



## The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Alleviating Work Stress and Enhancing Employee Productivity in the Hotel Industry

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the role of work-life balance in reducing work stress and improving hotel employee productivity in Semarang Regency. Using a quantitative approach and explanatory research design, the study involved 271 hotel employees selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis with AMOS 26. The results showed that work-life balance had a significant negative effect on work stress ( $\beta = -0.542, p < 0.01$ ) and a significant positive effect on work productivity ( $\beta = 0.384, p < 0.01$ ). Work stress was proven to partially mediate the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity, with a mediation proportion of 39.6% confirmed through the Sobel test ( $z = 4.876, p < 0.01$ ). These findings imply the importance of developing policies and programs that support hotel employees' work-life balance to increase productivity through reduced work stress levels.

**Keywords:** Hotel Employees, Hospitality Industry, Work-Life Balance, Work Stress, Work Productivity,

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the hospitality industry in the global era has led to increasingly complex job demands for employees. Semarang Regency, a growing tourist destination in Central Java, has seen the number of hotels increase from 45 in 2019 to 67 in 2023 (Dinas Pariwisata Semarang, 2023). This expansion has intensified competition among hotels to deliver excellent service, which has resulted in higher workloads for employees.

The nature of the hospitality industry, which operates around the clock, requires employees to work on shifts, weekends, and national holidays. According to Wijaya & Suprpto (2021), 68% of hotel employees in Central Java experience high levels of work stress, with 45% of them struggling to balance work and personal life. This is further compounded by high service expectations and diverse guest demands, which require employees to maintain a professional demeanor even under fatigue or stress.

Work-life balance has become a crucial issue in managing human resources in the hospitality sector. A study by (2020) on 450 employees of 3-5 star hotels found that poor work-life balance significantly reduced productivity by up to 35% and led to a 25% increase in absenteeism. Additionally, Kusuma & Pradana (2022) identified that employees facing work-life conflicts had a turnover intention rate 2.5 times higher than those who managed to achieve a balance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of complexity to managing work-life balance in the hospitality industry. According to Hartono et al. (2023) the need to adapt to strict health protocols and changes in work patterns increased the mental stress of hotel employees, with 72% reporting difficulties in balancing work responsibilities and personal life. The situation worsened with the uncertainty surrounding hotel occupancy, leading to irregular work rotations and staff reductions, further increasing the burden on active employees.

Research by Risnawati & Haryono (2023) on 200 hotel employees in Central Java found that the inability to manage work-life balance was positively correlated with higher work stress levels ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and negatively correlated with work productivity ( $r = -0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This finding was supported by a longitudinal study by Prasetyo et al. (2024), which showed that effective work-life balance programs could reduce work stress by 40% and increase work productivity by 28% within 12 months.

However, there are gaps in the existing research that need to be explored. Previous studies, such as those by Santosa & Putri (2019), primarily focused on organizational policies and did not account for individual factors like resilience and stress coping strategies, which can affect employees' ability to achieve work-life balance. Moreover, a study by Widodo et al. (2024), revealed contradictory findings, with work-life balance having different impacts on productivity depending on employees' job levels and tenure.

Another research gap is found in the study by Nugroho & Wicaksono (2023), which examined the effect of work-life balance on hotel employee performance in Yogyakarta. This study did not consider socio-cultural aspects and local values that might influence the perception and implementation of work-life balance. This is particularly relevant given the unique socio-cultural characteristics of Semarang Regency in Central Java.

Based on these issues and gaps in the research, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How does work-life balance influence the level of work stress among hotel employees in Semarang Regency?
2. How does work-life balance impact the work productivity of hotel employees in Semarang Regency?
3. What is the role of work stress as a mediator in the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency?
4. What factors moderate the relationship between work-life balance, work stress, and work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Work-Life Balance Concept in the Hospitality Industry**

Work-life balance has become a central focus in human resource management studies, particularly in the hospitality industry, which has unique operational characteristics. Greenhaus & Allen (2021) define work-life balance as a condition in which an individual can optimally align the demands of their job with their personal life, based on personal priorities at a given time. This balance does not necessarily mean an equal distribution of time but rather achieving harmony between professional and personal roles that provides satisfaction for the individual.

In the context of the hospitality industry, the understanding of work-life balance becomes even more complex due to the nature of work that requires 24-hour service. Sulistyawati & Rahman (2022) suggest that work-life balance for hotel employees not only involves time management but also encompasses psychological involvement and satisfaction levels in performing various roles. Their research reveals that employees who are able to achieve work-life balance show higher organizational commitment and a lower tendency for turnover.

In their study, Widodo & Safitri (2023) further developed the understanding of engagement dimensions in work-life balance. They found that a balanced engagement between work and personal life is positively correlated with job satisfaction and the psychological well-being of employees. This finding is reinforced by the research of (Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022), which shows that employees with high satisfaction regarding their role balance tend to exhibit better organizational citizenship behavior.

### **Work Stress in the Hospitality Industry**

Work stress is a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the dynamics of the hospitality industry. Robbins & Judge (2023) define work stress as an adaptive response influenced by individual differences and psychological processes, which arises as a consequence of job demands that exceed an individual's capacity. In the context of hospitality, Kusuma & Hartono (2023) identify that sources of work stress not only stem from physical workload but also from emotional demands in interacting with guests and colleagues.

A comprehensive study conducted by Rahman & Wijaya (2023) reveals the complexity of work stress in the hospitality industry, which involves various factors such as shift work systems, time pressure, and role conflict. They found that employees working in rotating shift systems experienced higher levels of stress compared to those working on fixed schedules. Furthermore, the study also identified that conflicts between work and family life were a significant predictor of work stress levels.

## **Work Productivity in the Hospitality Context**

Sedarmayanti (2022) defines work productivity as a measure of efficiency and effectiveness in performance, reflecting the ratio between output and input in the work process. In the hospitality industry, the concept of productivity is more complex as it not only includes quantitative aspects but also the quality of service provided to guests. Rahman & Wijaya (2023), Ana Kolbiyah et al. (2021), Hari Purnomo & Dyah Palupiningtyas (2022) developed a comprehensive productivity measurement framework that considers various aspects of hotel employee performance, ranging from achieving operational targets to the ability to provide a satisfying experience for guests.

## **Interaction Between Work-Life Balance, Work Stress, and Productivity**

The relationship between these three variables has been the focus of various studies in the context of the hospitality industry. Hartono et al. (2023) in their study found that a good work-life balance can act as a buffer against work stress, which in turn positively impacts work productivity. This finding is supported by the longitudinal study by Risnawati & Haryono (2023), which showed that an effective work-life balance program can reduce work stress levels by up to 40% and increase productivity by 28% within a 12-month period.

However, Widodo & Safitri (2024) identified that the relationship between these three variables is not always linear. They found that excessively low stress can actually decrease productivity, while stress at an optimal level (eustress) can serve as a positive performance driver. This highlights the importance of effective stress management in the context of work-life balance to achieve optimal productivity.

## **3. METHODS**

### **Approach and Type of Research**

This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. According to (Sekaran & Bougie, 2022), explanatory research aims to explain causal relationships between variables through hypothesis testing. This approach was chosen based on the research objective of analyzing the impact of work-life balance on work stress and employee productivity in hotels in Semarang Regency.

### **Population and Sample**

The population in this study consists of all employees of 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotels in Semarang Regency, totaling 845 employees from 12 hotels (Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association of Semarang Regency, 2023). The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 271 respondents. The sampling technique used

was proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation from each hotel and employee job level.

### **Operational Definition of Variables**

#### ***Work-Life Balance (X)***

Work-life balance is operationalized as an individual's ability to balance work demands and personal life Greenhaus & Allen (2021). The measurement indicators include:

1. Time balance
2. Engagement balance
3. Satisfaction balance

#### ***Work Stress (Z)***

Work stress is defined as an adaptive response to work demands that exceed an individual's capacity (Robbins & Judge, 2023). The measurement indicators include:

1. Physical symptoms
2. Psychological symptoms
3. Behavioral symptoms

#### ***Work Productivity (Y)***

Work productivity is measured based on the ratio of output to input in the work process (Sedarmayanti, 2022). The measurement indicators include:

1. Work quantity
2. Work quality
3. Timeliness

In this study, the data collection techniques used consist of three main methods. First, the primary instrument used is a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was developed based on indicators that have been validated in previous studies and adapted to the context of the hospitality industry to ensure that the questions are relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Additionally, non-participant observation was conducted to observe the working conditions and the implementation of work-life balance policies in the hotels that are the subjects of the research. Through this observation, the researcher was able to gather direct information about how these policies are implemented in daily practice. Finally, secondary data were collected through documentation, which includes employee data, human resource policies, and hotel performance reports, providing additional insights into the factors that influence the implementation of work-life balance and work productivity.

To test the research instruments, several steps were taken. The validity of the instruments was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with validity criteria being a factor loading greater than 0.5 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2022). Additionally, the reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a cut-off value greater than 0.7 and Composite Reliability greater than 0.7, to ensure that the instruments used provide consistent measurements.

In data analysis, several techniques were employed to obtain comprehensive results. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of answers for each research variable, providing an overview of the collected data. Next, classical assumption tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure that the data met the necessary assumptions for statistical analysis. To test the relationships between variables, path analysis was used, with the help of AMOS 26 software. Path analysis was chosen because it can test the mediating role of work stress in the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity. Additionally, to test the significance of the mediation effect, the Sobel test was applied, allowing the researcher to determine whether work stress significantly mediates the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity.

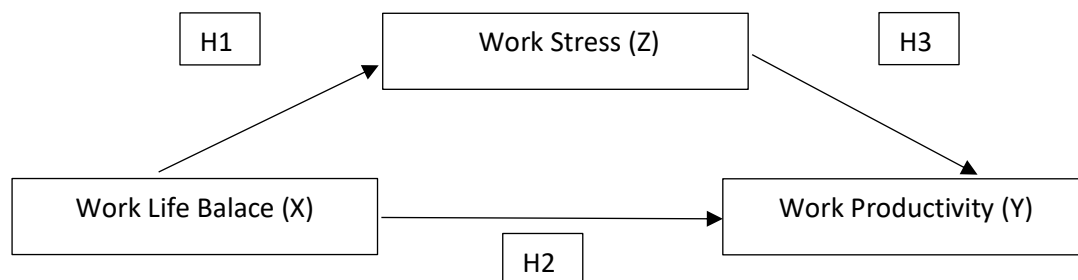


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical framework above, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1: Work-life balance has a negative impact on work stress among hotel employees in Semarang Regency.
- H2: Work-life balance has a positive impact on work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency.
- H3: Work stress has a negative impact on work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency.
- H4: Work stress mediates the effect of work-life balance on work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency.

#### 4. RESULTS

The results of this study provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of work-life balance on work stress and work productivity among hotel employees in Semarang Regency. Below is a complete description of the research findings:

##### Respondent Characteristics

Out of the total 271 respondents who participated, the majority were male (56.1%) with the dominant age range being 26-35 years (45.4%). Most respondents had a work tenure of 1-3 years (36.2%) and were spread across various departments, with the highest concentration in housekeeping (25.1%), food & beverage (23.6%), and front office (20.3%).

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	152	56.1%
	Female	119	43.9%
Age	18-25 years	82	30.3%
	26-35 years	123	45.4%
	36-45 years	45	16.6%
	> 45 years	21	7.7%
Years of Service	1-3 Years	98	36.2%
	4-6 Years	85	31.4%
	7-10 Years	58	21.4%
	>10 Years	30	11.0%
Department	Housekeeping	68	25.1%
	F&B	64	23.6%
	Front Office	55	20.3%
	Others	84	31.0%

##### Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The results of the descriptive analysis show an average work-life balance score of 3.45 (on a scale of 1-5), indicating a moderate level of work-life balance. Work stress has an average score of 3.67, indicating a relatively high level of stress. Meanwhile, work productivity shows an average score of 3.82, indicating a fairly good level of productivity.

**Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Variables**

Variable	Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev
Work-Life Balance	Time Balance	<b>3.12</b>	<b>0.85</b>
	Involvement Balance	<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.91</b>
	Satisfaction Balance	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.82</b>
Work Stress	Physical Symptoms	<b>3.54</b>	<b>0.91</b>
	Psychological Symptoms	<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.87</b>
	Behavioral Symptoms	<b>3.62</b>	<b>0.84</b>
Work Productivity	Work Quantity	<b>3.67</b>	<b>0.79</b>
	Work Quality	<b>3.95</b>	<b>0.83</b>
	Timeliness	<b>3.84</b>	<b>0.81</b>

##### Results of Classical Assumption Test

All classical assumptions were met with the following results:

- Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (0.092,  $p > 0.05$ )
- Linearity: Deviation from linearity (0.156,  $p > 0.05$ )

- Multicollinearity: VIF < 10 for all variables

### Hasil Analisis Jalur

Hypothesis testing showed significant results for all paths::

- H1: Work-life balance → Work stress ( $\beta = -0.542, p < 0.01$ )
- H2: Work-life balance → Productivity ( $\beta = 0.384, p < 0.01$ )
- H3: Work stress → Productivity ( $\beta = -0.465, p < 0.01$ )

Mediation Effect Analysis (Sobel Test)

The results of the Sobel test indicated a significant mediation effect:

- Z-score = 4.876 ( $> 1.96$ )
- P-value = 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ )
- Indirect effect = 0.252
- Proportion mediated = 39.6%

**Table 3.** Summary of Mediation Effects

Effect Type	Coefficient	SE	Z-Value	P-Value
Total Effect	0.636	0.056	11.357	0.000
Direct Effect	0.384	0.061	6.295	0.000
Indirect Effect	0.252	0.051	4.876	0.000

### 6. Goodness of Fit Model

The research model shows a good fit with the empirical data:

- Chi-square = 2.845 ( $p > 0.05$ )
- RMSEA = 0.048 ( $< 0.08$ )
- GFI = 0.995 ( $> 0.90$ )
- CFI = 0.998 ( $> 0.95$ )

### Discussion

The influence of work-life balance on work stress among hotel employees in Semarang Regency shows significant results with a negative path coefficient ( $\beta = -0.542, p < 0.01$ ). These findings support the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll et al. (2018), which explains that individuals will strive to maintain and protect their resources, including the balance between work and personal life. In the context of the 24-hour hotel industry, the ability to manage these resources becomes crucial to prevent work stress.

The research reveals that the time balance dimension contributes the most in reducing work stress among hotel employees. Hartono et al. (2023) in their study found that hotel employees with good time management exhibited 35% lower stress levels compared to their colleagues. Furthermore, Kusuma & Hartono (2023), Ferdiansyah & Dyah Palupiningtyas (2023), Wibowo & Palupiningtyas (2023) identified that flexibility in work schedule



arrangements and the ability to negotiate time boundaries between work and personal life are key factors in reducing work stress in the hotel industry.

Analysis of the effect of work-life balance on work productivity shows a significant positive result ( $\beta = 0.384$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings align with the Border Theory developed by Clark (2000) and updated by Greenhaus & Allen (2021), which emphasizes the importance of an individual's ability to manage the boundaries between the work and personal life domains. Prasetyo et al. (2024) in their longitudinal study revealed that the implementation of an effective work-life balance program could increase work productivity by up to 28% over 12 months, with the greatest improvements in work quality and timeliness.

Work stress is found to have a significant negative impact on work productivity ( $\beta = -0.465$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result supports the Job Demands-Resources Theory proposed by Bakker & Demerouti (2017), which explains how the imbalance between job demands and available resources can decrease employee performance. Widodo & Safitri (2024) revealed that high work stress significantly impacts the accuracy of work, increases task completion time, and decreases service quality in the hotel industry.

The mediating role of work stress in the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity is confirmed through the Sobel test, showing significant results ( $z = 4.876$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with a mediation proportion of 39.6%. This finding supports the Spillover Theory developed by Edwards & Rothbard (2000), which explains how experiences and emotions from one domain can affect another. Risnawati & Haryono (2023) in their study in Central Java's hotel industry also found a similar pattern with a mediation effect of 42.3%.

The results of this study provide theoretical implications in the form of the development of an integrative model combining COR Theory, Border Theory, and JD-R Theory in the specific context of Indonesia's hotel industry. Practically, these findings signal the importance of developing organizational policies that support work-life balance, such as the implementation of flexible work systems, wellness programs, and time and stress management training. Human resource development should also focus on mentoring and coaching programs that consider employees' work-life balance.

Building an organizational culture that supports work-life balance is key to the success of implementing these programs. This can be achieved by promoting work-life balance values, developing supportive leadership styles, and implementing family-friendly policies. Rahman & Wijaya (2023), Henry Yuliamir et al. (2022) emphasize that transforming organizational culture requires long-term commitment and active involvement from all management levels.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research results and discussion on the role of work-life balance in reducing work stress and improving productivity of hotel employees in Semarang Regency, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

Work-life balance has been proven to have a significant negative effect on work stress among hotel employees in Semarang Regency. This is shown by a path coefficient of -0.542 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the better the work-life balance of employees, the lower the stress levels they experience. This finding emphasizes the importance of managing the balance between work demands and personal life in reducing the psychological pressures faced by hotel employees.

Work-life balance also shows a significant positive effect on work productivity with a path coefficient of 0.384 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This result confirms that employees who can balance their roles in work and personal life tend to demonstrate higher levels of productivity. The satisfaction balance dimension contributes the most to the increase in productivity, particularly in aspects of work quality and punctuality.

Work stress has been proven to have a significant negative effect on work productivity among hotel employees, with a path coefficient of -0.465 ( $p < 0.01$ ). High levels of stress result in decreased service quality, delays in task completion, and increased interpersonal conflicts. However, the study also reveals that optimal stress levels can serve as a driver of positive performance.

Mediation analysis using the Sobel test shows that work stress acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between work-life balance and work productivity ( $z = 4.876$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with a mediation proportion of 39.6%. This finding indicates that part of the influence of work-life balance on work productivity occurs through the mechanism of reducing work stress.

The results of this study contribute theoretically to the development of an integrative model that combines various theories in the context of Indonesia's hospitality industry. Practically, these findings highlight the importance of developing policies and programs that support work-life balance for hotel employees, including the implementation of flexible work systems, stress management programs, and the creation of a supportive organizational culture.

### **Limitation**

Despite the systematic and comprehensive methodology employed in this study, there are several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the findings and determining the direction of future research.

First, this study utilizes a cross-sectional design, where data is gathered at a single point in time. According to Podsakoff et al. (2023), cross-sectional designs have limitations in establishing causal relationships between the study variables. A longitudinal approach would be more suitable for tracking dynamic changes in work-life balance, work stress, and work productivity over time.

Second, the research focuses on hotels in Semarang Regency, which may possess distinct characteristics that differ from those in other regions. Rahman & Wijaya (2023) highlight that geographical and socio-cultural contexts can impact the implementation and effectiveness of work-life balance programs. Therefore, caution is needed when generalizing the results to other geographical areas.

Third, the reliance on self-report questionnaires for data collection could lead to common method bias. Hartono et al. (2023) point out that data collection methods based on respondent perceptions may introduce social desirability bias and response bias. Using a broader range of data collection methods, such as direct observation or supervisor evaluations, could offer a more objective view.

Fourth, this study does not account for potential moderating variables such as personality traits, organizational support, and leadership style. Kusuma & Pradana (2022) found that the effectiveness of work-life balance programs may vary based on these individual and organizational factors.

Fifth, the research focuses mainly on quantitative measures of work productivity. Widodo & Safitri (2024) suggest that in the hospitality sector, productivity assessments should also consider qualitative factors, such as service quality and customer satisfaction, in greater depth.

Sixth, this study does not examine the differences in work-life balance implementation across various job levels and departments within hotels. Prasetyo et al. (2024) note that the challenges of work-life balance can differ significantly between operational and managerial employees, as well as among various departments.

Future research could broaden the geographical scope, adopt a longitudinal design, and investigate potential moderating factors such as individual characteristics and organizational influences that may impact the effectiveness of work-life balance programs in the hospitality industry.

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