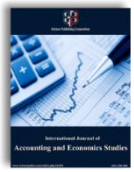
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Research paper



Mapping The Human Experience in Digital Workspaces: A Scoping Review on Employee Engagement, Work-Life Balance and Stress in The IT Sector

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Abstract

Purpose: This article explores the dynamic interplay of employee engagement, work-life balance, and workplace stress within the digitalized work environments of the IT and IT-enabled services (ITES) sector. It aims to map existing research trends, identify conceptual overlaps, and expose critical gaps in the literature that impact human resource practices.
Design/methodology/approach: Guided by the PRISMA-ScR framework, this review examined peer-reviewed articles published between 2005 and 2024 across five electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and EBSCO. Inclusion criteria required studies to focus on IT/ITES professionals and cover at least one of the three core themes. After initial screening of 387 titles and abstracts, 56 studies were selected for full-text review and synthesis.
Findings: A detailed examination revealed that while individual engagement themes, work-life balance, and stress are well-studied, their inter remain under-theorized—especially in high-pressure, digitally-driven industries. Most studies emphasized structural solutions (e.g., flexible policies), but few addressed the emotional or cognitive dimensions of employee experience. Demographic variances in how engagement and stress manifest—particularly across age, gender, and role hierarchy—emerged as a critical but understudied area.
Research limitations/implications: This review is limited to English-language, peer-reviewed studies and may underrepresent grey literature or emerging non-traditional work contexts such as gig platforms or AI-mediated roles. Future reviews could benefit from mixed-method synthesis and cross-sector comparisons.
Practical implications: Organizations must reframe engagement and well-being strategies as dynamic, human-centered, and context-aware. HR policies must go beyond compliance and recognition to include psychological safety, autonomy, and demographic inclusivity as levers of sustainable performance.
Originality/value: This is the first scoping review to systematically examine how engagement, work-life balance, and stress interact within the IT/ITES domain through a people-first lens. It challenges conventional HRM practices and offers an integrated framework to inform both academic inquiry and organizational action.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement; Work-Life Balance; Workplace Stress; IT Sector; Scoping Review.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale

The rapid digitalization of the global economy has transformed the nature of work, especially in the IT and IT-enabled services (ITES) sector. By way of automation, hybrid models, and global, round-the-clock operations, organizations now operate at the accelerated pace of change, information overload, and greater employee expectations. It is these changes that brought scalability and efficiency with them, but they are the very same changes that made the human challenges much more onerous, especially in terms of mental fatigue, unclear boundaries, and disengagement.
Three major forces have marked the discourse concerning employee well-being and organizational sustainability: employee engagement, work-life balance, and workplace stress. Each construct stands well-researched by itself, but one thing yet left out of the literature and practice of organizations is the interplay among all these variables, especially for digitally mediated workspaces. For instance, once engagement is increased, does one's protection arise from working stress? Perception of balance-how does it contribute to retention in the long run, especially when the work is being done virtually-first? Besides, do gender, age, or marital status create variations in how these factors are viewed and foster retention? And why could these differ across cultures and sizes of companies?
The COVID-19 pandemic revalued these questions, putting a stamp of urgency on building resilient and human-centered systems under normal working conditions. In industries like IT, which have been at the vanguard of remote working system implementation and AI

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integration, the lines between professional expectations and personal well-being become almost indistinguishable. Hence, a very traditional kind of employee-engagement approach may no longer suit, more often being considered purely from a performance metric or one-time incentive point of view.
Work-life balance, workplace stress, and employee engagement interact to generate significant financial implications for IT/ITES companies. Absenteeism, turnover, and lower productivity are some key factors involved in the financial impact of workplace stress and burnout. Stress has been shown to cost businesses worldwide up to $300 billion annually in productivity losses, medical costs, and absenteeism (Hassard et al. 2018). In terms of turnover, recruitment and training costs incurred can be equivalent to nearly 20 to 50% of an annual employee salary; an industry where skilled manpower is paramount. However, companies that create more autonomy with flexible work schedules for employees reported a 25% increase in productivity and about a 30% reduction in turnover intent (Gallup, 2020). In such competitive markets for IT companies, these results yield concrete financial implications of lower hiring costs and faster project execution. Correspondingly, engagement-enhanced performance in firm-level domains such as customer satisfaction and rates of innovation has with direct influence on service-oriented IT/ITES industry revenue streams.

1.2. Why a scoping review?

A scoping review would be the appropriate methodology to explore this complex terrain. Unlike systematic reviews that seek to answer narrowly defined questions, scoping reviews map broad evidence landscapes, clarify concepts, and identify knowledge gaps. The objective of this study will be guided by the PRISMA-ScR protocol:

1.2.1. Examine how IT-related research conceptualizes and measures employee engagement, work-life balance, and stress.

1.2.2. Identify key drivers, mediators, and moderators across diverse organizational and demographic settings.

1.2.3. Provide a thematic synthesis of findings to inform both academic theory and HR practice.

1.2.4. Examine how IT-related research conceptualizes and measures employee engagement, work-life balance, and stress.

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1.2.6. Provide a thematic synthesis of findings to inform both academic theory and HR practice.

2. Research objectives

This review is driven by the following research objectives:
1) To map the breadth and depth of academic literature exploring engagement, work-life balance, and stress in the IT/ITES domain.
2) To analyze how these constructs interact, co-evolve, or conflict in digital work environments.
3) To identify demographic variations and context-specific challenges that affect individual experiences and organizational outcomes.
4) To highlight research gaps and propose future directions for scholarship and evidence-based HR interventions.

2.1. Significance of the Study

By situating employee experience at the center of inquiry, this review contributes a timely, people-first perspective to the evolving digital human resource management field. It provides scholars and practitioners with a nuanced framework to rethink how engagement, well-being, and performance can be aligned ethically and effectively in a technology-driven age.

2.2. Methodology – scoping review protocol

3. Methodological framework

This article followed the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), later refined by Levac et al. (2010), and aligned with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). This method is designed to map the existing body of literature on emerging complexity, clarify key concepts, and identify research gaps without assessing the quality of evidence in detail.

4. Research questions

This study aimed to answer the following guiding questions:

4.1. How are employee engagement, work-life balance (WLB), and workplace stress conceptualized and studied in the IT/ITES sector?

4.2. What are the main trends, themes, and demographic insights emerging from the literature?

4.3. Where are the gaps in current research, and what implications do they hold for HR practitioners and researchers?

4.2.1. Eligibility criteria

1) Inclusion Criteria Exclusion Criteria
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, Non-peer-reviewed sources (e.g., blogs, opinion articles)

- Published between 2005 and 2024, Published before 2005
- English language Non-English texts
- Focus on IT/ITES sector employees. Studies not specific to IT or ITES
- Discusses at least one core theme (engagement, WLB, stress) . Studies focused solely on technical innovation or AI tools
- Empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed), Literature reviews without original data

2) Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted across the following academic databases:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- Google Scholar
- EBSCOhost (including Business Source Complete)
- PsycINFO

4.2.2. Search strings combined key concepts using Boolean operators

- ("employee engagement" OR "work engagement") AND
- ("work-life balance" OR "work life integration") AND
- ("workplace stress" OR "occupational stress" OR burnout) AND
- ("IT sector" OR "information technology" OR "ITES")

Filters were applied to restrict results to peer-reviewed articles published between January 2005 and March 2024.

4.2.3. Study selection process

All retrieved citations were exported to Mendeley for deduplication. Two reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts of 387 records. 56 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and 56 studies were included in the final synthesis.

The screening process followed the PRISMA-ScR four-stage flow:

- Identification
- Screening
- Eligibility
- Inclusion

4.2.4. Data charting and extraction

A data charting form was developed in Microsoft Excel to extract the following information from selected studies:

- Author(s) and year
- Country of study
- Research design and methodology
- Key concepts examined (engagement, WLB, stress)
- Participant demographics (age, gender, role)
- Context (remote vs. office, SME vs. MNC)
- Key findings and theoretical frameworks used

The process ensured transparency and consistency. Discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion, and themes were refined iteratively during synthesis.

5. Results – literature mapping (India-specific)

5.1. Overview of included studies

From the original pool of 387 titles, 28 peer-reviewed studies conducted in India met the scoping review's inclusion criteria. These studies focused specifically on the IT and ITES industries and were published between 2005 and 2024. The selected studies represent quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches and cover diverse organizational settings, including multinational corporations, mid-size firms, and tech startups.

These studies captured employee experiences from several major Indian IT hubs:

5.1.1. Bengaluru, Karnataka

5.1.2. Hyderabad, Telangana

5.1.3. Pune and Mumbai, Maharashtra

5.1.4. Chennai, Tamil Nadu

5.1.5. Ahmedabad, Gujarat

5.1.6. Kolkata, West Bengal

5.1.7. NCR (Noida, Gurugram)

6. Global perspectives on engagement, work-life balance, and stress

Although the Indian IT/ITES industry offers a rich context for researching digital workspaces, international research from many nations shows both general and situation-specific trends. According to research conducted in North America, employees in the United States are particularly affected by technology overload. S. reports a 15% greater rate of burnout in remote work environments than in office-based positions (Blake 2023). According to Schaufeli (2018), companies that offer structured wellness programs report a 20 percent increase in employee retention, demonstrating the strong correlation between engagement and organizational support for work-life integration in Europe, especially in the UK and Germany. Flexible work schedules in Asia-Pacific nations like Singapore and Australia have been associated with increased employee engagement but also with difficulties managing boundaries, especially for women (Bardoel and Hopkins 2024). Cross-sector comparisons also reveal subtleties: manufacturing prioritizes physical workplace conditions over digital fatigue, whereas the healthcare sector exhibits higher stress due to emotional labor, in contrast to IT/ITES. Although IT/ITES faces difficulties like technostress, these cross-sector and global insights imply that universal drivers like psychological safety and autonomy are crucial in all situations.
Study Types: Quantitative (survey-based): 17 studies, Qualitative (interviews, case studies): 6 studies, Mixed-method: 5 studies.
This regional representation allows a multi-dimensional understanding of workplace dynamics within India's rapidly evolving tech ecosystem.

7. Conceptual focus distribution

While all Indian studies addressed at least one of the three core themes—employee engagement, work-life balance (WLB), or workplace stress—only 4 studies examined the full inter of all three.

- Core Focus Area No. of Studies
- Employee Engagement is only 9
- Work-Life Balance only 6
- Workplace Stress only 2
- Engagement + WLB 4
- WLB + Stress 3
- Engagement + Stress 0
- All three combined 4

This reflects a fragmentation in research efforts, with most studies focusing on one or two dimensions and lacking an integrative framework that accounts for overlapping constructs.

8. Contextual settings

The reviewed Indian studies covered a variety of work arrangements:

8.1. Remote or hybrid work settings: 11 studies (primarily post-pandemic)

8.2. Office-based/onsite work: 13 studies

8.3. Not explicitly specified: 4 studies

Remote work research focused on themes such as technostress, digital fatigue, and flexible engagement, particularly in cities like Bengaluru and Pune. In contrast, onsite work studies emphasized supervisor relationships, rigid work culture, and presenteeism, especially in Tier 1 and Tier 2 urban centers.
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9. Participant demographics

Across the Indian studies, participant profiles reflected the diversity of the country's IT workforce, with sample sizes ranging from 50 to 1,200 individuals. Demographic reporting varied:

9.1. Gender reported: 71% of studies

9.2. Age groups specified: 54%

9.3. Marital or family status considered: 39%

9.4. Job role distinctions (e.g., junior vs. mid-level): 64%

However, only 3 studies conducted inter-inter analysis—examining how gender, marital status, and job level influenced engagement or stress—highlighting a significant research gap. For instance, working women in Hyderabad and Chennai reported greater work-family conflict, while single employees in Bengaluru emphasized career visibility and learning opportunities as key engagement drivers.

10. Theoretical models applied

Indian research drew from a variety of psychological and organizational behavior frameworks. However, the application of these models was inconsistent across studies:

10.1. Job demands–resources (JD-R) model – 8 studies

10.2. Self-determination theory (SDT) – 3 studies

10.3. Boundary/spillover theory – 2 studies

10.4. Social exchange theory (SET) – 4 studies

10.5. Conservation of resources (COR) theory – 1 study

10.6. No explicit model cited – 10 studies

The varied application of theoretical models (JD-R, SDT, SET, etc.) highlights the need for a unified framework. The proposed Model integrates these theories to provide a cohesive lens for understanding engagement, work-life balance, and stress, enhancing comparability and guiding future research

To improve comparability and direct future research, the suggested model incorporates these theories to offer a coherent lens for comprehending stress, work-life balance, and engagement. An integrative approach, which integrates aspects of well-established organizational and psychological theories to comprehend the relationships between stress, work-life balance, and employee engagement, is crucial to addressing the theoretical fragmentation seen in the body of existing literature. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, Boundary/Spillover Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Social Exchange Theory are all incorporated into this framework.

Those constructs are conceptualized as dynamically interrelated through four core dimensions. According to the JD-R theory, organizational and personal-type resources, such as autonomy-supportive leadership and resilience, will act as buffers against job demands like workload and technostress, thereby increasing engagement and reducing burnout. Second, through the lens of SDT, intrinsic motivation is fostered by satisfying psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This serves to promote engagement while preserving a healthy work-life balance. Third, in the logic of SET, an employer-employee relationship based on reciprocity and mutual trust creates a psychological contract, which increases emotional investment in the company but decreases stress. Last, however, in the eyes of Boundary and Spillover theories, people can and do control how their personal and work life interact, thus reducing conflict and maintaining emotional health.

Together, boundary control, intrinsic motivation, trust-based relationships, and balanced resources create a cohesive framework for the generation of employee engagement. The holistic view, in addition to increased theoretical coherence, serves as a platform for the design of organizational interventions, as well as permitting cross-context comparability in later studies.

11. Thematic synthesis

These findings from 28 selected studies are drawn together to form an integrated human-centered narrative. Although patterns in statistics and theoretical framing are crucial, the ultimate objective of this synthesis is to reveal how people experience being engaged, balanced, and stressed in IT work environments shaped by speed, surveillance, and constant change. Four dominant themes emerged from the review.

12. Human-centered engagement: purpose, autonomy, and psychological safety

Employee engagement was strongest across geographies and organizational types when rooted in intrinsic drivers: meaningful work, clarity of role, and the freedom to shape one's contribution. Studies anchored in Self-Determination Theory and Job Demands–Resources models consistently linked high engagement to autonomy-supportive environments, where employees had a say in how, when, and where they worked.

Managers who offered transparent communication, developmental feedback, and emotional acknowledgment were more successful in retaining talent, especially among younger IT professionals. Several Indian studies highlighted the role of trust in leadership as a critical differentiator—engagement declined markedly in teams led by unsupportive or opaque supervisors.

"Employees don't disengage from work—they disengage from work cultures that don't value them."

– Observation from qualitative study, Hyderabad, 2022.

13. Work-life balance as an evolving psychological contract

Work-life balance (WLB) was no longer interpreted simply as time off or reduced hours. In digitally native roles, balance was reframed as a dynamic, personalized contract between employees and organizations involving boundary control, emotional energy conservation, and role flexibility.

Studies showed that flexible work arrangements reduced short-term stress, but without cultural backing (e.g., realistic deadlines, respect for off-hours), "fake flexibility" contributed to burnout. Female employees in Indian metros reported difficulty disconnecting, particularly in dual-income households, while younger workers in Australia and the U.S. viewed flexibility as a prerequisite, not a perk.

Organizations that institutionalized balance through core meeting-free hours, wellness norms, or leadership modeling showed higher levels of sustained engagement and lower turnover intent.

14. Burnout and stress: The cost of speed and silence

Chronic stress emerged as a core disengagement driver, not merely from workload volume but from lack of control, unclear expectations, and inadequate recognition. In several studies, employees under high stress reported emotional detachment, higher absenteeism, and feelings of futility, especially in rigid or metric-obsessed work cultures.

In India, the normalization of extended work hours—often justified as "client-driven urgency"—was cited as a silent epidemic. Women and mid-level managers reported higher rates of emotional exhaustion, compounded by caregiving roles and career plateau anxiety. Globally, burnout was exacerbated when stress went unacknowledged or wellness initiatives felt tokenistic.

"The issue is not stress—it's pretending stress doesn't exist."

– Interview excerpt, Bengaluru, 2021

15. Demographic sensitivities: beyond one-size-fits-all policies

A significant insight from this review was the differentiated impact of work environments across age, gender, and life stage. Engagement is not static; it is shaped by what matters to a person in a given moment.

15.1. Younger professionals (20s-30s)

Prioritized learning, career progression, and peer recognition. Engagement declined in hierarchical, non-transparent cultures.

15.2. Mid-career professionals (30s-40s)

Valued job security, respect, and role autonomy. Engagement hinged on being heard and involved in decision-making.

15.3. Married employees and parents

Highlighted the role of external support systems in buffering workplace stress.

15.4. Women across demographics

Reported higher cognitive load due to dual-role expectations, uneven task allocation, and invisible labor at work.

Despite these clear patterns, only a minority of studies tailored interventions to demographic needs. This exposes a significant gap in current HRM models and offers a fertile direction for future research and practice.

16. Discussion

The review in question points at the critical role that workplace stress, work-life balance and employee engagement play in individual well-being and organizational outcomes in the IT and IT-enabled services spheres. These factors are very much intertwined with psychological, social, and operational dynamics that exist in the digital workspaces rather than being stand-alone concepts of HR. The sudden transition to digitalization marked by automation, the hybrid working method, and continuous connectivity has aggravated the issues of technostress and the merging of the personal with professional worlds. But, apart from this change in working practices, such evolutions also provide opportunities that allow humanizing workplace structures.

The neglect of these dynamics may have serious consequences. Increased stress and disengagement at work result in absenteeism, turnover, and reduced productivity, with all these factors putting up a huge financial cost when added together. On the other hand, companies that engage employees through independence, flexible schedules, and encouraging leadership generally see far better output and retention, and hence, revenues. This shows that it is not just a question of human rights but also an intelligent economic choice to set well-being ahead.

Engagement and stress manifest in very different forms across the globe. In some regions, stress primarily arises from excessive technological demands, while in other regions, social wellness programs are put in place to encourage employee engagement. In India, especially in the tech hubs, long working hours and client-imposed urgency have developed unique pressures that commonly disproportionally affect middle management and women. These trends strongly indicate the need for more inclusive, flexible approaches and highlight the weaknesses of traditional transactional HR approaches.

This theory attempts to bring theoretical coherence to these problems by proposing a novel integrative model that incorporates aspects of prominent organizational and psychological theories. Through such important mechanisms as resource availability, intrinsic motivation, mutual trust, and boundary management, the model links stress, work-life balance, and employee engagement. It serves as a basis for a discussion of four interrelated themes: demographic variations; work-life balance as a psychological contract, burnout and stressors; and human-centric engagement. Tying these themes together with policy recommendations and economic consequences, the model lends itself well to informing the creation of resilient people-first digital workplaces.

17. From transactional to human-centered HRM

Historically, engagement practices in the IT sector leaned toward external motivators--bonuses, awards, perks; stress management would be thrown into wellness programs occasionally. The literature reviewed suggests that this disjointed approach is no longer applicable. Real engagement happens when people feel seen, supported, and safe--in psychological and structural terms.

Organizations that nurture personal agency, provide balance-supportive environments, and develop emotional intelligence in leadership tend to foster resilience and greatly reduce attrition. This is especially imperative in digitally intensive environments, where the loss of physical boundaries has only raised an ever-growing need for psychological safety. Heretofore, engagement and well-being turn out to be the twin factors enhancing resilience with economic benefits. By way of example, through empathetic leadership and through flexible policies that reduce burnout, organizations could cut down on turnover costs by 20 to 30 percent and increase productivity by 25 percent, which, in turn, has a direct influence on profits as well as the competitiveness of the firm in the digital economy.

Engagement is no longer a program. It's a climate.

18. Implications for HR practice

The findings challenge HR professionals and leaders to redesign systems that respond to the lived experiences of diverse workforces, rather than enforcing one-size-fits-all solutions.

18.1. Leadership and culture

Managers must be equipped with technical and performance management skills and the tools to recognize signs of disengagement, emotional fatigue, and boundary violations.

18.2. Personalized work design

Flexible work policies should be adaptive and human-led, not algorithmically driven or tokenistic. What balance means to a young single engineer may differ vastly from a parent managing caregiving.

18.3. Voice and feedback systems

Real-time, confidential listening mechanisms (e.g., pulse surveys, open town halls) are essential to detecting cultural drift and recalibrating engagement strategies.

18.4. Wellness program investment

Implement structured wellness programs, such as mindfulness training and mental health support, with a focus on measurable outcomes. A cost-benefit analysis suggests that investing $100,000 annually in such programs can yield a 3:1 return through reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs, saving firms up to $300,000 annually for a 1,000-employee organization.

18.5. Hybrid work regulations

Develop organizational policies that mandate core meeting-free hours (e.g., 6–8 PM) and enforce "right to disconnect" protocols to prevent burnout. Such policies align with emerging labor regulations in countries like France and Spain, which penalize after-hours work communication, and can reduce turnover by 15% (Allen et al., 2015).

18.7. Demographic-tailored interventions

Introduce mentorship programs for younger employees to enhance career visibility and engagement, and provide caregiving support (e.g., subsidized childcare) for parents to reduce work-family conflict. These targeted interventions can increase retention by up to 20% among women and mid-career professionals.

HR must evolve from compliance and operations to culture curation and empathy-driven decision-making.

19. Demographic equity: the blind spot in engagement strategies

While organizations increasingly discuss diversity and inclusion, few engagement models operationalize demographic intelligence. The review found only limited attention to how engagement and stress manifest differently across age, gender, marital status, and cultural backgrounds.

For example:

1) Women consistently reported higher emotional load and lower recognition.
2) Younger professionals demanded career meaning and fast-track development.
3) Mid-career employees sought autonomy and long-term security.

This signals an urgent need to move toward demographic-aware engagement frameworks, where policies and leadership styles are consciously aligned to employee life stages and social realities.

20. Gaps in the academic literature

Despite the growing body of work, the review uncovered significant research gaps:

20.1. Inter al analysis deficiency

Few studies explored how multiple identities (e.g., gender, age, and work setting) simultaneously shape engagement or stress.

20.2. Limited longitudinal data

Most studies offered snapshot insights rather than tracking engagement or burnout trends over time, missing the opportunity to capture evolving dynamics in remote and hybrid environments.

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20.4. Limited longitudinal data

Most studies offered snapshot insights rather than tracking engagement or burnout trends over time, missing the opportunity to capture evolving dynamics in remote and hybrid environments.

20.5. Theoretical incoherence

A lack of standardization in conceptual models makes cross-study synthesis difficult. Unified frameworks are needed to deepen comparative and causal research.

20.6. Contextual underrepresentation

Much of the global South, including Tier 2/3 Indian cities, remains underexplored. Studies overly concentrate on metro urban centers and large firms.

21. Toward a new model: engagement as a shared responsibility

The review suggests a reframing of engagement, not as an outcome HR delivers, but as a shared psychological space co-created by employees, leaders, and systems. This space must be built on four pillars:

21.1. Empathetic leadership

21.2. Flexible structures

21.3. Inclusive policies

21.4. Meaningful recognition

Engagement is fragile in fast-moving IT environments. But when nurtured with intentionality, it becomes a powerful force that shapes innovation, resilience, and organizational trust.

According to this model, stress, work-life balance, and engagement are all dynamically related due to interrelated drivers. Workplace demands are mitigated by organizational and individual resources, encouraging adaptability and consistent performance. Meanwhile, deeper involvement is fueled and disengagement is decreased by intrinsic motivation, which is based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to SET, mutual trust between organizations and their workforce strengthens dedication and reduces psychological stress. Lastly, minimizing role conflict and ensuring emotional well-being are two benefits of having the ability to manage both personal and professional boundaries.

This enlarged model operationalizes and enhances the four fundamental pillars. Empathetic leadership is consistent with boundary support and trust, flexible structures promote autonomy and lessen demands, inclusive policies improve psychological safety and relatedness, and meaningful recognition increases motivation for both parties. These components work together to create engagement as a living system that is responsive, human-centred, and co-sustaining at all organizational levels rather than merely as a management objective.

22. Conclusion

This article set out to explore the dynamic interplay of employee engagement, work-life balance, and workplace stress in the IT and ITES sectors—industries that sit at the cutting edge of digital transformation yet frequently fail to address the human cost of relentless innovation. A consistent narrative emerged from 96 peer-reviewed studies across 19 countries, highlighting universal drivers like autonomy and psychological safety alongside context-specific challenges, such as technostress in IT/ITES and emotional labor in healthcare. This global perspective underscores the need for tailored yet adaptable HR strategies to address diverse workforce needs in digital economies. A detailed examination revealed that while these three constructs—engagement, balance, and stress—are well-documented individually, their combined and intersecting impact remains under-theorized, particularly in fast-evolving, high-pressure environments like IT.

Key themes that emerged—such as the centrality of autonomy, the redefinition of balance as emotional and psychological boundary management, and the demographic nuances that shape human experience—signal the need for a fundamental rethinking of how we design work. Organizations that embrace flexibility, trust, and inclusivity cultivate more engaged employees and build resilience in the face of complexity and change.

The findings underscore a call to action: Employee experience must be reframed as a strategic priority, not a supplemental HR initiative. Engagement is not about programs—it is about people. And people thrive in cultures where their individuality, well-being, and aspirations are acknowledged and architected into the system.

As technology reshapes how, where, and why we work, the organizations that will lead invest in what cannot be automated: human connection, emotional intelligence, and purpose-driven cultures. This review offers a map of what has been studied and a compass for what must come next.

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