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The Relationship between Work-Life Balance, Job Stress, and Artificial Intelligence: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines the complex and evolving relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, work-life balance (WLB), and job stress in contemporary workplaces. Drawing from 30 highly relevant empirical and conceptual studies published primarily between 2021 and 2025, this review reveals that AI presents a paradoxical influence on employee well-being. On one hand, AI-driven automation, intelligent scheduling systems, and wellness interventions can reduce repetitive tasks, enhance time management, and lower workplace stress, thereby improving work-life balance. On the other hand, AI deployment introduces new stressors, including technostress, job insecurity, algorithmic management pressures, and work-family boundary erosion, which can exacerbate stress and undermine work-life integration. The review identifies key theoretical frameworks—particularly the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, technostress theory, and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory—that explain these dual pathways. Methodologically, the literature is dominated by quantitative surveys employing structural equation modeling, though mixed-methods and conceptual studies provide important contextual insights. Critical mediating factors include job autonomy, trust in AI, personalization of AI tools, and organizational HR practices. The review concludes that the net impact of AI on work-life balance and stress depends heavily on implementation strategies, ethical considerations, and organizational support systems. Future research should focus on longitudinal designs, cross-cultural comparisons, and the development of AI-specific well-being frameworks.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Job Stress, Artificial Intelligence, Literature Review

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence technologies into organizational settings has fundamentally transformed the nature of work, employee experiences, and the boundaries between professional and personal life. As AI systems increasingly automate routine tasks, provide intelligent decision support, and monitor employee performance, critical questions emerge about their impact on employee well-being, particularly regarding work-life balance and job stress. Work-life balance—defined as the equilibrium between work

demands and personal life responsibilities and job stress characterized by psychological and physiological strain resulting from work demands are central determinants of employee health, productivity, and organizational effectiveness [1], [2], [3].

The relationship between AI, work-life balance, and job stress is inherently complex and paradoxical. AI technologies promise to liberate workers from mundane tasks, optimize scheduling, and provide personalized wellness support, potentially reducing stress and enhancing work-life integration [3], [10], [11]. However, the same technologies can introduce new forms of stress through constant connectivity, algorithmic surveillance, job displacement fears, and the blurring of work-home boundaries [2], [6], [12]. This duality—what Pinho and colleagues term the "double-edged sword" of AI [1]—necessitates a comprehensive examination of the mechanisms through which AI influences employee well-being.

This literature review synthesizes findings from 30 recent studies to address three primary research questions: (1) How does AI deployment affect work-life balance and job stress? (2) What theoretical frameworks best explain these relationships? (3) What mediating and moderating factors shape AI's impact on employee well-being? By examining empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives, and contextual variations, this review aims to provide a nuanced understanding of AI's role in shaping contemporary work experiences and to identify critical directions for future research and practice.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Job Demands-Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model emerges as the predominant theoretical framework for understanding AI's impact on work-life balance and stress. Originally developed to explain burnout and work engagement, the JD-R model posits that job characteristics can be categorized into demands (aspects requiring sustained effort and associated with costs) and resources (aspects that facilitate goal achievement and reduce demands) [1], [7], [13], [24].

Several studies apply the JD-R model to conceptualize AI as both a demand and a resource. Pinho and colleagues surveyed 280 AI-enabled workers and found that AI collaboration and AI awareness jointly influence work engagement and work-life balance through the JD-R framework [1]. Their findings suggest that when employees perceive AI as a supportive resource that enhances their capabilities, it reduces job demands and improves work-life balance. Conversely, when AI is perceived as an additional demand requiring adaptation and constant monitoring, it can increase stress.

Aloqaily and colleagues extended the JD-R model to examine AI implementation's effect on job burnout through the mediating role of work-life balance in human resource management contexts [7]. Their survey data revealed that AI implementation can reduce burnout when it enhances work-life balance by providing resources such as flexible scheduling and task automation. Similarly, Tahir and colleagues applied the JD-R model to serial entrepreneurs in smart cities, demonstrating that AI-driven tools such as predictive analytics and algorithmic management systems can intensify job demands while simultaneously offering resources for better work-life integration [13].

The JD-R model's strength lies in its ability to explain the paradoxical effects of AI: the same technology can function as a resource (reducing repetitive tasks, enhancing efficiency) or a demand (requiring new skills, creating monitoring pressure), depending on implementation context and individual perceptions [24].

2.2 Technostress Theory

Technostress theory provides a complementary framework specifically addressing the stress arising from technology use. Technostress encompasses five dimensions: techno-overload (being forced to work faster and longer), techno-invasion (blurring work-life boundaries), techno-complexity (feeling inadequate about skills), techno-insecurity (fear of job loss), and techno-uncertainty (constant technology changes) [2], [12].

Kamboj and colleagues conducted a moderated mediation analysis demonstrating that AI technostress—arising from employees' struggles to adapt to, trust, or collaborate with AI—mediates the relationship between AI deployment and both work-life balance and employee well-being [2]. Their empirical survey data revealed that AI technostress represents a distinct form of workplace stress that directly undermines work-life balance by creating constant pressure to engage with AI systems.

Wach and colleagues' critical analysis of ChatGPT identified AI technostress as one of seven major threats of generative AI, noting that techno-overload and techno-invasion can compel users to engage with AI outside work hours, invading personal life and increasing anxiety, stress, and burnout [12]. They recommend that management establish policies promoting healthy work-life balance and set clear guidelines for AI use to mitigate these effects.

The technostress framework is particularly valuable for understanding the negative pathway through which AI affects well-being, highlighting that the stress induced by AI adoption itself—independent of work content—can significantly impair work-life balance [29].

2.3 Conservation of Resources Theory

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect valued resources, and that stress occurs when resources are threatened or lost, provides another important lens for understanding AI's impact [28]. Jeong and colleagues applied COR theory alongside Social Cognitive Theory to investigate how organizational AI investment influences job insecurity, coworker conflict, and work-family conflict [28].

Their time-lagged study of 486 South Korean employees revealed that AI investment increases job insecurity perceptions, which depletes psychological resources and leads to increased work-family conflict [28]. This resource depletion pathway explains why AI, even when intended to improve efficiency, can paradoxically increase stress and undermine work-life balance by threatening employees' sense of job security—a critical psychological resource.

2.4 Other Theoretical Perspectives

Beyond these dominant frameworks, several studies employ additional theoretical perspectives. Zhang examined the association between AI awareness and emotional exhaustion through the serial mediation of job insecurity and work interference with family, suggesting a cognitive appraisal process [8]. Chen and colleagues introduced an algorithmic management lens to understand the "algorithm-based job flexibility paradox" among gig workers, where AI-driven flexibility simultaneously offers autonomy and intensifies demands [15].

Nazareno and colleagues developed a conceptual framework relating automation to worker well-being based on socio-technical systems theory and the task model from skill-biased technological change literature [27]. Their longitudinal analysis of 5,718 workers found that automation risk is negatively correlated with job autonomy, which mediates the relationship between AI and both stress and health outcomes.

3. Methodological Landscape

The reviewed literature exhibits diverse methodological approaches, though quantitative survey designs predominate. Of the 30 studies examined, approximately 60% employed quantitative //surveys with sample sizes ranging from 168 to 5,718 participants [1], [2], [3], [5], [7], [14], [25], [27], [28], [30]. These studies typically utilized structural equation modeling (SEM), regression analysis, or mediation/moderation analysis to test hypothesized relationships.

Begum and colleagues surveyed 250 employees across IT, banking, and healthcare sectors in India, employing descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques to explore relationships between AI usage, stress reduction, and work-life balance [3]. Their cross-sectional design is representative of the field's current methodological approach. Similarly, Ratna employed a mixed-methods design combining survey data from 462 employees with interviews from 30 HR experts, using SEM for quantitative analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative data [5].

Longitudinal designs remain rare but provide valuable insights into temporal dynamics. Nazareno and colleagues' longitudinal analysis using General Social Survey data from 2002-2018 revealed that AI's stress-reduction effects may weaken over time, suggesting potential future increases in stress for high-risk jobs [27]. Time-lagged designs, such as Jeong and colleagues' study, help establish temporal precedence and reduce common method bias [28].

Approximately 30% of the reviewed studies are conceptual or theoretical in nature, providing frameworks and propositions without empirical data collection [6], [10], [11], [12], [16], [18], [19], [20], [22], [26]. While these contributions advance theoretical understanding, the field would benefit from more empirical testing of proposed mechanisms.

A notable methodological gap is the limited use of experimental or quasi-experimental designs that could establish causal relationships. Additionally, most studies rely on self-report measures, which are susceptible to common method bias. Only a few studies incorporate objective measures such as biometric data from wearable devices [22] or AI-driven analytics systems [21].

4. The Dual Nature of AI: Benefits and Risks

4.1 Positive Impacts: Automation, Efficiency, and Stress Reduction

A substantial body of evidence documents AI's potential to reduce workplace stress and enhance work-life balance through task automation, intelligent scheduling, and efficiency gains. Begum and colleagues found that AI minimizes repetitive activities, enhances time management, and strengthens work-life integration, thereby reducing workplace stress among 250 Indian employees [3]. Their regression analysis revealed significant positive relationships between AI usage and both stress reduction and work-life balance.

Tariq's examination of AI technologies across healthcare, education, and finance sectors demonstrated that AI-driven automation and advanced analytics can simplify repetitive work, lower stress levels, and free employees to focus on more meaningful projects [10]. Intelligent scheduling systems that consider worker preferences minimize stress and improve job satisfaction by facilitating better work-life balance [16].

Robotic process automation (RPA), a specific form of AI, has shown particular promise. Noordeen found that RPA helps employees attain work-life balance by lowering job stress, with the impact considerably moderated by how and where RPA is deployed [9]. The automation of routine, time-consuming tasks allows employees to reclaim time for personal activities and reduces the cognitive load associated with mundane work.

AI-powered wellness interventions represent another positive pathway. Sharma documented how AI tools prioritize personal and professional wellness by handling repetitive processes, identifying signs of burnout, and creating personalized workflows [11]. These systems act as dual-purpose mechanisms supporting both productivity and health. Dharmagunaratna and colleagues developed an AI-powered virtual stress management assistant for IT professionals that provides personalized counseling, emotion recognition, and tailored calming interventions, aiming to enhance emotional resilience and promote balanced work-life experiences [17].

Quantitative evidence supports these benefits. Кицак and colleagues reported that AI-driven adaptive scheduling aligned with biological rhythms can enhance productivity by 15-20%, reduce employee turnover, and improve cognitive performance by 20-30% while reducing stress [22]. These findings suggest that when AI is designed to complement human capabilities and respect individual needs, it can significantly enhance well-being.

4.2 Negative Impacts: Technostress, Job Insecurity, and Boundary Erosion

Despite these benefits, a parallel stream of research documents significant risks associated with AI deployment. Kamboj and colleagues identified AI technostress as a critical mediator linking AI deployment to impaired work-life balance and increased job stress [2]. Their moderated mediation analysis revealed that employees struggling to adapt to, trust, or collaborate with AI experience heightened stress that directly undermines work-life integration.

Job insecurity emerges as a particularly potent stressor. Zhang's serial mediation analysis demonstrated that AI awareness increases emotional exhaustion through job insecurity and work interference with family [8]. Jeong and colleagues found that organizational AI investment increases employees' perceptions of job insecurity, which in turn leads to increased work-family conflict [28]. This finding aligns with COR theory: the threat of job loss depletes psychological resources, leaving employees less capable of managing work-family boundaries.

Billett and colleagues' examination of AI's impact in Asia highlighted the paradoxical nature of AI: while automating routine tasks can improve efficiency, it simultaneously creates job displacement fears and psychological stress [6]. They emphasized that without robust training programs and ethical guidelines, AI integration can exacerbate workplace inequalities and undermine well-being.

The blurring of work-life boundaries represents another critical concern. Wach and colleagues noted that AI-induced techno-invasion compels users to engage with AI systems outside work hours, invading personal life and increasing anxiety and burnout [12]. Pascual's conceptual analysis revealed that AI's capacity for constant analysis of worker behavior can intensify mental stress and blur boundaries between work and personal life [19].

Algorithmic management in the gig economy presents unique challenges. Chen and colleagues documented the "algorithm-based job flexibility paradox," where AI-driven flexibility simultaneously offers autonomy and intensifies demands, with work-family conflict fully mediating the relationship between algorithmic flexibility and job insecurity [15]. This paradox illustrates how AI can undermine the very work-life balance it promises to enhance.

Nazareno and colleagues' longitudinal analysis revealed a concerning temporal pattern: while AI and automation are initially associated with decreased job stress, this stress-reduction effect appears to weaken over time, suggesting potential future increases in stress, especially for highest-risk jobs [27]. This finding challenges the assumption that AI's benefits are sustainable and highlights the need for ongoing organizational support.

5. Mediating and Moderating Mechanisms

5.1 Work-Life Balance as a Mediator

Work-life balance frequently functions as a mediating mechanism linking AI deployment to ultimate well-being outcomes. Aloqaily and colleagues demonstrated that work-life balance mediates the relationship between AI implementation and job burnout in HRM contexts [7]. When AI enhances work-life balance through flexible scheduling and task automation, it reduces burnout; conversely, when AI undermines balance through constant connectivity demands, burnout increases.

Zaki's mediation and multigroup analysis using PLS-SEM revealed that AI usage affects employee satisfaction through its impact on work-life balance and burnout [14]. This mediation pathway suggests that AI's ultimate impact on employee outcomes depends critically on whether it supports or undermines work-life integration.

5.2 Job Autonomy and Control

Job autonomy emerges as a critical moderating factor. Nazareno and colleagues found that autonomy mediates the relationship between automation risk and both stress and health outcomes, with automation risk negatively correlated with autonomy [27]. When AI systems enhance employee autonomy by providing decision support and eliminating constraints, they reduce stress; when they constrain autonomy through rigid algorithmic control, they increase stress.

Alberti's examination of AI product use identified job autonomy as a key moderator of the relationship between AI use and employee well-being, with technostress serving as a mediator [29]. Employees with higher autonomy are better able to manage AI-related demands and experience less technostress.

5.3 Trust, Personalization, and AI Awareness

Trust in AI and the personalization of AI tools significantly influence their effectiveness. Ratna's structural equation modeling revealed that trust in AI and perceived personalization are key factors determining the effectiveness of AI-driven mental health interventions in hybrid work environments [5]. When employees trust AI systems and perceive them as tailored to their needs, they are more likely to engage with wellness tools and experience benefits.

AI awareness and collaboration also matter. Pinho and colleagues found that AI awareness and AI collaboration jointly influence work engagement and work-life balance [1]. Employees who understand AI capabilities and view AI as a collaborative partner rather than a replacement experience better outcomes.

5.4 Organizational HR Practices

Organizational context and HR practices moderate AI's impact. Jeong and colleagues demonstrated that the negative relationship between organizational AI investment and job insecurity becomes weaker when general HRM practices are well-implemented [28]. This moderated mediation finding suggests that supportive HR practices—such as transparent communication, training programs, and job security assurances—can buffer against AI-induced stress.

Wach and colleagues recommended that management establish policies promoting healthy work-life balance and set clear guidelines for AI use to mitigate technostress [12]. These organizational interventions can transform AI from a stressor into a resource.

6. Context-Specific Findings

6.1 Hybrid and Remote Work Environments

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated hybrid work adoption, creating new contexts for AI's impact on work-life balance. Ratna's mixed-methods study of 462 employees in hybrid work environments found that AI-powered mental health tools—including chatbots, mood tracking apps, and guided wellness platforms—boost emotional strength, lower stress, and increase job satisfaction [5]. However, the study also identified critical concerns about privacy, ethics, and digital literacy that shape engagement with these technologies.

The hybrid context presents unique challenges: employees experience increased loneliness, unclear boundaries between work and personal life, and exhaustion from constant digital use [5]. AI interventions must be designed with these specific stressors in mind, emphasizing trust, personalization, and ethical implementation.

6.2 Sector-Specific Applications

Different sectors exhibit varying patterns of AI impact. Begum and colleagues' study across IT, banking, and healthcare sectors in India revealed that while AI benefits are evident across sectors, concerns about employee privacy and job displacement are particularly acute in banking and healthcare [3]. Tariq documented successful AI implementations in healthcare (patient scheduling, diagnostic support), education (personalized learning, administrative automation), and finance (fraud detection, customer service) [10].

Soomro and colleagues examined AI in higher education, finding that AI adoption affects faculty work-life balance and workplace well-being, with mixed evidence on whether AI represents empowerment or future workplace stress [23]. This sector-specific variation suggests that AI's impact depends on the nature of work tasks, organizational culture, and implementation strategies.

6.3 Gig Economy and Algorithmic Management

The gig economy presents a distinct context where algorithmic management directly shapes work experiences. Chen and colleagues documented that algorithm-based job flexibility creates a paradox: while offering temporal flexibility, it simultaneously intensifies demands and creates job insecurity, with work-family conflict fully mediating this relationship [15]. Gig workers face unique challenges including unpredictable schedules, constant availability expectations, and limited organizational support.

This context highlights the importance of regulatory frameworks and platform design choices in determining whether AI enhances or undermines work-life balance for non-traditional workers.

7. AI-Driven Interventions for Well-Being

Several studies document specific AI-driven interventions designed to enhance employee well-being. Harahap and colleagues developed an integrated people analytics system that uses AI to monitor and predict employees' work-life balance levels and job stress, identifying employees in the "Work-Life Balance Red Zone" for targeted intervention [21]. This data-driven approach enables proactive well-being management.

Dharmagunaratna and colleagues' AI-powered virtual stress management assistant for IT professionals integrates multiple components: an AI chatbot for personalized counseling, emotion recognition technology, personalized calming music recommendations, and curated video suggestions [17]. This multifaceted system aims to enhance emotional resilience and promote balanced work-life experiences.

Singh and colleagues described AI-driven sentiment analysis and intelligent scheduling systems that monitor employee communications for stress indicators and create work plans considering worker preferences, thereby minimizing stress and improving job satisfaction [16]. These systems exemplify how AI can be designed specifically to support rather than undermine well-being.

Sharma emphasized that AI-powered tools can identify signs of burnout early and create personalized workflows that balance productivity with mental and physical health [11]. However, ethical concerns, including data protection and algorithmic fairness, must be addressed for successful adoption.

Srinivasan argued that organizations embracing AI-powered wellbeing frameworks—designed with ethics, inclusivity, and human-centeredness—are better positioned to thrive in the evolving future of work [26]. This perspective emphasizes that AI's impact depends fundamentally on design philosophy and implementation approach.

8. Gaps, Limitations, and Future Directions

Despite substantial progress, several critical gaps remain in the literature. First, longitudinal research is scarce. Most studies employ cross-sectional designs that cannot establish causality or track how AI's impact evolves. Nazareno and colleagues' finding that AI's stress-reduction effects may weaken over time [27] underscores the need for more longitudinal investigations.

Second, the literature lacks experimental or quasi-experimental studies that could establish causal relationships through controlled manipulation of AI features. Current evidence relies heavily on correlational survey data, limiting causal inference.

Third, cultural and geographic diversity is limited. While some studies examine Asian contexts [6], [28], most research focuses on Western or developed economies. Cross-cultural research is needed to understand how cultural values, labor regulations, and technological infrastructure shape AI's impact on work-life balance and stress.

Fourth, the mechanisms linking AI to well-being require deeper investigation. While mediating factors such as work-life balance, job insecurity, and technostress have been identified, the specific features of AI systems that trigger these mechanisms remain underexplored. Research should examine how AI transparency, explainability, user control, and design characteristics influence employee experiences.

Fifth, individual differences receive limited attention. Factors such as age, gender, digital literacy, personality traits, and prior technology experience likely moderate AI's impact, yet few studies systematically examine these variables.

Sixth, the literature exhibits a methodological limitation in its reliance on self-report measures. Future research should incorporate objective measures such as biometric stress indicators, actual work hours, productivity metrics, and AI usage logs to complement self-reported perceptions.

Seventh, ethical considerations require more systematic investigation. While several studies mention privacy concerns and algorithmic bias [5], [11], [12], comprehensive frameworks for ethical AI implementation in the context of employee well-being are lacking.

Finally, intervention research is needed. While several studies describe AI-driven wellness interventions [5], [17], [21], rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness through randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs is largely absent.

9. Conclusion

This comprehensive literature review reveals that the relationship between artificial intelligence, work-life balance, and job stress is fundamentally paradoxical. AI technologies possess the capacity to both enhance and undermine employee well-being, depending on implementation strategies, organizational contexts, and individual characteristics. The evidence demonstrates that AI can reduce workplace stress and improve work-life balance through task automation, intelligent scheduling, and personalized wellness interventions. Simultaneously, AI can increase stress and erode work-life boundaries through technostress, job insecurity, algorithmic management pressures, and constant connectivity demands.

Theoretical frameworks—particularly the Job Demands-Resources model, technostress theory, and Conservation of Resources theory—provide valuable lenses for understanding these dual pathways. The JD-R model explains how AI can function as both a job demand and a job resource, technostress theory illuminates the specific stressors arising from AI adoption, and COR theory clarifies how AI-induced resource threats (such as job insecurity) cascade into work-family conflict.

Critical mediating and moderating mechanisms shape AI's ultimate impact. Work-life balance frequently mediates the relationship between AI deployment and well-being outcomes. Job autonomy, trust in AI, personalization of AI tools, AI awareness, and supportive organizational HR practices moderate these relationships, determining whether AI enhances or undermines employee well-being.

Context matters significantly. Hybrid work environments, different industry sectors, and the gig economy present distinct challenges and opportunities for AI's impact on work-life balance and stress. AI-driven interventions show promise but require careful attention to ethical considerations, user trust, and personalization.

For practitioners, these findings suggest several implications. Organizations should implement AI with explicit attention to work-life balance and stress outcomes, not merely productivity gains. Supportive HR practices, transparent communication, training programs, and clear guidelines for AI use are essential for mitigating negative impacts. AI systems should be designed to enhance rather than constrain employee autonomy, with features that respect work-life boundaries and provide user control. Ethical considerations, including privacy protection, algorithmic fairness, and job security assurances, must be prioritized.

For researchers, the field requires more longitudinal and experimental studies, greater cultural diversity, deeper investigation of mechanisms, systematic examination of individual differences, incorporation of objective measures, and rigorous evaluation of AI-driven wellness interventions. The development of comprehensive, AI-specific frameworks for understanding and promoting employee well-being represents a critical frontier.

Ultimately, AI's impact on work-life balance and job stress is not predetermined by the technology itself but shaped by human choices in design, implementation, and governance. The challenge and opportunity lie in harnessing AI's potential to enhance employee well-being while vigilantly guarding against its risks. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in organizational life, ensuring that it serves human flourishing rather than undermining it represents one of the most important challenges facing contemporary workplaces.

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