

# Understanding the Factors That Shape Teachers' Work-Life Integration in the Malaysian Context

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## ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper examines the multifaceted factors influencing teachers' work-life integration (WLI) in the Malaysian context, emphasising four key dimensions: workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic factors. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, Boundary Theory, and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, the study proposes an integrative framework that conceptualises WLI as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction of personal, organisational, and systemic elements. A synthesis of current global and Malaysian literature reveals that teachers face increasing challenges in balancing professional and personal roles due to excessive workload, bureaucratic pressures, and the rapid expansion of digital teaching responsibilities. These demands have blurred work-home boundaries, contributing to heightened stress and burnout. Conversely, supportive organisational climates, empathetic leadership, and adequate institutional resources are shown to enhance teachers' capacity for effective integration. The paper highlights the need for holistic strategies that go beyond individual coping mechanisms to address structural and policy-level reforms. It recommends that the Malaysian Ministry of Education incorporate WLI indicators into teacher management frameworks and prioritise workload reduction, digital boundary management, and gender-sensitive support systems. By offering a theoretically grounded framework and practical recommendations, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on teacher well-being, retention, and educational sustainability. It advances the understanding of WLI as a systemic and multidimensional construct, providing a foundation for future empirical validation and policy innovation in the Malaysian educational landscape.

**Keywords:** Work-Life Integration, teacher workload, digitalisation, organisational support, Malaysia, Job Demands-Resources Model

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding how teachers integrate their work and personal lives has become increasingly crucial in Malaysia, as growing workloads, administrative obligations, and post-pandemic digital demands continue to blur the boundary between school and home. Work-life integration (WLI) which emphasises blending roles and managing spillover rather than rigidly separating domains provides a valuable lens for examining teachers' daily experiences (Chauhan et al., 2024). Unlike traditional notions of work-life balance, which assume distinct boundaries between professional and personal spheres, WLI acknowledges that teachers often carry overlapping responsibilities across contexts.

Recent Malaysian evidence indicates that excessive non-teaching tasks, large class sizes, and ongoing online learning requirements have intensified time pressures and emotional strain, leading to burnout and intentions to leave the profession (Ani et al., 2025). Teacher organisations and national media have amplified these concerns, highlighting that hundreds of thousands of teachers face overwhelming administrative duties that detract from classroom teaching. In response, the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) has repeatedly urged the Ministry of Education (MoE) to reduce teacher workload. Consequently, in July 2025, the MoE announced seven intervention measures, including eliminating low-impact events and delegating examination duties to external invigilators (Malay Mail, 2025). Despite these initiatives, teachers continue to experience significant challenges in maintaining a healthy integration of their professional and personal lives.

The urgency of this issue is further reflected in national statistics. Approximately 418,000 teachers across Malaysia report difficulties managing heavy workloads, particularly administrative tasks unrelated to teaching (New Straits Times, 2025). Teacher attrition has also become a growing concern, with 6,394 educators retiring early in 2023, compared to 5,306 in 2022 (Iskandar et al., 2025). Beyond attrition, teachers' mental health risks are increasingly evident. A cross-sectional survey revealed that 55.5% of teachers experienced anxiety, 39.9% depression, and 27.6% stress during the pandemic, underscoring the psychological toll of persistent overwork (Ishak et al., 2022). Empirical evidence further links workload to burnout, though supportive organisational environments appear to buffer these effects (Shah et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the problem, demonstrating how structural, psychological, and organisational factors intersect to influence teachers' ability to integrate work and personal life effectively.

A growing body of research has examined teacher workload, stress, and burnout, offering valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of these challenges. Empirical studies consistently identify administrative burdens and non-teaching responsibilities as significant predictors of burnout and diminished well-being among Malaysian teachers (Shah et al., 2024; Ani et al., 2023). Qualitative analyses reveal that long working hours, extensive paperwork, and digital teaching pressures contribute to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction (Amzat, 2021). Systematic reviews further corroborate these findings, identifying workload, limited resources, and heightened accountability demands as key antecedents of poor work-life outcomes (Khalis et al., 2025). Moreover, the digitalisation of education during the COVID-19 pandemic blurred home-work boundaries and intensified role spillover, escalating stress levels. In the absence of adequate organisational support-such as flexible leadership, staffing adjustments, and role redesign-these pressures were exacerbated (Njoli, 2024; Mordi, 2024). Together, these studies suggest that while teacher workload and well-being have been widely documented, less is understood about how these pressures collectively shape teachers' work-life integration, particularly within Malaysia's distinctive socio-cultural and institutional context.

Despite these contributions, notable research gaps remain. Existing Malaysian studies have largely focused on work-life balance or burnout, leaving the broader construct of work-life integration relatively underexplored. Furthermore, most research isolates individual factors such as workload, stress, or digitalisation rather than situating them within an integrative framework that captures their interrelationships. Another limitation lies in the concentration of research on higher education academicians (Mordi, 2024), while school teachers who face distinct professional demands, parental expectations, and community roles remain comparatively underexamined. Addressing these gaps is critical, as school teachers form the backbone of Malaysia's education system and play a pivotal role in national human capital development. Accordingly, this paper aims to conceptually explore the factors that shape teachers' work-life integration in Malaysia, focusing on four key dimensions: (i) workload and administrative duties, (ii) digital and technological demands, (iii) organisational support, and (iv) socio-demographic moderators.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

WLI has emerged as a critical lens through which to understand how teachers manage overlapping professional and personal domains in increasingly complex educational environments. Unlike the traditional concept of work-life balance, which assumes rigid boundaries between work and home, WLI recognises that these domains are deeply interconnected, particularly in professions such as teaching where responsibilities extend well beyond classroom instruction (Chauhan et al., 2024). For Malaysian teachers, the challenge of WLI is compounded by structural workload pressures, rapid digitalisation, varying organisational support, and socio-demographic factors that shape individual coping strategies. Synthesising these strands of scholarship provides a clearer picture of the systemic and individual influences on teacher well-being.

### Workload and Administrative Burdens

One of the most consistently cited determinants of work-life integration (WLI) among teachers is excessive workload. In the Malaysian context, teachers frequently report spending more time on administrative and non-teaching responsibilities than on core instructional tasks, which undermines their professional identity and intrinsic motivation (Ani et al., 2025). National statistics underscore the scale of the issue, revealing that more than 418,000 teachers face an escalating workload crisis involving reporting, data entry, exam invigilation, and

co-curricular management (New Straits Times, 2025). This situation contributes directly to burnout and early retirement trends, as evidenced by the 6,394 teachers who opted for early retirement in 2023 compared to 5,306 in 2022 (Iskandar et al., 2025). Workload-induced fatigue also leads to emotional exhaustion, reducing teachers' capacity for effective classroom engagement and personal well-being (Dadhwal et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2024).

Moreover, the spillover effects of workload extend beyond the workplace, intruding into teachers' personal and family domains. Research indicates that the blurring of professional and domestic boundaries heightens stress, diminishes job satisfaction, and erodes work motivation (Kim et al., 2025 & Amzat, 2021). Teachers often report feelings of guilt or inadequacy when unable to meet both professional obligations and family expectations, a dynamic that complicates their ability to achieve sustainable WLI (Shah et al., 2024). These findings suggest that excessive administrative burdens not only limit personal recovery time but also disrupt emotional balance, thereby impeding teachers' holistic well-being. Structural reforms that reduce non-teaching duties and streamline reporting systems are therefore critical for improving teachers' WLI and long-term retention in the profession.

## Digitalisation and Technological Demands

The rise of digitalisation-accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic-has profoundly transformed the nature of teachers' work, often intensifying the challenge of achieving WLI. The widespread adoption of digital platforms for instruction, assessment, and communication has extended teachers' responsibilities beyond conventional school hours (Tan et al., 2025). Malaysian teachers are now expected to manage multiple online platforms, respond to parents and students after hours, and ensure digital compliance with institutional directives (Mordi, 2024). While digitalisation can enhance instructional flexibility, it also generates "technostress," especially among educators with limited technological competence or insufficient institutional support (Amzat, 2021). This form of stress manifests as anxiety, fatigue, and decreased job satisfaction, all of which undermine teachers' ability to maintain a healthy integration of work and personal life (Shah et al., 2024).

At the same time, research highlights that digital competency can moderate the negative impacts of technological demands. Teachers with stronger ICT skills report higher levels of confidence, efficiency, and adaptability when integrating digital tools into both work and personal routines (Shah et al., 2024). However, when clear institutional boundaries and policies are absent-such as expectations regarding online availability-teachers' personal spaces become increasingly permeable, heightening the risk of overwork and burnout (Njoli, 2024). The digitalisation of education thus presents a paradox: it offers autonomy and innovation yet simultaneously amplifies role spillover and emotional strain. Sustainable WLI in the digital era therefore requires systemic interventions, including targeted digital literacy programs, workload redistribution, and clearer guidelines on digital communication practices.

## Organisational Support and Policy Interventions

Organisational support is a pivotal factor shaping teachers' WLI, influencing how individuals cope with professional and personal demands. Supportive leadership, equitable workload distribution, and opportunities for professional development have been consistently linked to reduced stress and enhanced well-being (Ani et al., 2023). In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has taken several steps to address teacher workload, including the implementation of seven workload-reduction measures such as removing low-impact school events and delegating examination invigilation to external personnel (Malay Mail, 2025). These policy interventions signify institutional acknowledgment of the growing WLI crisis. However, their effectiveness remains limited due to inconsistent implementation and the persistence of systemic inefficiencies (Malay Mail, 2025). When school leaders fail to cultivate a culture of empathy and flexibility, teachers often experience diminished morale and disengagement from both professional and personal roles.

Conversely, empirical studies reveal that organisational cultures promoting autonomy, collegial collaboration, and psychological safety are more effective in facilitating sustainable WLI (Kim et al., 2025; Mordi, 2024). Supportive school environments allow teachers to exercise discretion in managing their workloads and balancing competing demands. In contrast, rigid bureaucratic structures and excessive accountability requirements exacerbate emotional exhaustion and hinder personal recovery (Ani et al., 2025). Effective WLI, therefore,

depends not merely on formal workload policies but also on leadership behaviours, peer support networks, and shared organisational values. These insights underscore the need for a systemic approach to teacher well-being—one that aligns policy reforms with school-level practices that actively promote balance, flexibility, and respect for personal boundaries.

### Socio-Demographic Moderators

Socio-demographic characteristics - such as gender, age, marital status, and career stage -significantly moderate how teachers experience and manage WLI. Female teachers, in particular, face compounded pressures due to dual responsibilities in professional and domestic spheres (Adni et al., 2025). Studies reveal that women in teaching frequently perform “invisible labour” at home, leading to time scarcity and emotional strain (Shah et al., 2024). This gendered imbalance often manifests as higher rates of stress, reduced career satisfaction, and feelings of conflict between personal and professional roles (Dadhwal et al., 2024). Meanwhile, younger teachers entering the profession encounter steep learning curves, intensified by digitalisation and evolving pedagogical expectations (Mordi, 2024). These early-career challenges can lead to role ambiguity and difficulty in establishing healthy work-life boundaries.

Similarly, teachers at later career stages confront distinct WLI challenges. Senior educators often experience burnout from accumulated professional pressures, and the sustained mental load of mentoring, administrative duties, and evolving curriculum demands (Njoli, 2024). Family status also plays a mediating role; teachers with young children report higher work–family conflict compared to those with grown or no children (Khalis et al., 2025). Socio-demographic diversity thus shapes the heterogeneity of WLI experiences, suggesting that interventions should be contextualised rather than standardised. Recognising these variations is essential for developing equitable support structures that address the specific needs of different teacher groups, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable work–life integration across Malaysia’s teaching workforce.

### Relevant Theories And Models

Understanding work-life integration (WLI) among teachers requires a multidimensional theoretical foundation that captures the complex interplay between personal, organisational, and contextual factors. While early scholarship on work-life balance largely emphasised separation between work and home domains, contemporary theorists have advanced more integrative frameworks that reflect the fluidity of modern work arrangements (Nor et al., 2024). These models recognise that in technology-mediated and relationally demanding professions such as teaching, boundaries between professional and personal roles are increasingly porous. Within the Malaysian context, structural workload pressures, rapid digitalisation, organisational dynamics, and socio-demographic differences further shape how teachers navigate these overlapping domains. The following theories - Boundary Theory, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Role Theory, and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory - collectively provide a robust conceptual lens to understand how teachers experience and manage WLI in a changing educational landscape.

### Boundary Theory

Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) and its derivative, Work-Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000), serve as central frameworks in explaining how individuals negotiate the intersections between work and non-work roles. These theories propose that individuals construct and manage physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries to organise life domains effectively. When these boundaries are highly permeable - meaning work can easily intrude into personal life - individuals are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being (Kreiner et al., 2009). In teaching, boundary permeability is common as professional responsibilities extend beyond classroom hours through lesson preparation, grading, and digital communication. The increased expectation for teachers to remain digitally connected through messaging applications and online platforms further complicates these boundaries, leading to continuous role spillover and stress (Nor et al., 2024).

In Malaysia, where collectivist cultural norms and strong professional ethics emphasise commitment and service, teachers may find it particularly difficult to separate work from personal obligations (Azmi et al., 2023). Instead, they often adopt integrative strategies, blending work and home responsibilities as a means of coping. This aligns

with recent WLI perspectives, which view integration not as failure to separate but as an adaptive process to maintain functionality across domains (Kossek et al., 2022). Thus, Boundary Theory provides a valuable lens for examining how Malaysian teachers regulate - or struggle to regulate - the transitions between roles, and how digitalisation and workload pressures intensify boundary blurring.

### Job Demands-Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2007) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how job demands and resources jointly influence occupational outcomes such as engagement, burnout, and work-life integration. Job demands refer to aspects of work that require sustained effort - such as administrative overload, classroom management, and digital expectations - while resources refer to the physical, social, and organisational supports available to meet these demands (Demerouti et al., 2021). When demands exceed resources, teachers experience emotional strain and diminished capacity for role integration. Conversely, access to resources such as supportive leadership, flexible scheduling, and autonomy can buffer these effects and promote well-being (Shah et al., 2024).

In the Malaysian educational context, the JD-R model has gained empirical support in explaining teachers' occupational stress and coping mechanisms (Ani et al., 2025). Teachers who report higher organisational support and collegial trust also report better psychological well-being and stronger work-life integration. This model is particularly useful in understanding how policy-level interventions - such as workload reduction initiatives introduced by the Ministry of Education - can enhance available resources and mitigate burnout. The JD-R framework therefore bridges individual and systemic analyses, positioning organisational support as a critical determinant of teachers' capacity to balance, or integrate, professional and personal roles effectively in a high-demand environment.

### Role Theory

Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) posits that individuals occupy multiple roles - such as worker, parent, and community member - and that conflict arises when the expectations of these roles are incompatible. In the teaching profession, overlapping role expectations are particularly pronounced. Teachers not only serve as educators but also as mentors, administrators, and emotional caregivers, which can lead to overload and role ambiguity (Alyamy et al., 2020). When the demands of these roles exceed an individual's resources or time, role conflict and stress emerge, impairing both performance and well-being. This framework offers insight into why female teachers, who frequently shoulder disproportionate domestic and caregiving responsibilities, often report greater difficulties achieving WLI (Adni et al., 2025).

Within the Malaysian cultural context, traditional gender expectations and communal obligations intensify these conflicts (Azmi et al., 2023). Teachers, particularly women, may internalise social norms that prioritise family caregiving while simultaneously striving to fulfil demanding professional roles. Integrating Role Theory with Boundary Theory provides a more nuanced understanding of WLI, as it highlights how socio-demographic factors - such as gender, marital status, and family structure - moderate individuals' capacity to blend or compartmentalise their multiple roles. This theoretical synergy suggests that achieving sustainable WLI requires not only individual boundary management but also institutional recognition of role diversity and differentiated support structures for teachers across demographic groups.

### Conservation of Resources Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) asserts that individuals are motivated to acquire, preserve, and protect valuable personal and social resources, such as time, energy, and emotional stability. Stress occurs when these resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished. Within the teaching profession, continuous demands - ranging from administrative overload to digital communication and emotional labour -

can deplete these critical resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Conversely, supportive work environments, social networks, and access to coping strategies can help teachers regain or conserve their resources, reducing burnout and promoting healthier WLI (Shah et al., 2024).

Recent studies extend COR theory into digitalised educational contexts, illustrating how technological engagement can both deplete and restore resources depending on the level of organisational support and individual digital efficacy (Tan et al., 2025). Teachers with higher digital competence are better able to use technology as a resource rather than a drain, integrating it efficiently into their professional and personal routines (Mordi, 2024). However, without institutional safeguards—such as digital boundaries and workload management policies—continuous connectivity can erode teachers' psychological reserves and personal time. COR theory thus provides a dynamic lens for understanding how the availability or depletion of psychological and organisational resources influences teachers' overall integration capability. It reinforces the notion that sustaining WLI requires not only individual resilience but also structural mechanisms that replenish teachers' cognitive and emotional resources.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study integrates four theoretical perspectives - Boundary Theory, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Role Theory, and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory - to explain how Malaysian teachers experience and manage work-life integration (WLI). Together, these theories illuminate the complex interplay between individual, organisational, and contextual factors that shape teachers' ability to navigate professional and personal boundaries. Boundary Theory and Role Theory capture the psychological and behavioural mechanisms that underpin teachers' negotiation of role transitions and expectations, while the JD-R and COR models emphasise the structural and resource-based conditions that facilitate or hinder integration. This multidimensional framework acknowledges that WLI is not merely an outcome of personal time management, but the result of dynamic interactions between workload pressures, digital demands, institutional environments, and socio-demographic contexts (Kossek et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2024).

### Workload (Job Demand)

Within this framework, workload and administrative burdens represent key job demands that increase pressure on teachers and blur role boundaries, particularly when professional obligations encroach upon personal time. Guided by Boundary Theory, these demands heighten boundary permeability, thereby challenging teachers' capacity to maintain distinct psychological separations between work and home (Ashforth et al., 2000). The JD-R model complements this view by positing that high demands, in the absence of adequate resources, lead to emotional strain and burnout (Bakker et al., 2007). In the Malaysian context, the intensity of administrative tasks and extracurricular responsibilities further amplifies these effects (Ani et al., 2025). Thus, the framework posits that workload directly influences teachers' WLI and indirectly affects their well-being through boundary strain and role conflict.

### Digitalisation (Technological Demand)

Digitalisation and technological demands introduce a second major component of the framework. Drawing on Boundary Theory, digital tools and communication technologies act as "boundary permeators," making it increasingly difficult for teachers to disengage from work-related tasks (Tan et al., 2025). The COR Theory extends this argument by explaining how continuous digital connectivity drains teachers' cognitive and emotional resources, leading to fatigue and diminished well-being (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Conversely, when teachers possess high digital competence or institutional support - such as clear communication policies or adequate training - technology can serve as a resource that enhances flexibility and efficiency. Hence, digitalisation exerts both positive and negative influences on WLI depending on how teachers and organisations manage technological boundaries.

### Organisational Support (Job Resource)

The third element, organisational support, represents a critical job resource in the JD-R model and an enabling factor within the COR framework. Supportive leadership, equitable workload distribution, and collegial collaboration provide teachers with structural and psychological resources that help them cope with demanding work environments (Demerouti et al., 2021). These resources replenish depleted energy, foster resilience, and enhance teachers' capacity to manage multiple roles effectively (Mordi, 2024). Organisational support also moderates the effects of workload and digitalisation by buffering stress and improving perceived control over work demands (Ani et al., 2025). Within the Malaysian education system - where bureaucratic processes and high accountability pressures are prevalent - such support is essential for maintaining teachers' motivation, satisfaction, and overall integration between work and personal life.

### **Socio-Demographic Moderators**

Finally, socio-demographic moderators such as gender, age, marital status, and career stage are integrated into the framework through the lens of Role Theory. These factors influence how teachers perceive and respond to competing role demands. For instance, female teachers often experience intensified work-family conflict due to cultural expectations of domestic caregiving (Adni et al., 2025). Younger teachers, on the other hand, may struggle with digital overload and role ambiguity, while senior teachers face cumulative stress from years of professional commitment (Azmi et al., 2023). These variations highlight that WLI is a heterogeneous experience shaped by social and demographic conditions. Incorporating these moderators provides a more inclusive and contextualised understanding of how teachers in Malaysia integrate their professional and personal roles within distinct life stages and social settings.

In summary, this conceptual framework proposes that teachers' work-life integration is the product of the interaction between job demands (workload, digitalisation), job resources (organisational support), and personal moderators (socio-demographic characteristics). These interactions are shaped by boundary management strategies, role expectations, and the conservation or depletion of personal resources. The framework underscores that improving WLI requires a multi-level approach - addressing individual coping mechanisms, organisational policies, and systemic educational reforms. This integrative model therefore provides a theoretical foundation for analysing the factors that shape teachers' work-life integration in Malaysia's evolving educational landscape.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the factors influencing teachers' work-life integration (WLI) in Malaysia. The quantitative approach enables the systematic and objective measurement of teachers' perceptions regarding workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic characteristics that shape their ability to integrate professional and personal responsibilities. A descriptive - correlational design is employed to identify patterns and the strength of relationships among the study variables without manipulating any conditions.

Data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29, which provides robust tools for reliability testing, descriptive analysis, correlation, and regression modelling. The use of SPSS is appropriate for this study as it allows for the efficient management of large datasets and facilitates the application of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Through these analyses, the study seeks to generate empirically grounded insights that can inform institutional policies and practical strategies aimed at enhancing teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and retention within the Malaysian education system.

### **Population and Sampling**

The target population of this study consists of in-service primary and secondary school teachers employed under Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MoE), as well as teachers from selected private educational institutions. Since the study focuses on work-life integration, participants are required to have a minimum of one year of teaching experience, ensuring that they possess sufficient familiarity with both instructional and administrative workloads.

A stratified random sampling technique is utilised to ensure adequate representation across geographical regions (Northern, Central, Southern, and East Malaysia) and school types (urban and rural). The anticipated sample size is approximately 400 respondents, consistent with the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2019), who recommend a minimum of 10 respondents per item for regression-based analyses. This sample size also provides sufficient statistical power to detect significant correlations and multiple regression effects. Such an approach enhances the generalisability of findings across Malaysia's diverse educational contexts, ensuring balanced representation of demographic and institutional characteristics.

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## Research Instrumentation

Data will be collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising five sections, each designed to measure a specific construct relevant to teachers' WLI. The questionnaire items are adapted from validated instruments with established psychometric properties and have been contextualised to align with the Malaysian teaching environment. Except for the demographic section, all items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

### Section A: Workload

Workload will be measured using the Quantitative Workload Inventory (QWI) developed by Spector and Jex (1998). This section includes items that assess perceived task demands, time pressure, and administrative overload. A sample item is: *"I have more work to do than I can complete during my working hours."* This measure captures the extent to which excessive workload contributes to role strain and work-life challenges among teachers.

### Section B: Digitalisation

This construct examines teachers' experiences of technostress and digital demands, adapted from the Technostress Creators Scale by Ragu-Nathan et al. (2008). The items assess issues such as technological overload, after-hours digital communication, and role ambiguity arising from technology integration. A sample item is: *"Technology used in my school increases the amount of work I must do."* This dimension highlights how digitalisation reshapes work boundaries and affects teachers' integration experiences.

### Section C: Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support will be assessed using items adapted from Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Perceived Organisational Support Scale. This section evaluates the extent to which teachers feel recognised, valued, and supported by their school leadership and management. A sample item is: *"My school takes my well-being into consideration when assigning duties."* This measure reflects the buffering role of institutional support in mitigating work-related stress.

### Section D: Work-Life Integration

The dependent variable, Work-Life Integration (WLI), is measured using items from Hayman's (2005) Work-Life Integration Scale, which captures the degree to which teachers are able to blend professional and personal responsibilities effectively. A sample item is: *"I am able to integrate my teaching responsibilities with my personal life in a balanced way."* This construct provides insight into the overall success of teachers' integration efforts across multiple life domains.

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## Section E: Socio-Demographic Information

This section gathers respondents' demographic profiles, including gender, age, marital status, number of dependents, teaching experience, school type, and geographical region. These variables will be used for descriptive statistics and group comparison analyses to identify variations in WLI across different demographic groups.

### Data Collection Procedure

Data collection will be carried out both online and in-person to ensure accessibility across regions. For the online survey, a Google Form link will be distributed via school administrators and teachers' unions such as the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP). Paper-based surveys will be distributed in schools with limited internet access. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. All collected data will be coded and entered into SPSS version 29 for analysis.

### Data Analysis Using SPSS

SPSS provides a comprehensive platform for quantitative analysis, and it will be employed for all stages of data handling and statistical testing.

#### Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages will summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and general trends for each construct. Normality will be assessed using skewness and kurtosis (acceptable range  $\pm 2$ ), while outliers will be detected using boxplots and z-scores.

#### Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Reliability will again be confirmed through Cronbach's alpha for each construct. Pearson's correlation analysis will be conducted to determine the strength and direction of relationships among the independent variables (workload, digitalisation, organisational support) and the dependent variable (WLI). A correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) value between 0.10–0.29 indicates a weak relationship, 0.30–0.49 a moderate relationship, and 0.50 and above a strong relationship (Cohen, 2013).

#### Inferential Analysis

To test the study's hypotheses, multiple linear regression analysis will be performed using SPSS. This allows for examining how the independent variables collectively and individually influence teachers' WLI.

#### Moderation and Mediation Analysis

To examine whether socio-demographic factors (e.g., gender, marital status, age group) moderate the relationships between predictors and WLI, hierarchical regression analysis will be used.

#### Measurement Items for Each Variable

##### Workload (WL)

Adapted from Spector & Jex's (1998) Workload Scale

1. WL1 - I have to work very fast to complete my teaching and administrative tasks.
2. WL2 - The amount of work assigned to me is excessive.

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3. WL3 - I often bring work home to complete outside of school hours.
4. WL4 - I feel pressured by deadlines and performance expectations.
5. WL5 - I rarely have enough time to prepare lessons as thoroughly as I would like.

### **Digitalisation (DG)**

Adapted from Ragu-Nathan et al.'s (2008) Technostress Creators Scale

1. DG1 - Technology has increased the amount of work I must do daily.
2. DG2 - I feel pressured to respond to school-related digital messages after work hours.
3. DG3 - Frequent use of digital platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, WhatsApp) affects my personal time.
4. DG4 - Managing multiple online systems for teaching and reporting causes stress.
5. DG5 - I find it difficult to disconnect from digital work after school hours.

### **Organisational Support (OS)**

Adapted from Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Perceived Organisational Support Scale

1. OS1 - My school values my contributions to student learning.
2. OS2 - My school provides support when I am facing work difficulties.
3. OS3 - My school management considers my personal needs and well-being.
4. OS4 - I feel appreciated and recognised for the effort I put into my work.
5. OS5 - My school provides sufficient resources and assistance to manage my workload.

### **Work–Life Integration (WLI)**

Adapted from Hayman's (2005) Work–Life Balance/Integration Scale

1. WLI1 - I can integrate my professional and personal responsibilities effectively.
2. WLI2 - My work schedule allows flexibility for personal and family needs.
3. WLI3 - I feel satisfied with how I manage both work and personal life.
4. WLI4 - Work demands rarely interfere with my family or personal time.
5. WLI5 - I feel a sense of harmony between my teaching career and my personal life.

### **Socio-Demographic Variables (SD)**

Self-developed, descriptive questions

1. SD1 - Gender:  Male  Female
2. SD2 - Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. SD3 - Marital status:  Single  Married  Divorced/Widowed

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4. SD4 - Number of dependents (children/elderly): \_\_\_\_\_

5. SD5 - Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_ years

## DISCUSSION

This conceptual study underscores that teachers' work-life integration (WLI) in Malaysia is shaped by a complex interplay of workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic factors. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2007), Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000), and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the discussion reveals that these dimensions collectively determine how effectively teachers can navigate the overlapping demands of their professional and personal lives. The synthesis indicates that while educational reforms and technological adoption aim to enhance instructional quality and efficiency, they have also intensified workload pressures and blurred the boundaries between work and home, thereby challenging teachers' ability to sustain healthy integration between life domains (Njoli, 2024; Shah et al., 2024).

Workload remains one of the most persistent predictors of poor WLI among Malaysian teachers. Empirical evidence shows that teachers devote substantial time to non-teaching duties, such as administrative documentation, data reporting, and co-curricular management, which detract from classroom engagement and personal recovery time (Ani et al., 2023; The Sun, 2025). Consistent with the JD-R model, excessive job demands deplete emotional and cognitive resources, heightening burnout and reducing job satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2023). Although recent policy reforms introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) - such as delegating exam duties and scrapping low-impact events - represent positive steps (Bernama, 2025), teachers continue to report that bureaucratic procedures and insufficient staffing exacerbate chronic overload. Consequently, teachers often extend work hours into evenings and weekends, leading to time-based and strain-based conflict (Shah et al., 2024). These findings reaffirm that without structural adjustments to workload management, teachers' capacity to maintain WLI will remain limited despite policy-level interventions.

The expansion of digital technology in Malaysian schools - accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic - has further complicated teachers' efforts to balance work and personal life. Digitalisation has enabled more flexible and interactive pedagogies, yet it has simultaneously increased teachers' exposure to technological spillover (Njoli, 2024). Teachers frequently manage online platforms, communicate with parents, and prepare digital materials outside of regular hours, resulting in continuous connectivity that erodes psychological detachment. From the perspective of Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), this heightened boundary permeability blurs the temporal and spatial separation between work and home, reducing opportunities for recovery. Moreover, teachers with lower digital competence or inadequate institutional support experience heightened technostress, which undermines their motivation and well-being (Amzat, 2021; Mordi, 2024). Conversely, when schools provide targeted training, infrastructure, and digital literacy support, technology can function as a resource that facilitates rather than hinders integration (Shah et al., 2024). Thus, digitalisation represents a dual-edged factor - both a driver of flexibility and a source of overload - depending on the organisational environment.

Organisational support serves as a critical buffering mechanism that can mitigate the negative effects of workload and digitalisation on WLI. Drawing from both the JD-R and COR frameworks, supportive leadership practices - such as recognition, trust, and participative decision-making - help replenish teachers' emotional and psychological resources (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Bakker et al., 2023). Empirical studies among Malaysian educators indicate that perceived organisational support predicts higher engagement and greater satisfaction with work-life integration (Ani et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2024). Schools that cultivate an empathetic and flexible organisational culture not only enhance teacher morale but also reduce turnover intentions (Kim et al., 2025; Khalis et al., 2025). However, when institutional structures remain rigid and overly bureaucratic, even well-intentioned policies fail to translate into meaningful change. Hence, strengthening organisational capacity - through improved workload distribution, supportive leadership training, and well-being policies - is essential for promoting sustainable WLI.

Socio-demographic characteristics further influence how teachers experience and manage WLI. Gender, age, marital status, and caregiving responsibilities intersect to shape the intensity and type of work-life challenges faced. Female teachers, who make up the majority of Malaysia's teaching workforce, often report higher strain due to gendered expectations surrounding caregiving and household management (Adni et al., 2025). Similarly, early-career teachers may struggle with adapting to digital tools and balancing professional learning with family responsibilities (Mordi, 2024). In contrast, senior teachers may experience emotional exhaustion stemming from prolonged exposure to workload pressures. These socio-demographic variations align with Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964), which posits that multiple and conflicting role expectations generate strain and reduce integration capacity. Recognising this heterogeneity is vital for designing interventions that are responsive to teachers' diverse needs, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Overall, this discussion highlights that teachers' WLI in Malaysia is not merely a function of individual coping mechanisms but rather an outcome of multi-level interactions between personal resources, workplace structures, and socio-cultural contexts. Conceptually, this study extends prior research by moving beyond the binary notion of work-life balance toward a more fluid and integrative framework that acknowledges overlapping domains and dynamic role boundaries (Chauhan et al., 2024). The proposed model suggests that addressing workload alone will yield limited progress if digital demands, organisational rigidity, and socio-cultural expectations remain unaddressed. Similarly, resilience-building programs that focus solely on individual adaptation risk overlooking systemic determinants of teacher strain (Bakker et al., 2023).

Therefore, achieving sustainable WLI requires a comprehensive policy and managerial approach that integrates structural reforms, digital workload regulation, and targeted organisational support. Educational policymakers should prioritise the simplification of bureaucratic processes, equitable staffing distribution, and the provision of psychological and digital well-being resources. Future empirical research using multiple regression analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM) in SPSS could empirically test the proposed conceptual framework, quantify the strength of each factor, and identify mediating or moderating effects. Such studies would not only advance theoretical understanding of WLI but also inform evidence-based interventions to support teacher well-being, professional sustainability, and retention in Malaysia's evolving educational landscape.

## Research Implications

This conceptual paper examined the factors shaping teachers' work-life integration (WLI) within the Malaysian context, focusing on four key dimensions - workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic factors. Anchored in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2007), Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000), and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the study proposed an integrative framework positioning WLI as a dynamic, multidimensional construct shaped by both systemic and individual factors. The synthesis of recent literature underscores that teachers' capacity to integrate professional and personal life is not merely an individual concern but a systemic issue reflecting organisational structures, technological demands, and sociocultural expectations (Shah et al., 2024; Ani et al., 2023; Adni et al., 2025).

## Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this paper advances the discourse by shifting from the traditional notion of work-life balance to work-life integration, acknowledging the fluid interdependence between work and personal domains (Hayman, 2005; Nor et al., 2024). The integration of the JD-R, Boundary, and COR theories provides a comprehensive lens through which teachers' experiences can be understood - highlighting how they allocate personal resources, negotiate boundaries, and maintain well-being amid bureaucratic and digital pressures.

Specifically, this study extends the JD-R model by conceptualising digitalisation as a contemporary job demand that can either enhance or hinder performance depending on organisational support (Njoli, 2024; Scholze et al., 2024). At the same time, organisational support functions as a critical resource that buffers against resource depletion and promotes positive spillover between work and non-work domains (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Ani et al., 2023). Through this synthesis, the framework contributes to a more contextually grounded understanding

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of Malaysian teachers' WLI, reflecting the interplay between technological advancement, administrative demands, and socio-demographic realities.

### Practical and Organisational Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasise the need for institutional and managerial reforms that directly respond to teachers' lived realities. Educational institutions should restructure administrative processes, eliminating redundant reporting and bureaucratic tasks that inflate workload (Bernama, 2025; Shah et al., 2024). School leaders can foster healthier WLI by implementing flexible scheduling, clear digital communication boundaries, and empathetic leadership practices that prioritise well-being and psychological safety (Ani et al., 2023; Nor et al., 2024).

Investments in professional development are equally crucial. Training programmes focused on digital literacy, boundary management, and time management can help teachers utilise technology efficiently without allowing digital demands to spill into personal life (Njoli, 2024). Additionally, teacher support systems - such as peer mentoring, counselling services, and equitable workload redistribution - should be institutionalised rather than implemented on an ad hoc basis. By embedding WLI principles into school management and human resource policies, organisations can enhance teacher retention, engagement, and job satisfaction, leading to improved educational outcomes (Scholze et. al, 2024; Khalis et al., 2025).

### Policy Implications

At the policy level, this study calls for a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to teacher well-being under Malaysia's *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia* (PPPM). The Ministry of Education (MoE) should recognise WLI as a core component of teacher performance and school management, integrating it into key performance indicators (KPIs) and professional standards. Policy reforms should simultaneously address administrative streamlining, digital workload regulation, and teacher welfare enhancement.

Moreover, national teacher surveys should include WLI metrics to monitor long-term trends and inform data-driven policy adjustments. Gender-responsive and family-friendly initiatives - such as flexible scheduling, teleworking arrangements, and parental leave - are essential to mitigate the socio-demographic pressures that disproportionately affect female educators (Khalis et al., 2025; Ani et al., 2023). Such policies not only promote equity but also contribute to the sustainability of Malaysia's teaching workforce in an increasingly digitalised education system.

### Directions for Future Research

While this conceptual paper provides a theoretical foundation for understanding teachers' WLI, future research is needed to empirically validate the proposed model. Quantitative studies employing SPSS-based analyses, including multiple regression, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), or structural equation modelling (SEM), could assess the relative influence of workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic factors on WLI (Hair et al., 2020).

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable in capturing temporal changes as educational digitalisation and policy reforms evolve. Additionally, mixed-methods approaches could offer richer insights into the lived experiences of different teacher groups - such as urban versus rural, male versus female, and novice versus experienced educators - thereby deepening contextual understanding and enhancing generalisability. Future research should also explore cross-cultural comparisons to situate Malaysia's WLI challenges within the broader ASEAN or global education landscape (Scholze et. al, 2024; Shah et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

This conceptual study concludes that teachers' work-life integration (WLI) in Malaysia is a multifaceted construct shaped by the interplay of workload, digitalisation, organisational support, and socio-demographic factors. Anchored in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Boundary Theory, and Conservation of

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Resources (COR) Theory, the study emphasises that teachers' well-being depends not only on individual coping strategies but also on the organisational and systemic structures within which they work. Excessive workload and digitalisation have blurred the traditional boundaries between personal and professional life, while organisational support emerges as a vital resource that mitigates burnout and fosters sustainable integration. By advancing a comprehensive conceptual framework, this paper moves beyond the conventional notion of work-life balance to highlight integration as a dynamic process requiring alignment between institutional practices and individual needs. The study calls for targeted organisational and policy interventions - such as workload reduction, flexible digital policies, and empathetic leadership - to strengthen teacher well-being and retention. Moreover, gender-responsive and family-friendly policies are essential to address the disproportionate pressures faced by female educators. Overall, this study contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical reform by positioning WLI as a strategic priority within Malaysia's educational landscape. Future empirical research should empirically validate the proposed model through quantitative and mixed-method designs, offering data-driven insights to inform evidence-based policies that sustain teacher effectiveness and holistic well-being.

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