

# Determinants of Work-Life Balance Among Lecturers at Private Higher Learning Institutions in Johor

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the factors influencing work-life balance among lecturers at private higher learning institutions in Johor, focusing on role conflict, social support, and workload. A quantitative survey involving 115 lecturers was conducted and analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that social support significantly improved work-life balance, with emotional and practical assistance from colleagues and supervisors reducing work-related stress. Additionally, while role conflict is often perceived as a negative factor, it demonstrated a positive relationship with work-life balance in this study, suggesting that lecturers may adopt adaptive strategies, such as improved time management, to navigate conflicting demands successfully. On the other hand, excessive workload was found to have a significant detrimental impact on work-life balance, leading to increased stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction among lecturers. This study emphasizes the importance of creating supportive work environments within higher education institutions. Recommendations include the implementations of flexible policies, team-building activities, and mentorship programs to promote collaboration and mitigate the effects of role conflict. Regular evaluation and fair distribution of workloads are also essential to prevent overburdening lecturers and to promote a sustainable work-life balance. By addressing these factors, institutions can improve lecturers' well-being, enhance their job satisfaction, and strengthen overall institutional performance. This research contributes to the existing literature on work-life balance in academia and offers practical recommendations for fostering a healthier and more productive academic workforce.*

**Keywords:** Work-life balance, role conflict, social support, workload, private higher education, lecturers

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## 1. Introduction

Higher learning institutions in Malaysia place significant emphasis on the quality of their lecturers, particularly in their pursuit of world-class university status (Sirat, 2012; Janudin *et al.*, 2015). The fact that Malaysian Higher learning institutions have yet to rank among the top 100 universities globally in the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) should prompt serious consideration from various stakeholders. Achieving world-class education requires continuous improvement in the quality of lecturers, teaching and learning, leadership, and other relevant aspects (Yuniawan *et al.*, 2023; Banker & Bhal, 2020). Lecturers' quality is closely related to work-life balance, as this career demands balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Although the society may perceive the lecturer role as relaxed with flexible

hours, it is, in fact, similar to other jobs that require substantial time, energy, and thought (Neliwati *et al.*, 2024).

Lecturers are the backbone of producing excellent, well-mannered, and highly skilled students. Their responsibilities extend beyond teaching to include lesson planning, academic writing, and publishing journal articles. This wide range of tasks requires lecturers to wisely balance their professional and personal lives. An imbalance between work and personal life can increase the risk of depression among lecturers. Many studies have reported the prevalence of depression, stress, and anxiety among academic staff in Malaysian higher education institutions, due to various reasons (e.g., Razali *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021; Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). A study conducted by Kosnin and Jantan (2010) found that high work pressure led most lecturers to experience poor-quality sleep, and in many cases, the lecturers felt that they had little control over their circumstances, resulting in persistent worry and dissatisfaction with their current life. This finding was further supported by a recent study conducted by Mohamad and Subhi (2023), which found that 73% of university lecturers reported experiencing high levels of psychological stress.

Higher learning institutions in Malaysia are divided into two categories: public and private. According to the latest data updated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, in 2024, there are 20 government-recognized public universities, while the number of registered private universities and colleges continues to grow annually. The work pressure experienced by lecturers varies between institutions due to different annual performance targets (Mohamad & Subhi, 2023). Research-focused institutions prioritize research alongside teaching and services. Meanwhile, non-research institutions are classified into two categories: comprehensive universities, which offer a wide range of courses and fields of study, and specialized institutions, which focus on specific areas aligned with their establishment objectives.

Studies by Kosnin and Jantan (2010) and Mohamad and Subhi (2023) have provided the evidences suggesting that lecturers in Malaysia have yet to achieve a balance between their work and personal lives. In line with this need, this study aims to identify the factors that contribute to work-life balance among lecturers in private higher education institutions, specifically in the Johor state. This study focuses on private Higher learning institutions in Johor due to the limited attention given to work-life balance in the private sector in existing literature (Ahmad & Munir, 2023; Mohammed *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, through the Johor Sustainable Development Plan 2030, the state aims to achieve developed status by 2030 by enhancing education that can produce quality human capital. The findings of this study also aim to support the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which promotes quality education. Quality education begins with quality lecturers, and quality lecturers require balanced time management between work and personal life to ensure mental health is safeguarded and stress levels are minimized.

## 2. Literature Review

### General concept of work-life balance

Employees are vital to any organization's success, as they bring the skills, creativity, and dedication needed to drive the company forward. Organizational success often depends on employee performance, which is influenced by several factors, including work-life balance.

Balance is a key component of a fulfilling life. In a workplace setting, work-life balance generally refers to the ability to manage both personal and professional responsibilities with

flexibility, allowing individuals to allocate time and energy effectively across these areas without needing to justify their choices or feeling overwhelmed by competing demands. (Thomas, 2022). Simply put, it refers to having adequate time to fulfill both professional and personal goals (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2017). In the higher education context, work-life balance among lecturers refers to their abilities to effectively manage and harmonize professional responsibilities with personal life. Lecturers are generally expected to dedicate a certain amount of time to their roles, with the expectation of job security to some extent. However, achieving work-life balance is essential for lecturers in both the public and private education sectors, as it is closely linked to job satisfaction, well-being, and overall productivity (Husin *et al.*, 2018).

Work-life balance is influenced by a range of individual and external factors that shape how people manage the demands of their professional and personal lives. These include social support, organizational factors, stress factors, and the potential role of IT in fostering balance (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2017) as well as other factors related to family, work, health, and flexible working hours (Husin *et al.*, 2018). Individuals' balanced involvement in both roles is expected to enhance their well-being by reducing work-family conflict and stress (Bhende *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, without a proper balance, individuals may experience increased stress, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction, which can negatively impact both their professional performance and personal well-being.

### **Role conflict**

Role conflict and work-life balance are interconnected concepts that can significantly impact an individual's well-being. Role conflict can be properly defined as the situation that occurs when a person faces conflicting or incompatible expectations from multiple roles they have at the same time (Open Education Sociology Dictionary, 2024). It is characterized by the need for more compatibility or consistency in fulfilling the obligations and expectations associated with multiple roles (Bowling *et al.*, 2017). As reviewed by Bhende *et al.* (2020), role conflict occurs when the demands of different roles, like work and family, clash or cause tension. From a wider perspective, work-life conflict does not necessarily involve one aspect dominating the other; it can also be about how work and non-work responsibilities can coexist peacefully (Foy *et al.*, 2019). A study by Omar *et al.* (2015) examined the link between role conflict and work-life balance, indicating that role conflict contributes to difficulties in achieving a balanced work-life dynamic. High job involvement means spending a lot of time and energy on work, which can lead to neglecting family or personal responsibilities. This imbalance creates conflict, as the expectations of one role interfere with the other (Bhende *et al.*, 2020).

In this study, role conflict is referred to as the perception lecturers have regarding the expectations set by their job description compared to how others at work believe they should fulfill their role. Given the potential influence of role conflict on an individual's ability to balance work and personal life, this study firstly aims to examine its specific impact on lecturers in private higher education institutions:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Role conflict has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.*

### **Social support**

According to Drageset (2021), social support, in general sense, refers to any process through which social relationships contribute to an individual's health and well-being. It is widely valued for its key role in reducing stress and enhancing health and well-being (French *et al.*, 2018). Heaney and Israel (2008) categorized social support into four major types: emotional

support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support. Emotional support refers to the provision of empathy, love, trust, and care, while instrument support involves tangible aids and services that can assist in times of need. Meanwhile, information support refers to providing information or suggestions to help individuals address problems, and appraisal support involves providing useful feedbacks for self-evaluation (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

In the workplace setting, a supportive social atmosphere can foster positive work-life balance among employees. Social support within an organization encourages positive relationships among employees, facilitates knowledge sharing, allocates necessary resources, and promotes harmony. For instance, Omoniji *et al.* (2015) stated that employers who embrace family support activities can significantly enhance the work environment and positively impact employees' overall well-being. Moen *et al.* (2017) similarly argued that support from both supervisors and family, through positive reinforcement and cooperation, can help employees manage the imbalance between their work and family roles. This support can motivate them, boost their energy, and empower them to succeed in their work.

From the higher education perspective, social support refers to the network of interpersonal interactions that provide emotional, informational, and practical assistance to faculty members. Given the diverse forms of social support and their potential impact on an individual's well-being, this study identifies the need to explore their role in work-life balance:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Social support has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.*

### **Workload**

Workload typically refers to the amount of task perceived by an individual or within a group. According to Javed *et al.* (2014), workload is defined as the quantity of work or tasks that employees must complete within a specific time frame.

Workload is an important factor in the context of workplace, whereby it may act as both a contributing and preventing factor. As emphasized by Turpin *et al.* (2021), workload is a factor which may overlaps with other health and safety issues, like worker efficacy, supervisor support, and burnout. For instance, many studies reported that individuals who are constantly absorbed in their work with high workload may experience stress and burnout (e.g., Zanabazar & Jigjiddorj, 2022; Jomuad *et al.*, 2021). From another view, Javed *et al.* (2014) revealed that workload is one of the contributing factors to employees leaving their companies when the work demands exceed their limits. French (2018) highlighted that excessive workload negatively impacts employees' personal lives, intruding on their time with family and friends, as well as during holidays. Additionally, relationships with partners and children can also strained by work demands.

Hence, it can be concluded that workload is closely linked to work-life balance. A high level of workload can negatively impact employees' work-life balance, thus reducing their quality of life and social interaction with those around them. Given the negative impact of excessive workload on employees' wellbeing, this study seeks to examine the role of workload in influencing work-life balance:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Workload has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.*

### 3. Methodology

The sampling technique employed in this study was the convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting participants who are readily available and willing to participate. While this approach may limit the generalizability of the findings, it is practical for this study given the constraints of time and resources (Nurkhin *et al.*, 2018).

Using the G\*Power, version 3.1.9.4 software, the minimum and adequate sample size for the proposed model in this study was estimated to be 77. This estimation was based on the presence of three predictors at the 0.05 significance level, aiming to achieve 80% of the statistical power, which is the commonly accepted level, as stated by Brydges (2019).

Data were collected using a cross-sectional quantitative survey method, targeting lecturers from private higher learning institutions in Johor. Prior to the actual data collection, a small-scale pilot test was conducted involving 30 respondents to ensure the suitability of wordings, formatting, and layout of the survey. These respondents were excluded from the main study to avoid biasness in the results.

As for data analysis, Smart PLS 4.0 software was employed to examine the relationships between variables in the actual research. Smart PLS 4.0 is a widely used tool for structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is a robust statistical technique that allows for the analysis of complex relationships between multiple variables (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2021). The analysis was conducted in two phases: first, the measurement model, which evaluates the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, followed by the structural model, which assesses the relationships between the constructs.

### 4. Findings

#### Demographic information

Overall, a total of 115 completed questionnaires were received in this study. Table 1 presents the summary of respondents' demographic profiles as gathered from the survey, encompassing general background information such as gender, age, marital status, education level, income level, and length of service.

**Table 1: Demographic profiles (N=115)**

Demographic	Descriptions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	22.6%
	Female	89	77.4%
Age (years)	21-25	3	2.6%
	26-30	15	13.0%
	31-35	36	31.3%
	35-40	36	31.3%
	41 and above	25	21.7%
Marital status	Single	35	30.4%
	Married	76	66.1%
	Divorced	4	3.5%
Education level	Degree	68	59.1%
	Master	47	40.9%
	PhD	-	-
Income level	RM2,000-2,999	61	53.0%
	RM3,000-3,999	29	25.2%
	RM4,000-4,999	8	7.0%
	RM5,000-5,999	9	7.8%

	RM6,000 and above	8	7.0%
Length of service	Less than 1 year	12	10.4%
	2-5 years	26	22.6%
	6-9 years	24	20.9%
	More than 10 years	53	46.1%

### Convergent validity

In the data analysis, several indicators were employed to assess convergent validity, including composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair *et al.*, 2014). According to Hair *et al.* (2014), convergent validity is established when the following criteria are met: (a) CR values are 0.7 or higher; (b) all standardized factor loadings ( $\lambda$ ) are 0.5 or higher; and (c) AVE values are 0.5 or higher. The results of the convergent validity test in this study, as summarized in Table 2, indicate that the CR values—reflecting the degree to which the construct indicators adequately represent the latent construct—exceeded 0.7, consistent with Hair *et al.*'s recommended threshold. Similarly, the AVE, which reflects the total variance shared by the indicators of the latent construct, was greater than 0.5, which similarly fulfilled Hair *et al.*'s criteria. Thus, these findings confirm strong convergent validity for the measurement items in this study.

**Table 2: Convergent validity**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Role conflict	0.754	0.813	0.853	0.660
Social support	0.826	0.887	0.868	0.530
Workload	0.803	0.803	0.864	0.560
Work-life balance	0.842	0.860	0.884	0.563

### Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity assesses the degree to which a construct is distinct from other variables or measures, typically indicated by low correlations between the construct of interest and other constructs (Lee & Wong, 2015). In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Discriminant validity concerns arise when the HTMT value exceeds 0.90 (Gold *et al.*, 2001). As presented in Table 3, all HTMT values were found to be below the recommended threshold of 0.90, thus confirming that discriminant validity was achieved.

In summary, the results suggest that the measurement model in this study demonstrates satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity, supporting the reliability and distinctiveness of the constructs involved.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait)**

	Role conflict	Social support	Workload	Work-life balance
Role conflict				
Social support	0.587			
Workload	0.804	0.481		
Work-life balance	0.311	0.484	0.684	

### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted using the partial least squares (PLS) method, which is well-suited for building predictive models by transforming the variables with a limited number of predictors. The data analysis was performed using Smart

PLS Version 4.0, utilizing the two-step analysis approach. This method is preferred due to its ability to manage both reflective and formative factors (Khan *et al.*, 2024; Tehseen *et al.*, 2019). According to Hussain *et al.* (2021), Smart-PLS follows the two-step procedure, evaluating the outer measurement model and the inner structural model, making it a preferred method for multivariate analysis in social sciences. The significance levels for the PLS results, including loadings, weights, and path coefficients, were determined through the bootstrapping method. Figure 1 shows the structural model, which depicts the interrelationships among constructs in the study, as further discussed below.

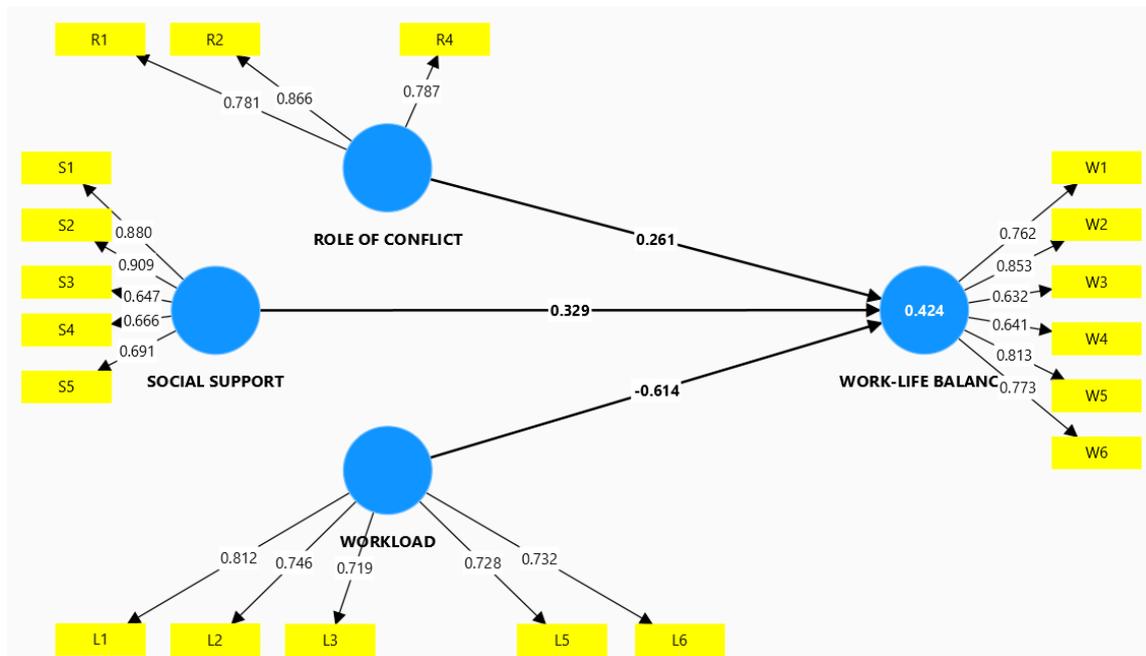


Figure 1: Structural model and hypothesis testing

In line with the study by Sang *et al.* (2010), the structural model illustrates the causal relationships among the constructs or variables in a model. To ensure robust model assessment, several key metrics are typically evaluated. These include the variance inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and path coefficients ( $\beta$  value) (Hair *et al.*, 2014). However, collinearity can pose a concern in structural models, as it can distort the relationships between variables. Therefore, addressing this issue is critical before hypothesis testing. One of the primary steps in this process is evaluating the VIF values. Ideally, before testing hypotheses, according to Hair *et al.* (2019), the VIF values should be below 5 to confirm that the model's predictors are not highly correlated. As shown in Table 4, the VIF values ranged from 1.307 to 1.609, all well below the threshold of 5, thus confirming that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model.

Next, the analysis examined the effect size of the predictors in the model using Cohen's f-squared ( $f^2$ ) value, which measures the relative impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable. The measurement for effect sizes is similar to the levels of predictive relevance, whereby 0.02 represents small, 0.15 indicates medium, and 0.35 signifies a large effect size (Hair *et al.*, 2019). As indicated in Table 4, the effect size of two predictors in this study (i.e., role conflict and social support) indicates a medium effect on work-life balance, while workload demonstrates a large effect size on work-life balance. This suggests that workload has the strongest influence on work-life balance in this model.

**Table 4: Results of  $\beta$  value, VIF,  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ , and  $Q^2$**

Constructs	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ value)	VIF	Effect size ( $f^2$ )	Coefficient ( $R^2$ )	Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ )
Role conflict	0.261	1.789	0.065		
Social support	0.329	1.307	0.135		
Workload	-0.614	1.609	0.402		
Work-life balance				0.424	0.362

Next, the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was performed in order to obtain the  $t$ -values. As shown in Table 5, the analysis reveals that role conflict and social support have a positive relationship with work-life balance among lecturers. On the other hand, the finding suggests that workload negatively impacts work-life balance. Overall, these findings highlight the significant role of role conflict, social support, and workload in influencing work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.

**Table 5: Structural model and hypothesis testing results**

		Beta coefficient	Standard error	$t$ -values	$p$ -values	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	Role conflict has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.	0.261	0.109	2.408	0.008	Supported (significant positive relationship)
H <sub>2</sub>	Social support has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.	0.329	0.088	3.736	0.000	Supported (significant positive relationship)
H <sub>3</sub>	Workload has a significant relationship with work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions.	-0.614	0.096	6.394	0.000	Supported (significant negative relationship)

## 5. Discussion

Work-life balance is a wellbeing need. In academia, where demands often extend beyond regular working hours due to teaching, research, and administrative duties, achieving work-life balance can enhance job performance, improve retention, and support long-term career satisfaction. This study underscores the importance of examining role conflict, social support, and workload as key factors influencing work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions. By investigating these factors, the study aims to highlight areas where institutions can intervene to support lecturers' well-being, ultimately benefiting both academic staff and institutional success.

The findings in Table 5 provide insights into the relationships between role conflict, social support, workload, and work-life balance among lecturers in private higher learning institutions. The result for the first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) revealed a significant positive relationship between role conflict and work-life balance ( $\beta = 0.261$ ,  $t = 2.408$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). Role conflict is widely recognized as a key factor contributing to employee stress and diminished productivity, often due to the struggle to balance competing demands from professional and personal domains. However, this study presents an intriguing counterpoint, finding that role conflict positively correlates with lecturers' work-life balance. This unexpected result suggests that, in

some cases, role conflict may encourage lecturers to develop adaptive strategies, such as improved time management or prioritization, which could enhance their overall balance between work and personal life.

While numerous research reported the otherwise, few studies similarly discussed the typical negative impacts of role conflict but also hint at its potential adaptive effects under certain conditions. For instance, Omonijo *et al.* (2015) argued that while role conflict is typically stressful, it can motivate individuals to enhance their time management and task prioritization skills. This is in line with Bhende *et al.* (2020) who suggested that in a balanced engagement, employees would establish routines over time to effectively manage the demands of both roles. While explaining positive conflicts in the workplace, Conroy (2023) emphasized that due to its constructive in nature, positive conflicts can lead to new ideas, continuous problem-solving, as well as opportunities for employees to enhance their skills and creativity in the workplace.

As for the second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>), the study finding demonstrated a significant positive relationship between social support and work-life balance ( $\beta = 0.329$ ,  $t = 3.736$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding indicates that the presence of social support from colleagues, supervisors, and family plays a crucial role in mitigating stress among lecturers in the private higher education institutions, while supporting them to effectively balance their work and personal life. Supportive social systems are crucial for fostering resilience and well-being in the face of the demands of academia, enabling lecturers to handle work-related demands more effectively without overwhelming their personal lives. The link between social support and improved work-life balance among lecturers highlights the essential role of supportive systems in academic settings.

The role of social support in promoting work-life balance has been widely acknowledged in the literature. For instance, Oludayo and Omonijo (2020) emphasized that emotional support received by employees through social network helps to reduce their psychological strain, which in turn enhances work-life balance. This is consistent with the study by Rahim *et al.* (2020) who argued that social support provides higher education staff with the emotional resources necessary for their career satisfaction and psychological well-being in navigating the pressures of their demanding roles and responsibilities. Therefore, fostering a supportive environment is critical for improving work-life balance in academic settings.

Next, the result of the third study hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) revealed a significant negative relationship between workload and work-life balance ( $\beta = -0.614$ ,  $t = 6.394$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that increased workload among lecturers in the private Higher learning institutions could lead to reduced personal time, heightened stress, and an overall imbalance between their professional and personal lives. Workload among academics often refers to the extensive and demanding combination of teaching, research, administrative duties, and other responsibilities that lecturers must manage within the higher education setting. The significant negative link between workload and work-life balance identified in this study underscores the need for institutions to manage lecturers' workloads effectively, ensuring a sustainable balance that minimizes stress and promotes well-being.

Several studies have highlighted that excessive workload is a significant contributor to burnout and diminished well-being. For instance, Khan *et al.* (2019) argued that heavy academic workloads not only lead to burnout but also affect lecturers' work productivity. Similarly, Abu Bakar *et al.* (2020) identified workload as the primary cause of stress among lecturers in a polytechnic in Malaysia. On the other hand, Husin *et al.* (2018) argued that while lecturers' job

responsibilities are extensive and time-consuming, the quantity and variety of tasks do not necessarily cause a significant disruption to their ability to balance work and personal life. Therefore, it is crucial for Higher learning institutions to ensure that workloads are manageable and balanced to avoid these negative outcomes, while providing the necessary resources, supports, and flexibility to help lecturers cope with professional demands.

Overall, the study findings contribute to the ongoing conversation around factors impacting academics' work-life balance, particularly in higher education setting, and thus provide a basis for future interventions aimed at improving the well-being of academic staff. By examining the dynamics related to the three factors (role conflict, social support, and workload), the study aimed to provide insights into the challenges faced by lecturers in the context of a demanding academic environment and the potential strategies they adopt to manage these challenges.

## 6. Conclusion

This study provides significant insights into the factors influencing work-life balance among lecturers in private Higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The findings highlight the critical roles of role conflict, social support, and workload in shaping work-life balance. Notably, social support emerges as a key factor in enhancing lecturers' ability to balance their professional and personal responsibilities, while excessive workloads represent the most significant challenge to achieving such balance. Additionally, role conflict was identified to positively correlate with work-life balance among lecturers, suggesting that role conflict may drive them to develop adaptive strategies to enhance their overall work-life balance.

In line with other studies, this research highlights the importance for Higher learning institutions fostering supportive work environments for the academics. By encouraging strong interpersonal relationships, providing emotional and practical support, and promoting open communication, institutions are better positioned to help lecturers thrive both professionally and personally. Strategies such as team-building initiatives, mentorship programs, and flexible work arrangements can help mitigate the adverse effects of workload and role conflict. Regular evaluation and transparent distribution of workloads are also essential to prevent stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction among lecturers, ensuring that they are able to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal lives.

In conclusion, improving social support structures and managing workloads effectively can contribute towards creating a more sustainable and productive work environment. This approach not only enhances lecturers' well-being and job performance but also serves as a strategic advantage for higher education institutions. Fostering a strong work-life balance is therefore critical for lecturer retention, preventing burnout, and ensuring long-term success of higher education institutions.

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