

**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE,  
JOB SATISFACTION, AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A  
REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study provides a comprehensive review of theoretical frameworks on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The modern work environment poses significant challenges to employees' work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction (JS), ultimately affecting their performance. This systematic literature review examines the theoretical frameworks that underpin the relationships between WLB, JS, and employee performance (EP). The study synthesizes the findings from various theories, including Spillover Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Job Characteristics Model, and Theory X and Theory Y. The results highlight the interconnectedness of WLB and JS and their synergistic effect on EP. The study's findings have practical implications for organizations seeking to improve employee performance and well-being. The review also identifies gaps and limitations in the existing literature, providing directions for future research.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance, Work-Life Balance, Theoretical Frameworks, Organizational Behaviour

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Carpiano et al. (2006), a theory is a set of analytical principles or statements constructed to align with our observation, perception, and description of the world. And the person-in environment configuration, the main facts of which can be confirmed through scientific methods. For instance, engineers have the perception or view that theory is the interrelated sets of concepts and propositions arranged into deductive systems to describe relationships about certain aspects of the world (Madara et al. 2016). However, these various definitions and many others from different fields of study have pointed out the main purpose of theory. However, many scholars have different views on the need to use theory in research work.

Some schools of thought maintain that research can be conducted independently of theoretical frameworks, and such findings can still hold validity (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). These researchers argue that not everyone possesses the time or expertise to formulate a theory; however, it is not essential to be extraordinarily gifted to propose a significant theory. If a researcher can effectively conduct rigorous quantitative validation of their sampling methods, coding processes, reliability assessments, validity measures, indicators, frequency distributions, conceptual formulations, hypothesis development, and the presentation of evidence and data, then the requirement for a theoretical framework to substantiate their findings may become superfluous.

On the other hand, some scholars view theory application or use as the only way of testifying and generalizing research work worldwide (Madra et al., 2016). They argue that the theory used organizes experiences, recognizes complexity, provides a structured set of lenses, safeguards against unscientific approaches to a problem, and protects against attacks from sceptical or hostile colleagues in other disciplines.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The modern work environment is characterized by increasing demands, blurring boundaries between work and personal life, and conflicting role demands. This has resulted in a range of negative consequences for employees, including emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and decreased overall well-being.

The modern work environment is characterized by several key issues that negatively impact employees' well-being and job satisfaction. These issues include work-life balance, inter-role conflict, unmet employee needs, job design, and management practices. Specifically, the increasing demands of work life led to emotional exhaustion, while conflicting work and family demands cause inter-role conflict, resulting in decreased job satisfaction and overall well-being.

Furthermore, organizations' failure to provide opportunities for employees to meet their higher-level needs, lack of autonomy and feedback in job design, and dominant use of Theory X management practices exacerbate these issues. These consequences include decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover, decreased overall well-being, and negative impacts on physical and mental health. Addressing these key issues is crucial to improving employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and performance by reviewing the aforementioned theories.

### **Objectives**

As a main objective, this study seeks to review the literature on the following theories: Spill-over Theory, Inter-role conflict theory, Abraham Maslow's Theory of need, Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham) (1975-76), Theory X, and Theory Y. In addition, it also aims to understand work-life balance and job satisfaction as the independent variables and employee performance as the dependent variable by reviewing the literature theoretically.

Finally, this study aims to investigate the impact, application, criticisms, and strengths of each theoretical framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Spill-over Theory**

The Spillover Theory was originally proposed by Wilensky (1960). The fundamental assumption of spillover theory is that one role spillover affects the perception of another role by making the roles comparable (Bello & Tanko, 2020). The theory identifies the spillover effect as a problem associated with the balance between work and family and it may be horizontal or vertical. Spillover

can be negative and positive: having negative family experiences leads to negative work experiences and vice versa. It happens when accomplishment satisfaction in one sphere enables fulfilment in another sphere and the other way around. An individual's way of behaving, emotions, and capacities that might emerge from one's family role may spill over into one's work role and other ways around. The utilization of this theory makes sense because of its significance for work-life balance studies, with its special focal point of interest on work and family connection. Spillover theory explains what is needed for a balance between personal and professional life. If an individual is not satisfied with the work effort or is mentally upset from work, the individual may come home with an upset mind, thus affecting personal life. Similarly, if the person has tension at home, like any domestic issue, it may negatively influence work life.

The implication for spillover theory is the negative approach, which is also referred to as contrast, complementarity, opposition, regeneration, and hetero-morphism, which states that having negative family experiences leads towards negative work experiences and vice versa. etc.

In summary, the theory states that if an individual is not able to perform well in one sphere, that individual cannot hold it, and it will affect the other aspects of that individual's life.

### **Criticism of Spill-over theory**

Others, such as economist Anne Barron, have critiqued the articles, suggesting that the spillovers theory is not consistent with welfare economics, necessarily relies on some other non-economic social theory yet to be specified, and thus is truly an external challenge to the conventional.

### **Inter-role Conflict Theory**

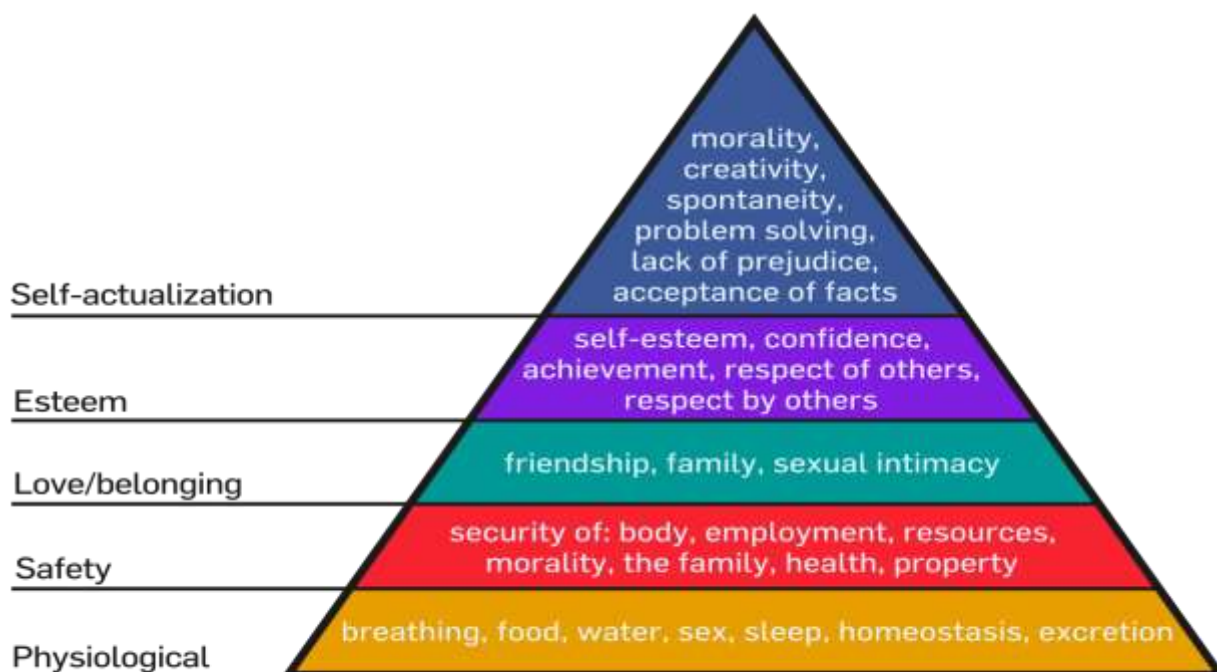
Inter-role conflict theory refers to what occurs when meeting the demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet the demands in the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In the literature, this has also been termed the opposition or incompatibility theory (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) avert that an individual encounter's role conflict when the sent expectations or demands from one role interfere with the individual's capacity to meet the sent expectations or demands from another role (Kahn et al., 1964). An example of role conflict is that of an employee who is at the same time pressured to work overtime while family members urge that employee to come home. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), described eight propositions where the constructs are in conflict in relation to time, role strain, and specific behaviour, as follows: pressures must come from both work and family; self-identification with roles is necessary; role salience moderates relationships and is positively related to conflict level; conflict is strongest when there are negatives associated with non-compliance; directionality is based on conflict source; conflict is related to career success and stage; external support is related to the conflict.

### **Abraham Maslow's Theory of need**

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory was introduced in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation". Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a model for understanding the motivations

for human behaviour. These include physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Figure v presents the theoretical framework of Abraham Maslow's Theory of need.



Source Abraham Maslow, 1943

The psychologist Abraham Maslow created this model. It maps different motivations onto a pyramid, with each level representing a different human need.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a psychological theory about what drives human behaviour and what makes humans feel fulfilled. It represents five key human needs that people must meet in order to achieve well-being. They are: Physiological needs, Safety, Love and belonging, Esteem and Self-actualization.

### **Applications for Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory**

People have applied Maslow's hierarchy of needs to many fields of study, industries, and societal issues. Below are some examples:

**Education:** Education experts sometimes use the hierarchy of needs to help children reach their learning potential. For example, in 2020, the Institutes of Education Science applied the theory to children receiving an education at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Healthcare: In 2014, researchers argue that applying Maslow's theory to the care of people in an intensive care unit (ICU) may have benefits. People in ICUs tend to be over sedated and immobilized. The authors contend that although these measures are necessary for a minority of patients, they are not essential for the majority. In fact, they may have a negative effect on mental health and cognitive function.

To prevent this, the authors propose changing ICU care so that it considers overall quality of life and not just physical recovery. They advocate using less sedation and promoting mobility wherever possible.

### **Criticisms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory**

- i. The order of needs within the hierarchy is arbitrary. Researchers stated that one criticism of Maslow's theory involves the order of needs within the hierarchy.
- ii. Some critics say that while it is logical to put physiological needs first and self-actualisation last, people do not necessarily pursue or obtain the needs in this order. For example, some argue that a healthy relationship with oneself is an important requirement for having healthy relationships with others. Maslow himself met people who valued self-esteem more than love. However, Maslow did not consider the exact order of needs to be rigid.
- iii. Self-actualization is not linear. In his early work, Maslow argued that a person could only self-actualize once they had met their basic needs. However, Ojogbo et al. (2018) note that sometimes, not being able to meet one's basic needs helps people identify their self-actualisation goals. For example, a person may have a stable career for many years, fulfilling their safety needs. However, if they lose their job, they may realise that their old career were not satisfying. Needing another source of income might spur them to pursue the job they truly want.
- iv. Maslow also acknowledged that unmet needs could be motivation for self-actualisation in his later work.
- v. Another criticism of the concept of self-actualisation is that Maslow largely based his ideas on the biographies of notable historical figures, most of whom were educated white men. As such, the traits he observed in these successful individuals may not apply to all people.

### **Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975-76)**

Hackman and Oldham's (1980) original formulation of job characteristics theory argued that several moderators influenced the outcomes of job redesign. Notable among these moderators are differences in the degree to which various individuals or employees desire personal or psychological development. (Perry et al., 2006). Job characteristics are aspects of the individual employees' jobs and tasks that shape how the individual perceives his or her particular role in the organisation. The clarity of tasks leads to greater job satisfaction. We expect that greater role clarity will create employees who are more satisfied with, committed to, and involved in their work (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Research reveals that jobs that are rich in motivating characteristics (i.e., task significance) trigger psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness of work)

among employees, which in turn increases the likelihood of desired outcomes. For instance, the significance of a task can ignite a sense of meaningfulness in work that leads to effective performance (Perry et al., 2006). More precisely, the model states that there are five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) that impact three critical psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results), in turn influencing work outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism, work motivation, etc.).

Unlike Maslow's or Herzberg's theories, the JCM has received more empirical support. However, it has also drawn criticism as many studies utilising this model investigate the direct impact core job dimensions have on personal and work outcomes, completely disregarding the critical psychological states. Despite this, the JCM and its impact on job satisfaction have been the subject of three reviews, which further lend support to the model. Further to this, Behson et. al.'s (2021) meta-analysis of 13 studies specifically focused on the role of critical psychological states and found these psychological states to play a crucial practical and theoretical role within the JCM.

#### Criticisms of the Job Characteristics Model

Critics of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) have raised concerns about the mediating role of psychological state variables.

Some studies have questioned the validity of the model, suggesting it should be discarded or adjusted due to the lack of empirical support for the relationships between job characteristics, psychological states, and outcomes.

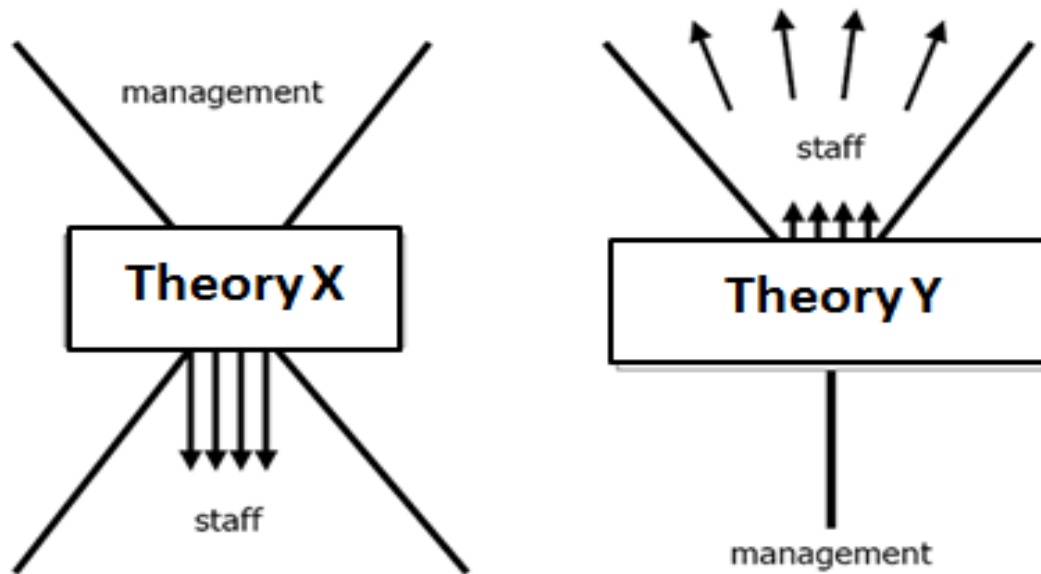
Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on the utility and validity of the JCM, with some researchers advocating for modifications to the model.

Research findings indicate that while the JCM has been widely used, there are ongoing debates regarding its effectiveness and the need for further refinement to enhance its predictive power and practical application.

#### Theory X and Theory Y

Theory X and Theory Y are the theories of motivation given by Douglas McGregor in the 1960s. These theories are based on the premise that management has to assemble all the factors of production, including human beings, to get the work done. McGregor believed that management can use either of the needs to motivate his employees, as grouped under theory X and theory Y. Theory X: Theory X relies on the authoritarian style of management, where the managers are required to give instructions and keep a close check on each employee. As it is assumed, the employees are not motivated, and they dislike working.

Figure vii presents the theoretical framework of theories X and Y.



Source: Douglas McGregor in 1960s

Theory X is based on the following assumptions:

1. The employee is lazy and dislikes work.
2. He is not ambitious and dislikes responsibility and, therefore, prefers to be led.
3. The employee is self-centred and indifferent towards the organizational interest.
4. Management is responsible for assembling all the factors of production, Viz. Money, material, equipment, people.
5. The managers are required to control his employees, manage their efforts, motivate them, modify their behaviour to comply with the organizational needs.
6. The management must intervene to keep the employees working towards the economic ends. The employees must be persuaded, rewarded, motivated, punished, controlled to get the work completed.

Theory Y: Theory Y relies on the participative style of management, where the managers assume that the employees are self-directed and self-motivated to accomplish the organizational objectives. Thus, here the management attempts to get the maximum output with least efforts on their part.

Following are the assumptions of Theory Y:

1. The average human being does not inherently dislike work, they are creative and self-motivated and likes to work with greater responsibilities.

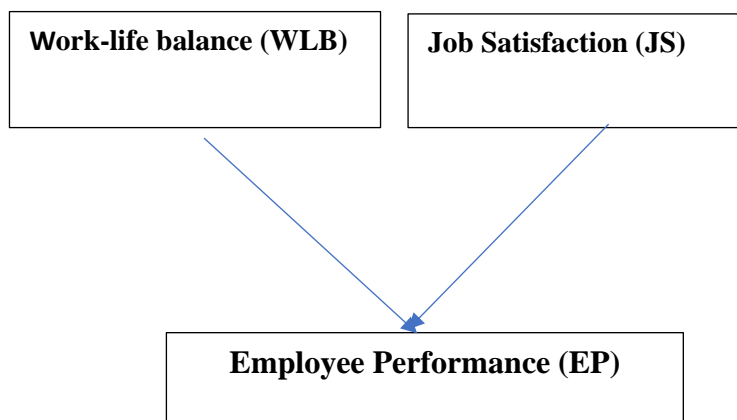
2. Employees are self-directed and self-controlled and therefore the threat of punishment is not only the means for getting the desired results.
3. The extent to which an employee is committed to objectives is determined by the rewards associated with their achievement. The most significant rewards in this context could be satisfying the ego and fulfilling self-actualization needs.
4. The average human being is ambitious and is ready to take responsibilities. He likes to lead rather than to be led by others.
5. The employees exercise a relatively high degree of imagination and creativity in solving complex organizational problems.

Thus, theory X and theory Y are two contrasting models that depict the set of assumptions a manager holds about his employees, which may or may not coincide with their general way of behaving. Therefore, these theories are based on attitudes, not attributes

#### Criticism of Theory X and Theory Y

- i. Nowadays, McGregor's theory is seen as outdated, representing two extremes.
- ii. Theory X is perhaps visible in low-paid or menial work, but motivated employees will move on to positions with Theory Y conditions.
- iii. Personal development, management training, and even general perceptions of behaviour are against a Theory X outlook towards work.
- iv. There is no doubt that this outlook would have been more prevalent in the 1960s when McGregor created his theory.
- v. Before he died McGregor started working on a new Theory that he called Theory Z to address these criticisms. Unfortunately, he died before this could be widely published and the ideas have since faded from mainstream management theory.
- vi. However, they were landmark ideas at their time and now form an important part of the historical study of management theory.

Figure viii: present the theoretic framework/model for the study



Source: Ungwa (2025)



The joint influence of work-life balance (WLB), and job satisfaction (JS) on employee performance (EP) can be discussed as follows:

### **Theoretical Framework**

Research suggests that WLB and JS are interconnected and can have a synergistic effect on EP. WLB is the ability to manage work and personal responsibilities effectively, and JS is the positive emotional state resulting from job experiences.

### ***Joint Influence on Employee Performance***

1. WLB and JS: Employees who achieve a better work-life balance tend to experience higher job satisfaction. This is because they are able to manage their work and personal responsibilities effectively, reducing stress and increasing overall well-being.
2. Interactive Effects: The joint influence of WLB and JS on EP can be more significant than the sum of their individual effects. For example, when employees experience job satisfaction, they are more likely to achieve a better work-life balance, which, in turn, enhances their performance.

### ***Practical Implications***

1. Work-Life Balance: Organizations can promote work-life balance by implementing policies and practices that support employees' personal and family responsibilities.
2. Job Satisfaction: Organizations can enhance job satisfaction by providing opportunities for growth and development, recognizing and rewarding employees' contributions, and fostering a positive work environment (Ungwa, 2025).

### **Summary of the key similarities, differences, and linkages of the theories and how they contribute to the research topic:**

Theories such as Spillover Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Job Characteristics Model, Theory X, and Theory Y share commonalities in their focus on understanding human motivation and behaviour. They also highlight the importance of balancing work and personal life, as well as fulfilling psychological needs to motivate individuals.

Despite these similarities, each theory has a distinct focus, such as work-family balance, role conflict, human needs, job design, and management styles. Theories X and Y also have contrasting assumptions about human nature, with Theory X assuming employees are lazy and unmotivated, while Theory Y assumes employees are self-directed and motivated. Additionally, the Job Characteristics Model is a more structured and empirical approach, while Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a more theoretical framework.

The theories also have linkages, such as the emphasis on work-life balance in Spillover Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, and Job Characteristics Model. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Job Characteristics Model both emphasize the importance of fulfilling psychological needs to motivate

individuals, which is also a key aspect of Theory Y. Furthermore, Theory X and Theory Y can be linked to the Job Characteristics Model, as the management style can impact job design and employee motivation.

These theories provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding human motivation, work-life balance, and job design. The Job Characteristics Model has received empirical support, providing a structured approach to understanding job design and employee motivation. The theories also have practical applications in management, human resources, and organizational development.

Finally, the theories of Spillover Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Job Characteristics Model, Theory X, and Theory Y provide valuable insights into human motivation, work-life balance, and job design. Their similarities, differences, and linkages contribute to a comprehensive understanding of these concepts, and their practical applications can inform management, human resources, and organizational development practices.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is the method used for this study; it is a comprehensive and structured approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant research studies on a specific research question or topic. A Systematic Literature Review is characterized by a systematic and transparent methodology, comprehensive literature search, inclusion and exclusion criteria, quality assessment, and data synthesis, providing a comprehensive overview of existing literature, increasing validity, informing practice and policy, and identifying research gaps.

### **Justification of Methodology**

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology is used in this theoretical paper because it provides a rigorous, transparent, and comprehensive approach to evaluating existing theoretical concepts and frameworks. By employing a systematic and transparent methodology, SLR minimizes bias, ensures the inclusion of all relevant studies, and provides a clear documentation of the review process. This approach facilitates a critical evaluation of the included papers, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the theoretical concepts and frameworks, and provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature. Furthermore, SLR methodology contributes to knowledge advancement by identifying research gaps, informing theory development, and providing a foundation for future research while also enhancing applicability and generalizability across various disciplines. Ultimately, by using SLR methodology in a theoretical paper review, researchers can ensure a robust and reliable evaluation of the existing theoretical concepts and frameworks, supporting evidence-based decision-making and informing policy and practice.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The systematic literature review revealed that work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction (JS) are interconnected and have a synergistic effect on employee performance (EP). Theories such as

Spill-over Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, Abraham Maslow's Theory of need, Job Characteristics Model, and Theory X and Theory Y provide a foundation for understanding the relationship between WLB, JS, and EP. The review highlighted the importance of considering the joint influence of WLB and JS on EP, as employees who achieve a better work-life balance tend to experience higher job satisfaction, which in turn enhances their performance.

The study's findings have practical implications for organizations seeking to improve employee performance. By promoting work-life balance and enhancing job satisfaction, organizations can create a positive work environment that fosters employee well-being and productivity. The study's results also highlight the need for future research to explore the complex relationships between WLB, JS, and EP and to develop evidence-based interventions that support employee well-being and performance. Overall, the study contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the field of organizational behaviour and provides a foundation for future research and practice.

### **Gaps and Limitations of the Study**

The existing literature on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance reveals several gaps and limitations. The Spillover Theory, Inter-role Conflict Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Job Characteristics Model, and Theory X and Theory Y provide valuable insights into human behaviour, motivation, and job satisfaction. However, criticisms of these theories include the arbitrary order of needs in Maslow's Hierarchy, the lack of empirical support for the Job Characteristics Model, and the outdated nature of Theory X and Theory Y. Furthermore, the existing literature fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the joint influence of work-life balance and job satisfaction on employee performance, highlighting the need for further research in this area. By addressing these gaps and limitations, future research can provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

### **Conclusion**

The joint influence of WLB and JS on EP may be significant. Organizations that promote work-life balance and enhance job satisfaction can expect to see improvements in employee performance (Ungwa, 2025).

### **Recommendations**

- i. Institutions should implement flexible work arrangements: To help employees balance work and personal responsibilities, institutions should offer flexible scheduling, telecommuting, or compressed workweeks.
- ii. Institutions should promote employee well-being: Institutions should provide access to wellness programs, employee assistance programs, and mental health resources to support employees' overall well-being.
- iii. Institutions should foster a supportive work culture: They should encourage open communication, recognition, and rewards to create a positive work environment that supports employees' job satisfaction and engagement.

- iv. Institutions should provide opportunities for growth and development: Institutions should offer training, mentorship, and opportunities for advancement to help employees achieve their career goals and enhance their job satisfaction.
- v. Institutions should monitor and address work-life balance and job satisfaction issues: Institutions should regularly assess employees' experiences and address any issues or concerns that arise to maintain a positive and supportive work environment.

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