Investigating the Impact of Work–Family Balance on Job Engagement: A Systematic Review

Hessa Eid N A Al- Enazi[1]

Abstract

In contemporary organizational research, work–family balance and job engagement have emerged as two interrelated constructs critical to employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. This study conducts a systematic review of 25 empirical and conceptual studies to examine the extent to which work–family balance affects job engagement, with a particular emphasis on employees at Qatar University. The review was conducted in line with PRISMA guidelines, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency. The findings indicate that work–family balance is strongly associated with higher levels of employee engagement, creativity, and performance, while imbalances are linked to stress, reduced productivity, and negative spillover into personal lives. Evidence from Arab and international contexts highlights both universal patterns and context-specific dynamics, especially in higher education institutions. By synthesizing theoretical and empirical insights, this review contributes to a better understanding of the drivers of engagement and provides practical implications for university leaders in creating a supportive and balanced work environment. The study also identifies gaps in the literature and proposes recommendations for future research on organizational strategies that promote sustainable work–life integration in academia.

Keywords: *Work–Family Balance, Job Engagement, Higher Education, Employee Well-Being, Qatar University.*

Introduction

The human element is one of the most important resources and assets in any organization; it is not only its backbone but also its beating heart. Therefore, organizational management must pay close attention to developing employees' skills and capabilities, ensuring their psychological well-being, and creating a work environment that encourages creativity and productivity.

In the twenty-first century, the pursuit of work–life balance has gained increasing importance due to rapid social, economic, and demographic transformations. Maintaining a balance between professional and family roles has been shown to significantly influence employees' well-being, safety, and overall job performance, while also reducing levels of psychological strain (Allen et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Since employees are the cornerstone of organizational success, fostering work engagement has become a critical priority. Work engagement not only drives employee behavior but also motivates individuals to achieve, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Work engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's tasks. Engaged employees go beyond basic job requirements, display commitment to professional growth, and find intrinsic satisfaction in meeting challenges (Schaufeli et al., 2002). As a central driver of organizational outcomes, engagement enhances productivity and performance quality, strengthens teamwork, and fosters a positive organizational climate. Moreover, its impact extends beyond the workplace, improving employees' psychological well-being and self-esteem. Conversely, declining levels of engagement often manifest in anxiety, stress, and reduced life satisfaction, which can adversely affect personal and family relationships (Halbesleben, 2010; Shimazu et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, sustaining engagement must be carefully balanced with employees' mental health and personal life demands. Excessive immersion in work risks leading to burnout, fatigue, and strained social connections. Thus, modern human resource management emphasizes creating environments that protect employees' well-being, promote job satisfaction, and encourage sustainable forms of engagement. Achieving such a balance benefits both organizations and employees: it leads to improved performance and

[1] College of Business and Economics, Qatar University, Qatar. Email: Ha1104302@qu.edu.qa. Oricd No:https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4041-8801

productivity, while also enhancing employees' quality of life and overall fulfillment (Bakker et al., 2011; Sonnentag, 2018).

Work–family balance can be defined as the extent to which individuals perceive their professional and family roles as compatible, mutually enriching, and effectively managed. It reflects the ability to integrate and fulfill responsibilities across both domains in a manner that supports stability, satisfaction, and reassurance (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Carlson et al., 2000). Ultimately, organizational performance hinges on the capacity and productivity of human resources, which vary across employees. This capacity may be optimized when organizations provide supportive systems, policies, and technologies, or it may be undermined when such resources are absent or mismanaged (Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014). The interaction of personal effort with organizational structures and available tools thus shapes employees' energy and productivity.

Work engagement is considered a key way to invest in human resources, gain a competitive advantage, and improve employee performance, as well as a crucial factor in enhancing and increasing employee motivation. It also contributes to employees' personal satisfaction, encourages them to improve and develop their skills and abilities, and serves as an important source in addressing the challenges posed by today's rapidly changing business environment (Sarwar & Abugre, 2013). Organizations' interest in promoting work engagement among their human resources encourages employees to exert maximum effort to achieve performance levels that exceed expectations. It also yields numerous positive effects for organizations, such as improved outputs, enhanced individual and team performance, increased commitment to organizational values and objectives, and reduced absenteeism.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, significant economic and social transformations have occurred, substantially impacting the nature of the work environment in general and family life in particular. Employees at Qatar University, in particular, face life pressures while striving to balance multiple roles and responsibilities. Thus, individuals in the workplace need to live a life where they feel satisfaction, achievement, and happiness, thereby recognizing the relationship between work–family balance and work engagement. The importance of work–family balance in business organizations lies in its direct and indirect impact on administrative phenomena and behaviors within organizations, which in turn influence the overall activities and tasks of organizations and ultimately the achievement of their objectives.

In light of the above, this study seeks to explore the extent to which work–family balance affects work engagement from the perspective of employees at Qatar University. To achieve this, the study is guided by a central research question: *To what extent does work–family balance affects work engagement from the perspective of employees at Qatar University?* Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of work–family balance on job engagement among employees at Qatar University. To accomplish this, the study aims to: (1) identify the relative importance of work–family balance dimensions from employees' perspectives; (2) assess the overall level of work–family balance among employees; (3) determine the level of job engagement at the university; (4) examine the impact of work–family balance on job engagement; and (5) propose recommendations that can assist university leadership in creating a supportive work environment that fosters balance and enhances employee engagement.

Materials and Methods

Systematic review articles of literature are methodological studies that use database searches to gather research results that focus on objective and theoretical discussions of a particular topic and theme. There are differences between systematic and narrative literature reviews. The narrative review provides readers with up-to-date knowledge about specific topics, but lacks the methodological approach that would allow for data reproduction or answers to specific quantitative research questions (Green et al., 2006; Grant & Booth, 2009). In contrast, a systematic review of the literature is one method for reviewing existing studies in a more systematic manner. According to Robinson and Lowe (2015), it is critical to conduct a systematic review of previous research to eliminate reviewer bias, which can impair the quality of a study. This paper attempts to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by developing a systematic review on the reality and trends in clothing reuse and recycling in the Arab world.

The best systematic review of the literature involves the primary stages: planning, conducting the review, and reporting the review based on an organized and transparent process. This process involves searching efforts across several databases, and a similar approach can be replicated and reproduced by other researchers. It covers a rigorous search strategy that enables researchers to answer a defined question (Moher et al., 2009). The lack of research on the reality and trends in clothing reuse and recycling in the Arab world has led to a lack of understanding and a failure to comprehend the existing related literature systematically.

The central research question guides the review: "To what extent does work–family balance affect work engagement from the perspective of employees at Qatar University?" This study aimed to fill a gap by systematically reviewing previous related studies to gain a better understanding of the trends, challenges, and opportunities associated with work–family balance and work engagement in the higher education sector, with a particular focus on Qatar University. It explores existing empirical and theoretical contributions, synthesizes evidence on how work–family dynamics shape employee engagement, and highlights areas that remain underexplored in the literature.

PRISMA

This systematic review adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which provide a standardized framework to enhance transparency, completeness, and methodological rigor in systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021). The use of PRISMA helps ensure that findings are reported clearly and consistently, thereby reducing the risk of bias and misinterpretation throughout the review process (Moher et al., 2009). Although initially developed for health research, PRISMA has been increasingly applied across diverse fields, including environmental and social sciences, where systematic syntheses are essential for evidence-based decision-making (Haddaway et al., 2018).

To further enhance reliability, the review protocol was prospectively registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) under the identifier *INPLASY202250103*. The protocol is publicly accessible via the INPLASY database and archived with the International DOI Foundation (https://doi.org/10.37766/inplasy2022.5.0103, accessed 16 May 2022), thereby ensuring transparency and replicability.

Resources

A comprehensive electronic literature search was conducted using Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Google Scholar, and regional Arabic databases to ensure wide coverage of both international and local research. Scopus served as the primary database for this review, providing access to approximately 24,900 active peer-reviewed journals from 7,000 publishers, covering fields such as education, psychology, social sciences, and organizational studies that are highly relevant to work–family balance and employee engagement. The second database, WoS, comprises approximately 33,000 journals spanning over 256 disciplines, with a strong focus on management, sociology, and higher education research. Managed by Clarivate Analytics, WoS also provides a long historical archive with more than a century of citation data, enabling robust tracking of influential studies.

In addition to these international databases, Google Scholar was used to capture grey literature and conference proceedings, which are particularly important for emerging themes such as employee engagement in higher education. To ensure contextual relevance, searches were also conducted in Arabic-language databases (e.g., Arab World Research Source, Al Manhal, and Dar Al Mandumah), where several studies focusing on work–family balance, organizational behavior, and higher education in Arab countries are published. This dual approach allowed the review to integrate both global scholarship and region-specific perspectives, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how work–family balance influences job engagement in higher education institutions such as Qatar University.

Systematic Review Process

The systematic review process consists of three key stages: identification, screening, and eligibility (see Figure 1).
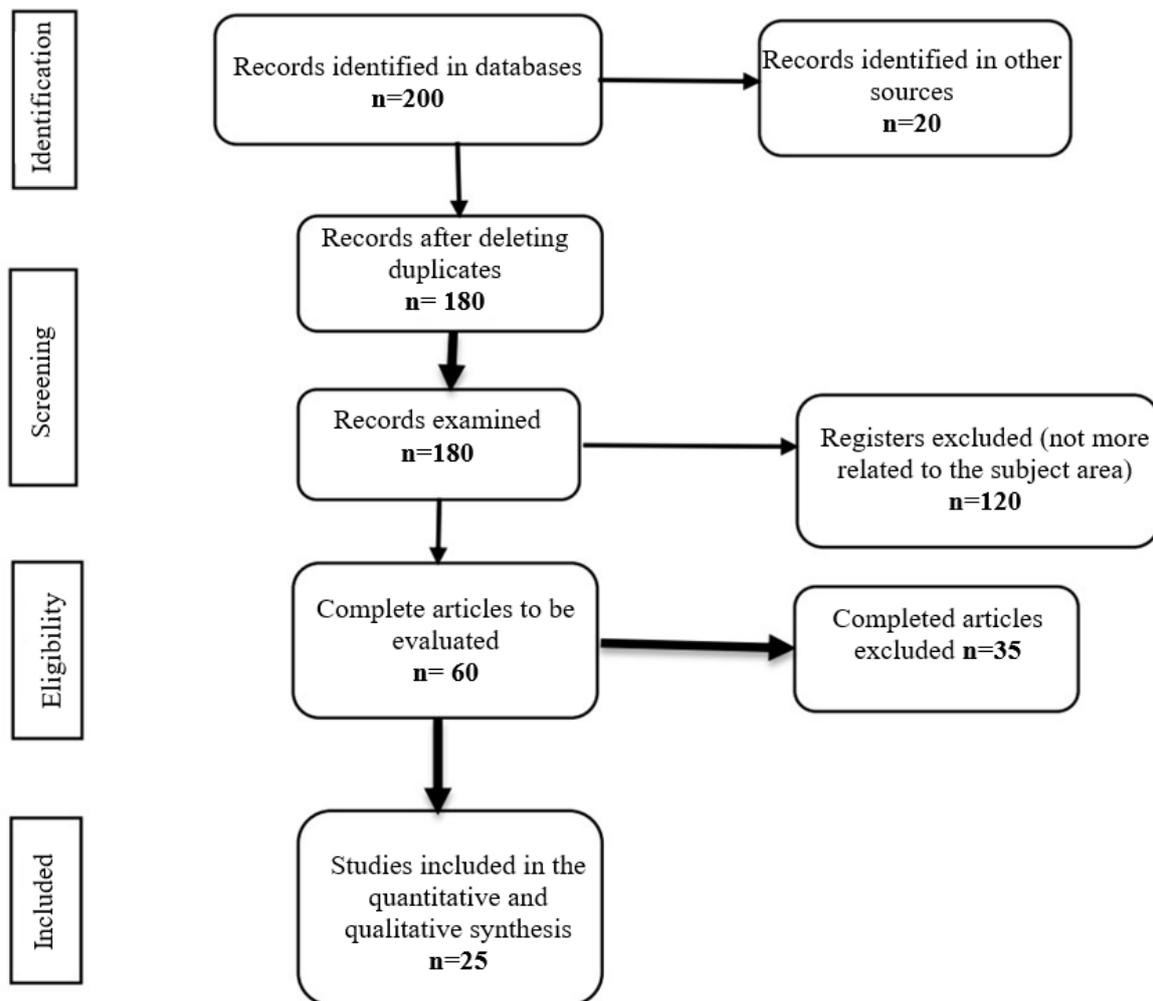

Figure 1: PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)

Identification

In the initial phase, relevant keywords for the search process were carefully determined in both English and Arabic to ensure comprehensive coverage of international and regional scholarship. This stage involved identifying synonyms, related terms, and variations of the primary concepts—work–family balance, work–life balance, work–family conflict, and work engagement—to broaden the scope of the search. The objective was to equip the selected databases with a diverse range of search terms that could retrieve the maximum number of relevant articles.

The keyword selection process was guided by the research question framework and refined using academic thesauri, previously applied terms in related studies, and automated keyword suggestions provided by

Scopus and Web of Science. Additional input was sought from subject matter experts in organizational behavior and higher education to ensure conceptual alignment with the context of Qatar University.

The finalized search strategy incorporated Boolean operators, phrase searching, truncation, wildcard symbols, and field codes. To ensure coverage of the regional dimension, equivalent Arabic keywords (e.g., *work–life balance, work–family balance, work–family conflict, job engagement, work engagement) were incorporated into searches conducted in Arabic databases, including* Dar Al Mandumah, Al Manhal, and Arab World Research Source. The complete search strings applied across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the Arabic databases are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Strings Used in Database Searches

Database	Search String (Boolean Operators, Keywords, Truncation)	Filters Applied
Scopus	("work–family balance" OR "work–life balance" OR "family–work conflict" OR "work–family conflict") AND ("work engagement" OR "job engagement" OR "employee engagement")	Years: 1995–2025; Language: English; Subject Areas: Social Sciences, Business, Psychology
Web of Science (WoS)	TS=("work–family balance" OR "work–life balance" OR "work–family conflict") AND TS=("work engagement" OR "job engagement")	Timespan: 1995–2025; Language: English
Google Scholar (International)	allintitle: ("work–family balance" OR "work–life balance") AND ("work engagement" OR "employee engagement")	Years: 1995–2025; First 200 results screened
Google (General Web Search)	"work–family balance" + "work engagement" + "Qatar" / "Arab countries" (in English and Arabic)	Grey literature, reports, dissertations, organizational policies
Arab Citation & Indexing Database (ArabBase / e-Marefa / Dar Almandumah)	Work–life balance" OR "work–family balance" OR "work–family conflict") AND ("work engagement" OR "job engagement"	Years: 1995–2025; Arabic and English; Social Sciences
Al Manhal (Arabic full-text database)	Work–life balance" OR "work–family balance") AND ("work engagement" OR "job engagement")	Peer-reviewed journals, theses; Arabic

Accordingly, search strings for Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and selected Arabic databases (Dar Al Mandumah, Al Manhal, and Arab World Research Source) were developed in November 2024 (see Table 1) after determining all relevant keywords in both English and Arabic. These databases were chosen because of their advanced search functionalities, extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals, stringent quality control processes, and multidisciplinary coverage, including organizational behavior, psychology, and higher education studies.

The current study successfully retrieved 70 articles from Scopus and 54 articles from Web of Science. In addition, a manual search using similar keywords in Google Scholar yielded 12 more articles, while searches in Arabic databases contributed 64 additional records. In total, 200 articles were collected during the initial stage of the systematic literature review.

Screening

The second stage of the systematic review process involved screening the records retrieved from the identification stage. In total, 200 records were identified through database searches (Scopus, Web of

Science, Google Scholar, and Arabic databases), and an additional 20 records were retrieved from manual searches and grey literature, making a total of 220 records.

After removing 40 duplicate records, 180 unique studies remained for screening. These records were initially assessed based on titles and abstracts, resulting in the exclusion of 120 articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria (e.g., those not focused on work–family balance or work engagement, unrelated to higher education or organizational contexts, or theoretical papers lacking empirical evidence).

Subsequently, 60 full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility. At this stage, 35 articles were excluded for reasons such as inappropriate study design (e.g., conceptual papers, reviews, or conference proceedings), irrelevant outcomes, insufficient empirical data, or unavailability in English or Arabic.

Ultimately, 25 studies met all the inclusion criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis of this systematic review. The possibility of conducting a quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) will be determined depending on the comparability of methodologies and outcome measures across the included studies.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Included Studies	Excluded Studies
Document Type	Empirical research articles and review papers	Conference papers, book chapters, book series, and full books
Language	English and Arabic-language publications	Non-English publications
Study Focus	Work environment Employee performance Organizational success	Studies with unclear methodology Studies unrelated to leadership, occupational safety, or educational institutions

Eligibility

At this stage, the full texts of sixty articles were retrieved and carefully reviewed in detail. Each article was examined to verify its alignment with the established inclusion criteria, with particular focus on ensuring that the studies directly addressed issues of work–family balance, work–life balance, work–family conflict, and work engagement within organizational or higher education contexts. The evaluation process considered the title, abstract, methodology, and reported findings in order to determine their relevance to the research objectives. As a result of this process, thirty-five articles were excluded because they either lacked a clear focus on the study variables, offered only conceptual or theoretical discussions without empirical evidence, presented inadequate methodological clarity, or reported outcomes irrelevant to the research question. Consequently, twenty-five articles met the eligibility requirements and were retained for further assessment, as shown in the PRISMA flow diagram.

Quality Assessment

To ensure the credibility and methodological rigor of the included studies, a quality appraisal was undertaken using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist alongside the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) appraisal tools. The assessment was independently conducted by two reviewers with expertise in organizational psychology and higher education research, which helped minimize potential bias. Each study was evaluated based on its research design, sample adequacy, validity and reliability of the instruments, clarity of the findings, and overall methodological soundness. The outcome of this appraisal showed that fifteen of the eligible studies were of high quality, seven were of moderate quality, and three were of low quality. To maintain the robustness of the review, studies rated as low quality were excluded, resulting in twenty-five studies for the final synthesis.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Following the quality assessment, the remaining studies underwent a systematic data extraction process to capture essential details, including author, year of publication, country, study context, sample size, research design, key variables, and main findings. This process ensured consistency and allowed for effective comparison across studies. Once the data had been extracted, a thematic synthesis approach was applied, consistent with the integrative review method described by Whittemore and Knafl (2005). Through iterative analysis, the review identified patterns, similarities, and divergences across the studies. Three primary themes emerged from this synthesis: determinants of work–family balance in academic and organizational contexts, levels and predictors of work engagement, and the interlinkages between work–family balance and work engagement. These themes were further refined into ten sub-themes, which encompassed aspects such as organizational support, gender differences, role conflict, leadership practices, and employee well-being. Each theme and sub-theme was clearly defined to ensure alignment with the central research question, providing a comprehensive framework for interpreting the systematic review's findings.

Table 3 (Researched Article)

Author & Date	Objective	Focus
Areisha (1995)	Analyze the effect of job/personal variables and rewards on engagement.	Job engagement determinants in Egyptian companies.
Boakye et al. (2003)	Examine work–family balance as a predictor of job satisfaction.	Work–Life Balance in Higher Education (Ghana)
Aghreeb (2017)	Explore the relationship between engagement and creativity.	Engagement & creativity in Palestinian institutions.
Ahmed & Mamdouh (2017)	Compare the effect of transformational leadership on engagement.	Leadership & engagement in Egyptian universities.
Abu Seif (2018)	Investigate the role of psychological empowerment in engagement.	Empowerment & engagement in Egyptian higher education.
Taha (2019)	Study the link between psychological well-being and engagement.	Well-being & engagement in Egyptian academia.
Marzouk (2019)	Assess the effect of organizational integrity on engagement.	Integrity & engagement in Egyptian hospitals.
Mokalled (2020)	Examine the moral intelligence of leaders and its effect on engagement.	Leadership Ethics and Engagement in Port Authorities.
Sotouhi (2020)	Assess trust's effect on engagement.	Organizational trust & engagement in the Egyptian cement industry.
Adisa et al. (2021)	Investigate COVID-19's impact on women's work–family balance.	Remote work & WLB during pandemic (UK).
Saioud (2021)	Measure the empowerment and engagement relationship.	Empowerment & engagement in the Algerian energy sector.
Ali (2021)	Examine the effect of ethical leadership on employee engagement.	Leadership & engagement in Egyptian hospitals.
Boughlita (2021)	Test the organizational justice's impact on commitment.	Justice & employee commitment in the Algerian gas sector.
Abdel-Khair et al. (2021)	Test organizational agility and engagement.	Agility & engagement in Sudanese service firms.
Al-Maghribi et al. (2021)	Examine engagement's impact on creativity and performance.	Engagement & performance in Arab tourism companies.
Jedi et al. (2021)	Test empowerment's effect on engagement.	Empowerment & engagement in the Algerian transport sector.
Mohamed (2022)	Examine engagement and resilience.	Engagement & resilience in Egyptian schools.
Othman (2022)	Test engagement's role in reducing emotional exhaustion.	Engagement & burnout in Egyptian universities.

Author & Date	Objective	Focus
Ishtawi (2022)	Explore green HRM's effect on engagement.	Sustainability HRM & engagement in the Palestinian utility sector.
Daoud (2022)	Assess admin improvements and engagement.	Organizational development & engagement in Syrian firms.
Al-Shumaimri (2022)	Test the quality of work life, engagement, and creativity.	QWL, engagement, and creativity in Saudi universities.
Elsawy (2023)	Explore servant leadership's role in engagement.	Leadership & engagement in Egyptian hospitals.
Saoudi (2023)	Study justice in incentives and engagement.	Incentive fairness & engagement in Egyptian universities.
Foutari (2023)	Assess work–family conflict/balance on performance.	WLB & performance in Algerian organizations.
Abdullah & Abdulrahman (2023)	Analyze flexible work arrangements and balance.	Flexibility & WLB in Egyptian hospitals.

Results Analysis and Discussion

As shown in the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1), this systematic review ultimately included a total of 22 studies after the quality appraisal process. Table 2 presents a summary of the key findings related to *work–family balance, work–life conflict, and work engagement* in higher education and organizational contexts. The reviewed articles were analyzed qualitatively, with a focus on identifying recurring themes and examining the relationship between work–family balance and employee engagement.

The findings reveal that prior research across diverse countries and organizational settings consistently emphasizes the dual role of work–family balance and work–life conflict in shaping employee outcomes. Studies highlight that a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities is strongly associated with higher levels of work engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Conversely, work–family conflict has been shown to undermine employee performance, increase stress, and reduce engagement.

Literature Review

Research on job engagement has evolved over several decades, examining its antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and outcomes across diverse organizational contexts. One of the earliest contributions in this field is by Areisha (1995), who investigated the role of both individual and job-related variables in shaping engagement within Egyptian public-sector companies. The findings underscored that job-related factors—particularly satisfaction with extrinsic rewards—had a more pronounced impact on employees' engagement than individual characteristics. Moreover, when employees perceived their income as sufficient to cover financial needs, their levels of job engagement and subsequent work effort increased. This study established the foundational importance of organizational rewards and job design in driving engagement, especially in resource-constrained environments.

More recent studies have expanded the scope of inquiry, linking job engagement to outcomes such as creativity, resilience, and emotional well-being. For example, Othman (2022) focused on the higher education sector, exploring the protective role of engagement in reducing emotional exhaustion among university employees. The study demonstrated that engagement dimensions, when fostered by university leaders, helped buffer against the adverse effects of work pressure and work–family conflict. The strong inverse relationship between engagement and emotional exhaustion highlights the potential of engagement practices as a strategic tool for employee well-being.

Similarly, Al-Shumaimri (2022) examined the interplay between quality of work life, job engagement, and creative behavior among faculty members in Saudi Arabia. Findings revealed moderate levels of all three constructs but also confirmed a significant association between quality of work life and both engagement and creativity. Interestingly, male faculty members reported higher levels of engagement and quality of work

life compared to their female counterparts, indicating that gendered experiences of work conditions may influence engagement outcomes.

In the healthcare sector, Elsawy (2023) advanced the discussion by examining the mediating mechanisms through which servant leadership fosters job engagement among physicians in Egyptian teaching hospitals. The study highlighted the central role of psychological ownership, perceived organizational support, and happiness as pathways that connect leadership practices to engagement. This work not only reinforced the positive impact of supportive leadership styles but also broadened the conceptualization of engagement by situating it within a network of psychological and relational factors.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate a clear progression in the job engagement literature: from an early emphasis on structural and extrinsic factors (e.g., rewards and job design) to a more contemporary focus on psychological resources, leadership, and quality of work life. They collectively illustrate that while engagement is sensitive to contextual factors such as income adequacy and gender, it is also deeply shaped by organizational culture and leadership practices that nurture employee well-being, ownership, and creativity.

Building on these insights, more recent studies have emphasized the interplay between engagement, creativity, empowerment, and organizational practices across sectors. Aghreeb (2017) examined job engagement and creativity in both governmental and non-governmental institutions in Palestine, showing that employees reported high levels of both constructs. Engagement was positively linked to creativity, with job title having an influence on creativity outcomes. This study highlighted the role of engagement as a driver of innovation and creative work behaviors in diverse institutional settings.

In the tourism sector, Al-Maghribi et al. (2021) found that job engagement significantly enhanced managerial creativity and overall employee performance. By surveying 454 employees of tourism companies, the study highlighted the competitive advantage that engagement offers in highly dynamic industries, where innovation is crucial for survival. These findings reinforced earlier work by suggesting that engagement not only benefits individual well-being but also directly supports organizational competitiveness.

At the organizational level, Jedi et al. (2021) investigated the role of psychological empowerment in shaping engagement within the transportation sector in Algeria. Results revealed that autonomy and impact were significant in fostering engagement, while meaning and competence were less influential. This suggests that empowerment practices need to go beyond skill development to include granting employees genuine authority and influence over their work, which in turn strengthens their engagement.

In the context of sustainable management, Ishtawi (2022) examined how green human resource management practices influence employee engagement in Gaza's electricity distribution sector. The study found that green HRM generally boosted engagement, though green recruitment and performance appraisal showed no significant effect. Interestingly, gender differences emerged, with men reporting higher engagement levels. These findings suggest that environmental management initiatives, when aligned with employee development, can contribute to stronger engagement while also promoting sustainability goals.

Finally, the importance of work–family balance as an engagement-related factor has been highlighted by Abdullah and Abdulrahman (2023), who studied women working in hospitals under Egypt's Health Insurance Organization. The results demonstrated a strong relationship between flexible work arrangements and working women's ability to balance professional and family responsibilities. Notably, this relationship held regardless of demographic differences, emphasizing the universal value of flexibility in enhancing engagement and reducing work–family conflict.

Together, these studies enrich the literature by connecting job engagement to creativity, empowerment, sustainability, and work–family balance. They reveal how engagement is shaped not only by leadership and psychological resources but also by broader organizational strategies and social arrangements that support innovation, gender inclusivity, and environmental responsibility.

The earliest contribution in this stream of research is the study by Boakye et al. (2003), which examined the role of work–family balance as a predictor of job satisfaction among 476 employees in Ghanaian universities. The findings demonstrated that workplace support significantly enhanced job satisfaction, while excessive workload often triggered work–family conflict. This early evidence highlighted the centrality of organizational support in mitigating conflict and sustaining satisfaction.

Later, research shifted towards exploring leadership and organizational drivers of engagement. For instance, Mokalled (2020) investigated the influence of leaders' moral intelligence on job engagement among employees in Egyptian ports. The study found that empathy, cooperation, and fairness were crucial dimensions of moral intelligence that positively predicted job engagement. Similarly, Sotouhi (2020) highlighted the importance of organizational trust in promoting work engagement in the cement sector. Results revealed significant relationships between trust and engagement, with variations across administrative levels and companies, underscoring the importance of trust as a foundational element for organizational engagement.

The focus on empowerment and engagement was further expanded by Saioud (2021), who studied employees at a power plant in Algeria. The results showed that empowerment dimensions—participation, teamwork, and work incentives—were closely associated with different aspects of job engagement, reinforcing the view that empowerment mechanisms foster deeper employee involvement. During the same period, Adisa et al. (2021) examined work–family balance during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on interviews with British women. The study reported that flexible and remote work arrangements helped women sustain family responsibilities, though the pandemic created notable challenges for balancing work and family demands.

Administrative and organizational change were the focus of Daoud (2022), who explored improvements in a Syrian cement company and their effect on job engagement. The findings revealed moderate levels of both administrative improvements and employee engagement, with clear evidence that organizational reforms were positively linked to engagement levels. This suggested that structural and managerial reforms could serve as levers to foster employee involvement in challenging industrial contexts.

More recent studies expanded the scope to broader performance outcomes. Foutari (2023) analyzed the effects of work–family conflict and work–life balance on employee performance in Algeria. Findings indicated that while work–family conflict had no significant impact, work–life balance had a strong positive effect on performance. Interestingly, gender mediated the relationship between family–work conflict and performance, but did not influence the link between work–life balance and performance.

Taken together, these studies trace an evolution in focus—from early concerns about work–family balance and satisfaction (Boakye et al., 2003) toward leadership qualities, organizational trust, and empowerment as key predictors of engagement (Mokalled, 2020; Sotouhi, 2020; Saioud, 2021), to more recent explorations of administrative reform and work–life balance as determinants of both engagement and performance (Daoud, 2022; Foutari, 2023). This body of evidence underscores the multidimensional nature of engagement and its interconnectedness with leadership, organizational structures, and personal–professional balance.

Building on earlier research that highlighted leadership and organizational factors, Ahmed and Mamdouh (2017) compared the influence of transformational leadership on work engagement within two Egyptian universities. Their findings confirmed a strong positive association between the dimensions of transformational leadership—such as inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation—and employee engagement. Complementing this perspective, Abu Seif (2018) examined the role of psychological empowerment among administrative staff at Assiut University, finding that competence was the most influential dimension in fostering work engagement, while self-determination showed no significant effect. Together, these studies reinforced the importance of leadership and empowerment as key drivers of engagement in higher education contexts.

At the organizational level, Marzouk (2019) explored the relationship between organizational integrity and work engagement among nurses in Kafr El-Sheikh public hospitals. Results indicated that higher integrity practices led to stronger engagement, with notable differences in how staff perceived integrity across dimensions. Similarly, Taha (2019) studied psychological well-being at Sadat City University, showing that reduced levels of well-being—particularly among teaching assistants and faculty—were associated with weaker engagement. The study highlighted that fostering well-being can serve as a crucial pathway for boosting employee engagement.

In the Sudanese context, Abdel-Khair et al. (2021) examined the relationship between organizational agility and employee engagement in agricultural service companies. Their findings revealed high levels of both agility and engagement, with a significant positive relationship between them. No demographic differences were observed, suggesting that organizational capacity is more important than personal variables. Parallel to this, Ali (2021) investigated the healthcare sector in Cairo and found that ethical leadership was a decisive factor in enhancing engagement across both public and private hospitals. Interestingly, no significant variation in engagement was observed between the two hospital types, suggesting a universal role for ethics-based leadership.

Further evidence emerged from Algeria, where Boughlita (2021) focused on organizational justice within the Sonatrach Gas Liquefaction Complex. Results showed that while distributive justice was perceived as weak, interactional and procedural justice were perceived as moderate, and employees displayed high overall commitment. The positive relationship between justice and commitment indirectly suggests that justice serves as a driver of work engagement, echoing similar findings from later studies.

More recently, scholars have expanded this debate to schools and sports institutions. Mohamed (2022) examined job engagement and organizational resilience in Qena public schools, reporting moderate levels of both and identifying engagement as a vital input to building resilience. Similarly, Saoudi (2023) investigated physical education specialists at Benha University, highlighting that perceived justice in incentive systems significantly enhanced job engagement. Notably, interactional justice was found to exert the most decisive influence, followed by procedural and distributive justice. These findings underscore the significance of fairness and trust in cultivating engaged employees across diverse organizational settings.

Critical Discussion and Synthesis

Across the reviewed corpus—from the earliest empirical contributions such as Areisha (1995) and Boakye et al. (2003) through to recent investigations by Othman (2022), Elsawy (2023), and Abdullah and Abdulrahman (2023)—several consistent themes emerge that shed light on the determinants and consequences of employee engagement.

A central theme is the role of organizational structures and resources. Early work by Areisha (1995) demonstrated that job-related variables such as extrinsic rewards and adequate income more strongly predicted engagement than individual traits. Similarly, Boakye et al. (2003) highlighted workplace support as a predictor of satisfaction and as a buffer against work–family conflict. Later studies confirm this trend: Daoud (2022) and Abdel-Khair et al. (2021) both show that administrative reforms, organizational agility, and participatory practices foster higher levels of engagement. Taken together, these findings suggest a clear conclusion: organizations can significantly influence employee engagement through the deliberate design of structures, reward systems, and supportive environments.

Leadership, justice, and trust represent another recurring cluster of findings. Multiple studies have reported that leadership styles—whether transformational, ethical, or servant—have a significant influence on employee engagement (Ahmed & Mamdouh, 2017; Ali, 2021; Mokalled, 2020; Elsawy, 2023). Similarly, leadership attributes such as moral intelligence, empathy, and fairness play a decisive role. Organizational justice and trust emerge as equally important climate factors, consistently predicting higher commitment and engagement (Boughlita, 2021; Saoudi, 2023; Sotouhi, 2020). Collectively, these studies suggest that fairness, trust, and leadership quality activate psychological mechanisms such as reciprocity, psychological ownership, and commitment, which in turn elevate engagement.

Psychological resources and empowerment also stand out as important antecedents. Studies on empowerment, well-being, and reduced emotional exhaustion reveal that internal psychological resources serve as a buffer against burnout and strengthen engagement. Abu Seif (2018), Saioud (2021), and Othman (2022) all demonstrate that competence, participation, and perceived organizational support enhance cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment at work. In these cases, engagement operates not only as an outcome but also as a protective mechanism that sustains employee resilience.

Another consistent theme concerns work–family balance and flexibility. Evidence from various contexts suggests that flexibility and balance enhance employees' ability to meet role demands and support sustained engagement. For instance, Adisa et al. (2021), Foutari (2023), and Abdullah and Abdulrahman (2023) all emphasize that flexible work arrangements enhance well-being and performance, particularly during periods of heightened stress such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Gender repeatedly surfaces as an important moderator, with women often experiencing greater work–family conflict burdens, making flexible policies especially consequential for female employees.

Ultimately, the literature reveals that engagement is not only an individual or psychological outcome, but also a key driver of organizational performance. Studies in tourism (Al-Maghribi et al., 2021), education (Aghreeb, 2017; Mohamed, 2022), and utilities (Ishtawi, 2022) all show that engagement enhances creativity, innovation, and institutional resilience. This broadens the significance of engagement from being an employee-centered concept to one directly tied to organizational competitiveness and sustainability.

Despite these convergences, the literature also reveals points of divergence and tension. For instance, the effects of empowerment dimensions are not consistently observed across studies. Jedi et al. (2021) found that autonomy and impact significantly predicted engagement, whereas meaning and competence did not. In contrast, Abu Seif (2018) highlighted competence as the strongest predictor. This suggests that empowerment is multi-faceted and highly context-dependent, with different dimensions becoming salient in different organizational or cultural environments. Work–family conflict also yields mixed results: while Boakye et al. (2003) found that it undermines satisfaction, Foutari (2023) reported no direct effect on performance but emphasized the importance of achieving a work–life balance. Gender effects similarly vary, with some studies identifying significant differences (Ishtawi, 2022; Othman, 2022), while others report no demographic variation (Abdel-Khair et al., 2021). These inconsistencies likely stem from differences in measurement, sector, culture, and sample characteristics.

From a methodological perspective, the reviewed studies share several strengths and limitations. Strengths include the widespread use of primary data and standardized quantitative tools such as SPSS, AMOS, and structural equation modeling, which provide empirical rigor. Many studies have moved beyond bivariate analysis to examine mediation and moderation effects, offering more nuanced insights into engagement mechanisms. The coverage across diverse sectors—including healthcare, higher education, utilities, manufacturing, and tourism—also supports cross-context generalizations. However, the dominance of cross-sectional designs limits causal inference, and many studies rely on relatively small samples, which constrain generalizability. Another weakness lies in measurement inconsistency: different operationalizations of engagement, work–life balance, and empowerment limit comparability across studies. Additionally, much of the evidence is concentrated in Egypt, Algeria, and Palestine, with relatively little research conducted in the Gulf region—particularly Qatar—highlighting the need for local validation. Few studies also engage with intersectionality or explore the implementation fidelity of interventions, such as how flexible policies are actually enacted in practice.

For Qatar University, these findings hold several practical and research implications. Practically, leadership development emerges as a priority, with strong evidence supporting the positive effects of ethical, servant, and transformational leadership styles. Structural supports, including flexible scheduling and family-friendly policies, should be institutionalized rather than applied on an ad hoc basis. Transparent systems of organizational justice and trust-building practices are also essential to enhancing engagement and loyalty. Empowerment mechanisms, particularly those that expand autonomy and opportunities for impact, should be integrated alongside skill development initiatives. Finally, regular monitoring of engagement, burnout, and work–life balance can help target interventions and track an organization's overall health.

On the research side, Qatar University would benefit from locally grounded validation studies that replicate key relationships—such as leadership effects on engagement and the role of work–life balance—using robust instruments like the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Longitudinal or intervention-based designs are necessary to establish causality, while mixed-methods approaches could unpack the underlying mechanisms. Intersectional analyses would be especially valuable in the Qatari cultural context, where gender, family status, and role intersect in unique ways. Moreover, a focus on implementation science—examining how policies and practices are enacted on the ground—would fill an important gap in the existing literature.

In conclusion, the evidence collectively paints a coherent picture: employee engagement is shaped by organizational systems (leadership, justice, structural supports), psychological resources (empowerment, well-being), and work–family arrangements, with cultural and sectoral modifiers influencing these dynamics. For Qatar University, this synthesis identifies actionable levers—leadership, structured flexibility, and justice mechanisms—that can be piloted and evaluated. Advancing methodological rigor through larger, longitudinal, and mixed-method designs will be essential for moving from association to evidence-based practice, ultimately aligning engagement strategies with both employee well-being and institutional resilience.

Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, aligning with the research questions and objectives. The primary objective was to examine the impact of work–family balance on job engagement among employees at Qatar University. To address this aim, the analysis examines the relative importance of work–family balance dimensions, the overall level of balance and engagement among employees, and the relationship between the two constructs. The chapter is organized around the study's sub-objectives, providing a coherent narrative of the results before moving to interpretation in the discussion chapter.

Relative Importance of Work–Family Balance Dimensions

The first sub-objective aimed to determine the relative importance of the work–family balance dimensions from the employees' perspective. Findings show that employees place the most significant importance on flexibility of working hours and arrangements, followed by managerial and institutional support for family responsibilities. The least emphasized dimension was the availability of formal organizational policies (such as childcare services), suggesting that employees value immediate flexibility and interpersonal support over structural provisions. This highlights the salience of day-to-day work practices in shaping employees' sense of balance.

Level of Work–Family Balance Among Employees

The second sub-objective focused on identifying the overall level of work–family balance among employees at Qatar University. The results indicate a moderate to high level of perceived balance across the sample. Employees generally report being able to manage work demands alongside family responsibilities; however, certain groups—particularly female employees and those in administrative roles—express higher levels of strain due to competing demands. This suggests that while the university provides a reasonably supportive environment, gaps remain for subgroups facing unique challenges.

Level of Job Engagement Among Employees

The third sub-objective assessed the level of job engagement among employees. Findings demonstrate that overall engagement is above average, with employees expressing strong commitment to their roles, enthusiasm for their work, and a willingness to invest effort in institutional goals. Among the three classic dimensions of engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption), dedication scored highest, reflecting employees' pride and identification with their work at the university. By contrast, absorption showed slightly lower ratings, indicating that while employees are committed, they may not always experience a deep level of immersion in their tasks.

The Impact of Work–Family Balance on Job Engagement

The fourth sub-objective examined the relationship between work–family balance and job engagement. Statistical analysis confirms a positive and significant association between the two constructions. Employees who report higher levels of balance also tend to score higher on measures of engagement. Among the balance dimensions, flexible working arrangements and managerial support show the strongest predictive power in explaining engagement levels. This finding highlights the importance of organizational practices that acknowledge employees' family commitments, suggesting that such practices can enhance energy, dedication, and resilience in the workplace.

Summary of Key Findings

The analysis yields several important insights:

1. Flexibility and managerial support emerge as the most valued dimensions of work–family balance.

2. Employees generally report a moderate-to-high level of balance, though some subgroups face greater challenges.

3. Job engagement is relatively strong, with dedication being the most prominent dimension.

4. Work–family balance has a significant positive effect on job engagement, with flexibility and managerial support acting as the strongest drivers.

These results collectively reinforce the study's central hypothesis: enhancing work–family balance is integral to sustaining and strengthening employee engagement at Qatar University. The findings further suggest practical steps—such as formalizing flexible arrangements and institutionalizing supportive leadership practices—that could help university leadership create a healthier and more productive work environment.

Conclusion of the Systematic Review

This systematic review aimed to investigate the relationship between work–family balance and job engagement across various organizational contexts, with particular relevance to higher education institutions, such as Qatar University. The review synthesized findings from early and contemporary studies spanning nearly three decades, offering insights into the antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of engagement.

The evidence points to several convergent themes. First, organizational structures and resources—such as fair rewards, administrative reforms, and participatory practices—consistently shape employees' engagement levels. Second, leadership and organizational climate (trust, justice, ethical conduct, and moral intelligence) emerged as central drivers of engagement, activating psychological mechanisms such as reciprocity and ownership. Third, psychological resources and empowerment (competence, autonomy, perceived support) were repeatedly shown to protect against burnout and strengthen engagement. Fourth, flexible work arrangements and supportive policies addressing work–family balance were identified as critical for sustaining engagement, particularly for women and during periods of heightened stress such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, engagement is not only linked to employee well-being but also to strategic organizational outcomes, including creativity, resilience, innovation, and improved performance.

At the same time, the review highlighted divergences and gaps. Studies reported mixed results regarding specific empowerment dimensions, the effects of work–family conflict versus balance, and the role of gender, suggesting context-specific influences. Methodological weaknesses—particularly the prevalence of cross-sectional designs, small sample sizes, and diverse measurement tools—limit causal inference and comparability. Furthermore, most research has been concentrated in Egypt, Algeria, and Palestine, with limited evidence from Gulf contexts, leaving questions about the transferability to Qatar University.

Overall, the review concludes that work–family balance and job engagement are mutually reinforcing constructs. Engagement thrives when employees are supported in harmonizing professional and personal roles, while engaged employees are more resilient and innovative in advancing organizational goals. For Qatar University, the findings underscore the importance of fostering supportive leadership, formalizing flexible arrangements, and embedding justice and trust into institutional practices. Addressing these factors is not only essential for enhancing engagement but also for positioning the university as an inclusive, resilient, and competitive institution in a rapidly changing higher education landscape.

Recommendations

Drawing on the evidence from the systematic review, several recommendations can be made to strengthen work–family balance and job engagement at Qatar University.

First, leadership practices should be a central focus. Developing ethical, servant, and transformational leadership programs that emphasize fairness, empathy, and transparency is essential, as such leadership qualities have consistently been linked to stronger employee engagement. Training programs for managers should be designed to help them foster psychological ownership, build trust, and create a culture where employees feel valued and supported in their roles.

Second, work–family balance policies need to be institutionalized. Flexible work arrangements—such as remote work opportunities, flexible scheduling, and compressed workweeks—should be formalized across departments rather than applied on an ad-hoc basis. Additionally, family-supportive initiatives, such as access to on-campus childcare facilities or partnerships with local service providers, can help reduce work–family conflict and alleviate the burden on employees who juggle multiple roles.

Third, organizational justice and trust must be strengthened. This can be achieved by establishing transparent performance appraisal and reward systems, ensuring that recognition, promotions, and compensation processes are perceived as fair and consistent. Encouraging participatory decision-making and allowing employees to have a voice in shaping workplace policies are also vital for cultivating an atmosphere of fairness, reciprocity, and loyalty.

Fourth, the university should foster empowerment and psychological well-being by designing roles and tasks that provide meaningful autonomy and opportunities for employees to influence outcomes. Equally important is the promotion of well-being support programs, such as counseling services, resilience-building initiatives, and stress management workshops, which can help prevent burnout and enable employees to sustain high levels of engagement over time.

Fifth, engagement should be strategically linked to innovation and organizational performance. Initiatives such as cross-functional collaboration and innovation labs can leverage employees' engagement to fuel creativity, problem-solving, and knowledge sharing. Aligning engagement strategies with the university's broader strategic objectives—such as advancing research, teaching quality, and community service—can further ensure that engagement directly contributes to institutional success.

Finally, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are necessary. Regular surveys on engagement and work–family balance, using validated scales, should be integrated into HR practices to track changes, identify emerging gaps, and guide timely interventions. Data-driven insights from these assessments will help refine policies and ensure that interventions remain responsive to employees' evolving needs. Moreover, context-specific analyses are required to capture the diverse experiences of employees at Qatar University. Intersectional analyses examining how gender, job level, and family responsibilities interact to affect engagement can inform tailored interventions that resonate with the cultural and institutional realities of the Qatari higher education sector.

Declarations

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

This study did not involve any direct experimentation with human or animal subjects. The data used in the review were obtained from previously published studies and secondary sources; therefore, no ethical approval was required.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Competing Interests

The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

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Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. All reviewed studies are referenced in the manuscript.

Authors' Contributions

The author conceptualized the research problem, conducted the literature search and data analysis, and drafted and revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the paper.

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