

DETERMINANTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A STUDY OF AVIATION SECURITY EMPLOYEES AT MALAYSIA AIRPORT SEPANG

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Abstract: *Work-life balance has become an increasingly crucial issue in safety-critical industries where employees operate under sustained operational pressure. Despite growing scholarly attention to employee well-being, empirical evidence on the determinants of work-life balance within aviation security (AVSEC) remains limited, particularly in emerging aviation hubs. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the determinants of working hours, job burnout, and working environment on work-life balance among AVSEC personnel at Malaysia Airports Sepang. Adopting a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 350 employees selected through simple random sampling from a population of 2,170 personnel. A structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings reveal that job burnout is significantly and negatively associated with work-life balance, working environment demonstrates a moderate positive relationship. In contrast, working hours show a weak and non-significant relationship. This study offers strategic insights for policymakers and airport management to prioritize burnout mitigation and resource-enhancing practices.*

Keywords: *Work-life balance, job burnout, working environment, working hours*

Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical organizational concern as modern workplaces become increasingly demanding and complex. Scholars define work-life balance as an individual's capacity to effectively fulfil both professional responsibilities and personal obligations without experiencing significant role conflict (Allen et al., 2020; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Maintaining such balance is strongly associated with positive employee outcomes, including improved psychological well-being, higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and enhanced productivity. Conversely, poor work-life balance has been linked to emotional exhaustion, reduced performance, and increased withdrawal behaviours.

The challenge of achieving work-life balance is particularly evident in safety-sensitive and operationally intensive sectors such as aviation. The aviation industry operates continuously, requiring employees to adapt to nonstandard schedules, rotating shifts, and unpredictable operational demands. These conditions can disrupt circadian rhythms, intensify fatigue, and heighten stress levels, ultimately undermining employees' quality of life (Costa, 2010). Within this ecosystem, Aviation Security (AVSEC) personnel serve as the frontline defence against potential threats, ensuring the safety of passengers, airport infrastructure, and aircraft. Their roles demand sustained vigilance, strict adherence to regulatory protocols, and rapid decision-making in high-pressure situations.

Such job characteristics place AVSEC employees in what researchers often describe as a high-reliability environment, where human error must be minimized to prevent severe consequences (Reason, 2016). Employees working in these environments frequently encounter prolonged working hours, heavy workloads, and psychologically taxing situations that may accelerate job burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout is a chronic occupational phenomenon characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy, often resulting from excessive job demands and insufficient recovery time. Empirical evidence suggests that burnout significantly undermines employees' ability to maintain a healthy work-life interface (Avadhani & Menon, 2022).

Beyond burnout, working hours and the broader working environment are consistently identified as key determinants of work-life balance. Extended or irregular working hours limit opportunities for family interaction and personal recovery, thereby intensifying work-family conflict (Allen et al., 2020). Meanwhile, supportive working environments, characterized by adequate resources, positive supervisory relationships, and organizational support, can mitigate stress and promote balance between professional and personal domains. When these organizational conditions are absent, employees are more vulnerable to negative outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover intentions, diminished engagement, and deteriorating mental health. Despite the growing body of literature on work-life balance, empirical investigations within the aviation sector remain relatively narrow in scope. Existing studies have predominantly focused on flight crews, air traffic controllers, and customer service personnel, with limited scholarly attention given to aviation security employees. This oversight is noteworthy because AVSEC personnel operate under distinct regulatory pressures and security obligations that differentiate their work experiences from other airport staff. Furthermore, research examining work-life balance within the Malaysian aviation context is still limited, creating a contextual

gap in understanding how occupational demands shape employee well-being in developing and rapidly modernizing aviation systems.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the determinants of work-life balance among Aviation Security employees at Malaysia Airports Sepang by examining the roles of working hours, job burnout, and the working environment. By integrating these organizational and psychological factors, this research contributes to the human resource management and occupational well-being literature while extending work-life balance scholarship into a safety-critical aviation context. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for airport authorities and policymakers in designing evidence-based interventions that enhance employee well-being, strengthen workforce sustainability, and support long-term operational effectiveness.

Literature Review

Work-life balance (WLB) is increasingly conceptualized as a dynamic process through which individuals regulate time, psychological resources, and role engagement across work and non-work domains to minimize conflict and sustain overall well-being. Contemporary perspectives argue that WLB is not merely a function of time distribution, but rather a subjective evaluation of role compatibility, where participation in one domain does not detract from effectiveness in another (Greenhaus & Allen, 2022; Haar et al., 2023). In high-reliability environments such as aviation security (AVSEC), this balance becomes particularly complex due to the non-negotiable nature of operational demands, strict compliance requirements, and continuous vigilance expectations. As such, WLB in AVSEC contexts is less about equal time allocation and more about employees' capacity to maintain psychological equilibrium under persistent job pressures.

Conversely, inadequate work-life balance is frequently associated with heightened work-family conflict, psychological strain, emotional exhaustion, and diminished life satisfaction. These adverse outcomes are particularly evident in safety-critical and service-intensive sectors such as aviation, where operational continuity, high accountability, and unpredictable schedules impose substantial psychological demands on employees (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). Empirical evidence suggests that employees who perceive a balanced integration of work and personal life demonstrate stronger job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and task performance, while also exhibiting lower turnover intentions (Han Bi & Yao, 2024; Lu et al., 2023). Persistent imbalance, however, may trigger chronic stress responses that ultimately impair both individual effectiveness and organizational sustainability.

Within this context, working hours represent a structural job demand that directly shapes employees' temporal resources. AVSEC personnel are frequently subjected to extended and irregular shifts, including night duties, rotating schedules, and work during public holidays, reflecting the 24/7 nature of airport operations. While prior studies associate long working hours with fatigue, reduced well-being, and increased work-family conflict (Badri et al., 2022; Ferguson et al., 2024), the explanatory power of working hours in predicting WLB within AVSEC may be comparatively limited. This is because employees in such environments often normalize long hours as an inherent job characteristic, thereby reducing its perceived strain impact over time. Drawing on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, working hours can be

classified as a quantitative demand; however, its negative effects may be attenuated when employees possess sufficient job resources such as schedule flexibility, autonomy, or supervisory support (Kim et al., 2023; Shockley et al., 2024). Consequently, although working hours contribute to WLB disruption, their influence may be weaker relative to more psychologically intensive factors that directly deplete emotional and cognitive resources.

In contrast, job burnout represents a deeper psychological mechanism that more directly undermines work-life balance. Characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (WHO, 2022), burnout is highly prevalent in AVSEC roles due to constant vigilance requirements, high accountability for public safety, and exposure to time pressure and operational uncertainty. Unlike working hours, which primarily affect time availability, burnout impairs employees' psychological detachment from work, a critical condition for effective recovery. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals experiencing burnout carry residual stress into their personal lives, resulting in stronger work-life interference and diminished well-being (Nadim & Abbas, 2023; Salvagioni et al., 2023). From a theoretical standpoint, burnout reflects chronic resource depletion, making it a more proximal and potent predictor of WLB imbalance compared to structural demands like working hours. Similarly, the working environment functions as a key organizational resource that shapes employees' ability to cope with job demands and maintain balance across life domains. In AVSEC settings, the working environment extends beyond physical infrastructure to include psychosocial conditions such as leadership quality, communication clarity, team cohesion, and perceived organizational support. A supportive environment can buffer the negative effects of high job demands by fostering psychological safety, enhancing resilience, and promoting adaptive coping mechanisms (Musena, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). Conversely, environments characterized by ambiguity, inadequate resources, or weak supervisory support may amplify stress and accelerate burnout, thereby indirectly and directly disrupting WLB. Consistent with JD-R theory, the working environment operates as a critical job resource, suggesting that its influence on WLB may surpass that of working hours, particularly in high-pressure contexts like aviation security.

Taken together, the literature indicates that work-life balance among AVSEC personnel is shaped by the interaction between structural demands (working hours), psychological strain (burnout), and organizational resources (working environment). However, the relative influence of these factors is likely uneven. While working hours impose visible constraints on time, burnout and the working environment exert more profound effects on employees' psychological capacity to manage role boundaries. Despite this, empirical studies explicitly examining these relationships within aviation security, particularly in emerging economy contexts, remain limited. This gap underscores the need for further investigation to determine the relative salience of these factors and to provide context-specific insights into workforce sustainability in safety-critical industries.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the review of relevant literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework that examines the relationship between three independent variables, working hours, job burnout, and working environment and the dependent variable, work-life balance. The framework assumes that these factors collectively influence AVSEC employees' ability to achieve a

balanced work and personal life. Based on the research constructs identified, a conceptual framework has been developed and is presented in Figure 1.

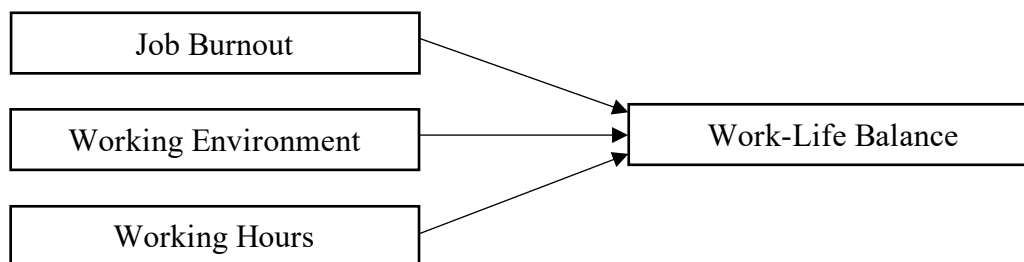


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the determinants of work-life balance among Aviation Security (AVSEC) employees at Malaysia Airports Sepang. A quantitative approach is appropriate as it enables systematic measurement of variables and statistical testing of relationships among working hours, job burnout, working environment, and work-life balance.

The target population comprises all AVSEC employees stationed at Malaysia Airports Sepang. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each employee had an equal probability of selection, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed. Out of these, 312 questionnaires were returned, and after data screening for completeness and consistency, 298 responses were deemed usable, representing a response rate of approximately 85.1%. The sample size is considered adequate for statistical analysis based on established guidelines for multivariate analysis. It is important to note that this study represents the full-scale (main) study, while a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted prior to the main data collection. The pilot test aimed to assess the clarity, reliability, and preliminary validity of the measurement instrument. Based on the pilot results, minor refinements were made to improve item wording and overall questionnaire structure.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of multiple sections. The first section captured respondents' demographic information, while subsequent sections measured the main constructs of the study. All items were adapted from established and validated sources to ensure content rigor. Specifically working hours items were adapted from prior studies on work schedules and time demands (e.g., Badri et al., 2022; Ferguson et al., 2024), job burnout was measured using items adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) framework, working environment items were derived from organizational climate and workplace support literature (e.g., Musena, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024), and work-life balance items were adapted from established scales such as those developed by Greenhaus and Allen (2022) and Haar et al. (2023). All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture respondents' perceptions consistently. In this study, validity refers to the extent to which the measurement instruments accurately capture the intended constructs. Content validity was ensured through the adaptation of items from well-established literature and expert review during the pilot phase. Construct validity was assessed through correlation analysis, ensuring that items measuring the same construct

are significantly related while remaining distinct from other variables. Additionally, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was conducted to confirm internal consistency, with values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. The collected data were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, while Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the strength and direction of relationships between working hours, job burnout, working environment, and work-life balance.

Findings and Discussions

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in this study (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Cronbach's Alpha evaluates the extent to which items within a construct are correlated and collectively measure the intended variable. The coefficient values range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate stronger reliability. Based on commonly accepted guidelines, Cronbach's Alpha values below 0.50 indicate unacceptable reliability, values between 0.50 and 0.59 are considered poor, values between 0.60 and 0.69 are regarded as moderate, from 0.70 to 0.79 are acceptable, and values between 0.80 and 0.89 indicate good reliability. Values exceeding 0.90 reflect very high reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha results and their respective classifications are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Cronbach's Alpha

Part	Scale/Measures	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	N of items	Classification
B	Work-Life Balance	0.84	5	Good
C	Job Burnout	0.93	5	Excellent
D	Working Environment	0.78	3	Moderate
E	Working Hours	0.72	4	Moderate

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize the respondents' demographic profiles and to examine the overall level of each study variable. The respondents were AVSEC employees at Malaysia Airport Sepang with diverse backgrounds in terms of age, gender, marital status, educational level, and years of service. This diversity provides a broad representation of the AVSEC workforce and supports the reliability of the findings.

The results indicate that the overall level of work-life balance among AVSEC employees is moderate, suggesting that employees are able to balance work and personal life to some extent, although improvement is still needed. Among the independent variables, job burnout recorded a relatively high mean score, indicating the presence of work-related stress and emotional exhaustion. This reflects the demanding nature of aviation security duties. The working environment recorded a positive mean score, showing that respondents generally viewed their workplace conditions and management support favorably. In contrast, working hours showed a moderate mean score, reflecting the structured but demanding shift work system practiced in aviation security operations. The descriptive analysis results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work-Life Balance (DV)	40	2.00	5.00	3.48	0.932
Job Burnout (IV1)	40	1.00	5.00	3.61	1.102
Working Environment (IV2)	40	1.67	5.00	3.76	0.740
Working Hours (IV3)	40	1.75	5.00	3.56	0.829

Pearson Correlation Analysis

This study examines the relationships between working hours, job burnout, and working environment with work-life balance among AVSEC employees at Malaysia Airport Sepang. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results indicate that the relationship between working hours and work-life balance is weak and not statistically significant ($r = 0.135$, $p = 0.12$). This suggests that working hours do not play a major role in influencing work-life balance within the context of this study. Changes in working hours alone appear to have minimal impact on employees perceived ability to balance work and personal life. In contrast, job burnout demonstrates the strongest and most significant relationship with work-life balance, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.694$ ($p < 0.001$). This indicates a strong and statistically significant negative relationship, where higher levels of job burnout are associated with poorer work-life balance. The findings highlight job burnout as a critical factor affecting employees' overall well-being. The relationship between the working environment and work-life balance is positive but relatively weak ($r = 0.171$, $p = 0.001$). Although the relationship is statistically significant, its strength is lower compared to job burnout. This indicates that improvements in the working environment can contribute to better work-life balance, albeit with a smaller effect size. The weak association between working hours and work-life balance implies that adjustments to working hours alone may not be sufficient to enhance employees' balance. Other factors such as job expectations, work flexibility, and organizational support may mediate this relationship. The strong negative relationship between job burnout and work-life balance underscores the need for organizational interventions focused on stress management, mental health support, and workload control. While the impact of the working environment is less pronounced, enhancements in workplace facilities, organizational culture, and communication remain important strategies for improving work-life balance.

Overall, the findings indicate that job burnout and the working environment are significant factors influencing work-life balance among AVSEC employees, whereas working hours show a weak and non-significant relationship. The detailed results of the Pearson correlation analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation

Relationship	r-value	P-value	Result	Strength
Job Burnout	0.772	<0.001	Positive	Strong
Working Environment	-0.264	0.100	Negative	Weak
Working Hours	0.487	0.001	Positive	Moderate

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides important empirical evidence on the determinants of work-life balance among Aviation Security (AVSEC) employees at Malaysia Airports Sepang, offering a deeper understanding of how occupational demands shape employees' ability to effectively integrate professional and personal roles. The findings identify working hours, job burnout, and the working environment as critical predictors of work-life balance, reinforcing contemporary organizational research that positions work design and psychosocial conditions as central to employee well-being (Haar et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2023). The results suggest that prolonged and irregular working hours significantly constrain employees' opportunities for recovery, family engagement, and psychological detachment from work. Consistent with Bakker and Demerouti, (2023), excessive job demands tend to deplete employees' physical and emotional resources, thereby increasing vulnerability to stress and work-life interference. Similarly, job burnout emerged as a substantial barrier to achieving balance, indicating that chronic exposure to occupational stress may spill over into non-work domains and reduce overall life satisfaction. Conversely, a supportive working environment was found to play a protective role by mitigating the negative effects of demanding work conditions. Organizational climates characterized by supervisory support, effective communication, and positive interpersonal relationships enhance employees' resilience and adaptive capacity, ultimately promoting healthier work-life integration (Nguyen et al., 2024). These findings highlight the strategic importance of cultivating resource-rich workplaces, particularly within safety-critical sectors where operational pressures are inherently high.

The study underscores the necessity for organizations to adopt proactive and employee-centred policies. Implementing flexible work arrangements, optimizing shift scheduling, and strengthening managerial support systems can substantially improve employees' capacity to manage competing role demands. Prior research demonstrates that flexible work practices not only enhance work-life balance but also contribute to higher engagement, reduced turnover intentions, and improved organizational performance (Shockley et al., 2024). Beyond its managerial implications, this study contributes to the expanding body of literature on work-life balance within high-demand occupational contexts by extending empirical evidence from the aviation security sector, an area that remains comparatively underexplored. The findings support the growing scholarly consensus that sustainable workforce management requires organizations to move beyond productivity-driven models toward strategies that prioritize employee well-being as a driver of long-term organizational effectiveness (Eurofound, 2023). In conclusion, fostering work-life balance should be viewed not merely as a human resource initiative but as a strategic organizational imperative. By addressing structural stressors such as excessive working hours and burnout while simultaneously strengthening the working environment, organizations can enhance employee sustainability, operational reliability, and overall performance. Future research may further explore moderating variables such as perceived organizational support, leadership style, or psychological capital to develop a more comprehensive understanding of work-life dynamics in safety-sensitive industries.

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