

## Working or *Ngayah*? Work-Life Balance Among Balinese Women Through the Lens of Boundary Theory

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**Abstract.** Bali's cultural dynamics require each individual to balance domestic, economic, and cultural roles adaptively. The research subjects, married Balinese women with jobs, face the challenge of balancing work with family and cultural roles to achieve work-life balance. This literature review aimed to examine Balinese women's work-life balance from the perspective of work/family border theory. The findings reveal that the roles of Balinese women in their families, local culture, and work lead to different flexibilities and permeabilities within each family. Balinese women can maintain work-life balance by effectively controlling the permeability and flexibility of their work and family borders. This indicates that in addition to the women's efforts, the support of family and colleagues significantly influences work-life balance, especially in the performance of *ngayah*. This research contributes to the understanding of Balinese women's work-life balance and can serve as a source of knowledge for stakeholders to support the work-life balance of working Balinese women.

**Keywords:** balinese woman; boundary theory; literature review; work-life balance

### Introduction

Work and family life are two domains that are integrated and inseparable in today's life, as is the case with Balinese families. Bali is one of the regions where cultural aspects are still embedded in its social system. Balinese women play a crucial role in the implementation of cultural activities in Bali. Their dominance means that it is only natural for women to take on the responsibility of carrying out cultural rituals, such as *majejaitan*, *mebanten*, and *menyama braya* (Kartika, 2021). Oktarina and Komalasari (2022) explained that Balinese women have prominent roles that they assume after marriage, known as triple roles. These triple roles encompass roles in the family, economy, and culture or tradition (Oktarina & Komalasari, 2022). Balinese women are required to be wives and mothers, uphold local customs, and serve as the backbone of the family. Traditional Balinese marriage still adheres to a patriarchal system that has been passed down through generations.

In the Balinese patriarchal system, a married woman is responsible for maintaining her

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husband's honor, obeying and carrying out their husband's wishes, and being able to adapt to all conditions and situations of her husband so that the woman's freedom of movement is restricted (Darmayoga, 2021; Swarsi et al., 2014). Women tend to be seen as their husbands' assistants, having responsibility in the domestic sphere, and being under their husbands' protection (Rahmawati, 2021). Moreover, the inheritance system in Bali adheres to a patrilineal inheritance system, meaning that only sons will inherit from the family (Wulandari & Kusuma, 2023), so Balinese women have no inheritance rights in their families. When a family has no male descendants, there is a tradition of transferring the status of daughters to *sentana rajeg*, which gives daughters the status of sons and allows them to enter into *kaceburin* marriages (Wulandari & Kusuma, 2023). *Kaceburin* marriage is performed if the to-be-married daughter has no brothers or is the only child in the family. However, this marriage was considered to lower the self-esteem of the male party, making it an inappropriate thing to do (Swarsi et al., 2014).

In this day and age, Balinese women are no longer confined to domestic work and caring for their families. According to data from the Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali (2018), the number of women working in Bali in 2023 was 1,208,767, with a labor force participation rate (LFPR) reaching 70.6%. Types of employment of women working in Bali are categorized into self-employment, casual labor, employees/civil servants, freelance agricultural workers, employers, freelance non-agricultural workers, and family/unpaid workers. Equal education and a more modern lifestyle have led to an increase in human resources regardless of gender, with many inspirational women now occupying strategic positions (Bukian & Sujana, 2022). Based on this data, the number of Balinese women working in the formal sector is increasing. Meanwhile, married Balinese women who work in Bali are required to balance their roles at work and in the household, which is closely related to cultural roles.

According to Lockwood (2003), work-life balance is a state of equilibrium between two demands, where an individual's work and life are equal. This situation applies to Balinese women. Balinese women who work in the formal and informal sectors have roles and responsibilities that must be fulfilled in accordance with their job tasks. Working Balinese women also have roles in other aspects of their lives. For married Balinese women, life outside of work is related to the biological roles of women in the family and traditional activities, such as *menyama braya* and *ngayah*, in their family environment. The role of working in the formal sector and the cultural role of Balinese women require women to be able to contribute optimally in both domains. The challenges faced by Balinese women were described by Rini and Indrawati (2019), who said that Balinese women have difficulty managing their time between work and traditional activities to the extent that they have to leave their office jobs to partake in traditional activities, such as the *ngaben* ceremony, which takes place during the day.

Clark (2000) described work and family as two asymmetrical domains that can overlap with each other. Transitions between domains can be difficult or easy, depending on the contributing factors. In general, based on the work/family border theory, Balinese women are capable of managing work and family domains. However, the interaction between the two domains can differ for each individual. Therefore, there needs to be awareness of boundaries between work and family domains to maintain the balance in time, space, and energy when transitioning roles in the two domains.

The interaction that occurs within the boundaries between the two domains can be penetrated temporally, spatially, and psychologically. It means that the boundaries between the work and family domains are physically (visible or tangible), temporally (work schedules and family commitments), or psychologically (thoughts and emotions) permeable and flexible. Work/family border theory discusses the integration and segmentation between work and family, the formation and crossing of boundaries between the two domains, how the relationship between women as employees with other individuals at work, and how working women, who are required to do domestic work (including traditional responsibility like *ngayah*), maintain balance between work and family (Clark, 2000).

In work/family border theory, two aspects within the boundary are discussed: flexibility, which means one's ability to expand or contract the domain boundary, and permeability, or the extent to which an individual's domain boundary can enter another domain when the individual is not within a domain based on their thoughts or behaviors (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2021). According to Clark (2000), a balance between domains can be achieved if individuals can adjust their time and energy and divide responsibilities between work and family. In this case, the roles of Balinese women at work and *ngayah* are two different domains, and the interaction between these domains has different flexibility and permeability, depending on household conditions, types of jobs, and other factors that can affect both domains. The role of Balinese women, which is closely related to their traditional culture, especially their domestic obligations after marriage, requires them to quickly cross domains, thus necessitating good decision-making and positive interactions between domains (Powell & Greenhaus, 2006). Balinese women are inclined to prioritize their roles in the domestic sphere, resulting in limitations in career choices, and these limitations are often overlooked by society (Nariswari & Dwi, 2023).

Based on the description above, this study aimed to determine how Balinese women balance work and *ngayah*. The purpose of this literature review was to describe the work-life balance of Balinese women from the perspective of the work/family border theory. The results of this study can be a source of knowledge for Balinese women, both those who are already married and those who are preparing to marry, their families, and other researchers who are interested in researching work-life balance among Balinese women. The findings can help them apply flexibility and permeability between work and *ngayah*, in accordance with the work/family border theory.

## Method

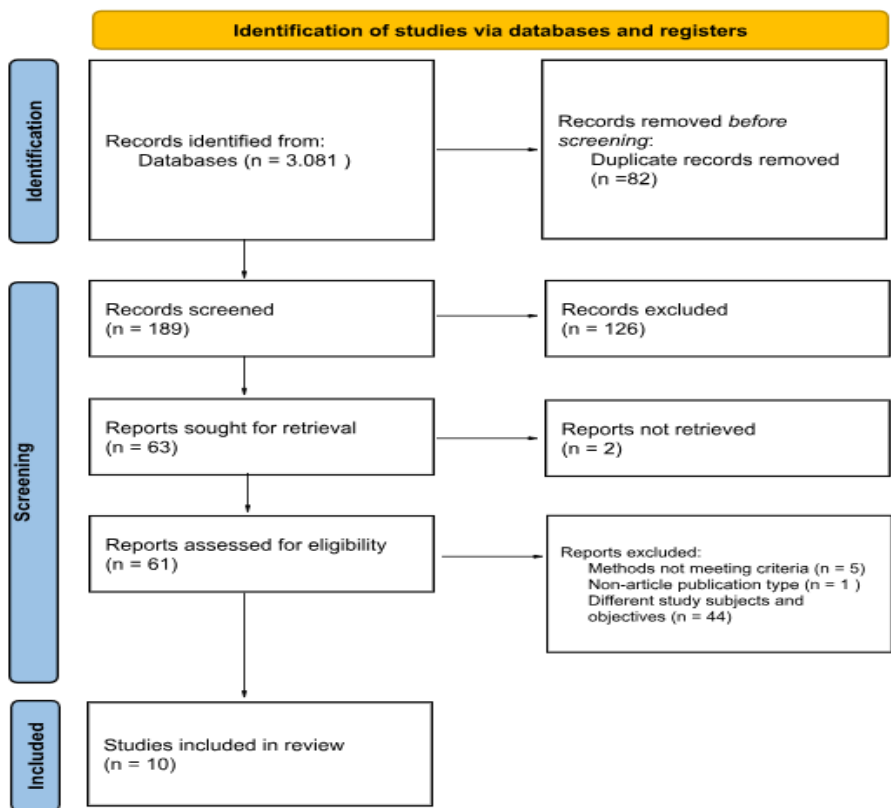
This article presents a literature study on psychological factors that contribute to the work-life balance of Balinese women. The literature review method employed in this study was a systematic literature review (SLR), utilizing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method. The search was conducted on Google Scholar and ResearchGate with keywords "work-life balance on Balinese women" (2,310) and "work-life balance *pada perempuan Bali*" (771), covering articles published from 2014 to 2024. Considering that the number of publications based on the keywords was relatively small, the researchers chose the publication period to obtain literature

relevant to the development of research. The search yielded 3,081 articles discussing the topic to be studied.

The inclusion criteria implemented in the literature screening were: (1) the research participants were married Balinese women; 2) the research was published between 2014 and 2024, and (3) the research variables included psychological factors that contribute to the work-life balance of Balinese women. The exclusion criteria were: (1) literature that did not study Balinese women and (2) literature that did not discuss psychological factors involved in the work-life balance of Balinese women. The selected articles were full-text, not theses, downloadable, and written either in English or Indonesian. The article search process can be seen in Figure 1 using PRISMA.

**Figure 1**

*Analysis Results*



Ten research articles were obtained based on the established inclusion criteria. These articles are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*List of Literature*

No	Author(s) (Year, Title, Publisher)	Research Objective	Research Method	Research Findings
1	Pradnyapradipa and Indrawati (2022). The Work-life Balance Experience of Balinese Women Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <i>Udayana Psychology Journal</i> , 9(2).	To explore the work-life balance of married Balinese women working in the formal sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Qualitative phenomenological	During the pandemic, Balinese women experienced role conflicts as mothers, workers, and individuals bound by tradition.
2	Pucangan (2020). The Role of Work-Life Balance and Social Support on Work Stress Among Balinese Women Working in 4-Star Hotels in Badung Regency. <i>Udayana Psychology Journal</i> , Special Issue on Mental Health and Culture I, 178–186.	To examine the role of work-life balance and social support in work stress among Balinese women working in 4-star hotels in Badung Regency.	Quantitative cross-sectional	Both work-life balance and social support jointly contribute to reducing work stress in Balinese women working in 4-star hotels in Badung Regency.
3	Putri and Mujiati (2023). The Role of Job Satisfaction in Mediating the Effect of Work-life Balance on Employee Performance at the Denpasar Immigration Detention Center. <i>E-Journal of Economics and Business</i> , Udayana University.	To determine the role of job satisfaction in mediating the effect of work-life balance on employee performance at the Denpasar Immigration Detention Center.	Quantitative cross-sectional	Work-life balance improves employee performance both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction, with job satisfaction acting as a mediator.
4	Sinthia Widiastuti and Putra Suryanata (2020). Work Motivation in Married Balinese Women from the Perspective of Work-life Balance. <i>Business Management Journal</i> , 17(1).	To understand the work motivation of Balinese women working in the context of work-life balance.	Qualitative phenomenological	The study presents an overview of married Balinese women balancing work-life and the factors driving them to work.
5	Yuni and Darma (2022). Exploring Role Conflict in Achieving Work-life Balance for Female Workers. <i>Business Management Journal</i> , 19(1).	To explore the role conflicts experienced by women and the efforts made to avoid role conflicts and achieve work-life balance.	Qualitative phenomenological	The study identified two types of role conflicts: work interference with personal life and personal life interference with work.

Table 1 (Continued)

List of Literature

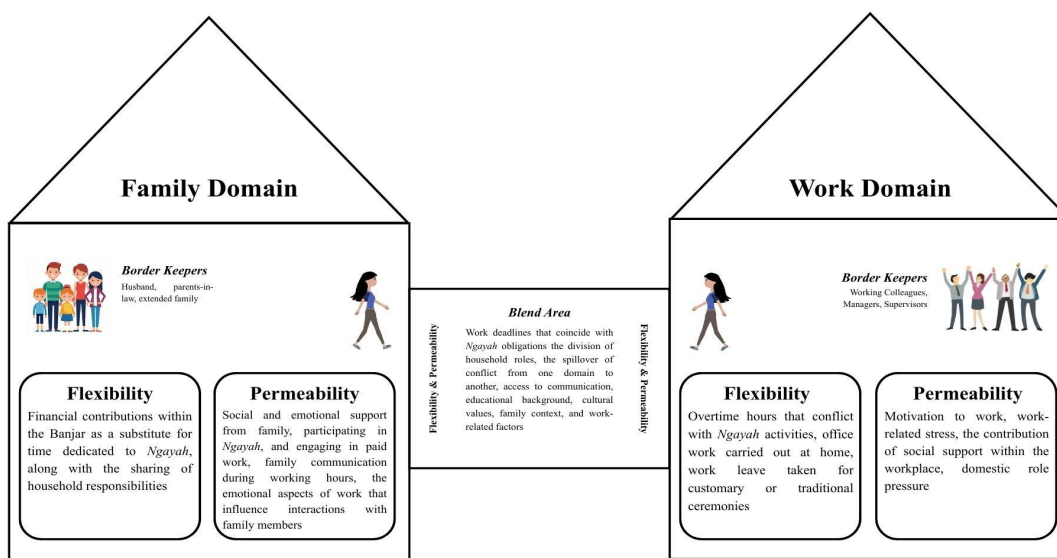
No	Author(s) (Year, Title, Publisher)	Research Objective	Research Method	Research Findings
6	Wijaya and Suwandana (2022). The Role of Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance on the Job Performance of Female Nurses at Local General Hospital. <i>European Journal of Business and Management Research</i> , 7(1).	To analyze the influence of job satisfaction and work-life balance on the job performance of female nurses at Klungkung General Hospital.	Quantitative cross-sectional	Work-life balance positively and significantly influences job satisfaction, and job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and job performance.
7	Dewi et al. (2023). Career Development Models. <i>International Journal of Social Sciences</i> , 6(3).	To understand how Balinese women balance personal and work life while carrying household, economic, and cultural roles.	Qualitative phenomenological	Balinese women perceive their careers as fulfilling family needs and providing social interaction with peers.
8	Juliantini et al. (2019). Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study on Balinese Female Auditors. <i>International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities</i> , 3(2).	To understand Balinese female auditors' experiences with dual roles.	Qualitative phenomenological	Respondents viewed work-life balance through happiness and gratitude, with family serving as the strongest source of support.
9	Rini and Indrawati (2019). The Relationship Between Work-life Balance and Organizational Commitment Among Balinese Women Working in the Formal Sector. <i>Udayana Psychology Journal</i> , 6(1).	To examine the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment among Balinese women working in the formal sector.	Quantitative cross-sectional	A significant positive relationship exists between work-life balance and organizational commitment among Balinese women working in the formal sector.
10	Vidyantari et al. (2022). Work Cultural-Life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Balinese Female Accountants in the Banking Sector. <i>Journal of Accounting and Business Science</i> , 17(1).	To understand how Balinese women working as accountants navigate their careers in the banking industry while managing cultural responsibilities.	Qualitative phenomenological	Four main themes were identified: joyful life, blessings, self-pride, and time management.

## Results

Following the literature screening, we conducted a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (“themes”) in qualitative data, which can be obtained from within or across data. Several themes emerged from the analysis, describing the dynamics between work and *ngayah* among Balinese women. We summarize these themes in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Analysis Results*



## Discussion

This literature review was conducted to describe the dynamics of work-life balance among Balinese women from the perspective of work/family border theory. Each individual, in this case, married Balinese women, has their own way of adjusting to achieve work-life balance. This aligns with the work/family border theory, which explains how an individual attempts to integrate and segment work and family (Clark, 2000). In line with this concept, Handayani (2013) said that work-family balance occurs when someone can share roles and feel satisfaction in their roles, even though small conflicts remain. Two main domains are interrelated but still have boundaries between them. These domains are the family and work domains. According to Vidyantari et al. (2022), playing dual roles is not a threat to Balinese women. In this study, there are two domains that create significant challenges in maintaining balance, namely family and work.

### *Family Domain*

Balinese women are required to balance their work and family life in order to fulfill every role they are expected to play. According to Pradnyapradipa and Indrawati (2022), Balinese women, especially married women, view activities related to culture and traditions as a natural duty that must be fulfilled. The family domain can be influenced by the social support received by the individual, whether from their spouse or extended family. Based on Sinthia Widiastuti and Putra Suryanata (2020)'s study, the support received from the husband plays a significant role in one's decision to continue working, even with the other roles they must fulfill as Balinese women. This social support is often connected to the demands of maintaining harmony both at home and in the traditional village. Emotional and behavioral support from in-laws and extended family can improve the work-life balance of Balinese women. For example, family members never force individuals to engage in domestic tasks, like making offerings (*banten*) if the person has limited knowledge of this practice, to participate in communal service (*ngayah*), or to attend traditional ceremonies (*odalan*) (Juliantini et al., 2019). On the other hand, a lack of support from the husband's family can hinder the work-life balance of married Balinese women. A non-supportive family, characterized by poor responses and a lack of appreciation for the individual, can increase stress levels for working Balinese women, especially due to the limited time available to participate in traditional ceremonies and community events, which is crucial for them (Pucangan, 2020).

The family domain is also closely linked to support from the individual *banjar* community. Individuals who are unable to attend *braya* activities in the *banjar* due to work can compensate for their absence by paying a fee (Pucangan, 2020). Economic conditions in the family can reduce the work-life balance of Balinese women. In the research by Yuni and Darma (2022), economic difficulties, such as what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting daily basic needs, and children's education, are the reasons why Balinese women work and take care of their children at home—meaning that individuals have to perform two roles at once at home. Poor work-life balance indicators can be seen in Putri and Mujiati (2023) research on employees of the Denpasar Immigration Detention Center, where indicators of individual engagement in social activities suggest the need to minimize overtime hours.

### *Employment Sectors*

Married Balinese women have various employment options, both in the formal and informal sectors. Based on relevant journal sources, these jobs include the tourism sector, government, private companies, and other occupations. In their study, Sinthia Widiastuti and Putra Suryanata (2020) explained that one of the motivations for married Balinese women to work is their educational background and adequate skills to find jobs that match their background, thereby helping to support their families' economies. The knowledge, experience, and material possessions of individuals encourage them to continue working (Vidyantari et al., 2022). Economic factors are also part of the motivation to work (Pradnyapradipa & Indrawati, 2022).

Balinese women who experience stress at work tend to have a lower level of work-life balance.

This stress may arise from a rigid attendance system, lack of social support in the office environment, and boredom with their position. Pucangan (2020) mentioned that Balinese women working in 4-star hotels in Badung Regency, who experienced a high level of work stress, can still maintain a good work-life balance and social support. This is due to the multiple roles they must fulfill in the family domain. Research by Yuni and Darma (2022) reveals that Balinese women who are overly focused on their careers find themselves dedicating more time to their jobs, such as attending meetings, fulfilling deadlines, and working overtime. This leaves less time for themselves, their social environment, and their family. Work-life balance in the work domain is also supported by contributions from the company. For example, Wijaya and Suwandana (2022) found that Balinese women working as hospital nurses need seminars, training, and support from superiors to improve their performance and confidence while working. There is a positive relationship between organizational commitment and work-life balance among women working in the formal sector, such as regional-owned enterprises (BUMD), with 78.3% of individuals working an eight-hour shift (Rini & Indrawati, 2019).

#### *Border Theory Perspective*

Work/family border theory is a theory that explains how individuals can manage and negotiate between work and family environments, as well as how the boundaries between work and family can remain balanced (Clark, 2000). This balance can be achieved through two mechanisms, namely integration and permeability (Clark, 2000). Permeability is a state in which the boundaries between the work and family domains can overlap and influence each other (Clark, 2000). Individuals with excessive workloads can still be physically present in the family domain, i.e., at home, but psychologically and behaviorally involved in their roles at work (Ashforth et al., 2000). Balinese women need to manage their schedules well, between completing traditional tasks, *ngayah*, domestic tasks, and office work (Yuni & Darma, 2022).

Even though they bring work home, individuals must be able to take part in several roles that are influenced by a patriarchal culture, which requires them to fulfill familial responsibilities (Harkina et al., 2020). The patriarchal Balinese culture certainly necessitates individuals to balance their domains through gender empowerment. The role of the husband is very significant in helping individuals with their roles outside of work and in taking more responsibility for demands outside the domain (Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014).

Role conflicts caused by excessive workloads can affect one's psychological condition, such as causing burnout, if not properly managed (Schultz & Schultz, 2020). In line with this, Pradnyapradipa and Indrawati (2022) described the negative effects of role conflict, such as decreased interest in socializing, withdrawal from society, excessive fatigue, turnover risks, and decreased productivity in both the work and family domains. However, appropriate boundary management strategies can support a better work-life balance (Leduc et al., 2016).

Social support is one of the modalities to achieve work-life balance. It can take various forms, such as in-laws helping their working daughter-in-law with *mebanten* tasks and *menyama braya* activities, which are usually carried out by Balinese women ahead of religious holidays or *nguopin*

(Oktarina & Komalasari, 2022). Research on Chinese culture shows that family support correlates with better work-family relationships, reflecting the flexibility of boundaries between work and family (Peng et al., 2022).

Flexibility is another important component in border theory. Flexibility means that each domain can expand and vice versa, depending on the priority scale (Clark, 2000). Domain expansion can be driven by demands from that domain (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2021). These demands can be contracted according to the priorities that individuals set for their family and work. Juliantini et al. (2019) studied individuals whose jobs required them to move around for work, limiting their ability to contribute to *ngayah* ceremonies, *menyama braya*, and other traditional activities. This illustrates that the family domain, especially in the traditional sense, cannot be expanded due to work demands, which individuals must prioritize.

Individuals actively seek solutions to problems, such as optimally managing the time spent between work and other traditional activities. The key for married Balinese women is to have good time management in organizing roles in each domain (Vidyantari et al., 2022). Time management skills should be paired with effective communication in both the work and family domains to improve work performance and overall life satisfaction (Liu et al., 2021). Leppäkumpu and Sivunen (2023) also asserted that communication across borders can provide instrumental and emotional support in each domain.

Dewi et al. (2023) described three subjective phases of careers among Balinese women, saying that in each phase, individuals can apply flexibility in each domain so that their work-life balance is maintained. The level of flexibility between Balinese women working in the formal and informal sectors certainly has some differences (Sinthia Widiastuti & Putra Suryanata, 2020). In the formal sector, individuals are bound by company rules and regulations, resulting in limitations on expanding into other domains, in this case, the family domain. However, individuals with good time management skills can set their priority scales so that they have equal flexibility between the work and family domains. If there are obligations in the family domain, individuals can request time off from work, and vice versa. Matters related to children and spouses become the focus before and after work.

Research has found that flexible working hours improve and facilitate work-life balance, reducing stress and increasing employee well-being (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Balinese women who work in the informal sector have a greater expansion of their family domain, with individuals having more time in their domestic roles due to the absence of rigid work rules that bind individuals. In line with Kim (2020)'s research, women who work from home and do part-time work have more time to interact with their children. In traditional activities, Balinese women working in the informal sector can actively carry out their roles and not work.

Balinese women who work and adhere to cultural values should be able to create a supportive ecosystem of boundaries so that when conflicts arise, individuals can maintain a work-life balance, allowing for permeable and flexible interactions between domains (Handayani, 2013).

### *Limitations*

This literature review has several limitations. First, there is a difficulty in describing the flexibility and permeability between the work domain and the family domain faced by Balinese women because the family domain cannot be separated from the cultural domain. Second, research about Balinese women's awareness of the balance between work and life, which is intricately linked with the Balinese culture. Third, there is a limitation in research on the extent of sanctions imposed by companies or organizations where Balinese women work when *ngayah* demands require them to take leave from work.

## **Conclusion**

Balinese women are required to balance work responsibilities, family obligations, and participation in customary activities to achieve work-life balance. From the perspective of work/family border theory, this balance depends on individuals' ability to manage the permeability and flexibility of the boundaries between work and family domains. While permeability often occurs when work demands extend into the family domain, flexibility enables Balinese women to adjust work schedules to accommodate family and traditional obligations. Effectively managing these boundary characteristics can help reduce stress and promote work-life balance, whereas poorly managed boundaries may increase role conflict and negatively affect psychological well-being.

### *Implications*

This literature review extends the application of work/family border theory by highlighting the importance of cultural context in understanding work-life balance among Balinese women. It suggests that work-life balance is shaped not only by interactions between work and family but also by obligations arising from customary and cultural practices. Practically, these findings underscore the need for supportive workplace policies, such as flexible work arrangements and culturally responsive leave policies, alongside support from families and traditional community leaders. Such collaborative support may strengthen the psychological well-being and work-life balance of married Balinese women.

### *Recommendations*

Future research should empirically examine the relationships among permeability, flexibility, and work-life balance in Balinese women using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate how Balinese cultural values, customary obligations, and social norms influence boundary management strategies across work and family domains. From a practical perspective, intervention programs and educational initiatives should be developed to enhance boundary management skills among Balinese women, increase family support, and encourage organizations and traditional communities to create environments that facilitate sustainable work-life balance.

## Declaration

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### *Author's Contributions*

Author PAAI contributed to conceptualizing and writing the majority of the manuscript. Author TDV contributed to conceptualizing and strengthening the arguments in the discussion and introduction sections.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the writing or publication of this literature review.

### *Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing*

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with minor language editing and proofreading. All AI-generated suggestions were reviewed and revised by the author as necessary. The author takes full responsibility for the content, originality, accuracy, and scientific validity of the manuscript.

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