

Balancing act: How work passion shapes educators' work-life balance and retention

Juego de equilibrio: Cómo la pasión por el trabajo determina el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal y la retención de los educadores

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ABSTRACT

The modern era is moving at a fast pace. Every industry is affected by this dynamic change and shift from its traditional mode of operations. Education also undergoes rapid changes in content and pedagogy which puts more responsibilities and stress on the educators who facilitate this change. This study examines the critical role of work-life balance for the well-being and retention of educators and highlights the moderating role of work passion. The study targets educators, a high proportion of whom are women in their early or middle adulthood, as they are challenged to balance work and family responsibilities. Despite their high qualifications, there is constant conflict in the work-life balance among this talented group, and their intention to stay in this profession is often challenged by multiple factors. This study used a descriptive design using convenience sampling to target its respondents for the study in the region of Kerala, India, with a sample size of 315. A structured questionnaire based on the work-life balance scale, work passion and intent to

stay scale was used in which the statistical analysis included Mann-Whitney U test, Spearman Rank Correlation and Moderation analysis using Hayes PROCESS macro. The gender influence on work passion was test using the Mann-Whitney U test while the Spearman correlation investigated the strength of association between the constructs of this research. The findings of moderation analysis by Hayes PROCESS macro demonstrate that work-life balance, work passion, and intent to stay are interconnected constructs that significantly impact educators' decisions to remain in their profession. This highlights the urgent need for educational institutions to implement supportive policies that enhance work-life balance and nurture work passion.

Keywords. Work-life balance, passion, intent to stay, moderation analysis, educators, spill over theory.

RESUMEN

La era moderna avanza a un ritmo vertiginoso. Todas las industrias se ven afectadas por este cambio dinámico y se alejan de su modo tradicional de operaciones. La educación también está experimentando cambios rápidos en el contenido y la pedagogía, lo que supone más responsabilidades y estrés para los educadores que facilitan este cambio. Este estudio examina el papel fundamental del equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal para el bienestar y la retención de los educadores, y destaca el papel moderador de la pasión por el trabajo. El estudio está dirigido a los educadores, una alta proporción de los cuales son mujeres en su edad adulta temprana o media, ya que se enfrentan al desafío de equilibrar el trabajo y las responsabilidades familiares. A pesar de su alta cualificación, existe un conflicto constante de equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal entre este grupo de talentosos, y su intención de permanecer en esta profesión a menudo se ve desafiada por múltiples factores. Este estudio utilizó un diseño descriptivo utilizando un muestreo por conveniencia para seleccionar a sus encuestados para el estudio en la región de Kerala, India, con un tamaño de muestra de 315. Se utilizó un cuestionario estructurado basado en la escala de equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal, la pasión por el trabajo y la intención de permanecer en el que el análisis estadístico incluyó la prueba U de Mann-Whitney, la correlación de rangos de Spearman y el análisis de moderación utilizando la macro PROCESS de Hayes. La influencia del género en la pasión por el trabajo se evaluó mediante la prueba U de Mann-Whitney, mientras que la correlación de Spearman investigó la fuerza de asociación entre los constructos de esta investigación. Los hallazgos del análisis de moderación realizado por Hayes PROCESS macro demuestran que el equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal, la pasión por el trabajo y la intención de permanecer son constructos interconectados que influyen significativamente en las decisiones de los educadores de permanecer en su profesión. Esto pone de manifiesto la necesidad urgente de que las instituciones educativas apliquen políticas de apoyo que mejoren el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal y fomenten la pasión por el trabajo.

Palabras clave. Equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal, pasión por el trabajo, intención de quedarse, análisis de moderación, educadores, teoría del desbordamiento.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of how critical it is to draw in and keep talented workers in the cutthroat business world of today. Work-life balance is one element that is essential in this respect. Work-life balance, as defined by the sources cited, is the capacity of workers to successfully manage their personal and professional obligations. It entails striking a balance between work obligations and personal commitments so that workers can continue to be happy and healthy in both domains. Numerous benefits of work-life balance for employees have been

discovered, such as decreased stress, enhanced job satisfaction, better mental and physical health, and a greater desire to remain with the company. Studies have shown that the role of work-passion plays a crucial mediating role in this relationship.

Work-passion can be conceptualized as a strong emotional attachment or commitment towards one's work, characterized by feelings of enthusiasm, dedication, and enjoyment. Previous studies have highlighted that employees with stronger work passion have a high sense of work-life balance. Such employee was able to find better fulfilment in their work, and this enhanced their well-being. It has been observed that work-passion acts as a key factor in employee retention in organizations. Employees with high levels of work-passion are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work, which in turn increases their loyalty and intent to stay with the organization. This research paper aims to explore the mediating role of work-passion in the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay among employees.

Objectives

1. To investigate the association between work passion and gender of the faculty.
2. To investigate the role of work-passion in moderating the ability of work-life balance to predict the intent to stay among.

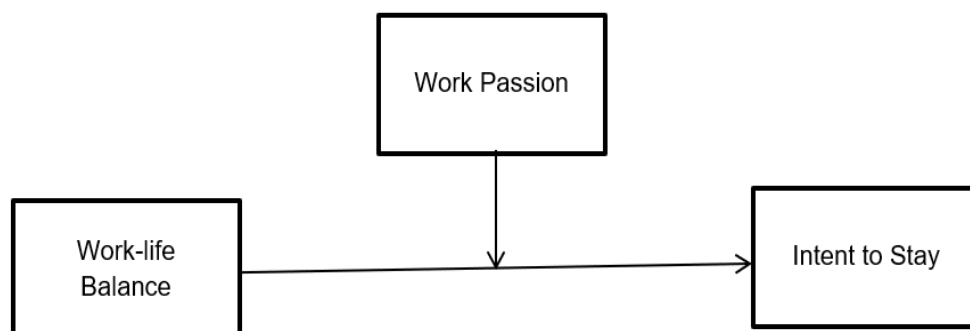
Research gap

Educators are the key to developing the young minds of any country. India is an upcoming economy which has a sizeable proportion of youth in their path to higher education. This research aimed to get insight on the educators who play as a vital link in facilitating the development of these youth by investigating the link between work-life balance and faculty retention. This association would be strengthened by the work passion for the job of the faculty. Although there has been some level of research in this matter, the mediating role of work passion has not been sighted in relation to faculty working in colleges or related institutions. This research aims to fill this video with results generated in the survey.

Theoretical model

This research was trying to shed light on the impact of work-life balance on retaining the faculty in their current jobs where this relationship would be strengthened or weakened by work passion which acts as the moderator. The modern era of the world has posed multitasking and other competencies to be part of daily work which is putting stress on the family life of the employees. Faculty are no different from this experience. The Conceptual model is shown in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research



Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the constructs of the model, the theory that this research emphasises is the popular concept of Spill over theory. Spillover refers to the transfer of pressure and resulting stress from

the professional sphere to personal life, occurring within an individual across different areas (Byron, 2005). This leads to conflict which has been theorised as Work-family conflict in many literature where professional duties when brought to the home environment disrupts the balance in life (Bakker et al., 2013). Spillover theory posits that one role can influence the perception of another role by creating a basis for comparison (Bello & Tanko, 2020). This theory highlights spillover effects as a challenge related to balancing work and family, which can occur in horizontal or vertical dimensions. The spillover theory explains how the interaction of individual responsibilities in work, personal, and social contexts creates a mutual connection, where either negative or positive aspects in one role impact similar results in others (Khalid, 2023).

Among the various theories proposed by researcher on Work-life balance, Spill Over theory has been sighted in different research over the decades. The spilling over of professional life over family life and vice versa has its repercussions on the individual. Spill over can generate either a positive effect or negative effect on the individual's life as stressed in literature (Krishna & Lakshmipriya, 2016). Passion at work, characterized by a strong connection to one's job and deriving positive emotions from it, is linked to higher dedication to one's career, reduced workplace exhaustion, decreased conflict between work and home life, and fewer physical symptoms (Chen et al., 2019). The dualistic concept of work passion has an influence on the level of work satisfaction and also the involvement of employees in the work assigned (Mehmood et al., 2022). The employee's decision to retain their job in the current organization would be an outcome of this effect, which in turn is the focus of this study.

Work passion has a vital role in the strengthening of the individual's interest to remain the current job or organization. Passion may be defined as a pervasive concept in the work domain (Vallerand & Houliort, 2013). Traditionally, poor work-life balance, where work demands bleed into personal life, is thought to decrease faculty satisfaction and lead to higher turnover intentions. However, Spillover theory suggests a more complex dynamic. Faculty with high work passion might experience positive spillover, where their work energizes them and enriches their personal lives. This passion could buffer the negative effects of work-life conflict, making them more resilient and less likely to consider leaving. Conversely, negative spillover from work could dampen faculty passion, leading to a vicious cycle that decreases intention to stay.

Hypothesis

H₁: Better work-life balance strengthens the intent to stay.

Some literature suggests that in industries also, better work-life balance contributes to intent to stay, especially among women (Sriram et al., 2022). When it comes to faculty, there have been references in literature where work-life balance enhances intent to stay (Magdaleno et al, 2022). It has been evident that faculty who have a better work-life balance will stay on in their respective institutions in the coming years. Employee retention has been a major concern for many educational institutions as the number of opportunities which popped up after COVID-19 in the education sector has created the paradigm.

H₂: Work passion enhances the association between work-life balance and intent to stay.

Work passion is an important element in contributing to reducing turnover in organisations. The effect of the dualistic nature of work passion and its effect has been mentioned in the literature (Pollack et al., 2020). Previous literature has sighted that there was a strong influence of work passion on the amount of interest the employee had in continuing in the same organisation (Elison & Purba, 2021; Saraswati et al., 2023). There has been literature on the fact that work passion has a significant impact on employee retention and work-life balance (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2018). Many faculty retain their jobs due to the passion they have for the profession which also support to strengthen the employee retention among this group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance and its relevance

Balancing professional work, family responsibilities, and personal activities is known as achieving work-life balance (Kerdpitak and Jermstittiparsert, 2020). Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for employees' well-being and has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including higher job satisfaction, less work-related stress, and better mental health. Research has shown that individuals who feel they have a good balance between their work and personal life tend to experience greater job satisfaction and are less likely to leave their jobs (Allen et al., 2020). Excessive work demands and substantial family responsibilities contribute to diminished physical, psychological, and emotional health (Jensen and Knudsen, 2017). Satisfactory work-life balance arrangements can enhance employee motivation, leading to improved business performance and profitability.

Work passion among faculty

The current era requires every employee to be ready to face new challenges and adjust accordingly. Work passion operates as a motivational mechanism that allows employees to address various kinds of pressures (Cabrita & Duarte, 2023). Individuals are motivated to overcome their hurdles and attain satisfaction in professional life. Work passion motivates individual to push their limits to engage in activities even in adverse scenarios (Vallerand et al., 2003). Previous literature has sighted that faculty are deeply influenced by work passion which also affects their well-being along with job satisfaction (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2018; Bi & Shafack, 2023).

Intent to stay in the job by faculty affected by work-life balance and work passion

Intent to stay is the decision of any employee to sustain their existing work profile in the current organisation. This decision of employee retention is an important factor in the highly competitive business environment (Paul & Vincent, 2018). A higher retention rate increases the strength of the workforce. There are multiple factors that contribute to employee turnover or that make the employee to stay in the current workforce (Das & Baruah, 2013).

Among those factors, work-life balance and work passion have their individual contributions. Striking a balance between work and personal life is a means of harmonizing professional and private spheres (Kerdpitak & Jermstittiparsert, 2020). The result of over workload affects the employee, and they take steps to leave the workforce for a better environment which tends to be more supportive. The decision to leave the job which is a counter act of the intention to stay has been affected by the work-life balance of employees even in professions like teaching. Educators who were more satisfied or able to maintain their work-life balance showed more intent to stay in academia (Magdaleano et al, 2022; Boamah et al, 2022).

Work passion is one of the major reasons leading people to adhere to the workplace and their profession. Faculty are also under a similar psychological mindset. Work passion among faculty appears to have a positive influence on their personal lives and the development of students (Brummelhuis & Greenhaus, 2012; Banu & Sundharavadivel, 2019,). Work passion and the intention to stay among faculty are closely related, as passionate faculty members are more likely to continue in their roles (Brummelhuis & Greenhaus, 2012; Banu & Sundharavadivel, 2019; Saeed et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A descriptive research design was used in the study to get insight into the association between work-life balance and intent to stay in the teaching profession by the faculty. The role of Work passion in moderating this relationship was also looked into as part of the research.

Measurement scales used in the instrument

The relevance of work-life balance in many industries has been stressed in multiple scenarios over the past decade. The current research used the Work-life balance scale developed by Hayman (2005) which consisted of fifteen items and had a Cronbach's alpha of .857 during the reliability test. The second construct of this research was work passion of the faculty owing to the importance of this in strengthening or weakening the link between work-life balance and intention to stay. The scale consisted of fourteen items adopted from Vallerand & Houliort (2003) and had a reliability of .908 for the sample. The final construct was the intention to stay in their teaching profession by the faculty which was measured using scale adopted from Daly & Dee (2006) and Khaldoun I. Ababneh (2016).

Table 1. Reliability coefficients for study constructs

CONSTRUCT	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S A
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	15	0.857
WORK PASSION	14	0.908
INTENT TO STAY	4	0.838

Note. N = 315. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the 33-item instrument was .921, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Source: Own elaboration.

Sampling method

The research had used Convenience sampling in order to source the data from respondents. Journals and other sources were used as supportive information for the study.

Sample size

The questionnaire was circulated to 500 samples from which 315 responses were obtained from different parts of the State of Kerala in India where this study was implemented. This region of India is well known for multiple institutions of Higher education and growth in this sector over the past many decades.

Data collection method

The data was sourced using a structured questionnaire. The initial part of the tried to summarize the demographic details of the sample population. The following part of the questionnaire was focused on the three major constructs of this survey which included- work-life balance, work passion, and intent to stay among the faculty working in educational institutions.

Techniques used

The survey data included summarising the demographic details using proportionate analysis. Inferential statistics was tested for the association between work passion among both genders was tested using a Mann-Whitney U test. Spearman Correlation was done between the three constructs of the research. Regression analysis was done using Hayee's PROCESS v4.2 (Hayes, 2013) to evaluate the ability of work passion to moderate the affiliation between work-life balance and intent

to stay among the faculty working in educational institutions. IBM SPSS Statistics 23 was used to perform the data analysis.

RESULTS

The survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire with the target respondents as faculty members working in private colleges across the State of Kerala, India.

Demographic characteristics

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC	CATEGORY	N	%
AGE GROUP	25-29	88	28
	30-34	97	30.8
	35-39	47	14.9
	39-43	41	13
	44-48	36	11.5
	Above 49	9	2.9
GENDER	Male	38	12
	Female	277	88
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Less than 5 years	205	65
	5 to 10 years	82	26
	More than 10 years	28	9
EDUCATION	Postgraduate with NET/SET	290	92
	M.Phil. & NET/SET	19	6
	PhD/Post Doc	6	2
ACADEMIC RANK	Assistant Professor	293	93
	Associate Professor	19	6
	Professor	3	1

Note: Sample size n=315; NET = National Eligibility Test; SET = State Eligibility Test.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2 showed that a large portion of the respondents were from the 30-34 age group, followed by twenty-eight percent of the sample in the 25-29 age group. The presence of younger age groups is evidence of the interest of be in the academic profession in the region. The majority of the respondents were females compared to males with a strong presence of 88%. Many of the respondents had less than five years of academic experience, while a certain portion had experience between 5 to 10 years. When it comes to the education of the respondents, the majority were postgraduates in NET qualification. NET score (National eligibility test score) is one the basic

requirements to be an Assistant professor in an academic career in India which has made this mandatory across the country. Most of the target respondents were working as Assistant Professors in their Colleges or educational institutions.

Mann-Whitney Test: Work passion has an impact on gender

Hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant difference in work passion across genders

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test results for work passion by gender

VARIABLE	GROUP	N	MEAN RANK	U	Z	P
WORK PASSION	Male	37	157.54	5005.5	-0.033	0.974
	Female	278	158.06			

Note: $p < .05$. U stands for Mann-Whitney U.

Source: Own elaboration.

The test was done to determine the difference in affinity to work passion among both genders using Mann-Whitney U test. The summary of the test in Table 3, which proved that there was no significant impact of work passion on gender, $z = -0.33$ and $p = .974$.

Correlation test between work-life balance, work passion, and intent to stay

Table 4. Spearman's rank order correlations among work-life balance, work passion, and intent to stay

VARIABLE	M	SD	1	2	3
1. WORK PASSION	3.72	0.89	—		
2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE	3.68	0.92	.935**	—	
3. INTENT TO STAY	3.54	0.78	.643**	.606**	—

Note: ** indicate $p < .05$.

Source: Own elaboration.

Spearman's correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between Work-life balance, Work Passion, and Intent to Stay. According to the table, Work-life balance and work passion have a very strong positive correlation $r(315) = .935$, $p = .0000$. Similar result of positive correlation was observed between Work-life balance and Intent to Stay, $r(315) = .606$, $p = .0000$. Work passion and intent to stay had significant correlation $r(315) = .643$, $p = .0000$. The multicollinearity assessment indicated elevated VIF values for Work life balance ($VIF = 9.87$) and Work passion ($VIF = 9.21$), which is consistent with their strong association ($r = .935$, $p < .001$). As recommended in moderation literature, multicollinearity is expected when interaction terms are included, and it does not bias the estimation of interaction effects but may increase standard errors. To address this, all predictor variables were mean centred prior to creating the interaction term, thereby reducing non-essential multicollinearity and improving interpretability.

Moderation analysis: work passion moderates the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay

Table 5. Moderation analysis of work passion on the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay

VARIABLE	B	SE	T	P	95% CI
INTERCEPT	-26.9766	10.6708	-2.5281	0.012	[-47.9728, -5.9805]
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	0.6662	0.2016	3.304	0.001	[0.2695, 1.0629]
WORK PASSION	-3.3285	0.7297	-4.5616	< .001	[-4.7642, -1.8928]
WORK-LIFE BALANCE × WORK PASSION	0.0693	0.0144	4.822	< .001	[0.0410, 0.0976]

Note. N = 315. Hayes PROCESS Model 1 (MATRIX procedure) was used to test the moderating effect of work passion on the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay. All predictor variables were mean-centered prior to creating the interaction term. CI = confidence interval. The interaction term was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that work passion significantly moderated the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay.

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on Table 5, the outcome of moderation analysis was conducted to assess the moderating effect of work passion on the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay. The interaction term between was Work-life balance and work passion was significant ($\beta = 0.0693$, $SE = 0.0144$, $t = 4.822$, $p < .05$), indicating that the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay was moderated by work passion.

Table 6. Conditional effects of work-life balance on intent to stay at different levels of work passion

WORK PASSION	B	SE	T	P	95% CI [LLCI, ULCI]
-6.3747 (LOW)	0.2241	0.1598	1.4029	0.1616	[-0.0902, 0.5385]
0.0000 (MEAN)	0.6662	0.2016	3.304	0.001	[0.2695, 1.0629]
5.6667 (HIGH)	1.0591	0.2612	4.0553	< .001	[0.5452, 1.5730]

Note: $p < .05$

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6 related to conditional effects of work-life balance on intent to stay was not significant at low levels of work passion ($b = 0.2241$, $SE = 0.1598$, $t = 1.4029$, $p > .05$) and was significant at high levels of work passion ($b = 1.059$, $SE = 0.2612$, $t = 4.0553$, $p < .05$).

Table 7. Johnson-Neyman analysis of conditional effects of work-life balance on intent to stay across levels of work passion

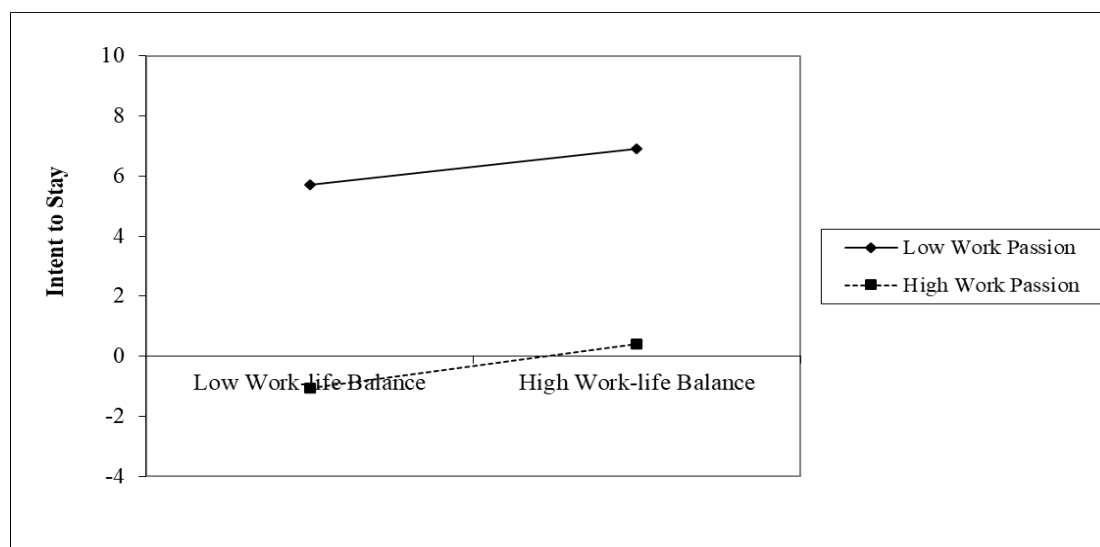
WORK PASSION	B	SE	*T*	*P*	95% CI [LLCI, ULCI]
-23.3333	-0.9518	0.2591	-3.6741	< .001	[-1.4616, -0.4421]
-21.807	-0.846	0.2419	-3.4977	< .001	[-1.3219, -0.3701]
-20.2807	-0.7401	0.2255	-3.2823	0.001	[-1.1838, -0.2964]
-18.7544	-0.6343	0.2101	-3.0184	0.003	[-1.0478, -0.2208]
-17.2281	-0.5285	0.1961	-2.6955	0.007	[-0.9142, -0.1427]
-15.7018	-0.4226	0.1835	-2.3029	0.022	[-0.7837, -0.0615]
-14.5879	-0.3454	0.1755	-1.9676	0.05	[-0.6908, 0.0000]
-14.1754	-0.3168	0.1729	-1.8326	0.068	[-0.6569, 0.0233]
-12.6491	-0.2109	0.1645	-1.2826	0.201	[-0.5346, 0.1127]
-11.1228	-0.1051	0.1587	-0.6624	0.508	[-0.4173, 0.2071]
-9.5965	0.0007	0.1558	0.0047	0.996	[-0.3058, 0.3073]
-8.0702	0.1066	0.156	0.6832	0.495	[-0.2004, 0.4135]
-6.5439	0.2124	0.1592	1.334	0.183	[-0.1009, 0.5257]
-5.0175	0.3182	0.1653	1.9248	0.055	[-0.0071, 0.6436]
-4.8987	0.3265	0.1659	1.9676	0.05	[0.0000, 0.6530]
-3.4912	0.4241	0.174	2.4369	0.015	[0.0817, 0.7665]
-1.9649	0.5299	0.1849	2.8656	0.004	[0.1661, 0.8938]
-0.4386	0.6358	0.1977	3.2163	0.001	[0.2468, 1.0247]
1.0877	0.7416	0.2119	3.4994	< .001	[0.3246, 1.1586]
2.614	0.8474	0.2274	3.7265	< .001	[0.4000, 1.2949]
4.1404	0.9533	0.2439	3.9087	< .001	[0.4734, 1.4332]
5.6667	1.0591	0.2612	4.0553	< .001	[0.5452, 1.5730]

Source: Own elaboration.

As per Table 7, the conditional effects of work-life balance on intent to stay at different work passion were probed. The effect of work-life balance on intent to stay was strongest at higher levels of work passion ($b = 1.0591$, $SE = 0.2612$, $p < .05$) and gradually weakened with lower levels of work passion ($b = -0.9518$, $SE = 0.2591$, $p < .05$). Johnson-Neyman technique was statistically significant for the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay at different levels of work

passion among the faculty. Work passion played a major role in retaining the faculty to the educational institutions where they worked provided, they had a balanced work and family balance.

Figure 2. Association of intent to stay on work-life balance moderated by work passion



Source: Dawson, J.F. Moderation in Management Research: What, Why, When, and How. *J Bus Psychol* 29, 1-19 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-013-9308-7>

From the graph (Dawson, 2013), it was found that work passion strengthens the relationship between Work-life balance and Intent to stay among faculty.

DISCUSSION

The research paper tried to shed some light on how the work-life balance has been affecting the decision of educators to continue in their profession and the role of work passion in strengthening the same. The demographic profile of the target population showed the age group to be predominantly in their thirties to mid-thirties, with a substantial majority of respondents being female. This demographic composition is reflective of the broader employment patterns in Kerala's education sector, where teaching has historically been a profession of choice for women seeking to balance economic participation with familial and social expectations. The predominance of women in the sample, while not a source of sampling bias, does highlight a specific cohort facing the common pressures of balancing professional advancement with caregiving responsibilities. There has been keen interest from women to take up teaching as their profession owing to the family restrictions while simultaneously supporting their spouses in the economic welfare of the family. According to literature, teaching has been a keen profession of interest in the State of Kerala where the works of teachers play a vital role in the development of students across diverse fields (Dhanya & Kinslin, 2022). Kerala is also known for its high quality of education and robust teacher welfare policies, which can serve as a model for other states in India to emulate.

As per the mandate of UGC regulations in the country, most of the teachers who are working in the State of Kerala are NET qualified (National eligibility test) and also are in their mid-career with over five years of experience identified in the survey. The educational qualifications of the faculty working in colleges show that they are highly qualified, with most possessing M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. The challenge lies in retaining these talented individuals, as factors such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment play a crucial role in their decision to continue in their roles (Banu & Sundharavadivel, 2019; Dhanya & Kinslin, 2022).

The association between work passion among both genders was not found to be significant from the independent Mann-Whitney U test, indicating that work passion is not inherently gendered and that both male and female educators possess similar levels of dedication and enthusiasm toward their profession. Similar results have been published in the literature where there were no gender-wise variations when it comes to work passion among the faculty (Kessler, Spector & Gavin, 2014; Pollack et al, 2020). Interestingly, some literature states that men have better work passion compared to their counterparts due to the various service-related tasks they are involved in, with women being affected negatively in this regard (O'Meara et al., 2017; Guarino & Borden, 2017). Studies have found that female faculty members often face additional challenges in managing work-life balance due to the societal expectations and responsibilities placed on them in terms of family caregiving (Bhatia & Williams, 2023). Educational institutions should look into the formulation of policies that enhance the work-life balance of the faculty and imbibe work passion in this group. However, it is essential to recognize that the lack of a significant gender difference in work passion suggests that institutional interventions need not be gender-specific but should rather focus on creating an equitable and supportive environment for all educators.

Work-life balance and its equilibrium are key to any workforce in the world. Teaching, being one of the important professions that enables the learning of the upcoming generation, needs to be cared for with adequate policies for these educators. This research investigated the association of work-life to intent to stay in the academic profession by faculty, which was to be strengthened by work passion. According to the literature, maintaining a work-life balance supports the retention of faculty and avoids the depletion of the workforce if proper upscale can be done through activities like mentoring and training to face these issues (Devadhasan et al., 2021; Magdaleno et al, 2022). The correlation test of the summary of this research demonstrates that the three constructs used in this research — work-life balance, work passion, and intent to stay — were interconnected. As sighted in previous literature, work-life balance affects the decision to stay in academia (Devadhasan et al., 2021; Magdaleno et al., 2022; Boamah et al., 2022). Similarly, the role of work passion to act as a motivation to continue in the current profession has also been stressed in recent years (Banu & Sundharavadeivel, 2019; Saeed et al., 2022).

The results generated in this research on the moderating role of work passion on the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay provide support to the need to improve the working environment of the teachers and increase their well-being. Some studies have shown that work passion has a strong positive association to impacting the well-being of educators (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2019). The findings of the moderation analysis, however, reveal a more nuanced picture with significant practical implications. The conditional effects demonstrate that the relationship between work-life balance and intent to stay is not uniform across all educators; rather, it is contingent upon the level of work passion they experience. At low levels of work passion, the effect of work-life balance on intent to stay was weak and statistically insignificant ($b = 0.2241$, $SE = 0.1598$, $p > .05$). This suggests that merely improving work-life balance through administrative policies may yield little return in terms of retention if educators have become disengaged or have lost their passion for teaching. Conversely, at high levels of work passion, the effect of work-life balance on intent to stay was strong and highly significant ($b = 1.059$, $SE = 0.2612$, $p < .05$). This indicates that for passionate educators who derive meaning and fulfilment from their work, supportive work-life balance policies can have a profound and amplifying effect on their commitment to remain in their positions.

The results of the current study suggest that the very strong association between Work Passion and Work life balance may be context driven, particularly in teaching professions where individuals often perceive their work as a meaningful extension of their personal identity. In such settings, passion toward work may reduce the psychological boundary between professional and personal life, thereby leading to a perceived balance rather than conflict. This indicates that Work Passion

may not operate independently but is closely embedded within how individuals experience work life integration. Since well-being also is related to work-life balance, the end result would be to have an effect on the retention rate of faculty. Higher work-life balance in turn and work passion can lead to the highly professional work environment. This allows for reducing the quitting of jobs and building the existing group to a more developed level.

The practical significance of these findings cannot be overstated. For institutional leaders and policymakers, the moderation effect provides clear guidance on resource allocation and strategic planning. The findings suggest that interventions designed solely to improve work-life balance without simultaneously addressing the underlying passion and engagement of faculty are unlikely to achieve their intended retention outcomes. Instead, a synergistic approach is required — one that invests in cultivating work passion through professional development opportunities, recognition programs, and inclusive decision-making processes, while simultaneously implementing supportive work-life policies. This dual investment creates a virtuous cycle where passionate educators, supported by balanced work environments, become increasingly committed to their institutions, thereby reducing turnover and enhancing the overall quality of education. The magnitude of the moderation effect, with the coefficient for work-life balance on intent to stay being nearly five times larger at high levels of work passion compared to low levels, underscores the critical importance of this integrated approach.

LIMITATIONS

A major limitation of the research was that the sample is predominantly female, which reflects the regional employment pattern in Kerala where teaching roles are largely occupied by women. Detailing this context, the gender distribution aligns with sectoral realities rather than sampling bias alone. Future research can incorporate qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus group discussions to explore the underlying reasons behind the strong association between Work Passion and Work life balance. Further studies may also include variables such as marital status, income, and family responsibilities to provide a more comprehensive understanding of retention behaviour.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the pivotal role of work-life balance in enhancing educator retention, with work passion serving as a critical moderating factor that significantly amplifies the positive influence of balanced professional and personal lives on educators' decisions to remain in their positions. The demographic profile, predominantly comprising women in their thirties, reflects regional employment patterns in Kerala's education sector, though the analysis revealed no significant gender-based differences in work passion, indicating that dedication to teaching transcends gender boundaries and that institutional interventions need not be gender-specific. The findings necessitate a dual-pronged institutional strategy that prioritizes fostering work passion through professional development, recognition programs, and participatory governance, while simultaneously implementing supportive work-life policies such as flexible arrangements, manageable workloads, and family-friendly leave provisions. A "passion-first" approach is recommended, where investing in faculty engagement and professional fulfillment amplifies the effectiveness of work-life balance interventions in promoting retention, as work-life balance policies alone appear insufficient to retain educators who have become disengaged from their profession. This synergistic model offers a sustainable pathway for educational institutions to maintain a motivated, committed, and high-quality teaching workforce amidst increasing academic demands and competitive employment opportunities. Future research should employ qualitative methodologies to explore the underlying reasons for the strong interconnection between work

passion and work-life balance, while also incorporating variables such as marital status, income, and family responsibilities to provide a more comprehensive understanding of retention behavior across diverse educational contexts and institutional settings.

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