

## Work-Life Balance in Nursing Field; A Concept Analysis

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### Abstract

*Work-life balance has become a critical issue within the nursing field due to escalating workloads, workforce shortages, and increasing professional demands. Nurses are required to manage complex clinical responsibilities while maintaining personal, family, and social roles, making work-life balance essential for individual well-being and the sustainability of healthcare systems. Despite extensive discussion in the literature, the concept of work-life balance in nursing remains inconsistently defined and frequently conflated with related constructs such as burnout, job satisfaction, and quality of work life. This study aims to clarify and refine the concept of work-life balance in the nursing field through a systematic concept analysis. Walker and Avant's eight-step method was employed to analyze the concept. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across major academic databases, and relevant studies were selected and screened using a PRISMA-style process. The analysis involved identifying the various uses of the concept, defining attributes, model and alternative cases, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents specific to nursing contexts. The findings reveal that work-life balance in nursing is a multidimensional construct characterized by perceived equilibrium between professional and personal roles, organizational and leadership support, flexibility in work arrangements, and holistic well-being. Antecedents of work-life balance include manageable workloads, supportive organizational cultures, effective leadership, flexible scheduling, and personal coping resources. Consequences of achieving work-life balance extend across individual, organizational, and care-delivery levels, including enhanced psychological well-being, increased job satisfaction, improved retention, and better quality of nursing care. This concept analysis provides conceptual clarity and a structured foundation for future research, policy development, and practical interventions aimed at promoting sustainable nursing practice and workforce resilience.*

**Keywords:** Work-life balance; Nursing workforce; Nurse well-being; Organizational support; Concept analysis

## 1. Introduction

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical and persistent concern within the nursing field due to the inherently demanding nature of nursing work, which is characterized by long working hours, shift rotations, emotional labor, and high responsibility for patient safety and care outcomes. Nurses are frequently required to manage competing professional and personal roles, often under conditions of staff shortages and increasing healthcare demands, which places them at heightened risk of work-life imbalance. Empirical nursing literature consistently highlights that inadequate work-life balance negatively affects nurses' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life, while simultaneously undermining organizational stability and quality of patient care (Gribben & Semple, 2021). As healthcare systems worldwide continue to face workforce shortages, particularly among nurses, understanding and addressing work-life balance has become a strategic priority rather than an individual concern.

Despite the growing body of research, the concept of work-life balance remains inconsistently defined and operationalized within nursing scholarship. Some studies conceptualize work-life balance primarily as the equitable distribution of time between work and personal life, while others emphasize subjective satisfaction, role harmony, or the absence of work-family conflict. Conceptual discussions within nursing and healthcare literature further reveal discrepancies between how organizations promote work-life balance in policy documents and how it is experienced by nurses in practice (Lester, 2024). This lack of conceptual clarity contributes to challenges in measurement, intervention design, and comparison of research findings across studies and contexts. Measurement-focused reviews have also identified substantial variation in theoretical foundations and psychometric properties of existing work-life balance instruments, particularly within the health sector (Alameddine et al., 2023). In the nursing context, work-life balance has been empirically linked to a wide range of professional and organizational outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that poor work-life balance is associated with increased burnout, work-related stress, turnover intentions, and reduced job satisfaction among nurses working in diverse clinical settings (Abuhammad et al., 2025). Conversely, supportive organizational cultures, flexible scheduling, and adequate leadership support have been shown to enhance nurses' ability to balance professional and personal demands, thereby improving retention and workforce sustainability (Gautam et al., 2025). Research conducted in both high-income and low- and middle-income countries indicates that work-life balance is shaped by a complex interaction of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and contextual factors, underscoring the multidimensional nature of the concept (Widayana et al., 2025).

Although numerous empirical studies have examined predictors and outcomes of work-life balance, fewer studies have focused on clarifying the conceptual boundaries of the construct within nursing. Recent concept analyses in closely related areas, such as nurses' quality of work life, have demonstrated the value of systematically disentangling overlapping concepts, identifying defining attributes, and distinguishing antecedents from consequences (Asiri et al., 2025). Without similar conceptual refinement, work-life balance risks being conflated with related constructs such as job satisfaction, burnout, and quality of work life, limiting its theoretical usefulness and practical applicability. A rigorous concept analysis is therefore warranted to address ambiguities and provide a clear, nursing-specific understanding of work-life balance. Accordingly, this study employs Walker and Avant's concept analysis approach to systematically examine work-life balance in the nursing field. By synthesizing evidence from empirical, conceptual, and review studies, this analysis aims to clarify the defining attributes of work-life balance, identify its antecedents and consequences, and determine appropriate empirical referents for its measurement. Establishing conceptual clarity is

essential for advancing nursing theory, informing organizational policies, and guiding the development of effective interventions that support nurses' well-being and sustain the nursing workforce.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted Walker and Avant's eight-step concept analysis approach to systematically examine and clarify the concept of work-life balance within the nursing field. Concept analysis is widely used in nursing scholarship to address conceptual ambiguity, distinguish overlapping constructs, and establish theoretical clarity that supports research, practice, and policy development. The Walker and Avant method was selected because it offers a structured and transparent process for identifying defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents of complex and multidimensional concepts. This approach has been successfully applied in recent nursing concept analyses addressing work-related constructs, including quality of nursing work life and ecological care, demonstrating its suitability for examining concepts that span individual, organizational, and contextual domains (Asiri et al., 2025). To ensure methodological rigor and transparency, the concept analysis was informed by a systematic and replicable literature search strategy. A PRISMA-style process guided the identification, screening, and selection of relevant studies examining work-life balance among nurses and closely related nursing populations. The methodological procedures for each step of the concept analysis are described in detail in the following subsections.

### 2.1 Selection of the Concept

The concept of work-life balance was deliberately selected due to its growing prominence and persistent ambiguity within nursing literature and practice. Nursing is widely recognized as a high-intensity profession characterized by irregular working hours, shift rotations, emotional demands, and sustained responsibility for patient safety. These occupational conditions create significant challenges for nurses in maintaining a balance between professional obligations and personal life roles. Empirical studies consistently report that nurses experience difficulties achieving work-life balance, which in turn affects their psychological well-being, job satisfaction, retention, and performance (Gribben & Semple, 2021). Despite its frequent use, work-life balance remains inconsistently defined in nursing research. Some studies conceptualize it as time-based equilibrium between work and non-work roles, while others emphasize subjective satisfaction, role harmony, or reduced work-family conflict. Conceptual discussions have highlighted that organizational policies often promote work-life balance rhetorically, yet nurses' lived experiences frequently reflect imbalance and role strain (Lester, 2024). This lack of conceptual consistency complicates measurement, comparison of findings, and the design of effective interventions. The selection of work-life balance was further justified by evidence demonstrating its central role in critical nursing outcomes. Studies conducted across diverse healthcare contexts show strong associations between work-life balance and burnout, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and mental workload (Abuhammad et al., 2025; Utami, 2025). Moreover, emerging research highlights the influence of organizational culture, leadership, and technological innovations on nurses' work-life balance, underscoring the evolving nature of the concept (Gerlach et al., 2025; Rony et al., 2024). Given these complexities, a concept analysis was deemed necessary to clarify the meaning, scope, and application of work-life balance specifically within the nursing field.

## 2.2 Determination of the Aim of Analysis

The primary aim of this concept analysis was to clarify and refine the concept of work-life balance in the nursing field by systematically examining its defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents using Walker and Avant's methodological framework. Conceptual clarity is essential for advancing nursing knowledge, as poorly defined concepts limit theoretical development and hinder the translation of research into practice. Previous reviews have emphasized that work-life balance is often conflated with related constructs such as burnout, job satisfaction, and quality of work life, which obscures its distinct contribution to nursing outcomes (Brough et al., 2022). Specifically, this analysis sought to address three key objectives. First, it aimed to synthesize how work-life balance is currently conceptualized and operationalized in nursing-related literature, including empirical studies, reviews, and conceptual papers. Second, it aimed to identify the core characteristics that consistently define work-life balance in nursing contexts, thereby distinguishing it from overlapping constructs. Third, the analysis aimed to establish observable indicators and measurement approaches that can be used to assess work-life balance in nursing practice and research. Clarifying the concept of work-life balance is particularly important given its relevance to workforce sustainability and patient care quality. Empirical evidence indicates that nurses who experience poor work-life balance are more likely to report burnout, psychological distress, and intentions to leave the profession, exacerbating existing workforce shortages (Yildiz et al., 2021). Conversely, supportive organizational cultures and policies that enhance work-life balance contribute to improved retention and well-being (Gautam et al., 2025). By articulating a clear and nursing-specific understanding of work-life balance, this concept analysis aims to provide a foundation for future research, inform organizational strategies, and support evidence-based interventions targeting nurse well-being.

## 2.3 Identification of All Uses of the Concept

The identification of all uses of the concept involved a comprehensive examination of how work-life balance is defined and applied across nursing and related healthcare literature. In nursing studies, work-life balance is commonly used to describe the ability of nurses to manage professional responsibilities alongside personal, family, and social roles. However, the literature reveals substantial variation in emphasis, with some studies focusing on time-based balance and others highlighting psychological satisfaction or role harmony (Lester, 2024). Beyond nursing, work-life balance is widely used in organizational psychology, occupational health, and human resource management. These disciplines often conceptualize work-life balance as an interaction between work demands and personal resources, shaped by organizational policies and individual coping strategies. Such perspectives have informed nursing research examining factors such as workload, scheduling flexibility, leadership support, and organizational culture (Widayana et al., 2025). In healthcare settings, work-life balance is also linked to broader workforce outcomes, including retention, productivity, and service quality. Within nursing education, the concept is used to describe faculty members' ability to balance teaching, research, service responsibilities, and personal life. Scoping reviews indicate that nursing faculty face unique challenges related to workload intensification and role overload, further expanding the contextual uses of the concept (Moyer, 2022). Additionally, recent literature explores the role of technology, such as artificial intelligence-based scheduling systems, in shaping nurses' work-life balance, reflecting the concept's evolving application (Gerlach et al., 2025).

## 2.4 Determination of Defining Attributes

Defining attributes represent the core characteristics that consistently appear when a concept is present and distinguish it from related constructs. In this analysis, defining attributes of work-life balance were identified through repeated examination of nursing-focused empirical and conceptual literature. Studies consistently highlight balance between work and personal life roles as a fundamental attribute, emphasizing the ability to meet professional demands without compromising personal well-being (Brough et al., 2022). Another defining attribute is perceived role harmony, reflecting nurses' subjective sense of compatibility between work and non-work roles. This attribute extends beyond time allocation to include emotional and cognitive alignment between professional and personal responsibilities. Research demonstrates that nurses' perceptions of balance are strongly associated with job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Abuhammad et al., 2025). Organizational support, including flexible scheduling, supportive leadership, and fair workload distribution, also emerged as a defining attribute, as these factors enable nurses to achieve and sustain balance (Widayana et al., 2025). A further attribute identified is control and autonomy over work arrangements, particularly regarding scheduling and workload management. Studies indicate that autonomy enhances nurses' capacity to manage competing demands and reduces work-family conflict (Salam et al., 2025). Finally, well-being and satisfaction across life domains was consistently associated with work-life balance, distinguishing it from mere absence of conflict.

## 2.5 Identification of a Model Case

A model case exemplifies all defining attributes of a concept and illustrates its application in real-world nursing practice. Consider the case of a registered nurse working in a tertiary hospital who is employed on a rotating shift schedule but has access to flexible rostering options. The nurse participates in a unit-based scheduling system that allows staff to express preferences for shifts, supported by transparent leadership practices. As a result, the nurse is able to align work schedules with family responsibilities and personal activities. In this case, the nurse reports a sense of role harmony, feeling that professional responsibilities do not consistently interfere with personal life. Organizational support is evident through fair workload distribution and managerial responsiveness. The nurse experiences autonomy in managing work arrangements and perceives satisfaction across both work and non-work domains. Empirical studies suggest that such conditions are associated with reduced burnout, improved job satisfaction, and enhanced retention (Gautam et al., 2025). This model case demonstrates all defining attributes of work-life balance: balance between roles, perceived harmony, organizational support, autonomy, and well-being. It provides a clear illustration of how work-life balance manifests in nursing practice and serves as a reference point for comparison with other cases.

## 2.6 Identification of Borderline, Related, and Contrary Cases

Borderline cases include some, but not all, defining attributes of the concept. For example, a nurse who has flexible scheduling but experiences persistent emotional exhaustion due to high workload demonstrates partial work-life balance. While organizational support is present, well-being and role harmony are compromised, indicating a borderline case. Related cases involve concepts that are similar but not identical to work-life balance. Job satisfaction, for instance, is closely related but does not fully capture the balance between professional and personal roles. Studies show that nurses may report job satisfaction despite experiencing work-life imbalance, highlighting the distinction between these constructs (Wan Omar et al., 2021). Contrary cases clearly lack defining attributes. A nurse

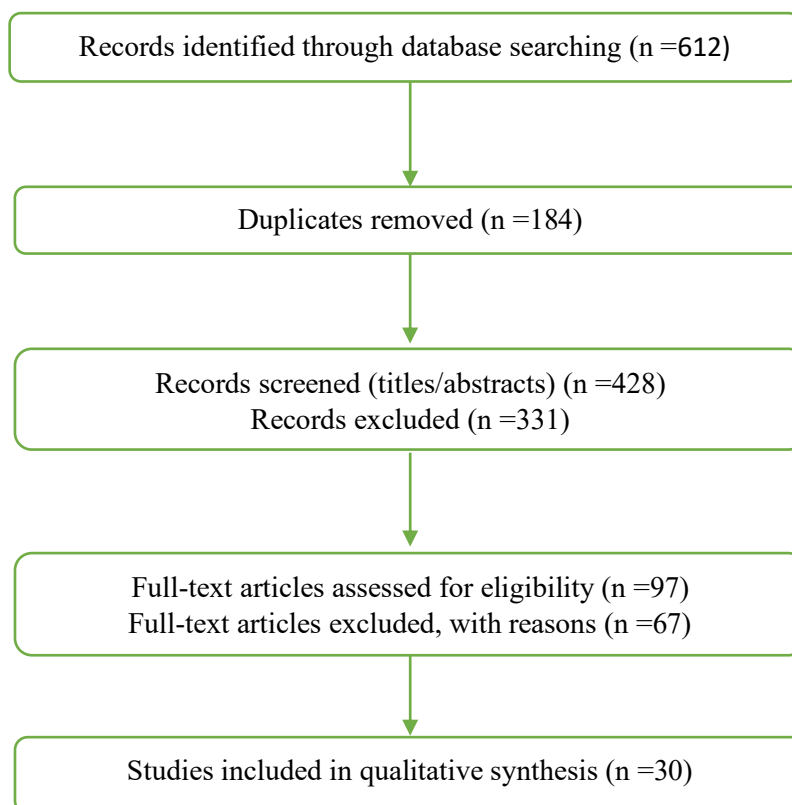
working excessive hours with rigid scheduling, limited autonomy, and high work-family conflict exemplifies a contrary case. Such conditions are consistently associated with burnout, dissatisfaction, and turnover intention (Yildiz et al., 2021). These cases help delineate the conceptual boundaries of work-life balance and reinforce its defining characteristics.

## 2.7 Identification of Antecedents and Consequences

Antecedents are conditions that must exist before work-life balance can occur. In nursing, key antecedents include manageable workloads, adequate staffing, supportive leadership, and flexible scheduling policies. Socio-ecological reviews emphasize that antecedents operate at individual, organizational, and policy levels (Widayana et al., 2025). Access to training in time management and supportive organizational cultures further facilitate balance (Salam et al., 2025). Consequences are outcomes that result from the presence or absence of work-life balance. Positive consequences include reduced burnout, enhanced job satisfaction, improved retention, and better psychological well-being (Abuhammad et al., 2025). At the organizational level, improved work-life balance contributes to workforce stability and quality of care. Conversely, poor work-life balance leads to negative outcomes such as increased turnover intention and diminished performance (Gautam et al., 2025).

## 2.8 Definition of Empirical Referents

Empirical referents are measurable indicators that demonstrate the presence of a concept in practice. In nursing research, work-life balance is commonly assessed using validated self-report scales that capture dimensions such as work interference with personal life and personal life interference with work. Measurement reviews highlight variability in existing instruments and emphasize the need for context-specific tools in healthcare settings (Alameddine et al., 2023). Additional empirical referents include observable outcomes such as reduced absenteeism, lower burnout scores, and improved retention rates. Studies linking work-life balance with mental workload and well-being further support these indicators (Utami, 2025). Together, these referents enable researchers and practitioners to assess work-life balance and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. To ensure methodological transparency and rigor, a PRISMA-style flow diagram was used to document the process of literature identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of studies informing this concept analysis. Figure 1 illustrates each stage of the search process, including the total number of records retrieved from electronic databases, the removal of duplicate records, and the application of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria during title, abstract, and full-text screening. The flow diagram also shows the final number of studies included for analysis, which formed the empirical and conceptual basis for identifying the defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents of work-life balance in the nursing field. By visually presenting the selection pathway, Figure 1 enhances the transparency, reproducibility, and credibility of the methodological approach underpinning this concept analysis.



**Figure 1:** PRISMA-style flow diagram of article search, screening, and selection process

### 3. Results of Concept Analysis

This section presents the findings of the concept analysis of work-life balance in the nursing field. Drawing on the studies summarized in Table 1, the results are organized according to Walker and Avant's framework, including defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents. The synthesis reflects consistent patterns across empirical, review, and conceptual studies conducted in diverse nursing contexts, including clinical practice, nursing education, leadership, and healthcare management.

#### 3.1 Defining Attributes

Analysis of the reviewed literature revealed several defining attributes that consistently characterize work-life balance in the nursing field. The most prominent attribute is the ability to achieve equilibrium between professional and personal life roles, which extends beyond time allocation to include perceived harmony and satisfaction across life domains. Multiple studies describe work-life balance as nurses' capacity to meet occupational demands without persistent interference with family, social, and personal responsibilities, emphasizing subjective perceptions of balance rather than objective workload alone (Lester, 2024). A second defining attribute is role harmony and reduced inter-role conflict, particularly between work and family or personal life. Empirical evidence demonstrates that when nurses experience high work interference with personal life or personal life interference with work, work-life balance is significantly compromised (Rony et al., 2023). Conversely, balanced role engagement is associated with improved psychological well-being and

professional functioning. Organizational support emerged as another defining attribute, encompassing leadership practices, scheduling flexibility, staffing adequacy, and supportive workplace culture. Studies consistently show that nurses' ability to achieve work-life balance is strongly influenced by institutional conditions rather than individual coping alone (Widayana et al., 2025). Supportive organizational cultures that explicitly promote work-life balance enable nurses to sustain equilibrium over time. Finally, perceived well-being and satisfaction across life domains constitutes a core attribute. Nurses who report effective work-life balance also report lower burnout, improved mental health, and greater job satisfaction, indicating that balance is inherently linked to holistic well-being rather than the mere absence of conflict (Abuhammad et al., 2025). Table 1 presents the author, year, context, methodological approach, and key findings of the studies included in this concept analysis.

**Table 1. Descriptive Data of the Research Studies**

No.	Citation	Setting (Domain)	Key Attributes (Conceptual / Methodological)
1	<b>Crawford et al. (2023)</b>	United States; nursing education	Qualitative survey; thematic analysis of faculty work-life balance experiences, highlighting workload, administrative support, and boundary setting.
2	<b>Widayana et al. (2025)</b>	Global; hospital nursing	Socio-ecological scoping review; identifies individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors influencing nurses' work-life balance.
3	<b>Lester (2024)</b>	Healthcare organizations; nursing	Conceptual discussion; examines definitions, organizational practices, and relevance of work-life balance to nurse well-being.
4	<b>Rashmi &amp; Kataria (2023)</b>	India; clinical nursing	Quantitative SEM study; work-life balance tested as a mediator between job resources and job satisfaction.
5	<b>Rony et al. (2024)</b>	Global; nursing practice and healthcare technology	Conceptual commentary proposing AI as a facilitator of work-life balance through reduced administrative burden, decision support, and workflow efficiency.
6	<b>Rashmi &amp; Kataria (2022)</b>	Global; multidisciplinary work-life balance research	Systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis identifying dominant themes, definitions, and research clusters in work-life balance studies.
7	<b>Asiri et al. (2025)</b>	Global; nursing workforce	Walker and Avant concept analysis clarifying quality of nursing work life, including balance, well-being, antecedents, consequences, and empirical indicators.
8	<b>Moghbeli et al. (2024)</b>	Global; nursing practice and education	Walker and Avant concept analysis defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents of ecological care in nursing.
9	<b>Brough et al. (2022)</b>	Global; occupational health and nursing	Conceptual review synthesizing definitions, antecedents, and consequences of work-life balance across work and non-work domains.
10	<b>Moyer (2022)</b>	Global; nursing education	Scoping review identifying perceptions, associated factors, and strategies related to work-life balance among nursing faculty.
11	<b>Gribben &amp; Semple (2021)</b>	Global; adult oncology nursing	Integrative review examining burnout-related factors influencing work-life balance in oncology nurses.
12	<b>Alameddine et al. (2023)</b>	Global; healthcare sector	Scoping review synthesizing measurement instruments and highlighting gaps in work-life balance assessment in healthcare.
13	<b>Obina et al. (2024)</b>	Uganda; healthcare workforce	Cross-sectional quantitative study identifying professional, scheduling, and social factors associated with perceived work-life balance.

No.	Citation	Setting (Domain)	Key Attributes (Conceptual / Methodological)
14	<b>Yildiz et al. (2021)</b>	Global; clinical nursing	Meta-analytic review demonstrating a positive relationship between work–family conflict and nurses’ turnover intention.
15	<b>Salam et al. (2025)</b>	Egypt; nursing leadership	Quasi-experimental intervention study showing time management training reduces work–family conflict among head nurses.
16	<b>Rani et al. (2022)</b>	Global; healthcare sector	Systematic review proposing an antecedent–outcome framework of work-life balance in healthcare.
17	<b>Mathebula et al. (2025)</b>	Global; nursing education	Scoping review identifying workload, staffing, stress, and technology as factors affecting nurse educators’ work-life balance.
18	<b>Gerlach et al. (2025)</b>	Global; clinical nursing	Qualitative focus group study examining perceptions of AI-based shift scheduling on fairness and work-life balance.
19	<b>Utami (2025)</b>	Indonesia; inpatient nursing	Cross-sectional quantitative study demonstrating a significant relationship between work-life balance and mental workload among female nurses.
20	<b>AbdELhay et al. (2025)</b>	Egypt; hospital nursing	Cross-sectional regression study identifying work-life balance and transformational leadership as predictors of nurse retention.
21	<b>Rony et al. (2023)</b>	Bangladesh; clinical nursing	Cross-sectional study linking work-life imbalance with employee unhappiness and negative work–family interactions.
22	<b>Abuhammad et al. (2025)</b>	Jordan; hospital nursing	Cross-sectional survey examining associations between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and burnout among nurses.
23	<b>Gautam et al. (2025)</b>	Private hospitals; nursing workforce	SEM study showing work-life balance dimensions influence job satisfaction and turnover intentions among nurses.
24	<b>Seo &amp; Yu (2023)</b>	South Korea; hospital nursing	Comparative descriptive study showing differences in work-life balance, organizational culture, and job satisfaction before turnover among clinical and non-clinical nurses.
25	<b>Cho (2021)</b>	South Korea; clinical nursing	Cross-sectional mediation study demonstrating organizational culture fully mediates the relationship between work-life balance and quality of nursing service.
26	<b>Yayla &amp; Eskici İlgin (2021)</b>	Turkey; hospital nursing	Cross-sectional correlational study linking work-life balance and coronaphobia to nurses’ psychological well-being during COVID-19.
27	<b>Ts (2022)</b>	Global; nursing workforce	Methodological study developing and validating a multidimensional quality of work life scale including work-life balance.
28	<b>Yilmaz &amp; Söyük (2022)</b>	Turkey; healthcare professionals	Scale validation study confirming reliability and validity of a work-life balance measurement tool and its association with burnout and well-being.
29	<b>Wan Omar et al. (2021)</b>	Malaysia; public hospital nursing	Conceptual framework proposing work-life balance dimensions as determinants of nurses’ job satisfaction.
30	<b>Fonseca et al. (2025)</b>	Global; nursing workforce	Walker and Avant–based concept analysis defining attributes and outcomes of quality of work life among nurses.

### 3.2 Antecedents

Antecedents of work-life balance refer to conditions that must exist prior to the occurrence of balance in the nursing context. Across the reviewed studies, manageable workload and adequate staffing were identified as primary antecedents. Excessive workload, understaffing, and extended working hours were consistently associated with work-life imbalance among nurses working in both clinical and educational settings (Mathebula et al., 2025). Flexible work arrangements also emerged as a critical antecedent. Nurses who had access to flexible scheduling, shift autonomy, or participatory rostering

systems were more likely to report positive work-life balance experiences (Obina et al., 2024). Leadership-related antecedents were also prominent, with supportive and transformational leadership styles facilitating balance by promoting fairness, autonomy, and psychological safety (AbdELhay et al., 2025). At the individual level, time management competence and professional experience functioned as enabling antecedents. Interventional evidence shows that time management training significantly reduces work–family conflict among nursing leaders, suggesting that skill development can precede and support work-life balance (Salam et al., 2025). Social support, both within and outside the workplace, further contributes to nurses' capacity to manage competing demands effectively (Widayana et al., 2025).

### 3.3 Consequences

The consequences of work-life balance in nursing are evident at individual, organizational, and patient-care levels. At the individual level, positive work-life balance is associated with reduced burnout, lower mental workload, and improved psychological well-being. Quantitative studies demonstrate that nurses who report better work-life balance experience significantly lower mental strain and emotional exhaustion (Utami, 2025). At the organizational level, work-life balance contributes to higher job satisfaction and increased retention. Empirical findings indicate that work-life balance is a significant predictor of nurses' intention to remain in their positions, thereby supporting workforce stability (Gautam et al., 2025). Conversely, work-life imbalance is linked to increased turnover intention and dissatisfaction, particularly in high-stress clinical environments (Yildiz et al., 2021). From a service perspective, improved work-life balance is indirectly associated with enhanced quality of nursing care. Studies show that organizational cultures supporting work-life balance positively influence service quality through improved nurse engagement and reduced fatigue (Cho, 2021). In contrast, sustained imbalance compromises nurses' ability to deliver safe and compassionate care.

### 3.4 Empirical Referents

Empirical referents of work-life balance are the observable indicators that demonstrate the presence of the concept in nursing practice and research. The most frequently used referents are validated self-report measurement instruments, such as work-life balance scales assessing work interference with personal life and personal life interference with work. Reviews of measurement tools highlight substantial variability in theoretical foundations and dimensions, underscoring the complexity of operationalizing the concept (Alameddine et al., 2023). Additional empirical referents include quality of work life scales, which incorporate work-life balance as a central dimension alongside job satisfaction, organizational culture, and well-being (Ts, 2022). Behavioral indicators, such as absenteeism rates, turnover intention, and retention outcomes, also function as indirect referents reflecting the impact of balance or imbalance in nursing settings (AbdELhay et al., 2025). Recent studies further suggest that emerging technological indicators, including AI-supported scheduling systems, may serve as future empirical referents by objectively capturing improvements in scheduling fairness and workload distribution (Gerlach et al., 2025).

### 3.5 Summary of Findings

The concept analysis revealed that work-life balance in the nursing field is a multidimensional construct defined by role equilibrium, organizational support, autonomy, and holistic well-being.

Antecedents operate across individual, organizational, and contextual levels, while consequences extend to nurse well-being, workforce sustainability, and quality of care. Empirical referents remain diverse, reflecting ongoing conceptual and measurement challenges. Collectively, these findings provide a coherent and nursing-specific conceptual foundation for work-life balance, supporting its use in future research, policy development, and practice-based interventions.

#### **4. Discussion**

This discussion interprets the findings of the concept analysis of work-life balance in the nursing field by situating them within existing theoretical frameworks, organizational and policy contexts, and practical nursing environments. The section also highlights implications for future research, drawing directly on the defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents identified in the results.

##### **4.1 Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this concept analysis reinforce work-life balance as a multidimensional and relational construct, rather than a purely temporal or individual phenomenon. The defining attributes identified align with contemporary theoretical perspectives that conceptualize work-life balance as the perceived harmony between professional and personal roles, shaped by both contextual and psychological factors. This supports broader conceptualizations that move beyond work-family dichotomies to include well-being, role satisfaction, and life integration across multiple domains (Brough et al., 2022). The analysis further contributes to theory development by clarifying the distinction between work-life balance and related constructs such as burnout, job satisfaction, and quality of work life. While these concepts are interrelated, the findings demonstrate that work-life balance functions as a foundational mechanism influencing these outcomes rather than being synonymous with them. This distinction is consistent with prior concept analyses that emphasize the need to avoid conceptual overlap in nursing research (Asiri et al., 2025). From a nursing-specific perspective, the results highlight the central role of organizational and leadership contexts in shaping work-life balance, thereby extending individual-level theories toward systems-oriented explanations. The prominence of leadership support, scheduling practices, and institutional culture underscores the relevance of socio-ecological perspectives in theorizing work-life balance among nurses (Widayana et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings strengthen the conceptual coherence of work-life balance and support its positioning as a core construct within nursing workforce and well-being theories.

##### **4.2 Management and Policy Implications**

The concept analysis yields important implications for healthcare management and policy formulation. The identification of organizational support, staffing adequacy, and scheduling flexibility as key antecedents underscores the responsibility of healthcare institutions in fostering work-life balance among nurses. Managerial approaches that prioritize efficiency without addressing workload sustainability risk perpetuating imbalance and its negative consequences (Lester, 2024). Policy-level implications are particularly salient in relation to nurse retention and workforce stability. Empirical evidence consistently links work-life balance with reduced turnover intention and improved retention, indicating that balance-supportive policies are not merely welfare initiatives but strategic investments in human capital (Gautam et al., 2025). Leadership development programs that

emphasize transformational leadership and fairness in work allocation may therefore play a critical role in sustaining the nursing workforce (AbdELhay et al., 2025). At a broader policy level, the findings suggest the need for institutionalized work-life balance frameworks within healthcare systems. Policies that mandate flexible scheduling options, regulate excessive working hours, and integrate work-life balance indicators into organizational performance metrics may contribute to long-term system resilience. Such approaches are especially relevant in high-demand healthcare environments where chronic imbalance has become normalized.

### 4.3 Practical Applications

The practical applications of this concept analysis are directly relevant to nursing practice, leadership, and education. At the practice level, recognizing work-life balance as a measurable and modifiable construct enables nurse managers to design targeted interventions that address both individual and organizational determinants. Interventions such as time management training have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing work–family conflict among nursing leaders, highlighting the value of skill-based support mechanisms (Salam et al., 2025). Technological innovations also present emerging practical applications. Studies exploring AI-supported scheduling systems suggest that technology can enhance fairness, transparency, and predictability in work schedules, thereby supporting nurses' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities (Gerlach et al., 2025). However, the integration of such technologies must be guided by ethical and human-centered considerations to avoid depersonalization of care. In nursing education, embedding work-life balance awareness into curricula may prepare future nurses to navigate professional demands more sustainably. Educators and administrators can utilize validated measurement tools to assess balance and identify early signs of imbalance, enabling proactive intervention (Alameddine et al., 2023). These practical applications demonstrate that work-life balance is not an abstract ideal but an actionable concept with tangible implications for nursing outcomes.

### 4.4 Future Research Directions

Despite growing attention to work-life balance in nursing, several research gaps remain. Future studies should prioritize theoretical refinement by examining how work-life balance interacts with emerging constructs such as digital work environments, hybrid care models, and technological augmentation of nursing roles. Conceptual clarity will be essential to prevent further overlap with related constructs such as burnout and quality of work life (Fonseca et al., 2025). Methodologically, there is a need for longitudinal and interventional research designs to establish causal pathways between work-life balance and key nursing outcomes. Much of the existing evidence relies on cross-sectional data, limiting the ability to assess temporal dynamics and long-term effects (Rony et al., 2023). Future research should also explore culturally sensitive measurement tools that reflect diverse healthcare contexts, particularly in underrepresented regions. Finally, nurse subgroups such as educators, leaders, and nurses in specialized clinical areas warrant greater attention. Scoping reviews indicate that these populations experience unique balance challenges that remain insufficiently explored (Mathebula et al., 2025). Addressing these gaps will enhance the applicability of work-life balance theory and support evidence-based policy and practice across the nursing profession.

## 5. Conclusion

This concept analysis has clarified the meaning, scope, and significance of work-life balance within the nursing field by systematically applying Walker and Avant's methodological framework. The analysis demonstrates that work-life balance in nursing is a multidimensional and dynamic concept characterized by role equilibrium, organizational support, autonomy, and holistic well-being. Rather than being solely an individual responsibility, work-life balance emerges as a relational construct shaped by interactions between nurses, workplace structures, leadership practices, and broader health system conditions. The findings highlight that work-life balance is preceded by identifiable antecedents, including manageable workloads, flexible scheduling, supportive leadership, and access to personal and professional resources. When these conditions are present, nurses are better positioned to navigate competing role demands effectively. Conversely, the absence of such antecedents contributes to sustained imbalance, with far-reaching consequences. Positive work-life balance is associated with improved psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and workforce retention, while imbalance is linked to burnout, increased turnover intention, and compromised quality of care. The identification of clear defining attributes and empirical referents strengthens the conceptual clarity of work-life balance and supports its consistent measurement and application in nursing research and practice. By distinguishing work-life balance from related constructs such as burnout and quality of work life, this analysis contributes to reducing conceptual ambiguity in the literature. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of recognizing work-life balance as a core component of sustainable nursing practice and workforce resilience. Clarifying this concept provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions, informed policies, and future research aimed at enhancing nurse well-being and ensuring high-quality patient care across diverse healthcare settings.

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