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Research Paper

The Role Leadership in Creating Work Life Balance

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Abstract

This research aims to map the development of Work-Life Balance (WLB) research and its relationship to the context of leadership. In total, 777 scientific articles indexed in Scopus were used as the database. Analysis was conducted using a bibliometric approach to map the author, source, and document details. The results found that WLB research began in 1993 and experienced significant increases during and after COVID-19. 2865 authors are dominated by research in developed countries and the health sector. This study found that transformational, servant, and e-leadership leadership styles are the most researched styles for realizing WLB. Apart from that, WLB is widely discussed in a gender context in which women, both as employees and leaders, still find it challenging to achieve WLB due to the high intensity of work-family conflict. This research is essential for human resource management (HRM) when reviewing operational arrangements and leadership styles. HRM must also make more specific interventions for female workers to achieve WLB in their careers.

Keywords *Work Life Balance, Leadership, Human Resource Management, Bibliometric*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic has created an awareness among managers and workers of the importance of balancing work with personal life, known as Work-Life Balance (WLB), among managers and workers (International Labor Office, 2022). More workers want more flexible working hours or jobs that allow for remote work. This work concept indicates that more time can be spent with family; however, on the one hand, it does not reduce the quality of work. Life Work Balance (WLB) can be associated with many positive aspects for companies and employees, such as job satisfaction and performance (Ardelt & Sharma, 2021). However, it should be noted that this can only happen if regulations and stakeholders adopt the same concept.

The importance of the presence of leaders in creating WLB for employees in the work environment has attracted researchers to explore this topic in depth, especially by mapping research trends and specific topics regarding these two keywords. The bibliometric approach is the most appropriate method to achieve this objective. Several researchers have carried out bibliometric analysis on Work-Life Balance (WLB). The research conducted by Nwachukwu et al. (2021) is the first bibliometric research to focus on WLB in general. A recent bibliometric search on this topic was carried out by Fauzi et al. (2024), but this research emphasizes the WLB phenomenon among academics, which is linked to work pressure.

In several bibliometric studies, it can be concluded that no research has mapped the role of WLB leaders. The key to company policies and regulations lies with the leader. Without leadership support and direction, WLB cannot be achieved, so personal conflicts, pressure, and work stress will continue to occur. This research contributes to the latest developments in human resource management (HRM) by focusing on the role of leaders in providing balanced conditions for workers. In the end, through this article, resource managers and company leaders can understand the importance of leaders' decisions

and the steps that can be taken to provide employees with a sense of job satisfaction and improvement through a balanced professional and personal life.

LITERATURE REVIEW
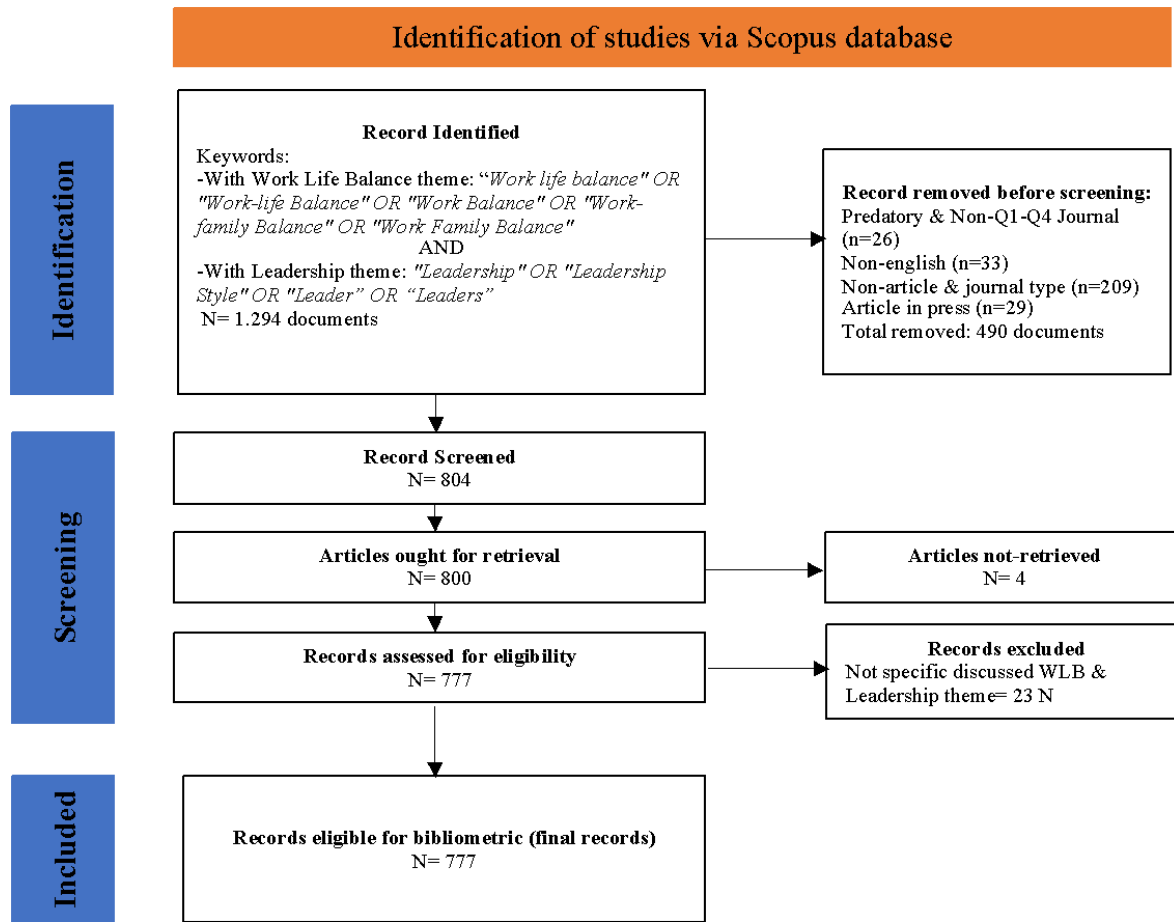### Work-Life Balance (WLB)

The balance between work-life and personal time, known as work-life balance, is defined as a condition in which a worker has balanced time for improving their career, interacting with family, community, and friends, and carrying out recreational activities (Thrasher et al., 2022). Work-Life Balance (WLB) has several elements that must be fulfilled to ensure that every employee feels complete balance. International Labor Office, (2022) indirectly emphasized that the fundamental basis of WLB is work patterns, working hours, job retention, and flexibility. These factors will form WLB if the company's work pattern is carried out with a fair division of tasks, humane working hours that do not violate domestic and international regulations, incentives for excess working hours, extended work retention, and openness of workers and companies to adjust productive time that is suitable.

Leadership Concept

Leadership is an effort to influence many subordinates through communication, instructions, or commands, or actions that prompt others to respond positively and make positive changes. Various leadership styles, such as transformational and servant leadership, are developing, prioritizing employee satisfaction and involvement. These examples of leadership are proven to be effectively implemented in organizations or within a company (George & Sreedharan, 2023). Meanwhile, oriented and militant leadership tends to be used to improve performance and achieve targets (Ardelt & Sharma, 2021). Thus, understanding and applying the appropriate leadership style is crucial for effective leadership because it can influence employee motivation, teamwork, organizational culture, and overall performance, including creating WLB within the company.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses the bibliometric method and develops a quantitative method to analyze bibliographic data in a journal. This analysis is used to identify references to scientific articles mentioned in journals, map the scientific area of a journal, and classify scientific articles according to research areas using one or more publication databases (Nwachukwu et al., 2021). The database used by the author contains scientific article data in the Scopus database, which has undergone strict selection based on editorial standards and a peer review process (See Fig. 1). The data analysis was performed primarily using R-Biblioshiny and VosViewer. These tools will help find essential information, including author production over time and mapping analysis.

Identification of studies via Scopus database

Identification

Record Identified
Keywords:
-With Work Life Balance theme: *"Work life balance" OR "Work-life Balance" OR "Work Balance" OR "Work-family Balance" OR "Work Family Balance"*
AND
-With Leadership theme: *"Leadership" OR "Leadership Style" OR "Leader" OR "Leaders"*
N= 1.294 documents

Record removed before screening:
Predatory & Non-Q1-Q4 Journal (n=26)
Non-english (n=33)
Non-article & journal type (n=209)
Article in press (n=29)
Total removed: 490 documents

Screening

Record Screened
N= 804

Articles ought for retrieval
N= 800

Articles not-retrieved
N= 4

Records assessed for eligibility
N= 777

Records excluded
Not specific discussed WLB & Leadership theme= 23 N

Included

Records eligible for bibliometric (final records)
N= 777

Figure 1. Data collection and refinement
Source: Author

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The bibliographic mapping of WLB research and the role of leaders involved 777 scientific articles published in Scopus from 1993 to 2024 and involved 2,865 authors from various countries.

Table 1. Main Information

Description	Results
Timespan	1993:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	528
Documents	777
Annual Growth Rate %	14.69
Keywords Plus (ID)	2033
Author's Keywords (DE)	1900
Authors	2865
Article	777

The first research on this topic began with an article by Berger et al. (1993). Awareness of the importance of WLB continues to grow, and there has been a rapid increase in the mid-2010s (see Figure 2). The peak will be in 2019-2023, when a shift in work culture occurs due to the influence of work patterns during COVID-19.
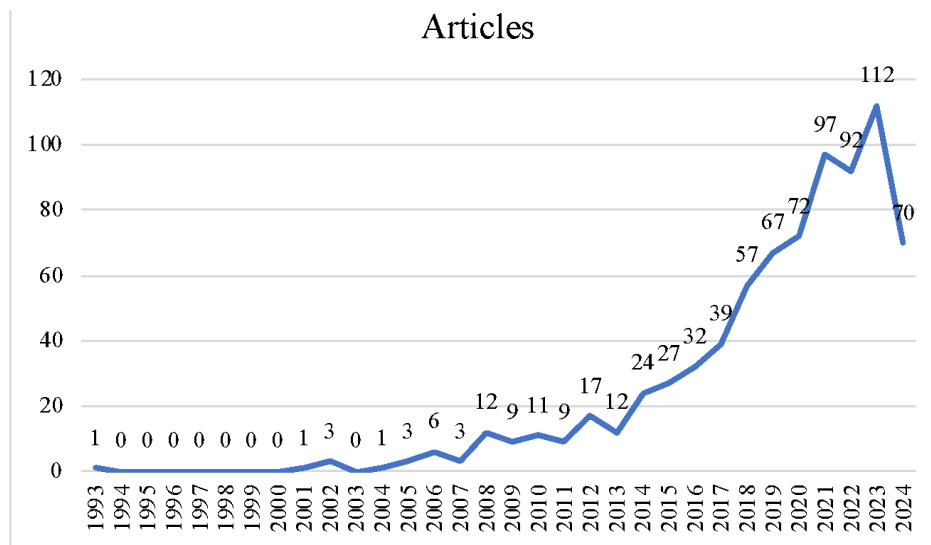
Figure 2. Production of Documents Annually

Next, in Figure 3, is a three-field plot, which visualizes the author's flow (AU) when discussing topics or keywords (DE), along with where the author publishes his articles in various journals (SO). At a glance, it can be seen that although there are not many authors who dominate research in this area, various exciting keywords, such as women and retention.
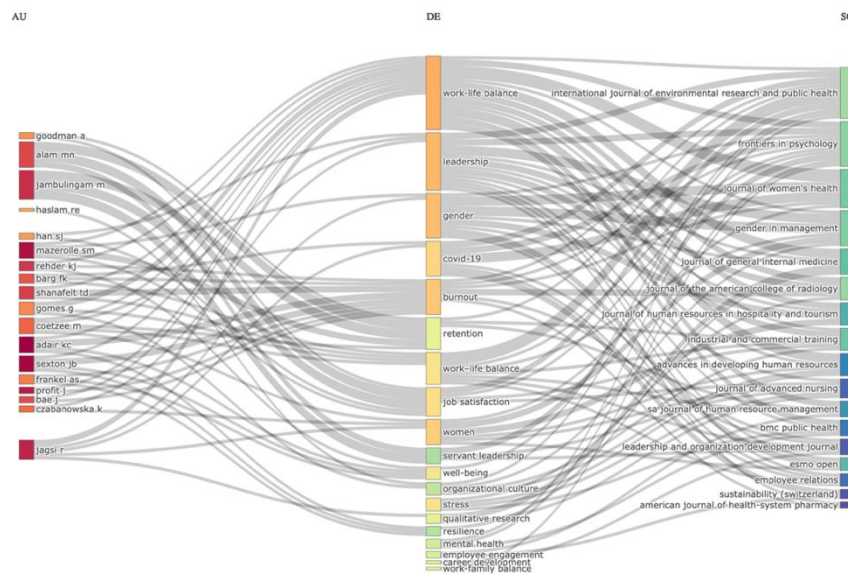

Figure 3. Three-Field Plot

Figure 4. Provides information about the authors of the most relevant articles. Aidar KC and Sexton JB are the most active writers with 6 articles, followed by Profit and Jagsi with five articles.
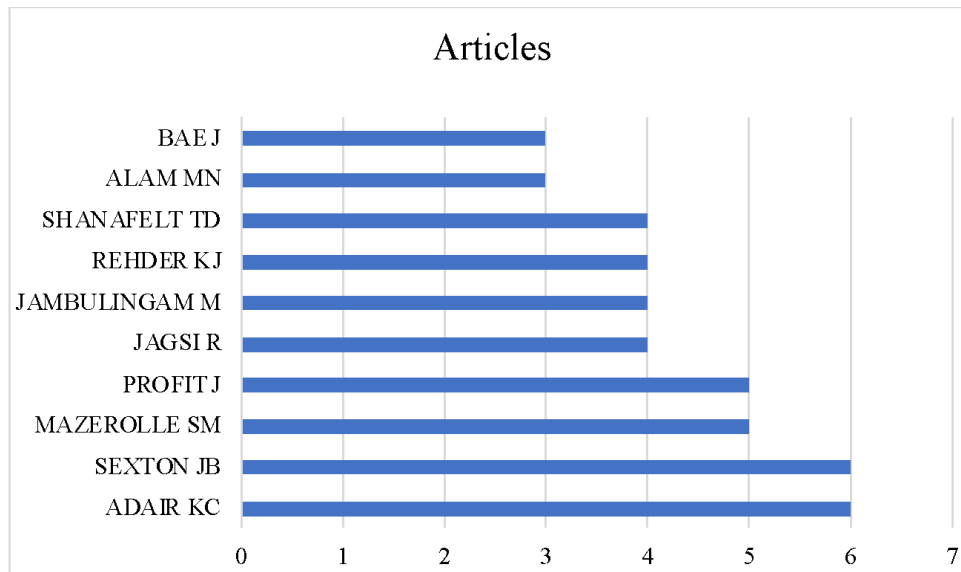
Figure 4. Top 10 Authors

Furthermore, as seen from the affiliation aspect in Figure 5, research on WLB is dominated by the world's top universities, such as the University of California (42 documents), the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Toronto.
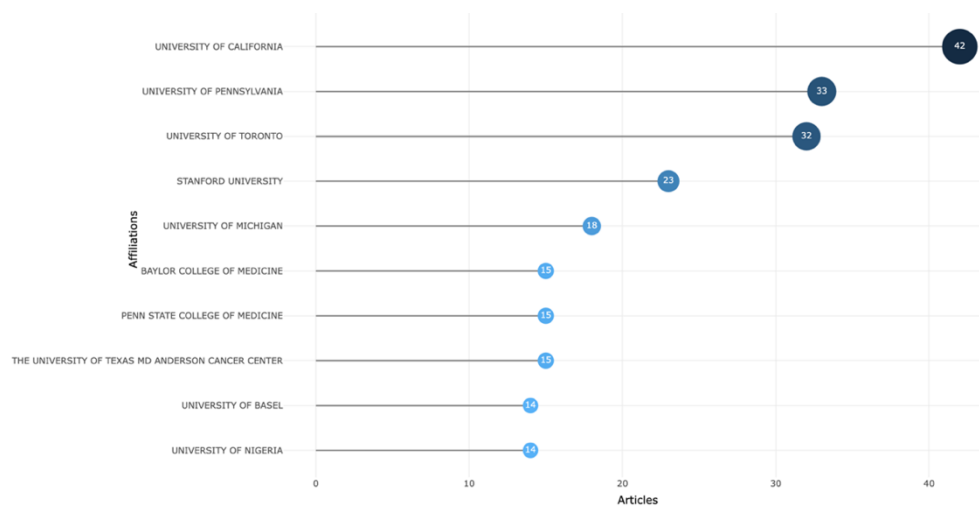

Figure 5. Top 10 Affiliations

It also shows that WLB issues and the role of leaders are more widely researched in developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, for both intra-country (SCP) and intercountry (MCP) collaboration index research. However, researchers in various countries have carried out MCP collaboration (See fig. 7)
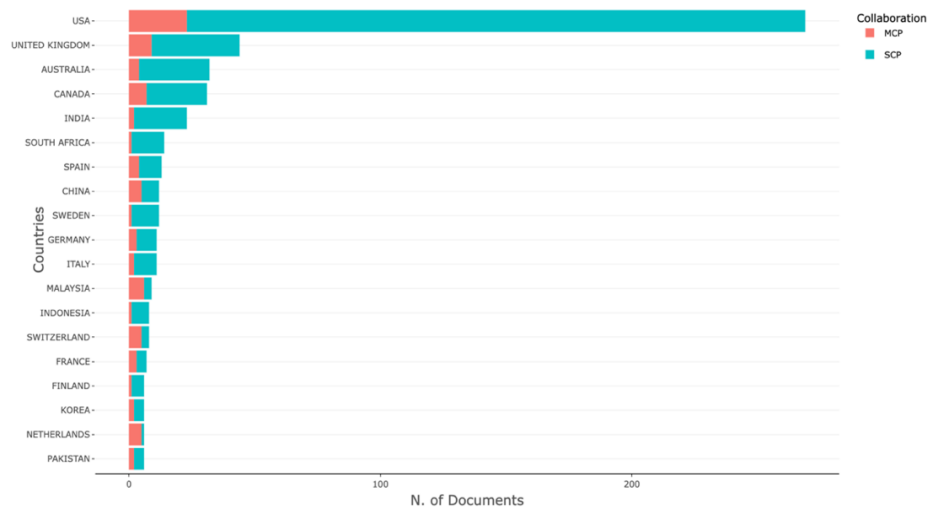
Figure 6. Top 20 Countries
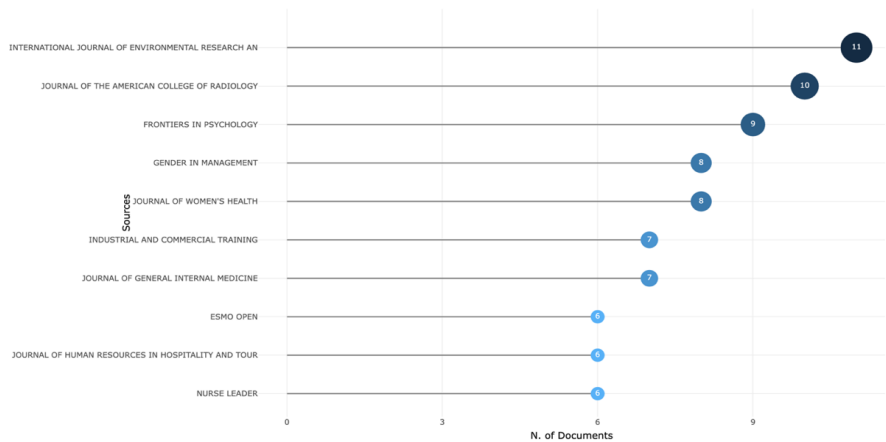

Figure 7. Authors' collaboration map

Figure 8. Top 10

Based on Figure 8, it can be seen that journals that publish WLB and leadership research are dominated by health-related journals (7 out of 10 journals), such as the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. Meanwhile, only three management and business journals were included, such as Gender in Management. This indicates that WLB research is more in the context of the health sector and touches on psychological issues; thus, journals in this scope publish more articles than management journals in general.

Table 2. Most Cited Documents

Authors	Title	Cited by
Lyons and Kuron (2014)	Generational differences in the workplace: A review of evidence and directions for future research	1368
Shanafelt et al. (2017)	The business case of investing in physician wellbeing	659
Guillaume and Pochic (2009)	What would you sacrifice? Access to top management and the work-life balance	399
Munir et al. (2012)	Mediating the effects of work-life conflict between transformational leadership and health care workers' job satisfaction and psychological well-being	344
Syrek et al. (2013)	Stress in highly demanding jobs: Transformational leadership moderates the impact of time pressure on exhaustion and work-life balance	326

Source: Authors Compilation (2024)

As shown in table 2 Research conducted by Lyons and Kuron (2014) raised the issue of differences in the workplace, including efforts to create work balance. Then, an article specifically in the leadership context is Guillaume and Pochic (2009), which explains the critical role of top management in creating WLB. Meanwhile, research conducted by Munir et al. (2012) and Syrek et al. (2013) discusses the transformational type of leader who performs better in encouraging the creation of WLB.

Document Analysis

This section analyzes topics related to WLB and leadership. Figure 9 shows the most frequently used keywords. "Work-Life Balance" and "Leadership" are the keywords most commonly used. Interestingly, this word cloud also captures more attention to the gender context with the discovery of the keyword "gender" and "women" as per research conducted by (Zeler et al., 2022).
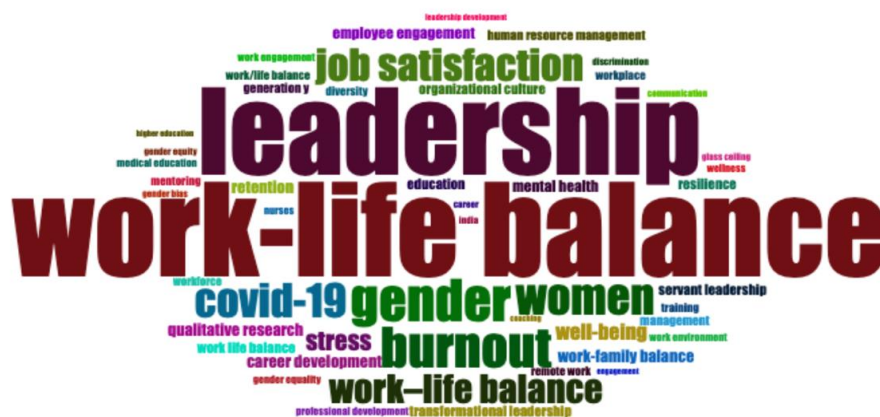

Figure 9. Wordcloud

Research trends regarding WLB and the role of leaders have experienced significant changes in the last five years, as shown in Figure 10, which presents the overlay below. Purple keywords indicate special topics in 2020, such as work settings, turnover, and career satisfaction. Keywords that are increasingly colored yellow indicate that these topics will become more widely discussed in 2022 or are currently being researched. Keywords such as pandemic, transformation, traineeship, and crisis have the intended color.
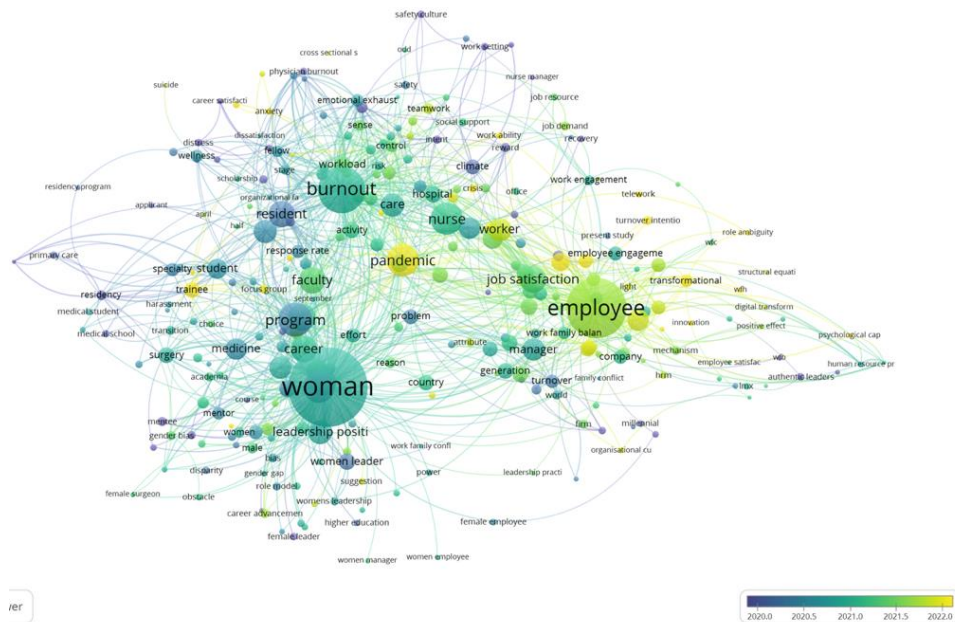
Figure 10. Keyword mapping by timeframe

Moving on to Figure 11, a thematic map diagram demonstrates that keywords included in this motor theme quadrant category include generational analysis (y & z), which suggests that WLB is interesting to examine from a generational perspective. Furthermore, the primary and transversal theme quadrants have strong centrality but low development. Commonly used basic themes, such as career development, career success, mentoring, and academics, have begun to reach saturation.

Figure 11. Thematic Map

In addition, the emerging or declining themes quadrant represents themes such as human resource management, which is said to be too general and needs more specific development. The final quadrant contains niche themes or highly developed clusters recorded at high density.

Figure 12. Research Theme: Keyword Analysis

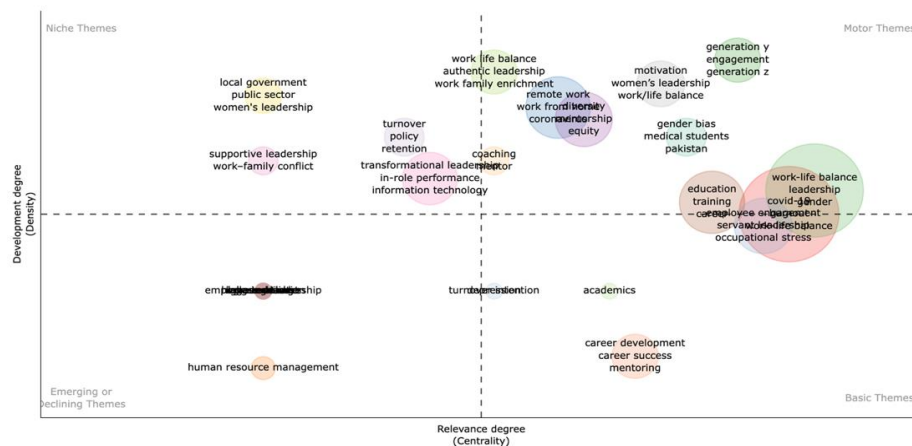This study identified four different clusters (see fig. 12), indicating the theme groups that researchers widely discussed. The first cluster (purple) discusses excessive workload resulting from an imbalance between professional and personal development. The second cluster (in green) shows a positive impact when WLB can be achieved, such as creating job satisfaction and high employee involvement. Interestingly, in the third cluster (pink), this research captures a separate space for gender perspectives, including in the context of leadership in achieving WLB. Finally, the yellow cluster has a more specific correlation because it discusses the relationship between the health sector.

Discussion

Based on the Biblioshiny and VOSViewer results, several findings related to leadership and WLB are revealed, as shown in the second cluster (green). Keywords such as job satisfaction and employee engagement emphasize transformational leadership styles in forming company work patterns.

Table 3. Effective Leadership Styles Shape WLB

Leadership Style	Total Article
Transformational Leadership	10
Servant Leadership	7
Virtual/Remote Leadership	5
Spiritual Leadership	3
Authentic Leadership	3
Sustainable Leadership	2
Wise Leadership	2

Leadership Style	Total Article
Benevolent Leadership	2
Ethical Leadership	2
Gritty Leadership	1
Visioner Leadership	1

Source: Authors Compilation (2024)

Based on an analysis of the database used by the author, it was found that leadership with a transformational style can create WLB for its employees. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees through a clear vision, support individual development, and pay attention to employee needs and welfare (George & Sreedharan, 2023). Servant leadership style also places employee comfort as a top priority, so they tend to prioritize employee needs, provide emotional support, and encourage work flexibility. The latest finding in this research is a new leadership trend in virtual/remote leadership. This type of leader controls and provides direction remotely. The pandemic stimulated this leadership trend, which required online work communication (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Al Dilby and Farmanesh (2023) found that E-leadership is more flexible because it allows workers to work at home or anywhere, thus giving them the freedom to build their social world. This type of leader encourages flexibility and efficiency and increases employee satisfaction and performance (Al Dilby & Farmanesh, 2023; Chatterjee et al., 2023). Meanwhile, visionary and gritty leadership, which is oriented toward targets and work achievements, tends to be less prevalent in creating WLB because failure to target leads to greater work intensity than usual, and ultimately, employees spend more time achieving these targets (Faiz et al., 2024).

Work-Life Balance: A Gender Perspective

This research also has exciting findings, in which the third cluster explicitly discusses the condition of women in the context of leadership and career, as well as the creation of WLB. This shows that the discussion regarding WLB is currently focused on the presence of women in the workforce to reduce the existing gender gap. The challenges of female workers tend to involve dual roles in the work environment, and they must be responsible for their families. Women have a lot of work to do, making it difficult to achieve good balance. Research conducted by Lakshmidevi and Geetha (2023) and Thrasher et al. (2022) also found that people face a work-family crisis more often than men, making it difficult to get an established career even if they have worked for a long time. This demonstrates the importance of HRM paying more attention to ensuring that female workers receive more assistance in achieving WLB.

On the other hand, research conducted by Naong and Naong (2023) showed that even when women become leaders, their duties and workload prevent them from being involved in the household environment, such as taking care of children and carrying out other tasks. Moreover, even those who become leaders continue to prioritize family over their leadership responsibilities. It makes it difficult for women to take up critical managerial positions. Thus, more empirical research is needed regarding women's leadership, their work-family crisis, and strategies that can be implemented.

CONCLUSIONS

Work-life balance (WLB) is vital in the work environment, and leaders are crucial in determining these conditions. Research on WLB has experienced rapid development, but a mapping of the role of leaders has not yet been conducted. This research found that WLB has been discussed since 1993 and has been increasingly discussed since the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 777 documents integrated discussions on WLB related to leadership involving 528 journals and 2865 authors. However, this issue is geographically still dominated by writers from developed countries, whereas there are still a few

writers from developing countries. Likewise, from a sectoral perspective, WLB is primarily observed in the health sector. Although WLB is an emerging phenomenon with a global scope, it is vital. This analysis also found that transformational leadership, servant leadership, and e-leadership were the most effective styles for realizing WLB. Interestingly, WLB is a dilemma for women regarding their status as leaders and employees. This is because there is evidence that women have more work-family conflicts than men.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This research is limited to bibliometric analysis and requires more in-depth content observation. Future research can conduct empirical tests on various leadership styles. Additionally, further research could investigate differences in WLB needs among different generations of workers, particularly generations X and Z, and how leaders can adapt their organizational culture to meet these varying expectations and needs. Regarding gender, further research could explore policy-based interventions such as work flexibility, special mentoring programs for women and the development of a more inclusive work environment.

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