

THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF RECENT EVIDENCE

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Abstract: *This systematic literature review (SLR) investigates the impacts of social media usage on work-life balance (WLB) in contemporary workplace settings, with a particular focus on studies conducted between 2020 and 2025. Drawing on 17 peer-reviewed empirical studies, the review explores how social media influences employees' ability to manage boundaries between work and personal life. The studies analyzed employed diverse methodologies, including cross-sectional surveys, qualitative interviews, and structural equation modeling. Key findings reveal that while social media can enhance communication, collaboration, and recovery during work breaks—thereby supporting WLB—it can also contribute to technostress, burnout, and blurred boundaries when used excessively or compulsively. Psychological constructs such as fear of missing out (FoMO), social media communication self-efficacy, and phubbing emerged as critical mediators and moderators. The review highlights the dual nature of social media as both a facilitator and disruptor of WLB, depending on usage patterns, platform type, and individual or organizational context. It concludes that a balanced and mindful approach to social media use, supported by digital well-being policies and boundary management strategies, is essential for optimizing its benefits while minimizing its risks. These insights offer valuable guidance for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers aiming to foster healthier and more sustainable work-life integration in the digital age.*

Keywords: *Work-Life Balance, Social Media Usage, Employee Well-being, Digital Boundaries, Organizational Behaviour.*

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of digital work, the boundaries between professional and personal life are becoming increasingly fluid. As organizations adopt flexible work arrangements and digital communication tools, employees are expected to remain connected beyond traditional working hours. This shift has brought renewed attention to the concept of work-life balance (WLB), a critical factor in employee well-being, satisfaction, and organizational sustainability. At the same time, the rise of social media as a ubiquitous tool in both personal and professional spheres has introduced new dynamics into how individuals manage their time, attention, and emotional energy. The advent of social media has revolutionized the way we communicate, interact, and share information. However, its pervasive integration into both personal and professional lives has raised concerns about its impact on work-life balance.

Literature Review

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical dimension of employee well-being and organizational sustainability, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage the demands of work and personal life, including the capacity to psychologically detach from work during nonwork hours. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote and hybrid work models, which, while offering flexibility, also intensified the overlap between work and home domains (Vyas, 2022). This shift has led to increased work-related fatigue and a growing need for organizations to support employees in managing their boundaries. A systematic review by Thilagavathy and Geetha (2023) emphasized that WLB is influenced by multiple factors, including organizational culture, support systems, and individual coping strategies. The review also highlighted that WLB is not a one-size-fits-all concept, as it is shaped by demographic, occupational, and cultural contexts. As such, achieving WLB requires a nuanced understanding of the interplay between personal values, job demands, and institutional support mechanisms.

Social Media Usage in the Workplace

Social media has become a ubiquitous feature of modern organizational life, transforming how employees communicate, collaborate, and engage with their work. Platforms such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn are now integral to daily operations, enabling real-time communication, remote teamwork, and professional networking. While these tools offer clear benefits in terms of efficiency and connectivity, they also introduce new challenges. The constant stream of notifications, messages, and updates can lead to information overload and cognitive fatigue, particularly when employees feel compelled to remain connected outside of working hours (Zivnuska et al., 2020). Moreover, the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes on the same platforms can blur the boundaries between work and life, making it difficult for individuals to disengage and recover. Research has shown that the psychological effects of social media use—such as fear of missing out (FoMO), social comparison, and compulsive checking—can contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction (Tandon et al., 2021; Dhir, 2022). These findings underscore the importance of understanding not just the frequency of social media use, but also its purpose, platform, and psychological impact.

The Impact of Social Media Usage on Work-Life Balance

The relationship between social media usage and work-life balance is complex and multifaceted, characterized by both enabling and disruptive effects. On the positive side, social media can support WLB by facilitating flexible communication, enabling remote collaboration, and providing emotional support through social connections. For example, Cheng and Cho (2021) found that using social media during work breaks can enhance recovery experiences such as relaxation and psychological detachment, which are essential for maintaining WLB. Similarly, enterprise social media platforms can streamline workflows and reduce the need for after-hours communication when used strategically (Pekkala & van Zoonen, 2021). However, the negative consequences of unregulated or compulsive social media use are increasingly evident. Studies have shown that excessive engagement—particularly when driven by FoMO or organizational pressure—can lead to technostress, burnout, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Oksa et al., 2021; Dhir, 2022). The conservation of resources (COR) theory provides a useful framework for understanding these dynamics, suggesting that social media interactions can deplete emotional and cognitive resources, thereby impairing individuals' ability to recover from work demands (Zivnuska et al., 2020). Furthermore, generational differences in digital behaviour have been found to influence WLB outcomes, with younger employees more likely to experience digital fatigue and boundary erosion due to their higher engagement with social media (Oksa et al., 2021). These findings highlight the need for organizations to develop digital well-being policies that promote mindful and purposeful social media use, while also supporting employees in managing their digital boundaries.

Interventions to Improve Work-Life Balance in the Digital Age

To support work-life balance in the digital age, organizations can implement strategies such as reducing non-work-related social media use, which has been linked to improved job satisfaction and mental health (Margraf, 2023). Digital well-being policies, like limiting after-hours communication, help employees disconnect and recover (Sutherland, 2020). Additionally, providing training in time management, digital literacy, and stress management, along with access to mental health resources, can empower employees to manage social media use more effectively and maintain a healthier work-life balance (Funke et al., 2023).

Current Study

This systematic literature review examined empirical evidence on the influence of social media usage on work-life balance among employees. The aim was to inform organizational policy and workplace practices, and to identify directions for future research in promoting digital well-being and sustainable work-life integration.

Methodology

This systematic literature review (SLR) followed a structured and transparent methodology to identify, select, and synthesize empirical studies examining the impact of social media usage on work-life balance (WLB). The review was guided by established protocols for conducting SLRs in the social sciences, ensuring rigor, replicability, and comprehensiveness.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using the Scopus and WoS Database, which provides access to a wide range of peer-reviewed academic journals and scholarly publications. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords such as “social media,” “work-life

balance,” “employee well-being,” “digital communication,” and “boundary management.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search results and ensure comprehensive coverage.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For the purposes of this review, studies were selected based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and methodological rigor. Eligible studies were those published between 2020 and 2025 in peer-reviewed academic journals. They were required to focus on the use of social media within workplace contexts and to examine outcomes related to work-life balance or its psychological correlates, such as burnout, recovery, or psychological detachment. Studies were excluded if they focused exclusively on non-work-related social media use, were not available in English, or were conceptual or opinion-based articles lacking empirical data.

Study Selection and Data Extraction

The quality of the included studies was assessed based on criteria such as sample size, use of validated instruments, analytical rigor (e.g., use of SEM), and clarity of theoretical framework. Each study was rated as having high, moderate, or low methodological quality. The assessment was conducted collaboratively by the review team, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Quality Assessment

Each study was appraised for methodological quality using criteria such as sample size, use of validated instruments, analytical rigor (e.g., use of SEM), and clarity of theoretical framework. Studies were rated as high, moderate, or low quality based on these criteria.

Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis approach was used to analyse and interpret the findings. Studies were grouped according to five key domains of social media usage: frequency and duration, purpose, platform type, engagement level, and content consumption. Thematic patterns and methodological trends were identified to draw conclusions about the relationship between social media use and work-life balance.

Analysis of Results

The initial search yielded a total of 1,750 records. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts for relevance, 322 articles were selected for full-text review. These articles were assessed based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Ultimately, 17 highly relevant empirical studies were included in the final narrative synthesis. These studies were chosen for their methodological rigor, relevance to the research objectives, and focus on the psychological and behavioural impacts of social media in workplace settings.

Table 1: Search Terms and Linkage

Participants	"employee" OR "worker" OR "staff" OR "teleworker" AND
Exposure	"social media" OR "enterprise social media" OR "digital communication" AND
Outcomes	"work-life balance" OR "WLB" OR "psychological detachment" OR "burnout" OR "recovery" OR "well-being" OR "job satisfaction"

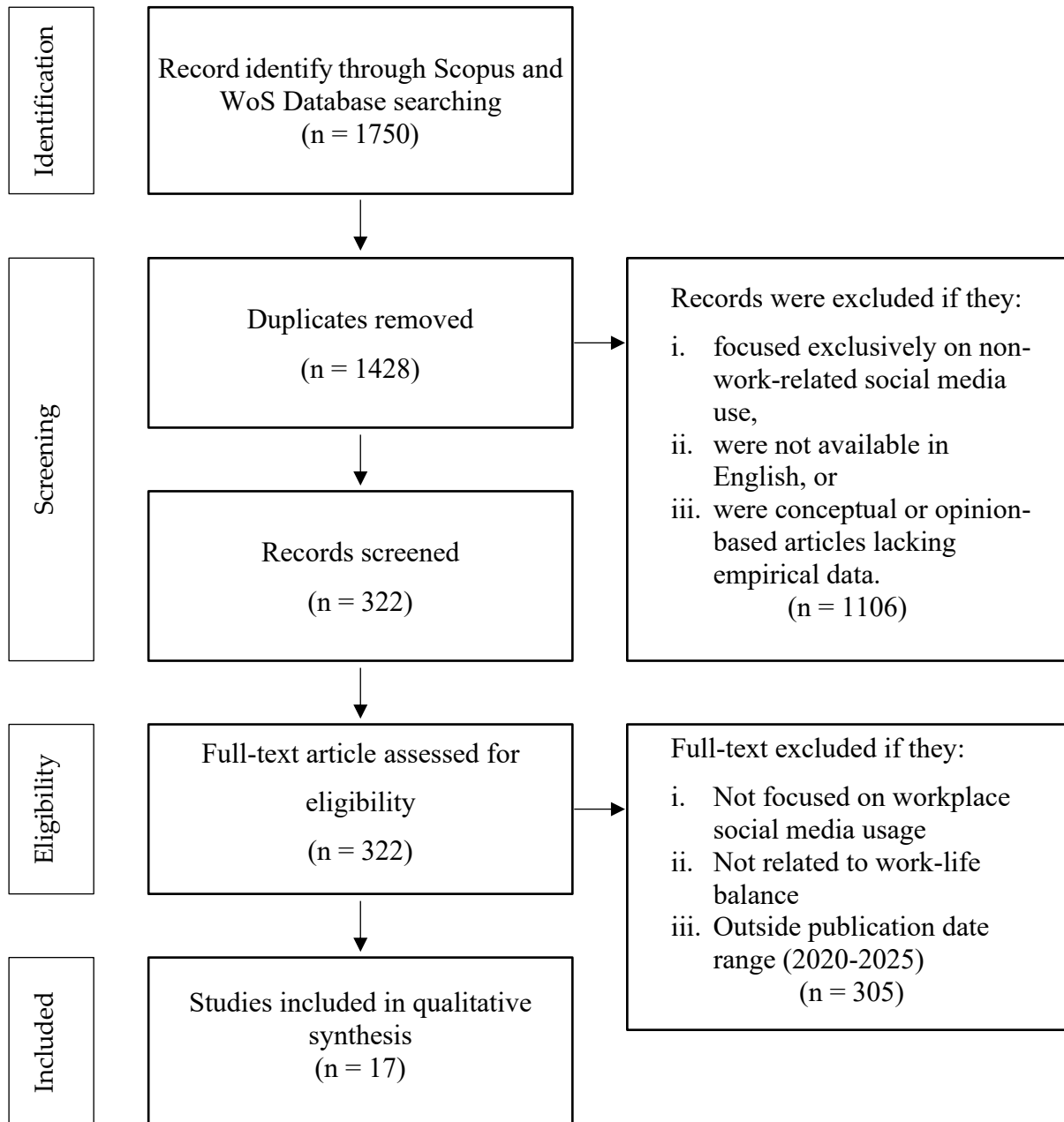


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

Description of Studies

The reviewed studies collectively explore the multifaceted impact of social media usage within workplace environments, with a particular emphasis on how such usage influences employees' ability to manage work-life balance (WLB). While many studies examined broader outcomes such as well-being, job performance, and psychological states, these are often closely tied to WLB through mechanisms like stress, burnout, recovery, and boundary management. Most studies employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, frequently analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), while a few adopted qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to capture deeper insights into employees' lived experiences. Sample sizes varied significantly, ranging from 14 participants in qualitative interviews to over 1100 respondents in large-scale surveys. The populations studied included corporate employees, knowledge workers, hospitality staff, and teleworkers, spanning diverse geographical contexts such as China, India, Finland, South Korea, and the United States. A wide array of outcome measures was used, including standardized instruments like the FoMO Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013), Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) (Schaufeli et al., 1996), Short Smith Well-being Questionnaire (Smith & Smith, 2017), and the Recovery Experience Questionnaire (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007)—many of which are directly relevant to understanding WLB. The findings reveal a nuanced picture: while enterprise social media use can support work-life integration by enhancing communication and flexibility, excessive or compulsive use is linked to technostress, burnout, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Mediating and moderating variables such as social media communication self-efficacy, FoMO, and work-life balance itself frequently emerged as critical factors influencing these outcomes. Overall, the studies underscore the importance of strategic and mindful integration of social media in organizational settings to support, rather than undermine, employees' work-life balance.

Table 2: Summary of Studies

Authors	Aim	Design	Sample Size	Sample Characteristics	Outcome Measure(s)	Findings / Results
Adeel Luqman et al. (2021)	To explore the relationship between enterprise social media use and its impact on employee creativity and well-being.	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	451	323 employees from firms in China	Employee creativity and well-being (e.g., job satisfaction, engagement, mental health) (Zhong et al., 2012; Chen & Karahana, 2018; Rhee & Choi, 2016; Schaufeli et al., 1995; Koopman et al., 2015)	Enterprise social media use enhances employee creativity through collaboration and idea sharing.
Anushree Tandon et al. (2021)	To investigate psychological and behavioral	Cross-sectional survey with path analysis	312	330 social media users in the U.S., diverse age and gender	Psychological outcomes (anxiety, stress); behavioral	Social media-induced FOMO increases

	outcomes of social media-induced FOMO in the workplace.				outcomes (productivity, distraction) (Przybylski et al., 2013)	anxiety and stress, reducing job satisfaction.
Kaisa Pekkala & Ward van Zoonen (2021)	To explore the relationship between work-related social media use and the mediating role of social media communication self-efficacy.	Cross-sectional survey	1000+	Knowledge workers in Finland, professional service sector	Social media communication self-efficacy; engagement and effectiveness in work-related social media use (Bandura, 1997)	Social media communication self-efficacy mediates positive work outcomes from social media use.
Ana Gálvez et al. (2020)	To analyse telework as a political tool for promoting or hindering social sustainability, focusing on female teleworkers with family responsibilities.	Qualitative (24 interviews + 10 focus groups)	48 participants	Female teleworkers with family responsibilities	Qualitative themes: “life sustainability ecologies” and “presence-based ecologies”	Female teleworkers perceive work culture through “life sustainability” and “presence-based” ecologies affecting work–life balance.
Marta Juchnowicz & Hanna Kinowska (2021)	To analyse the relationship between remote working and employee well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Cross-sectional survey (n = 1000, CAWI method)	1000	Polish workers, surveyed via CAWI in Jan 2021	Employee well-being: workplace relationships, health, and work–life balance	Exclusive remote work negatively affects workplace relationships and work–life balance.
Jana Kühnel et al. (2020)	To explore how personal social media use at work	Ecological Momentary	337	White-collar employees in Germany, mean age 33.8, 50% female	Personal social media use, work–nonwork balance, and	Personal social media use at work improves

	affects work–nonwork balance and creativity.	Assessment			creativity (measured hourly) (Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) design)	work–nonwork balance but may reduce creativity.
Sumera Saleem et al. (2021)	To explore the relationship between excessive SNS use at work and its impact on employee performance and technological conflicts.	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	505	Employees from diverse industries and job roles	Employee performance; technological conflicts due to excessive SNS use (Custom SEM-based model)	Excessive SNS use at work causes technological conflicts and lowers employee performance.
Chetna Priyadarshini et al. (2020)	To gain insights into the consequences of social media overuse on employee well-being and productivity.	Qualitative (semi-structured interviews)	14	6 males, 8 females, avg. age 32.5, IT/ITES sector	Physical and psychological effects (e.g., sleep issues, envy, distraction, productivity loss) (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA))	Social media addiction leads to physical strain, emotional distress, and reduced productivity.
Seung Yeop Lee & Sang Woo Lee (2020)	To examine how Facebook and KakaoTalk use at work affects job performance, and how task characteristics moderate this relationship.	Cross-sectional survey	400	Office workers in South Korea, using Facebook and KakaoTalk	Job performance; moderated by task equivocality	Facebook and KakaoTalk use positively correlate with job performance.
Reetta Oksa et al. (2021)	To examine the relationship between social media	Mixed methods: Focus groups + expert	52 (focus), 563 (expert), 1817	Millennials and older generations in Finland	Well-being: technostress, burnout, psychological distress	Millennials use social media for intrinsic and extrinsic

	use at work and well-being, focusing on generational differences.	survey + national survey	(national)		(Tarafdar et al., 2007; Maslach & Jackson, 1981)	reasons but face higher technostress and burnout.
Rahul Bodhi et al. (2022)	To examine the association between work-related social media use and employee outcomes, with psychological well-being as a mediator and FoMO as a moderator.	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	233	Employees from various organizations in India	Psychological well-being (PW), innovative performance (IP); moderated by FoMO (Przybylski et al., 2013); Ryff's Scales, 1989)	Work-related social media use boosts innovative performance, mediated by psychological well-being.
Amandeep Dhir (2022)	To explore the relationship between social media-induced FoMO and phubbing, and their psychological and relational outcomes.	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	330	U.S.-based social media users, mixed gender and age	Behavioral outcomes: FoMO, phubbing, anxiety, life satisfaction (Przybylski et al., 2013; Roberts & David, 2016)	FoMO and phubbing behaviours are linked to anxiety and lower life satisfaction.
Ruixia Han et al. (2020)	To examine how social comparison mediates the relationship between social media use and job burnout.	Cross-sectional online survey	530	WeChat users, categorized by social comparison tendencies	Job burnout (MBI-GS); social comparison scale (Schaufeli et al., 1996)	Social comparison mediates the link between social media addiction and job burnout.
Asta Stankevičienė et al. (2021)	To investigate the mediating	Cross-sectional survey	100	75.2% female, mostly aged 19–39, Lithuania	Employee well-being (Short Smith Well-being	Work culture strongly influences

	effect of work-life balance on the relationship between work culture and employee well-being.				Questionnaire) ; work-life balance (Smith & Smith, 2017)	well-being, with work-life balance as a partial mediator.
Fitriani Umar & C.V. Nanda Kishore (2022)	To examine how enterprise social media use moderates the relationship between work stressors and work engagement .	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	1104	694 social media users (392 internal, 302 external)	Job performance; moderated by work- and nonwork-related enterprise social media use (Custom SEM-based model)	Enterprise social media use moderates the relationship between stressors and work engagement .
Xiaiyu Chen et al. (2021)	To investigate how work- and social-related social media use affect employee performance in internal vs. external contexts.	Cross-sectional survey	694	Users of internal and external social media	Job performance; internal vs. external social media use (work- and social-related)	Internal social media for work and external social media for social use both enhance job performance.
Yi-Sung Cheng & Seonghee Cho (2021)	To investigate how social media use during work breaks affects recovery experiences and productivity .	Cross-sectional survey using SEM	387	Hospitality employees in the U.S., diverse roles	Recovery experiences: relaxation, psychological detachment, satisfaction during breaks (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007)	Social media use during breaks improves recovery experiences and job performance.

Quality Assessment

The quality assessment of the 17 reviewed studies reveals a generally high standard of methodological rigor across the literature. A majority of the studies were rated as high quality, particularly those employing large sample sizes, validated outcome measures, and robust analytical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). These studies demonstrated strong internal validity and clear theoretical frameworks, often grounded in established models like Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory or using well-known instruments such as the FoMO Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013), Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS), and the Short Smith Well-being Questionnaire. Several studies, including those by Adeel Luqman et al., Anushree Tandon et al., and Rahul Bodhi et al., stood out for their comprehensive design and use of validated psychological constructs, earning high ratings. Studies that utilized mixed methods or innovative designs like Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) also received high marks for methodological innovation and depth of insight. A few studies were rated as moderate quality, primarily due to limitations such as small sample sizes, non-standardized outcome measures, or limited generalizability. For instance, the qualitative studies by Ana Gálvez et al. and Chetna Priyadarshini et al. provided rich contextual insights but were constrained by smaller participant pools. Similarly, studies using custom models without standardized instruments were noted for their relevance but rated slightly lower due to concerns about replicability and measurement precision. Overall, the body of literature demonstrates a strong foundation for understanding the effects of social media in workplace contexts, with most studies meeting high standards of research design, clarity, and analytical rigor.

Table 3: Quality Assessment

Authors	Quality Rating	Quality Appraisal Findings
Adeel Luqman et al. (2021)	High	Large sample Validated outcome measures SEM analysis Clear methodology
Anushree Tandon et al. (2021)	High	Strong theoretical grounding Validated FoMO scale Robust path analysis
Kaisa Pekkala & Ward van Zoonen (2021)	High	Large sample Clear theoretical framework (Bandura) Well-defined constructs
Ana Gálvez et al. (2020)	Moderate	Rich qualitative data Limited generalizability due to small sample
Marta Juchnowicz & Hanna Kinowska (2021)	High	Large national sample Clear outcome measures Timely COVID-19 context
Jana Kühnel et al. (2020)	High	Innovative EMA design Real-time data Strong internal validity
Sumera Saleem et al. (2021)	Moderate	Adequate sample Custom SEM model Lacks standardized outcome measures

Chetna Priyadarshini et al. (2020)	Moderate	In-depth qualitative insights Small sample limits external validity
Seung Yeop Lee & Sang Woo Lee (2020)	Moderate	Clear design and sample Lacks detail on measurement tools
Reetta Oksa et al. (2021)	High	Mixed methods Large sample Validated scales (e.g., MBI) Strong triangulation
Rahul Bodhi et al. (2022)	High	SEM Validated scales (FoMO, Ryff) Clear mediation model
Amandeep Dhir (2022)	High	Validated outcome measures SEM Clear psychological constructs
Ruixia Han et al. (2020)	High	Large sample Validated burnout and social comparison scales
Asta Stankevičienė et al. (2021)	Moderate	Moderate sample size Validated well-being scale Clear mediation model
Fitriani Umar & C.V. Nanda Kishore (2022)	High	Large sample SEM Clear moderation model Relevant to workplace dynamics
Xiayu Chen et al. (2021)	High	Large sample Clear comparison of internal vs. external SM use
Yi-Sung Cheng & Seonghee Cho (2021)	High	Validated recovery scale SEM Strong workplace relevance

Among the 17 reviewed studies, most employed cross-sectional survey designs, with several utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyse relationships between variables. While the majority of studies clearly defined their outcome measures and referenced validated instruments (e.g., the FoMO Scale by Przybylski et al., 2013; MBI-GS by Schaufeli et al., 1996; and the Short Smith Well-being Questionnaire by Smith & Smith, 2017), a few relied on custom models or qualitative themes without detailed psychometric validation. For instance, studies by Sumera Saleem et al. (2021) and Fitriani Umar & Kishore (2022) used custom SEM-based models without reporting the reliability or validity of their measures. All studies relied on self-report questionnaires, which introduces the potential for social desirability bias and recall bias. Although some studies acknowledged this limitation, few explicitly described procedures to mitigate it, such as anonymity assurances or statistical controls. The qualitative studies (e.g., Ana Gálvez et al., 2020; Chetna Priyadarshini et al., 2020) provided rich contextual insights but were limited by small sample sizes and lacked triangulation or inter-rater reliability checks. No longitudinal or experimental designs were identified, limiting the ability to infer causality. Furthermore, while most studies included diverse samples, only a few (e.g., Reetta Oksa et al., 2021) employed mixed methods or stratified sampling to enhance generalizability. Overall, while the reviewed studies contribute valuable insights into the effects of social media in

workplace settings, methodological limitations—particularly related to measurement validity, bias control, and study design—should be considered when interpreting their findings.

Analysis of Results

Across the 17 reviewed studies, five key domains of social media usage—frequency and duration, purpose, platform type, engagement level, and content consumption—were addressed to varying degrees. These domains are critical for understanding how social media use influences employees' ability to manage boundaries between work and personal life, a core component of work-life balance. To systematically assess the impact of social media in workplace contexts, five key domains of usage were operationally defined based on their relevance across the reviewed literature. Frequency and Duration of Use refers to how often and for how long individuals engage with social media platforms, typically measured through self-reported estimates of daily or weekly usage time. Purpose of Social Media Usage captures the underlying intent behind usage, distinguishing between work-related activities (e.g., collaboration, professional networking) and personal use (e.g., entertainment, socializing). Type of Social Media Platform denotes the specific platforms utilized, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or enterprise tools like Slack, which may influence user behaviour and outcomes due to their differing functionalities. Engagement Level reflects the depth of interaction with social media, encompassing both behavioural indicators (e.g., posting, commenting) and psychological constructs such as communication self-efficacy or compulsive use. Finally, Content Consumption refers to the nature of the content users interact with—such as news, entertainment, or professional updates—which can shape cognitive and emotional responses. These operational definitions provide a structured lens through which the reviewed studies can be analysed and compared, highlighting both the breadth and specificity of social media's role in organizational settings.

Frequency and Duration of Use

Only one study—Jana Kühnel et al. (2020)—explicitly addressed this domain using an Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) design. This method allowed for real-time, hourly tracking of social media use, providing granular insights into usage patterns and their immediate effects on work–nonwork balance and creativity. However, the remaining 16 studies did not quantify frequency or duration of use, relying instead on general self-reports or focusing on other constructs. This lack of standardized measurement limits cross-study comparability and the ability to assess dose-response relationships between usage intensity and workplace outcomes. The omission also restricts the potential to identify thresholds beyond which social media use becomes detrimental.

Purpose of Social Media Usage

This domain was more thoroughly explored. Kaisa Pekkala & Ward van Zoonen (2021) and Rahul Bodhi et al. (2022) clearly distinguished between work-related and personal social media use, linking these purposes to outcomes such as engagement, innovation, and psychological well-being. Reetta Oksa et al. (2021) added depth by examining intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations, particularly across generational cohorts, revealing that younger employees often use social media for both social connection and professional development, but also experience higher technostress. Fitriani Umar & C.V. Nanda Kishore (2022) and Xiayu Chen et al. (2021) further differentiated between internal (enterprise) and external (public) platforms, showing that purpose-specific use moderates the relationship between stressors and engagement. These

studies underscore the importance of understanding user intent, as the same platform may yield different outcomes depending on its use context.

Type of Social Media Platform

Several studies identified specific platforms, though this was not consistent across the literature. Seung Yeop Lee & Sang Woo Lee (2020) focused on Facebook and KakaoTalk, finding that their use positively correlated with job performance, moderated by task characteristics. Chetna Priyadarshini et al. (2020) and Ruixia Han et al. (2020) examined WeChat, particularly in the context of social comparison and burnout. However, most studies used the term “social media” generically, without platform-specific distinctions. This limits the ability to assess how platform features (e.g., synchronicity, visibility, content richness) influence user behavior and outcomes. Given the functional diversity of platforms—from professional tools like LinkedIn to informal ones like Instagram—future research should more precisely identify and compare platform types.

Engagement Level

Engagement was often inferred rather than directly measured. Pekkala & van Zoonen (2021) used social media communication self-efficacy as a proxy for engagement, suggesting that confidence in using social media for work purposes enhances positive outcomes. Amandeep Dhir (2022) examined FoMO and phubbing, which reflect compulsive and socially driven engagement patterns, linking them to anxiety and reduced life satisfaction. However, few studies employed standardized engagement metrics or scales to quantify the depth of interaction (e.g., active vs. passive use). This limits the ability to differentiate between superficial browsing and meaningful participation, which may have divergent effects on well-being and productivity. The lack of consistent operationalization also hinders meta-analytic synthesis.

Content Consumption

This was the least addressed domain. None of the 17 studies systematically analysed the type of content consumed on social media (e.g., news, entertainment, professional updates). While some studies alluded to content indirectly—such as Chetna Priyadarshini et al. (2020) discussing emotional distress linked to social comparison—no study categorized or measured content types in a structured way. This omission is significant, as content type likely moderates the psychological and behavioural effects of social media use. For instance, exposure to professional content may enhance learning and engagement, while entertainment or emotionally charged content may lead to distraction or stress. Future research should incorporate content analysis or user-reported content categories to better understand these dynamics.

Confounding Factors

10 studies employed robust analytical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), few explicitly addressed or controlled for potential confounding factors. Several studies were susceptible to confounding due to their reliance on cross-sectional designs and self-report measures, which increase the risk of bias and limit causal inference. Commonly implied confounders included job stress and workload, which may influence both social media use and employee outcomes such as performance or well-being, as seen in studies by Fitriani Umar & Kishore (2022) and Sumera Saleem et al. (2021). Personality traits, such as neuroticism or extraversion, were likely confounders in studies examining FoMO and phubbing behaviours.

(e.g., Amandeep Dhir, 2022; Anushree Tandon et al., 2021), yet were not directly measured. Age and generational differences, addressed in part by Reetta Oksa et al. (2021), also represent a confounding influence, as younger employees may engage with social media differently and experience distinct psychological effects. Additionally, contextual variables such as job role, industry type, remote work status, and cultural background were rarely controlled for, despite their potential to shape both social media behaviour and workplace outcomes. Only a few studies, such as those by Rahul Bodhi et al. (2022) and Jana Kühnel et al. (2020), employed designs or statistical models that partially mitigated these risks through mediation, moderation, or real-time data collection. Overall, the limited attention to confounding factors across the literature underscores the need for more rigorous study designs, including longitudinal and experimental approaches, to better isolate the effects of social media use in organizational settings.

Discussion

This systematic literature review examined 17 empirical studies to explore how social media usage influences work-life balance (WLB) in contemporary organizational settings. The findings reveal a complex interplay between the benefits and drawbacks of social media use, with significant implications for employees' ability to manage boundaries between work and personal life. Several studies, such as those by Pekkala & van Zoonen (2021) and Bodhi et al. (2022), suggest that when used for work-related communication and collaboration, social media can enhance engagement and psychological well-being, indirectly supporting a more balanced work-life experience. Similarly, Cheng & Cho (2021) found that social media use during work breaks can facilitate recovery experiences—such as relaxation and psychological detachment—which are essential components of maintaining WLB.

However, the review also highlights the risks associated with excessive or compulsive social media use, particularly when boundaries between work and personal life become blurred. For instance, Tandon et al. (2021) and Dhir (2022) reported that social media-induced FoMO and phubbing behaviours contribute to anxiety and relational strain, which can disrupt personal time and reduce satisfaction in both work and nonwork domains. Oksa et al. (2021) further emphasized generational differences, noting that younger employees often experience higher technostress and burnout due to constant connectivity, which undermines their ability to disengage from work during personal time.

The domain-based analysis revealed that purpose of use and platform type were the most frequently addressed dimensions, with several studies distinguishing between work-related and personal use and their respective impacts on WLB. However, frequency and duration, engagement level, and especially content consumption were underexplored, limiting a comprehensive understanding of how specific usage patterns affect boundary management. Moreover, while some studies acknowledged the mediating role of psychological constructs (e.g., FoMO, communication self-efficacy), few explicitly examined how social media use interacts with organizational policies or individual boundary management strategies—factors that are critical to understanding WLB outcomes.

Limitations

This review identified several limitations in the current body of literature on social media and work-life balance. First, the predominance of cross-sectional survey designs across the studies

limits the ability to establish causal relationships between social media use and WLB outcomes. Without longitudinal or experimental data, it is difficult to determine whether social media use leads to changes in WLB or whether individuals with poor WLB are more likely to engage in certain types of social media behaviour.

Second, all studies relied on self-report measures, which are subject to recall bias, social desirability bias, and common method variance. Although some studies used validated instruments (e.g., the Recovery Experience Questionnaire, FoMO Scale), others relied on custom or unvalidated measures, raising concerns about the reliability and comparability of findings.

Third, there was a lack of standardized operationalization of key constructs related to social media use. For example, engagement level and content consumption were either vaguely defined or omitted entirely, and few studies measured the temporal aspects of use (e.g., frequency, duration) in a structured way. This inconsistency hinders the ability to synthesize findings across studies and identify usage patterns that are particularly beneficial or harmful to WLB.

Fourth, confounding variables such as job stress, personality traits, digital literacy, and organizational culture were rarely controlled for, despite their potential to influence both social media use and WLB. Additionally, the generalizability of findings is limited by the demographic and cultural specificity of many samples, with several studies focusing on particular industries, age groups, or national contexts.

Conclusion

This review underscores the dual role of social media in shaping work-life balance. When used strategically—such as for professional communication, collaboration, or recovery during breaks—social media can support boundary management and enhance well-being. However, unregulated or compulsive use, particularly when driven by social comparison or FoMO, can erode boundaries, increase stress, and disrupt personal life. The findings suggest that the impact of social media on WLB is highly context-dependent, influenced by the purpose of use, platform type, and individual psychological factors.

To advance this field, future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to capture the dynamic nature of social media use and its evolving impact on WLB. Researchers should also develop standardized, multidimensional measures that capture not only the frequency and purpose of use but also engagement depth and content type. Importantly, studies should account for confounding variables and explore the moderating effects of organizational policies, digital norms, and individual boundary management strategies.

For practitioners, the findings highlight the need for evidence-based digital well-being policies that promote mindful and purposeful social media use. Organizations should provide guidance on managing digital boundaries, encourage restorative use of social media during breaks, and foster a culture that respects personal time. By doing so, they can harness the benefits of social media while mitigating its risks, ultimately supporting healthier and more sustainable work-life integration.

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