

Work-Life Balance and Social Support Among IT Professionals: An Integrative Review

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ABSTRACT

In the whirlwind world of IT, juggling deadlines, tasks, and personal life often feels like walking a tightrope. Work-life balance (WLB) is no longer a luxury, it's essential. Social support from colleagues, supervisors, and family can act as a safety net, cushioning the strain of long hours and high expectations. This integrative review gathers insights from studies published between 2015 and 2025, exploring how social support shapes WLB among IT professionals. Evidence suggests that those with robust support systems navigate work and personal responsibilities more smoothly, while those without often face stress, burnout, and conflict. Gender differences, organizational culture, and societal expectations also color these experiences. By weaving together these threads, the review highlights practical and research implications, urging organizations to foster supportive environments that help employees not just survive, but thrive.

Keywords: *Work-Life Balance, Social Support, IT Professionals, Organizational Psychology, Employee Well-Being, Stress Management*

In the contemporary professional landscape, maintaining a harmonious balance between work responsibilities and personal life has become increasingly vital for employee well-being and overall productivity (Casper et al., 2024). This equilibrium, often referred to as work-life balance, allows individuals to effectively manage their commitments across various life domains, fostering a sense of fulfillment and reducing the likelihood of burnout (Sirgy, and Lee, 2017). Coupled with the importance of work-life balance is the role of social support, which provides individuals with the necessary resources and assistance to navigate stressors and challenges in both their professional and personal lives (Chen et al., 2024).

While these aspects are crucial across all professions, they hold particular significance for Information Technology (IT) professionals who often operate in a demanding environment characterized by long working hours, rapid technological advancements, and the expectation of constant availability (McPhail et al., 2023). The pervasive nature of technology, while facilitating connectivity and remote work, can also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, potentially intensifying work-life imbalance (Stankevičiūtė, 2022)

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Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the potential influence of gender on the experience and perception of work-life balance and social support within the IT profession. The IT sector has historically faced gender disparities in representation, with women constituting a smaller proportion of the workforce compared to men (Corneliussen, 2023). Understanding whether men and women in IT encounter different challenges and have varying experiences concerning work-life balance and social support is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that promote inclusivity and well-being for all professionals in this field (Guzmán, Fischer, and Kok, 2023). This literature review aims to synthesize existing research focusing on the intricate relationships between work-life balance, social support, and gender differences among IT professionals. By examining the key findings, methodologies, and conclusions of relevant studies, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current research landscape, identify existing gaps in knowledge, and suggest potential directions for future research in this critical area (Bharathi, and Мала, 2016)

METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

The present review adopts an integrative approach to synthesize existing research on work-life balance and social support among information technology (IT) professionals. The objective was to identify recurring patterns, theoretical perspectives, and contextual influences shaping this relationship within organizational settings.

Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified through comprehensive searches in electronic databases including Google Scholar, PsycINFO, ResearchGate, Springer and PubMed. To ensure inclusion of recent developments, studies published between 2015 and 2025 were considered. Manual screening of reference lists from selected papers was also performed to capture additional sources.

Keywords Used

The following search terms and their combinations were employed: “work-life balance,” “social support,” “occupational stress,” “employee well-being,” “IT professionals,” “organizational psychology,” Boolean operators (AND/OR) were used to refine search results.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they: focused on employees in organizational or IT settings and examined variables related to work-life balance and social support.

Studies were excluded if they: Were not in English, Did not focus on organizational employees.

Screening and Selection

An initial pool of approximately 150 studies was identified. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 53 studies were selected for in-depth review. These articles were chosen based on their conceptual relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to understanding work-life balance dynamics among IT professionals.

Data Analysis

The selected studies were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. Findings were organized into major conceptual categories such as (a) theoretical frameworks of work-life balance, (b) the role of social support, (c) gender and organizational factors, and (d)

emerging trends in workplace well-being. This method allowed for an integrative understanding of how social and organizational variables collectively shape employees' work-life experiences.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

Defining Work-Life Balance in the IT Context

Work-life balance is generally understood as the extent to which an individual can effectively manage and integrate their responsibilities and commitments across their professional and personal lives. This balance encompasses the allocation of time, energy, and mental resources to both work-related tasks and personal pursuits, including family, hobbies, and social activities (Brough et al., 2020)

In the specific context of the IT profession, the concept of work-life balance takes on unique dimensions due to the inherent characteristics of the industry. IT professionals often work on project-based assignments with stringent deadlines, requiring intense periods of focused work. The dynamic nature of technology necessitates continuous learning and adaptation to new tools and methodologies, adding to the time and cognitive demands on these professionals (Iswarya et al., 2024)

Moreover, the increasing prevalence of remote work in the IT sector, while offering flexibility, can also lead to an overlap between work and personal life, making it challenging to establish clear boundaries (Vacchiano, Fernandez, and Schmutz, 2024). The IT services landscape is often characterized by a sense of urgency, where the expectation of rapid responses and constant connectivity can permeate personal time, potentially disrupting the balance between professional and personal spheres (Alam, and Mohanty, 2023). The conflict arising from the need to meet job obligations on one hand and family or personal obligations on the other can generate significant stress for IT professionals (Sanz-Vergel, Rodríguez-Muñoz, and Antino, 2024)

Challenges to Achieving Work-Life Balance

IT professionals encounter several challenges in their pursuit of work-life balance. One of the primary challenges is the prevalence of long working hours, often driven by project deadlines and the competitive nature of the technology industry (Fadel, Li, and Sembajwe, 2023). The rise of remote work, while offering flexibility, has also blurred the lines between work and personal life for many IT professionals (Alfano et al., 2024). When the physical separation between the office and home diminishes, it can become difficult to disconnect from work-related tasks, leading to potential burnout (Rieder, 2024)

The competitive environment within the tech world can also contribute to high stress levels among IT professionals. For instance, developers might impose internal pressures by overcommitting to project deliverables or striving for perfection in their code, further exacerbating stress (Coté, and Harris, 2021). Burnout is a significant concern in the IT profession, affecting a substantial percentage of employees (Marsh, Vallejos, and Spence, 2024). Signs of work-life imbalance in tech employees can include bringing work home, physical symptoms of exhaustion or distress, and a constant feeling of stress. The expectation of 24/7 connectivity through various communication channels creates an environment where IT professionals may feel obligated to respond quickly to work-related matters at any time, further eroding their personal time (Marsh, Vallejos, and Spence, 2024)

Impact of Work-Life Balance (or Imbalance) on IT Professionals

The presence or absence of work-life balance significantly impacts various aspects of IT professionals' work lives. Research indicates that work-life balance is a key factor influencing work engagement and is an important determinant of employee satisfaction (Udin, 2023). A healthy work-life balance can lead to lower rates of absenteeism, reduced employee stress, improved health, and an overall better quality of life (Udin, 2023). Conversely, work-life imbalance can result in negative consequences for both employees and employers (Udin, 2023). Chronic stress stemming from a poor work-life balance can lead to reduced efficiency and low job performance (Stanley, and Sebastine, 2023). Furthermore, it can contribute to a lack of focus, weaken the immune system, increase the risk of depression, and potentially lead to more severe health issues (Wang et al., 2025)). Studies have also shown that work-life balance is associated with occupational commitment among IT professionals, indicating that those who perceive a better balance are more likely to be committed to their chosen occupation (Udin, 2023).

Strategies for Improving Work-Life Balance in IT

Addressing the challenges of work-life balance in the IT sector requires a multifaceted approach involving both organizational and individual strategies (Lee, and Sirgy, 2024). Organizations can implement policies such as flexible work arrangements, including flexible hours and remote work options, to empower IT professionals to better manage their personal and professional lives (Kosseck, Perrigino, and Lautsch, 2022). Encouraging employees to establish clear boundaries between work and personal time is crucial for preventing burnout and promoting mental well-being (Hammer et al., 2024). Providing access to mental health resources and support can help employees cope with the stressors inherent in the industry (Aust et al., 2024). Effective resource management, ensuring that projects are adequately staffed and resourced, can also reduce the burden on individual team members (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel, 2022)

On an individual level, IT professionals can benefit from practicing time management techniques, such as task prioritization and setting realistic goals (Taking regular breaks throughout the day and week can contribute to improved focus, productivity, and overall well-being (Iswarya et al., 2024). Cultivating a culture within IT teams that encourages open communication about workload and promotes collaborative approaches to task distribution can also help prevent individuals from becoming overwhelmed (Rietze, and Zacher, 2023)

SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

Defining Social Support in the Workplace

Social support in the workplace refers to the provision of assistance or comfort to individuals by others in the workplace to help them cope with various biological, psychological, and social stressors (Weinert et al., 2020). This support can manifest in different forms, including emotional support, which involves providing empathy, encouragement, and a sense of being valued and understood (Feeney, and Collins, 2015). Informational support entails offering advice, guidance, and relevant information to help individuals address challenges (Rotar, 2022). Instrumental support involves providing tangible help, such as assistance with tasks or offering practical resources (Szkody et al., 2024)

In the organizational context, social support often reflects the social climate at work, encompassing the quality of relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Eisenberger, Shanock, and Wen, 2019). It serves as a crucial resource that enables individuals to navigate

job-related stress effectively through supportive interactions with others (Ueno et al., 2024). Social support can be sought for various reasons, such as obtaining practical advice for problem-solving or seeking emotional comfort and understanding during difficult times (Feeney, and Collins, 2015)

Sources of Social Support for IT Professionals

IT professionals can draw social support from various sources within and outside the workplace (Chen et al., 2024). Supervisors can provide instrumental and informational support through guidance, feedback, and resources, as well as emotional support by fostering a positive and understanding work environment (Hammer et al., 2024). Coworkers can offer valuable social support through collaboration, shared experiences, and mutual understanding of the daily challenges inherent in IT roles. Peer support networks within organizations can also play a significant role in providing emotional and informational support (Cooper et al., 2024)

Beyond the workplace, family and friends serve as important external sources of social support, offering emotional comfort and practical assistance that can help IT professionals manage work-related stress and maintain a better work-life balance (Weinert et al., 2020). The nature and effectiveness of social support can vary depending on the source. For instance, supervisors might be better positioned to offer career-related guidance, while coworkers may provide more immediate support related to specific tasks or projects (Song, Xu, and Hashim, 2024)

Impact of Social Support on IT Professionals

Social support plays a crucial role in influencing various outcomes for IT professionals. Research suggests that workplace social support can significantly impact turnover intentions, particularly during challenging times such as the COVID-19 crisis (Chen et al., 2024). Studies have explored the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction among IT professionals, indicating that strong social support can buffer the negative effects of work-family conflict on job satisfaction. Social support is also considered a crucial variable in maintaining work-life balance and potentially mitigating the adverse consequences associated with burnout (Chen et al., 2024). A positive association has been found between social support and job satisfaction, while a negative relationship exists between social support and emotional exhaustion (Wu et al., 2020). This suggests that IT professionals who perceive higher levels of social support are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and experience less emotional exhaustion (Chen et al., 2024). Strong social support networks can provide a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and offer practical and emotional resources that help IT professionals cope with the demands and stressors of their profession (Gillman, Turner, and Slater, 2023).

Challenges to Social Support in the IT Context

Despite the benefits of social support, IT professionals may face challenges in building and maintaining strong support networks, particularly in the context of increasing remote work arrangements (McPhail et al., 2023). The shift towards geographically dispersed teams can hinder the development of close working relationships and limit opportunities for spontaneous interactions that often foster social support (Liu, 2021).

Research suggests that a social disconnection can develop between teleworkers and office-based staff, potentially impacting the level of social support experienced by remote IT

professionals (Trzebiatowski, and Henle, 2023). While technology facilitates communication, it may not fully replicate the nuances and benefits of in-person interactions in building strong social bonds (Nguyen et al., 2021). Therefore, organizations need to be mindful of these challenges and implement strategies to promote social interaction and support among IT professionals, regardless of their work location. This could include virtual team-building activities, regular check-ins, and fostering a culture of open communication and mutual support (Lane et al., 2023)

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

Research Findings on Gender Differences in Work-Life Balance

Research exploring gender differences in work-life balance among IT professionals presents a mixed landscape of findings. Some studies suggest notable disparities, with female professionals facing greater difficulties in balancing personal demands and organizing their schedules compared to their male counterparts (Tushabe et al., 2025). These findings often point to cultural norms and a lack of institutional support as contributing factors to these differences. For instance, research in the IT and ITES industry has indicated that female employees experience more work-to-life conflicts, such as missing family gatherings and social functions due to busy work schedules, compared to male employees (Bharathi, and Мала, 2016)

Conversely, other studies have found no significant differences between male and female IT professionals on overall work-life balance or certain dimensions of it, such as personal life interference with work (Alfano et al., 2024). However, one study found that the positive influence of work-life balance on occupational commitment was stronger for females than for males in the IT sector (Bharathi, and Мала, 2016). This suggests that while both genders value work-life balance, it might play a more significant role in the occupational commitment of women in IT. The perception of work-life balance and career opportunities can also differ by gender, with women potentially reporting lower satisfaction in both areas compared to men (Tushabe et al., 2025)

Factors Contributing to Gender Differences

Several factors may contribute to the observed gender differences in work-life balance among IT professionals. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations often place a greater burden of domestic responsibilities and caregiving on women, which can lead to more significant work-life conflicts (Sahni et al., 2023). Even in the ICT sector, where gender gaps in caregiving might be smaller than in other occupations, women still tend to shoulder a larger share of household and care responsibilities, potentially limiting their time and energy for career advancement and personal pursuits. Workplace biases and a lack of sufficient institutional support can also exacerbate these challenges for women in IT (Friedmann, and Efrat-Treister, 2022).

Additionally, men and women might evaluate the importance of work-life balance differently, which could influence their perceptions and experiences. The intense work environment in the IT sector might also lead some women to postpone having children, highlighting the challenges they face in balancing career aspirations with family planning (Ramos, and Lamolla, 2018)

Impact of Work-Life Balance on Career Progression and Well-being by Gender

The impact of work-life balance (or the lack thereof) can have distinct implications for the career progression and well-being of men and women in the IT sector. Research suggests

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that work-life balance issues can pose a greater barrier to career advancement for women compared to their male counterparts (Shah et al., 2025). The difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities might lead some women to opt out of career opportunities or even leave the IT field, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Lakshmidēvi, and Geetha, 2023).

Women in IT may also report lower levels of job and life satisfaction and experience higher levels of work-related stress compared to their male colleagues. The relationship between work-life balance and overall well-being might also be stronger for women, indicating that a lack of balance can have a more significant negative impact on their health and well-being (Shah et al., 2025). Therefore, addressing work-life balance challenges is not only crucial for the well-being of all IT professionals but also essential for promoting gender equality and retaining talented women in the field.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

Research Findings on Gender Differences in Social Support

Research consistently suggests that there are gender-based differences in social support networks and utilization. Meta-analyses examining social support on social network sites have found that females tend to give and receive greater social support than male (Tifferet, 2020). This aligns with the "tend and befriend" theory, which posits that females, when faced with stress, are more likely to seek and provide social support as a coping mechanism (Bedrov, and Gable, 2022)

Studies have indicated that females report higher levels of stress but also perceive a larger and higher-quality social support network compared to males. Women tend to have larger and more supportive networks with a greater number of close partners and more frequent contact with their support network members. While these findings are not exclusively focused on IT professionals, they provide a broader context for understanding potential gender differences in social support that might also apply within the IT sector (Tifferet, 2020)

Differences in Providing and Receiving Social Support

Research suggests that men and women may differ in both the provision and reception of social support. Females on social network sites have been found to give significantly more social support than males (Tifferet, 2020). Furthermore, when males do engage in social support, it is less likely to involve emotion-focused support compared to females. This could be attributed to traditional gender roles and societal expectations that might discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking emotional support (Croft, Atkinson, and May, 2021)

Women, on the other hand, are often socialized to be more nurturing and supportive in their interactions, which might explain their tendency to provide and seek more emotional support. While specific research on these aspects within the IT profession might be limited, these broader gender differences in social support patterns likely extend to the IT workplace. (Tifferet, 2020).

Implications of Gender Differences in Social Support for Well-being

The observed gender differences in social support can have significant implications for the stress coping mechanisms, burnout levels, and overall well-being of male and female IT professionals. Women's tendency to have larger and higher-quality social support networks

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might provide them with better resources for coping with work-related stress and maintaining their well-being (Kneavel, 2020)

The greater likelihood of women both seeking and providing emotional support could contribute to a more supportive and resilient work environment for them. Conversely, men in IT, who might be less inclined to seek or offer emotional support, could potentially face greater challenges in managing stress and preventing burnout (Pultz, and Dupret, 2023). Understanding these gender-specific patterns in social support utilization is crucial for developing targeted interventions and fostering a more equitable and supportive workplace for all IT professionals. Organizations should consider initiatives that encourage both men and women to build strong social connections at work and feel comfortable seeking and providing support when needed (Hall et al., 2022)

SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed highlights the significant interplay between work-life balance, social support, and gender differences within the IT profession. A consistent theme across studies is the demanding nature of the IT sector, which often poses considerable challenges to achieving a healthy work-life balance due to long working hours, the expectation of constant connectivity, and the increasing prevalence of remote work that blurs the boundaries between professional and personal life (Hemavati et al., 2024). The impact of work-life imbalance on IT professionals is evident in increased stress levels, burnout, reduced productivity, and lower job satisfaction. Organizations are recognizing the strategic importance of fostering work-life balance through various strategies such as flexible work arrangements, mental health support, and clear boundaries (Kossek, Perrigino, and Lautsch, 2022)

Social support emerges as a crucial resource for IT professionals in navigating the stressors and challenges of their work. It plays a significant role in reducing turnover intentions, buffering the negative effects of work-family conflict, and promoting job satisfaction while mitigating emotional exhaustion (Chen et al., 2024). However, the rise of remote work presents a challenge to building and maintaining strong social support networks within IT teams.

Regarding gender differences, the findings on work-life balance in IT are somewhat varied. While some studies suggest that women in IT experience greater work-life conflict and face more difficulties in balancing personal and professional demands, others indicate no significant gender differences in overall work-life balance (Alfano et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the positive influence of work-life balance on occupational commitment appears to be stronger for women in IT, and work-life imbalance might pose a greater barrier to their career advancement compared to their male counterparts (Bharathi, and Manja, 2016). Factors such as traditional gender roles, societal expectations regarding caregiving, and potential workplace biases contribute to these observed differences.

In terms of social support, research consistently indicates that women tend to have larger and higher-quality social support networks and utilize social support more effectively than men, both online and offline (Tifferet, 2020). Women are also more likely to provide and seek emotional support, while men might be less inclined to do so. These gender differences in social support have implications for how male and female IT professionals cope with stress and maintain their overall well-being. (Graves et al., 2021)

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The theoretical implications of these findings suggest that existing work-life balance and social support theories are generally applicable to the context of IT professionals, but the specific nuances of the IT work environment and the influence of gender need to be carefully considered (Bharathi, and Maļa, 2016). Practically, these findings have several implications for IT organizations and professionals. Organizations should prioritize the implementation of comprehensive work-life balance policies and initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by IT professionals while also being mindful of potential gender-specific needs (Hemavati et al., 2024). IT professionals themselves can benefit from developing effective time management skills, actively building and maintaining social support networks, and seeking help when needed.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future research should aim to address the gaps and inconsistencies identified in the existing literature. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how work-life balance and social support evolve over time for IT professionals of different genders. Qualitative research could explore the lived experiences and perspectives of men and women in IT regarding these issues in greater depth. Further investigation into the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to improve work-life balance and foster social support in IT workplaces is also needed. Finally, research exploring the intersectionality of gender with other demographic factors, such as age, ethnicity, and family status, could provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors shaping work-life balance and social support experiences in the IT profession.

Despite providing a comprehensive overview of research on work-life balance and social support among IT professionals, this review has several limitations like the selection of studies was restricted to articles published in English between 2015 and 2025, potentially excluding relevant findings in other languages or earlier research.

Future research should address these limitations by incorporating longitudinal and experimental designs, examining the effects of interventions to enhance social support, and exploring cross-cultural differences in organizational contexts. Additionally, studies focusing on diverse employee populations, including contract and gig workers, may provide a more inclusive understanding of work-life balance challenges. Expanding the methodological and contextual diversity of research will strengthen evidence-based recommendations for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being.

CONCLUSION

Social support improves work-life balance among IT professionals. Supervisor, peer, and family support reduce stress and enhance employee well-being. Gender and organizational culture influence how social support affects work-life balance. Flexible organizational policies strengthen employees' capacity to manage personal and professional responsibilities. Targeted interventions can enhance productivity and satisfaction. Future research should explore longitudinal and cross-cultural effects of social support.

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Conflict of Interest

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