

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship Between Work-life Balance and Job Burnout Among Millennials Working Remotely

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the dynamic relationship among work-life balance, job burnout, and employee engagement within a sample of 186 remote-working millennials. Survey responses were analyzed using Jamovi. Descriptive analyses revealed insights into demographic characteristics, while a mediation analysis, employing the GLM Mediation Model of the MEDMOD package, explored total, direct, and indirect effects. Bootstrapping with 1000 replications ensured result reliability. Utilizing the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT), and Work-Life Balance (WLB) scale, the study aimed to understand the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between work-life balance and job burnout. The results unveiled a direct correlation between work-life balance and job burnout, as well as between work-life balance and employee engagement. However, the third finding posed a challenge to the assumed mediation model by revealing no mediation among the three variables. Additionally, the study acknowledged potential unexplored factors not considered in the research design, contributing to the failure to establish the assumed causal relationship. Despite these limitations, the research offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of employee engagement within the context of work-life balance and job burnout among millennials. It emphasizes the necessity for future investigations to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies surrounding remote work dynamics and the additional factors that might influence the nuanced relationship between work-life balance, job burnout, and employee engagement.

Keywords: employee engagement, job burnout, work-life balance, millennials

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the way professionals work has changed significantly, mainly due to the widespread adoption of remote work trends. Millennials, in particular, show a growing preference for the flexibility that comes with remote work [1]. It's essential to grasp the dynamics of this changing work landscape to tackle the various challenges that millennials face [2].

Millennials, notably, stood out in embracing the adaptability of remote work arrangements, as highlighted by Haan [1]. Understanding the dynamics of this evolving work paradigm is crucial for comprehending the

diverse challenges faced by the millennial workforce [2].

Work-Life Balance (WLB) plays a pivotal role in today's work scenarios, encompassing the delicate balance between professional commitments and personal life. Haan's research also showed that a large majority (98%) enjoys the flexibility of remote work, indicating a strong preference for adaptable work setups [1]. Balancing work and personal life is important for people's well-being, job satisfaction, and overall happiness, according to Jayaraman et al. [3]. Additionally, WLB can also bring financial savings and positive effects on the environment [1][2]. However, achieving WLB is difficult because of the complexities of modern work structures, leading to increased stress, tiredness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed [4].

Employee Engagement (EE) is another critical variable in the remote work context, representing the emotional commitment and involvement of employees in their work and organization [5]. Deloitte's Global Millennial Survey [6] emphasizes millennials' recognition of the financial benefits of remote work, focusing on reduced work demands and increased flexibility. Key resources within remote work influencing EE include effective communication tools, flexible hours, and a supportive organizational culture [1]

In another note, Job Burnout, resulting from prolonged workplace stress, has become a growing concern. It was revealed that factors like workload stress and complex tasks play a significant role in shaping millennials' career choices, increasing challenges related to well-being [4]. This highlights the importance of job burnout, especially for the current workforce operating remotely. Ford's research on burnout among millennials in helping professions emphasizes shared experiences that reflect the unique pressures faced by this generation and the demanding nature of their jobs [7].

By combining findings from various research studies, our investigation aims to thoroughly examine the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and job burnout (JB), particularly among millennials working remotely, while also exploring the mediating role of employee engagement (EE) in this relationship. Millennials, often informally labeled as the 'burnout generation' [7], face unique challenges in remote work settings. By focusing on this demographic and considering the mediating role of EE, our study aims to provide insights into the complex interplay between WLB, EE, and JB in the remote work context.

The rise of remote work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought about various consequences. This literature review sheds light on the connections among remote work, stress, burnout, work-life balance, and employee well-being. It focuses specifically on how millennials are affected across different types of organizations.

Gangwar and D'Costa's study [8] delves into the aftermath of remote work adoption in India, specifically among millennials, revealing a significant positive correlation between stress and burnout post-COVID-19. Olsen et al. [9] contribute by examining job demands, resources, stress, and job engagement among young employees in a Norwegian telecom company, revealing diverse associations that enrich our understanding of remote work challenges. Nabawanuka and Ekmekcioglu [10] offer insights on the role of perceived supervisor support, WLB, and employee well-being among millennials in the financial sector in Turkey. Palumbo's investigation [11] into home-based telecommuting on public sector employees highlights adverse effects on WLB, mitigated by work engagement.

Collectively, these studies provide diverse perspectives, offering valuable insights into the experiences of millennials in remote work settings and underscoring the complex relationships between stress, burnout, work-life balance, and employee well-being. They lay a robust foundation for our specific exploration within this study's context.

Building upon the insights gleaned from the literature, we turn our attention to the Burnout Theory crafted

by Christina Maslach. In the mid-1970s, Maslach conducted empirical research on burnout in professionals who worked with people, specifically those in institutional settings. Maslach hypothesized that burnout is a response to disproportionate stress at work, categorized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Additionally, Maslach identified six dimensions of burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values [12].

This framework provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of burnout and its impact on employees in various work environments. It aligns with our study's focus on understanding the relationship between work-life balance, employee engagement, and job burnout among millennials in remote work settings. By incorporating Maslach's Burnout Theory, we aim to explore how these dimensions manifest in the context of remote work and their implications for employee well-being.

Olsen et al.'s [9] study applied Maslach's burnout theory to explore the dynamics of job demands, resources, stress, and job engagement among young employees. Nabawanuka and Ekmekcioglu [10] utilized Maslach's theory to examine the role of perceived supervisor support on mitigating emotional exhaustion and enhancing personal accomplishment.

Maslach's Burnout Theory provides an ideal framework for our study due to its well-established conceptualization of burnout, encompassing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Its relevance lies in our focus on understanding how work-life balance (WLB) and employee engagement (EE) relate to burnout among millennials in remote settings.

In conclusion, this study addresses key questions crucial to understanding the challenges faced by the millennial workforce in remote settings: Is there a connection between remote work arrangements and perceived WLB among millennials? To what extent does WLB influence variations in JB levels? How does EE mediate the relationship between WLB and JB in remote-working millennials? Our goal is to provide evidence-based insights for the Human Resource domain and its professionals, guiding them in fostering a balanced, engaged, and satisfied millennial workforce in the contemporary professional sphere.

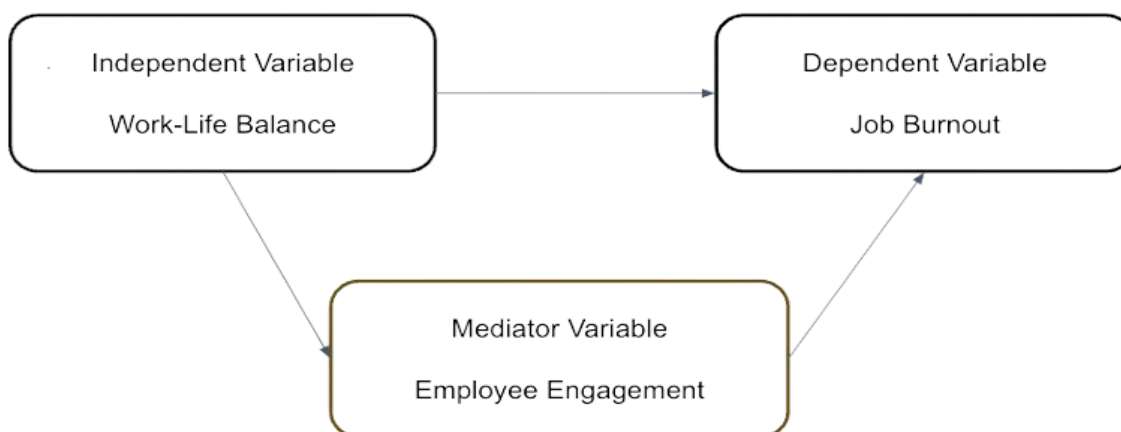


Fig. 1: Mediation Model

METHODS

A. Participants

The participants in this study comprised a total of 186 individuals. Among them, 41.9% identified as male, 55.9% as female, 1.1% chose a non-binary identification, and 1.0% opted not to reveal their gender identity. The majority of participants, 79.6%, reported being single, indicating the prevalence of this status within our

sample. The married demographic constituted 17.2%, and 0.5% reported being widowed, while 2.7% chose to withhold their civil status.

Geographically, our 186 participants exhibited a diverse distribution, with 40.3% residing within Metro Manila and 59.7% located outside the metro area.

B. Measures

- *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)*: This scale comprises 17 items designed to assess individuals' workplace engagement. Respondents use a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always), to indicate their agreement with each item. The scale demonstrates strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.969$), ensuring accurate measurement. Higher scores reflect greater agreement with positively framed statements, providing a concise yet comprehensive evaluation of employee engagement across various work-related aspects.
- *The Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)*: BAT is a comprehensive instrument comprising 33 items. It employs a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), to evaluate individuals' experiences of workplace burnout. Participants utilize this Likert scale to express their agreement or disagreement with each statement, covering dimensions such as exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. The tool exhibits a reliable internal consistency coefficient ($\alpha = 0.969$). Scoring involves summing up responses, resulting in a concise measure of job burnout. A higher cumulative score indicates a more significant level of burnout, offering valuable insights into workplace stress and fatigue.
- *Work-Life Balance (WLB)*: This scale is designed to assess individuals' views on balancing work and personal life. With strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.736$), the scale comprises 4 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Respondents use this scale to express their agreement or disagreement, with one item (item 3) reverse scored. The final score is achieved by summing responses, providing a comprehensive overview of individuals' perspectives on work-life balance.

C. Data Gathering Procedures

An online questionnaire was distributed via Microsoft Forms on Facebook groups and forums tailored for working individuals. The questionnaire is organized into 3 sections:

- *Informed Consent and Details of the Study*: Participants' informed consent was obtained individually before proceeding with the actual part of the survey.
- *General Questions*: These aim to categorize respondents based on gender, age, and geographical location.
- *Survey Questions*: These analyze aspects such as employee engagement, work-life balance, and job burnout.

D. Data Analysis

The survey responses collected from 186 participants were analyzed using Jamovi [13]. Initially, descriptive analyses were carried out to understand the demographic characteristics of the sample. The study utilized purposive sampling techniques, reaching out through various social media platforms to exclusively gather responses from Filipino millennials engaged in remote work setups.

Data collection procedures involved the distribution of an online questionnaire via Microsoft Forms on specific Facebook groups and forums tailored for individuals in the workforce. The questionnaire was structured into three sections: firstly, obtaining informed consent and detailing the study; secondly, gathering general demographic information; and thirdly, analyzing aspects such as employee engagement,

work-life balance, and job burnout. This methodological approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics surrounding work-life balance, job burnout, and employee engagement among millennials working remotely.

To assess key constructs, the study employed established measurement tools. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used to evaluate workplace engagement, consisting of 17 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) measured workplace burnout through 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale, while the Work-Life Balance (WLB) scale assessed individuals' perspectives on balancing work and personal life, comprising 4 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Subsequently, the survey responses underwent further analysis using Jamovi [13]. A mediation analysis was conducted utilizing the Generalized Linear Model (GLM) Mediation Model within the jAMM [14] of the MEDMOD package in Jamovi. This analysis aimed to explore the total, direct, and indirect effects among the variables of interest. To ensure the reliability of the findings, bootstrapping with 1000 replications was applied, computing 95% confidence intervals for the mediated effect. This rigorous analytical approach enhanced the validity of the study's results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study hypothesized that Employee Engagement serves as a mediator in the relationship between Work-Life Balance and Job Burnout among Filipino millennials working remotely. Here, we present the results obtained from the data analyses conducted in this study. We will discuss the sample characteristics, mediation analysis, as well as the discussion, conclusion, and implications derived from the findings of the study.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Variable.

	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Worklife Balance	3.69	0.823	1	5
Employee Engagement	4.84	1.75	1	7
Job Burnout	2.46	0.777	1	5

Note: M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; Min.=Minimum; Max=Maximum

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between teleworkers' job burnout and work-life balance, mediated by employee engagement.

The results revealed that millennial telecommuters reported high levels of work-life balance ($M = 3.69$) and low levels of job burnout ($M = 2.46$), indicating a potential positive correlation between work-life balance and reduced job burnout. Furthermore, the data suggests that millennial teleworkers exhibit a moderate level of employee engagement ($M = 4.84$). These findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of remote work among Filipino millennials.

However, it is worth noting that there appears to be no direct association between job burnout and employee engagement ($\beta = -0.0329$, $p = 0.650$). Contrary to common belief, elevated levels of work engagement do not invariably shield against the onset of burnout; indeed, excessive engagement can even precipitate burnout

[15]. Additionally, preventing burnout doesn't inherently result in engagement, and similarly, having engaged employees doesn't automatically prevent burnout. Thus, instead of viewing job burnout and work engagement as correlated, it is plausible to consider them as independent constructs that can coexist within an individual [16].

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and job burnout, indicating that the level of work-life balance had an effect on the occurrence or severity of job burnout among individuals.

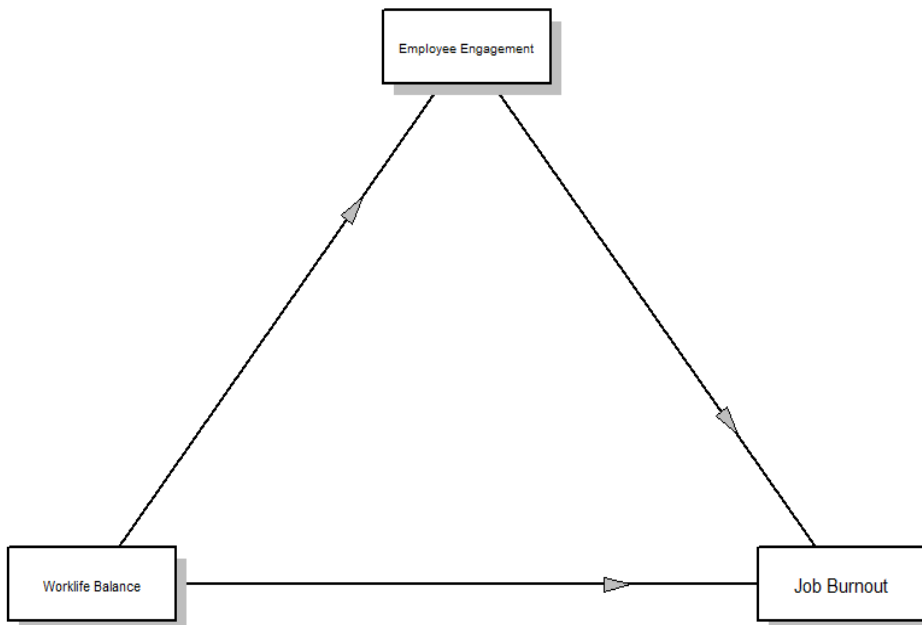


Fig. 2: Mediation model of employee engagement in between work life balance and job burnout (N=186).

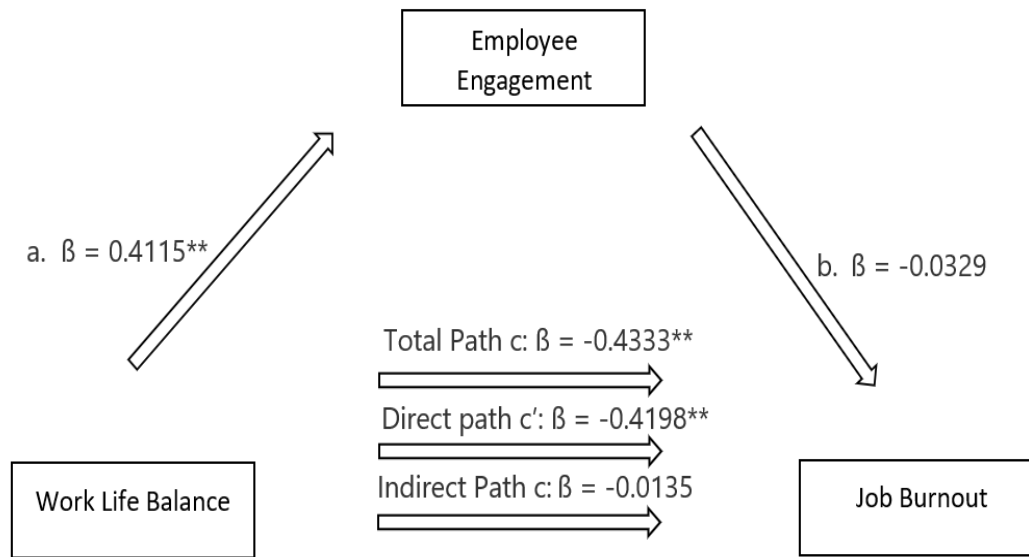
However, the analysis presented in Table 2 highlights a significant negative correlation between work-life balance and job burnout ($\beta=-0.4198$, $p<.001$), implying that millennial teleworkers with higher levels of work-life balance are prone to reporting lower levels of job burnout. In alignment with a similar study, the research unveiled substantial correlations between work-life balance, telecommuting, job satisfaction, sleep duration, and stress management, all of which demonstrated significant relationships with both physical and mental health indicators.

Table 2. Confidence Interval.

Type	Effect	95% C.I. (a)		β	p
		Estimate	SE		
Indirect Component	WLB \Rightarrow EE \Rightarrow JB	-0.0128	0.0282	-0.0135	0.651
	WLB \Rightarrow EE	0.6756	0.1097	0.4115	<.001
	EE \Rightarrow JB	-0.0189	0.0417	-0.0329	0.650
Direct	WLB \Rightarrow JB	-0.3961	0.0684	-0.4198	<.001
Total	WLB \Rightarrow JB	-0.4089	0.0625	-0.4333	<.001

Note: Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method); Betas are completely standardized effect sizes; N=186; SE – Standard Error; Confidence interval computed with bootstrap method; $p<.001$ indicates a significant relationship between the variable

Fig. 3. Mediation model of employee engagement in between work life balance and job burnout (N=186).



Note: the values presented are beta coefficients, with significance denoted as $^{**}p < .001$.

Mediation analysis was conducted to evaluate the mediating influence of employee engagement on the association between work-life balance and job burnout among Filipino millennial remote workers. Additionally, the bootstrapping method was employed in the analyses to derive 95% confidence intervals for statistical inferences regarding specific and total indirect effects. The mediation result is shown on Table 2.

The statistical analysis revealed significant findings regarding the relationship between work-life balance, employee engagement, and job burnout among Filipino millennial remote workers. The results indicated a positive correlation between work-life balance and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.4115$, $SE = 0.1097$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that as work-life balance improves, so does employee engagement. Furthermore, there was a significant cumulative effect was observed in the notable negative correlation between work-life balance and job burnout ($\beta = -0.4333$, $SE = 0.0625$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that an improvement in work-life balance is linked to a reduction in job burnout.

However, when examining the mediation of employee engagement between work-life balance and job burnout, the correlation was determined to be non significant ($\beta = -0.0135$, $SE = 0.0282$, $p = 0.651$). This indicates that the presence of employee engagement as a mediator does not significantly modify the relationship between work-life balance and job burnout among Filipino millennial remote workers. These results suggest that although work-life balance directly impacts both employee engagement and job burnout, the mediating role of employee engagement in this relationship does not demonstrate statistical significance in the analysis.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics between work-life balance, employee engagement, and job burnout among Filipino millennial remote workers. The positive correlation between work-life balance and employee engagement underscores the importance of fostering an environment where employees perceive a balance between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. In a comparable study, Abrams [17] and Lee & Sirgy [18] highlight numerous benefits associated with telecommuting. Principally, it offers employees the flexibility to tailor their work hours to accommodate their personal and professional commitments. Another study discovered that telecommuting positively influences work-life balance strategies, allowing employees greater flexibility to manage both work schedules and personal lives

effectively [19]. This adaptability supports an improved work-life balance by empowering individuals to seamlessly integrate work with other facets of their lives.

Moreover, the negative correlation between work-life balance and job burnout suggests that improving work-life balance may serve as a protective factor against the detrimental effects of burnout among remote workers. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of the growing prevalence of remote work arrangements, where individuals may face increased challenges in managing boundaries between work and personal life. Kaltainen & Hakanen [20] found that the rise in teleworking correlated with enhanced well-being, evidenced by heightened work engagement and reduced instances of burnout and job boredom, primarily attributed to increased job control.

Nonetheless, the absence of a noteworthy association discovered when analyzing employee engagement as a mediator between work-life balance and job burnout demands compelling investigations into the underpinning processes. According to Frago et al. [16], efforts to prevent burnout do not necessarily lead to increased employee engagement, and conversely, having engaged employees does not ensure complete protection against burnout, indicating a nuanced relationship between the two constructs in the workplace. Rather than viewing job burnout and employee engagement as correlated, it may be more accurate to perceive them as potentially coexisting within an individual.

Furthermore, remote work arrangements can lead to cost savings for employees, particularly in terms of transportation expenses and some child-care costs. By eliminating the need for daily commutes, employees can save money on fuel, public transportation fares, and vehicle maintenance. Additionally, for employees with children, telecommuting can reduce the need for expensive child-care services, as parents may have more flexibility to manage their childcare responsibilities while working from home.

Overall, telecommuting offers a range of benefits to employees, including greater flexibility, time savings, reduced transportation costs, and improved work-life balance. As organizations continue to embrace remote work as a viable option, it is essential for employers to recognize and support the advantages that telecommuting can offer in enhancing employee well-being and productivity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into the intricate dynamics among work-life balance, job burnout, and employee engagement within the context of remote work among millennials. Contrary to the assumed mediation model, our findings indicated a direct association between work-life balance and both job burnout and employee engagement. However, the observed indirect effect among these variables suggests a more nuanced relationship that challenges conventional understanding.

The unexpected results emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach in understanding the complexities of remote work. It is apparent that factors beyond the scope of this study contribute to the relationship among work-life balance, job burnout, and employee engagement. Future research should consider exploring additional variables to build a more accurate model of the intricate dynamics involved.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, organizations should adopt holistic interventions that address both work-life balance and job burnout concurrently, particularly focusing on the challenges faced by millennials in remote work setups. Secondly, it is suggested that companies continue to refine flexible work policies to cater to the diverse needs of millennial remote workers, promoting a healthier balance between work and personal life and potentially reducing instances of job burnout. Thirdly, investing in training and education programs aimed at enhancing employees' skills in managing work-life balance and identifying signs of burnout is advised, as a proactive measure to cultivate a resilient and engaged remote workforce. Additionally, it is recommended to investigate unexplored factors such as family

dynamics, financial pressures, and personal interests in relation to work-life balance and employee engagement. Moreover, employing qualitative research methods like interviews and focus groups can provide deeper insights into individual experiences and perspectives, especially among millennials. Lastly, ongoing research is encouraged to explore additional variables such as organizational culture, social support systems, and technology usage, which may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding remote work dynamics.

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