclusion criteria that can be used to choose articles or references that match the SLR to be conducted. (Heyrol et al., 2019). Table 1 shows the inclusion criteria used.

Table 1: The Inclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion Criterion
Timeline	2019-2023
Language	English
Study Scope	Women Entrepreneur, Work-Life Balance, Work-Life Balance Strategies
Literature type	Research paper, Literature Review Paper
Expertise	Business Management, Entrepreneurship

Identification

First, the process of identification by the selection of related papers for this study involves three major stages of the systematic review procedure. Articles relating to the topic were filtered

using keywords, including "work-life balance", "work-life balance strategies" and "women entrepreneur". The usage of these keywords facilitates researchers' ability to identify relevant papers via library search in Scopus. In the first part of the systematic review procedure, 1155 papers were obtained.

Screening

The next process is deleting the duplicate items in the first screening phase. The first criterion was the literature type, with the researchers deciding to focus solely on the journal (research papers) as the primary source of empirical data. This also means that the current study excludes publications such as systematic reviews, reviews, meta-analyses, meta syntheses, book series, books, book chapters, and conference reports. Aside from that, it should be noted that the review mostly focused on papers published in English and Malaysian. The timetable was based on statistics from 2019 to 2023. The findings were addressed further in the debate.

A well-crafted search string allows researchers to retrieve targeted and pertinent information from various databases, ensuring they find the most relevant and reliable sources. When developing a search string, it is crucial to carefully consider the critical terms within the topic field and the specific purpose of the literature review (Hidayatullah et al., 2022). By following a systematic approach, researchers can maximize their chances of identifying relevant literature that addresses their research questions. It is essential to start by identifying the critical terms or keywords relevant to the studied topic and develop a search string. These keywords should represent the main concepts or ideas to explore. The focus of the key words search was on work-life balance strategies.

The process of conducting searches can be facilitated through the utilisation of Boolean operators, specifically the OR and AND operators. The operator OR is employed to consolidate several manifestations, such as different spellings and synonyms, of specific search terms. In the context of information retrieval, the AND operator serves the purpose of connecting distinct search phrases, so creating a unified search string.

From the Boolean operators as in Table 1, the result shows there were 2262 documents of work-life balance strategies. The next process is to filter the 5 years recent articles from 2019 to 2023. The result from the Boolean operators as in Table 2, shows there were 1155 documents found in Scopus database. After filtering the years of publication which is limit from 2019 to 2023, the result from the Boolean operators shows there were 1155 documents found in Scopus database. The next process is to limit the subject areas which are social sciences, business management and accounting, psychology and multidisciplinary. There were 540 documents found. In the next process, this study filter types of documents to articles, book chapter, book, review, conferences paper, editorial, data paper and conferences review. The results indicate 538 documents found with the Boolean operator. Further to the next process, this study limit language to English only and result were 493 documents found underlying the Boolean operator. In next process, the study filters the keywords to work-life balance, human covid -19, female, women, productivity, coping strategies, well-being, strategic approach, entrepreneurship, strategy. The result indicates there were 127 documents of the Boolean operator.

Findings

A well-crafted search string allows researchers to retrieve targeted and pertinent information from various databases, ensuring they find the most relevant and reliable sources. When developing a search string, it is crucial to carefully consider the critical terms within the topic field and the specific purpose of the literature review (Hidayatullah et al., 2022). By following

a systematic approach, researchers can maximize their chances of identifying relevant literature that addresses their research questions. It is essential to start by identifying the critical terms or keywords relevant to the studied topic and develop a search string. These keywords should represent the main concepts or ideas to explore. The focus of the keywords search was on work-life balance strategies. The process of conducting searches can be facilitated through the utilisation of Boolean operators, specifically the OR and AND operators. The operator OR is employed to consolidate several manifestations, such as different spellings and synonyms, of specific search terms. In the context of information retrieval, the AND operator serves the purpose of connecting distinct search phrases,

TITLE-ABS-KEY (work AND life AND balance AND strategies)

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TITLE-ABS-KEY (work AND life AND balance AND strategies) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024

After filtering the years of publication, which is limited from 2019 to 2023, the result from the Boolean operators shows there were 1155 documents found in Scopus database. The next process is limiting the subject areas which are social sciences, business management and accounting, psychology and multidisciplinary. There were 540 document found as shown below.

TITLE-ABS-KEY (work AND life AND balance AND strategies) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MULT"))

In the next process, this study filter types of documents to articles, book chapter, book, review, conferences paper, editorial, data paper and conferences review. The results indicate 538 documents found with the Boolean operator as shown below.

TITLE-ABS-KEY (work AND life AND balance AND strategies)

Further to the next process, this study limit language to English only and result were 493 documents found underlying the Boolean operator as shown below.

TITLE-ABS-KEY (work AND life AND balance AND strategies) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUS")

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AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ch" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "bk" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "re" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "cp" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "dp" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "cr" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ed" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )
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Discussion and Conclusion

From the analysis above, the findings of this study are divided into the documents with high citation for each of the year 2019 to 2023 as shown in Table 7. From the final analysis, there are 31 articles written on work-life balance in multidisciplinary area such as organizational setting (Althammer Reis, van der Beek, Beck, Michel, 2021), organizational culture (McCallan & Daudt, 2021), sustainability (Fazal, Masood, Nazir, Majoka, 2022) and education (Mohamad & Despois, 2022). However, this finding of this paper addresses 7 journal articles on work-life balance among entrepreneurs that have high citation as shown in Table 7 below. The scholar discussed the current issues faced by women entrepreneurs, such as multitasking and work-life conflict, a lack of financial resources and support services, insufficient business, management, and marketing skills, and limited access to information, business networks, technology, and digital markets. According to studies, innovation or the will to innovate is the primary criterion for successful entrepreneurship. To encourage long-term female entrepreneurial participation and socioeconomic development, researchers continue to advocate for the promotion and implementation of statutory policies and legal scholarship on entrepreneurship, such as equal opportunity policies and well-defined property rights, particularly for women in developing countries.

Next journal article written by Wang (2019) has 25 citations on gender, race or ethnicity, and entrepreneurship: women entrepreneurs in a US south city. The finding of the article emphasized on how women entrepreneurs face the challenges and the difficulties of managing both family roles and work. However, they have strategically negotiated with their multiple roles through entrepreneurship to gain independence and purpose, as well as the opportunity to contribute to society. Their embeddedness within local communities provides meanings, opportunities, and functional strategies for their entrepreneurial activities. The findings imply

profound implications for practices of equitable growth, community development, and urban planning under the rapid growth of immigration.

Table 2: List of High Citation on Work-Life Balance

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
1	Kamberidou, (2020)	“Distinguished” women entrepreneurs in the digital economy and the multitasking whirlpool	2020	Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship	51
2	Wang, (2019)	Gender, race/ethnicity, and entrepreneurship: women entrepreneurs in a US south city	2019	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	25
3	Vinberg, (2021); Danielsson, (2021)	Managers of micro-sized enterprises and Covid-19: impact on business operations, work-life balance and well-being	2021	International Journal of Circumpolar Health	10
4	Saksilapachai, (2019); Mayakul, (2019).; Wattanasirichaigoon, (2019); Kiattisin, (2019).	Communication Process Management within Virtual Work for Startup Entrepreneur	2019	TIMES-iCON 2019 - 2019 4th Technology Innovation Management and Engineering Science International Conference	1
5	Medeiros, (2022); Barbosa, (2022).; de Souza Alves, (2022); Grato, (2022)	Work-family balance among caregivers of elderly people: a systematic review.	2022	Brazilian Journal of Occupational Therapy	1

To address the challenges of work-life balance among women entrepreneurs, various strategies and initiatives could be implemented by them. One strategy is to promote flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flextime. These arrangements allow women entrepreneurs to have more control over their schedules and work from their locations, which can help reduce commuting time and increase flexibility. Another strategy that can contribute to achieving a healthy work-life balance is offering wellness programs, providing childcare support, and promoting a culture of work-life integration. By offering these initiatives, women entrepreneurs can concentrate on their businesses and sustain a good healthy lifestyle to encourage a balance between work and personal life. Furthermore, women entrepreneurs can also prioritize business development and provide opportunities for business growth and advancement. This can help entrepreneurs feel supported in their business while also maintaining a sense of control over their work-life balance. The finding implies the government and other industries to support women entrepreneurs to have balance between the business and human life.

Theoretical Implications

This paper presents an interesting finding with theoretical implications for conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the literature on strategies for achieving work-life balance. While numerous studies have examined the comprehensive literature review of work-life balance strategies, their conclusions remain insufficient and require further exploration to discover methodologies and practices that are specifically applicable to single mother entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Practical and Social Implications

The practical implication emphasises the ongoing discussion on work-life balance strategies and the numerous debates conducted by scholars. Managing businesses as single woman entrepreneurs can be extremely intricate and challenging. The study implies that by analysing the significant aspects of work-life balance (WLB) challenges faced by single women entrepreneurs, one can identify the specific areas in which these entrepreneurs want assistance. Single women entrepreneurs who aspire to succeed can utilise the scale to gain a deeper understanding of potential work-life balance (WLB) challenges, enabling them to proactively take action. The impact of social concerns on single mother entrepreneurs in balancing their family and business might be minimised. In addition, single women who are pursuing entrepreneurial sectors due to the evolving social and economic situation should also promote public awareness about the work-life balance difficulties experienced by single women entrepreneurs.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limitation of this study is in the process of selecting the journal for analysis, it is possible to overlook certain research that may have been detected by work life balance strategies and this could have influenced the results. Furthermore, when it comes to the study of systematic literature review of work life balance strategies some have neglected to consider the fundamental theories that underpin the process of the strategies. The study identified and examined various conceptualizations, methodological methodologies, along with recommendations for further research. Future researchers must possess a solid understanding of the involvement in creating a new strategy. This is particularly crucial to prevent any theoretical or methodological errors. In the unlikely scenario that such errors do occur, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Possible strategies for minimising the issue in future research could include doing face-to-face surveys or interview-based surveys. As a suggestion for the future, the setting of the keywords must be updated to the recent article to ensure the high quality of paper used as sample of the study.

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