

Emotional Intelligence and Work Life Balance in the Indian Banking Sector: A PRISMA driven Systematic Review and Theoretical Integration

Ms. Shafeen, Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow

Dr. Farheen Siddiqui, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow.

Dr. Anamika Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Language University, Lucknow

Dr. Ehsan Ul Haque, Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, Integral University, Lucknow.

Corresponding author: Dr. Farheen Siddiqui

Abstract

The rapid digitalisation of the Indian banking sector has significantly increased both performance pressures and emotional demands on employees, particularly women who often balance professional and family responsibilities. This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work-life balance (WLB) through a systematic review of existing literature. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 70 relevant studies were identified and analysed. Rather than offering a purely descriptive review, the study integrates key theoretical perspectives, including the Job Demands-Resources model, spillover theory, and emotional labour theory, to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence contributes to work-life balance both directly and indirectly by reducing stress and work-family conflict, while organizational and family support further strengthen these relationships. The study offers a structured theoretical foundation and highlights directions for future empirical research.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Work Life Balance; Stress Management; Work Family Conflict; Banking Sector; Systematic Review

JEL Classification: M12; I31; J28; M54, D23, J24

1. Introduction

The banking sector has undergone rapid transformation due to digitalisation, increasing competition, and evolving customer expectations (Ewim et al., 2021). These changes have significantly increased both cognitive and emotional demands on employees, especially in customer-facing roles.

Work-life balance has become a critical issue in such environments, as employees struggle to manage professional responsibilities alongside personal commitments (Todd & Binns, 2013; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). This challenge is particularly significant for female employees, who often face dual-role expectations related to work and family responsibilities (Shah, 2025).

Emotional labour in banking requires employees to regulate their emotions during customer interactions, often leading to emotional exhaustion and stress spillover into personal life (Grandey, 2000; Wang, 2025). In this context, emotional intelligence emerges as a crucial psychological resource. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to understand, manage, and regulate emotions effectively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Employees with higher EI are better equipped to handle stress, maintain relationships, and achieve balance between work and personal life (Mayer et al., 2008; Zeidner et al., 2013).

Despite extensive research on emotional intelligence and work life balance, existing studies remain fragmented, often focusing on isolated relationships without integrating underlying theoretical mechanisms. This study addresses this gap by adopting a systematic review approach combined with theoretical integration.

The study draws upon the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, spillover theory, and emotional labour theory to explain how emotional intelligence functions as a personal resource that reduces stress, regulates emotional demands, and enhances balance between work and personal life. By synthesizing findings across multiple studies, the research develops an integrated conceptual framework that links emotional intelligence, stress management, work family conflict, and work life balance. This study aims to systematically examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-life balance in the Indian banking sector using a structured review approach (Nanda & Randhawa, 2020). Given these challenges, there is a need to move beyond isolated examinations of emotional intelligence and work-life balance. Existing studies often overlook the mechanisms and contextual factors that shape this relationship. Therefore, this study adopts a systematic and theory-driven approach to develop an integrated understanding of how emotional intelligence contributes to work-life balance in the banking sector. The banking sector in India has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, driven by technological advancements, regulatory reforms, increased competition, and evolving customer expectations (Ewim et al., 2021; Shakeel & Khan, 2022). These changes have intensified the nature of work, resulting in heightened performance pressures, extended working hours, and increased emotional demands on employees (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Banking professionals are required not only to meet financial targets but also to maintain high levels of customer service, often involving continuous interpersonal interaction and emotional regulation (Shakeel & Khan, 2022). Such conditions contribute to elevated levels of occupational stress and pose challenges to maintaining a healthy work life balance. Within this context, female employees in the banking sector experience unique and compounded challenges (Shah, 2025). In addition to professional responsibilities, women are often expected to fulfill primary roles in household management, caregiving, and family coordination, particularly in socio-cultural settings like India where traditional gender roles remain influential. This dual burden frequently leads to role conflict, time constraints, and psychological strain, making the attainment of work life balance more complex for women compared to their male counterparts.

The increasing participation of women in the banking workforce underscores the importance of understanding factors that can support their well-being and performance. Emotional intelligence has emerged as a critical personal resource that enables individuals to manage emotions, cope with stress, and navigate interpersonal relationships effectively (Mayer et al., 2008; Antonopoulou, 2024; Usmani et al., 2024). In high-pressure environments such as banking, emotional intelligence may play a vital role in mitigating stress, reducing work family conflict, and enhancing overall work life balance (Khan F.S., 2021)

Despite the growing body of research, the literature remains largely fragmented and descriptive. Many studies establish associations between emotional intelligence and work-life balance without sufficiently explaining the underlying mechanisms or contextual influences. In addition, there is limited integration of theoretical perspectives, which restricts the depth of understanding. This indicates the need for a more structured and theory-driven synthesis.

The contemporary banking environment is characterized by high work intensity, stringent performance targets, continuous customer interaction, and increasing technological demands (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). These factors contribute to elevated levels of occupational stress among employees, which often spill over into their personal lives, leading to an imbalance between work and non-work domains (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). For female employees, this imbalance is further intensified due to the dual responsibilities of professional commitments and family obligations. In the long term, this imbalance can lead to burnout, absenteeism, and increased turnover intentions (Allen et al., 2000). While emotional intelligence has been recognized as a key factor in managing emotions and coping with stress, its role in addressing work life imbalance, particularly through underlying mechanisms such as stress management and work family conflict, remains insufficiently explored (Nanda & Randhawa, 2020; Khan et al., 2024). This creates a critical need to examine how emotional intelligence can function as a resource to mitigate stress and enhance work life balance in high-pressure sectors such as banking.

2. Literature Review

Existing literature highlights that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in improving employee well-being and work-life balance.

Emotional intelligence consists of five key dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies enable individuals to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain effective interpersonal relationships.

Work-life balance is a multidimensional concept that involves maintaining harmony between professional and personal roles. Theoretical frameworks such as boundary theory, spillover theory, and the job demands-resources model explain how individuals manage competing demands.

Research consistently shows that emotional intelligence reduces work-family conflict and enhances psychological well-being. Self-regulation and self-awareness are particularly important in managing stress and emotional exhaustion. Empathy and social skills help build support systems that improve balance.

In the banking sector, emotional labour and gender-based expectations further increase work-life challenges for women. Emotional intelligence helps manage these pressures by improving coping mechanisms and communication. Additionally, organizational and family support play a moderating role by strengthening the effectiveness of emotional intelligence in achieving work-life balance.

2.1 Emotional Intelligence: Concept and Dimensions: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical construct in understanding individual effectiveness in emotionally demanding work environments (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Initially conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively. This conceptualization was later popularized and expanded by Daniel Goleman (1995), who emphasized its role in workplace performance and leadership.

EI is generally understood as a multidimensional construct comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Antonopoulou, 2024; Saxena, 2025). These dimensions collectively enable individuals to manage their own emotions and navigate interpersonal relationships effectively. In service-oriented sectors such as banking, where employees engage in continuous customer interaction and emotional labour, EI becomes particularly relevant (Grandey, 2000).

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that higher levels of EI are associated with improved job performance, better stress management, and enhanced interpersonal relationships (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Within the framework of the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, EI is conceptualized as a personal resource that enables employees to cope with job demands and maintain psychological well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

2.2 Work Life Balance: Conceptual Perspectives: Work Life Balance (WLB) refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage and harmonize work and personal life roles. It encompasses the equitable distribution of time, involvement, and satisfaction across different life domains (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Several theoretical perspectives have been used to explain WLB. Spillover theory suggests that experiences in one domain of life influence outcomes in another, implying that stress or satisfaction at work can transfer to personal life (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Boundary theory further explains how individuals manage the boundaries between work and family roles, with varying degrees of integration and segmentation (Ashforth et al., 2000). In high-pressure sectors such as banking, maintaining work life balance is particularly challenging due to long working hours, performance targets, and emotional demands. Poor work life balance has been linked to reduced job satisfaction, increased burnout, and lower organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2000; Clark, 2000).

2.3 Emotional Intelligence and Work Life Balance: The relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance has gained increasing attention in recent years (Nanda & Randhawa, 2020; Sy et al., 2006). EI enables individuals to regulate emotions, manage interpersonal interactions, and respond adaptively to stress, thereby facilitating a better balance between work and personal life.

Studies have shown that employees with higher EI are more capable of managing work pressures and maintaining psychological well-being, which contributes positively to work life balance (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006). Emotional intelligence helps individuals interpret emotional cues, reduce conflict, and maintain positive relationships, all of which are essential for balancing multiple roles.

From the perspective of the JD-R model, EI acts as a buffer against job demands, reducing strain and enhancing engagement. This suggests that EI not only directly influences WLB but also operates through underlying psychological mechanisms.

2.4 Role of Stress Management: Stress management plays a critical mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance. Occupational stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to cope, leading to psychological and physiological strain (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotional intelligence enhances an individual's ability to identify stressors, regulate emotional responses, and adopt effective coping strategies. Employees with higher EI are better equipped to manage workplace stress, thereby reducing its negative impact on their personal lives (Schutte et al., 2007). Within the JD-R framework, stress represents the outcome of excessive job demands, while EI functions as a resource that mitigates this effect. Effective stress management, therefore, serves as a key mechanism through which EI contributes to improved work life balance.

2.5 Work Family Conflict: Work Family Conflict (WFC) refers to the incompatibility between work and family roles, where participation in one domain interferes with the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). WFC is a major barrier to achieving work life balance, particularly for employees with multiple role responsibilities. Spillover theory explains how stress and negative experiences in the workplace transfer into the family domain, resulting in conflict and imbalance. Emotional intelligence can reduce WFC by enabling individuals to manage emotional demands, communicate effectively, and maintain role boundaries (Michel et al., 2011). Empirical research suggests that employees with higher EI experience lower levels of work family conflict, as they are better able to regulate emotions and manage competing demands. This highlights the importance of EI as a resource in reducing role conflict and enhancing work life balance.

2.6 Moderating Role of Organizational and Family Support: Organizational support and family support are critical contextual factors that influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance. Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Supportive organizational practices, such as flexible work arrangements, employee assistance programs, and supportive leadership, can enhance employees' ability to manage work demands and reduce stress. These factors strengthen the positive impact of emotional intelligence on work life balance.

Similarly, family support plays a vital role in enabling individuals to manage dual-role responsibilities (Park & Fritz, 2015; Sembiring et al., 2024). Emotional and practical support from family members can reduce stress and facilitate better role integration, particularly in collectivist societies like India.

2.7 Theoretical Integration and Research Gap: Despite the growing body of literature on emotional intelligence and work life balance, existing research remains fragmented. Many studies have focused on direct relationships without considering the mediating and moderating mechanisms involved.

By integrating the Job Demands Resources model, spillover theory, and emotional labour theory, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how emotional intelligence influences work life balance. The inclusion of stress management and work family conflict as mediating variables, along with organizational and family support as moderating factors, offers a more holistic perspective.

This integrated approach addresses existing gaps in the literature and provides a foundation for developing a conceptual model that captures the complexity of the EI WLB relationship in the banking sector.

Table 1: Theoretical Foundations Underpinning the Study

Theory	Seminal Authors	Core Concept	Relevance to Present Study
Emotional Intelligence Theory	Salovey & Mayer (1990); Goleman (1995)	EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage emotions in oneself and others.	Forms the central independent variable of the study. Explains how individuals regulate emotions to handle workplace stress and interpersonal demands in the banking sector.
Job Demands Resources (JD-R) Model	Bakker & Demerouti (2007)	Employee well-being is influenced by the balance between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional pressure) and resources (e.g., personal competencies, support).	EI is conceptualized as a personal resource that helps employees manage job demands, reduce stress, and improve work life balance.
Spillover Theory	Edwards & Rothbard (2000)	Experiences in one domain (work) transfer to another domain (family), either positively or negatively.	Explains how work stress spills over into personal life, affecting work life balance. EI helps regulate this spillover and reduce negative effects.
Boundary Theory	Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate (2000)	Individuals create and manage boundaries between work and personal life roles.	EI enables individuals to manage role boundaries effectively, reducing role conflict and improving balance.
Work Family Conflict Theory	Greenhaus & Beutell (1985)	Conflict arises when demands of work and family roles are incompatible.	Provides the basis for including work family conflict as a key outcome variable affecting work life balance. EI helps minimize such conflicts.
Stress and Coping Theory	Lazarus & Folkman (1984)	Stress results from perceived imbalance between demands and coping ability; coping strategies determine outcomes.	Supports the mediating role of stress management. EI enhances coping ability, thereby reducing stress and improving work life balance.
Emotional Labour Theory	Grandey (2000)	Employees regulate emotions to meet organizational expectations during interactions.	Highly relevant to the banking sector, where employees must manage emotions in customer interactions. EI facilitates effective emotional labour and reduces stress.
Social Exchange Theory (Support Context)	Eisenberger et al. (1986)	Employees reciprocate organizational support with positive attitudes and behaviors.	Explains the moderating role of organizational support in strengthening the relationship between EI and work life balance.

Source: Authors Compilation

These theoretical perspectives collectively inform the development of the conceptual model presented in the following section

The present study is grounded in a multi-theoretical perspective to explain the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance among female employees in the banking sector. By integrating complementary theoretical lenses, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of both the direct and underlying mechanisms through which emotional intelligence influences employee well-being.

At the core of the framework is Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995), which conceptualizes EI as the ability to perceive, regulate, and manage emotions effectively. In high-pressure service environments such as banking, EI functions as a critical personal capability that enables employees to handle emotional demands, maintain interpersonal relationships, and cope with workplace challenges.

Building on this, the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides the foundational structure for understanding how EI operates within the work environment. According to this model, job demands such as workload, time pressure, and emotional labour can lead to stress and burnout,

whereas personal resources like emotional intelligence help mitigate these effects. In this study, EI is conceptualized as a key personal resource that reduces stress and enhances work life balance.

The mediating role of stress is further explained through Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which posits that stress arises when individuals perceive an imbalance between demands and their coping abilities. Emotional intelligence enhances coping capacity by enabling individuals to regulate emotions and adopt adaptive strategies, thereby reducing perceived stress and its negative consequences.

Spillover Theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) and Work Family Conflict Theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) provide additional insight into the cross-domain effects of work experiences. These theories suggest that stress and emotional strain experienced at work can spill over into the family domain, leading to conflict and reduced work life balance. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in managing this spillover by facilitating emotional regulation, boundary management, and effective communication, thereby reducing work family conflict. Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) further complements this perspective by explaining how individuals manage the interface between work and personal life. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are better able to establish and maintain boundaries, preventing excessive role interference and promoting balance. Finally, Emotional Labour Theory (Grandey, 2000) highlights the importance of managing emotions in service roles, where employees are expected to display appropriate emotional expressions during customer interactions. In the banking sector, this requirement can be a significant source of stress; however, emotional intelligence enables employees to perform emotional labour more effectively, thereby reducing strain. The framework also incorporates Social Exchange Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) to explain the moderating role of organizational support. When employees perceive higher levels of support from their organization, they are better able to utilize their emotional intelligence, leading to improved stress management and work life balance. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust foundation for the study by explaining how emotional intelligence functions as a central resource that influences work life balance both directly and indirectly through stress management and work family conflict. This integrated framework forms the basis for the conceptual model presented in the following section.

The findings indicate a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and work-life balance across all reviewed studies.

Table 2. Summary of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Their Impact on Work-Life Balance

The synthesis of reviewed studies supports a mediated relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance through stress management. Table 2 summarizes key emotional intelligence dimensions identified across studies and their relevance to work-life balance.

EI Dimension	Key Function	Impact on Work-Life Balance
Self-awareness	Recognizing emotional stress	Early stress detection and prevention
Self-regulation	Controlling emotional responses	Reduces work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion
Motivation	Sustaining engagement	Enhances resilience and reduces burnout
Empathy	Understanding others' emotions	Improves workplace and family relationships
Social Skills	Communication and interaction	Strengthens support systems

Source: Authors Compilation

Self-awareness and self-regulation emerged as the most significant dimensions. Employees with high EI can identify stress early and manage emotional responses effectively, reducing emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict.

Table 3. Summary of Selected Studies (Systematic Literature Review)

Author & Year	Country	Sector	Sample	Method	Key Findings
Koubova & Buchko (2013)	USA	Mixed	Employees	Survey	EI positively affects WLB
Vasumathi et al. (2015)	India	Education	Faculty	Quantitative	EI improves work-life balance
Choi et al. (2019)	Korea	Hospitality	Frontline staff	Survey	EI reduces stress and burnout
Jung & Yoon (2016)	Korea	Hospitality	Employees	SEM	EI improves coping and satisfaction
Perumal & Aithal (2023)	India	Banking	Bank staff	Empirical	EI improves job performance & WLB
Barragán et al. (2021)	Spain	Social	Individuals	Survey	EI enhances family support
Karatepe (2013)	Turkey	Hospitality	Employees	Quantitative	Work stress affects WLB negatively
Park & Fritz (2015)	USA	General	Couples	Survey	Family support improves WLB

Source: Authors Compilation

Table 4. Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Work-Life Balance

EI Dimension	Role	Outcome
Self-awareness	Identifies stress	Prevents burnout
Self-regulation	Controls emotions	Reduces conflict
Motivation	Sustains effort	Improves engagement
Empathy	Builds understanding	Enhances relationships
Social Skills	Communication	Strengthens support

Source: Authors Compilation

3. Key Existing Theories

The findings of this study extend existing literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives into a unified framework. While previous studies have examined emotional intelligence and work life balance in isolation, this study demonstrates that the relationship operates through underlying mechanisms such as stress management and work family conflict. The integration of JD-R and spillover theory provides a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence functions as a psychological resource that facilitates balance in demanding work environments.

- Self-regulation and self-awareness are the most influential EI dimensions
- Emotional intelligence reduces stress and work-family conflict
- EI improves boundary management between work and personal life
- Social skills and empathy strengthen support systems

The reviewed studies consistently report positive associations between emotional intelligence and work-life balance. However, these relationships are derived from individual empirical studies and are synthesized qualitatively in this review rather than statistically tested.

3.1 Integrated Thematic Analysis: The findings of the reviewed studies were synthesized to identify key themes and relationships among variables. The analysis reveals that emotional intelligence consistently demonstrates a positive relationship with work life balance across different contexts.

Importantly, the relationship is not merely direct but operates through underlying mechanisms. Emotional intelligence enhances employees' ability to manage stress, which in turn improves their capacity to balance work and personal life. Similarly, higher emotional intelligence reduces work family conflict by enabling better emotional regulation and communication.

Furthermore, the strength of these relationships is influenced by contextual factors such as organizational and family support. These findings support the integrated conceptual framework proposed in this study and highlight the multidimensional nature of the emotional intelligence work life balance relationship.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design: This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to synthesize existing research on emotional intelligence and work life balance in the banking sector. The review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability in the selection and analysis of relevant studies.

4.2 PRISMA Framework: The study selection process was conducted in four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, a comprehensive search was performed across multiple academic databases to identify relevant studies. Duplicate records were removed, and the remaining articles were screened based on titles and abstracts. Subsequently, full-text articles were assessed for eligibility using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies that did not meet the criteria were excluded, and the final set of articles was included for qualitative synthesis. The entire selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 3).

This figure illustrates the systematic process of study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. A total of 600 records were initially identified from multiple databases. After removing duplicates ($n = 80$), 520 records were screened based on titles and abstracts. Of these, 380 records were excluded, and 140 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Subsequently, 70 articles were excluded based on predefined criteria, resulting in a final sample of 70 studies included in the qualitative synthesis.

4.3 Search Strategy and Data Sources: The search process was iterative in nature, with keywords refined during the initial screening phase to improve relevance. A systematic search was conducted using major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed literature.

The search strategy involved the use of Boolean operators and keyword combinations. The primary search string used was: ("Emotional Intelligence" OR "EI") AND ("Work-Life Balance" OR "WLB") AND ("Banking Sector" OR "Employees")

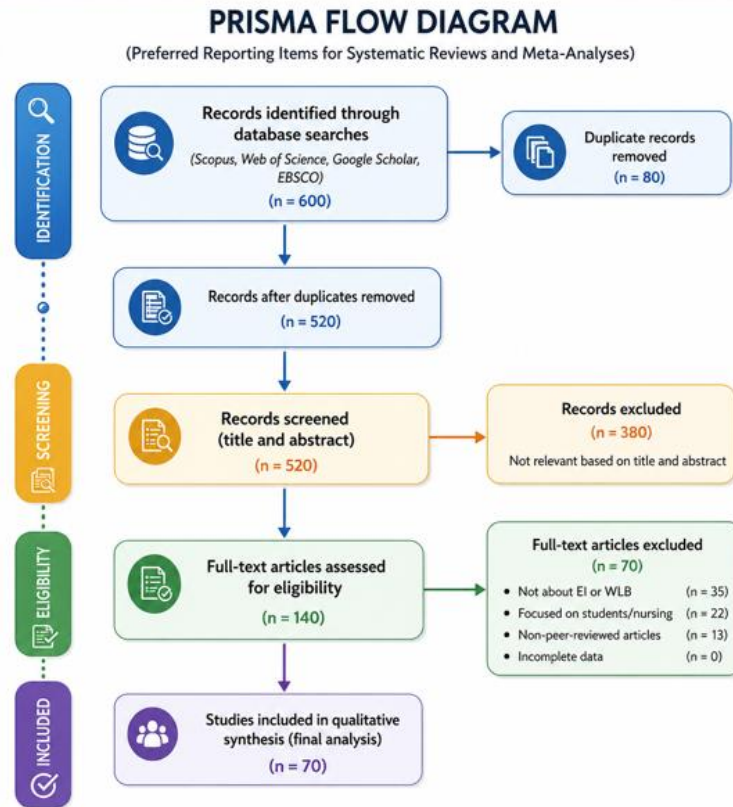


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram Illustrating the Study Selection Process

Additional keywords such as “stress management,” “work-family conflict,” and “organizational support” were also included to refine the search results. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2010 and 2024. Reference lists of selected articles were also manually examined to identify additional relevant studies.

4.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Studies focusing on emotional intelligence and/or work life balance
- Empirical or theoretical research published in peer-reviewed journals
- Studies conducted in organizational or workplace settings
- Articles published in English between 2010 and 2024

Exclusion Criteria:

- Studies focusing solely on student or healthcare (non-banking) populations
- Non-peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and dissertations
- Studies not directly related to emotional intelligence or work life balance
- Duplicate or incomplete records

4.5 Study Selection Process

The initial search yielded 600 records. After removing duplicates ($n = 80$), 520 articles remained for screening. Based on title and abstract screening, 380 articles were excluded due to lack of relevance.

The remaining 140 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 70 articles were excluded based on predefined criteria, resulting in a final sample of 70 studies included in the qualitative synthesis.

4.6 Data Extraction

Relevant data were systematically extracted from each selected study using a structured approach. The extracted information included:

- Author(s) and year of publication
- Study context and sample characteristics
- Key variables examined (e.g., EI, stress, WLB)
- Methodological approach
- Main findings and conclusions

This process enabled a consistent and comprehensive comparison across studies.

4.7 Quality Assessment

To ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings, the selected studies were evaluated based on quality criteria, including clarity of research objectives, methodological rigor, sample adequacy, and relevance to the research topic.

Only studies meeting acceptable quality standards were included in the final analysis. This step enhances the validity of the review and minimizes potential bias in the synthesis of findings.

4.8 Data Analysis Approach:The selected studies were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. Key themes and patterns were identified across the literature, focusing on the relationships between emotional intelligence, stress management, work family conflict, and work life balance. The analysis also emphasized identifying mediating and moderating mechanisms, enabling the development of an integrated conceptual framework that explains the interrelationships among the variables.

Additional filters were applied to include peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2010 and 2024. Reference lists of selected articles were also manually screened to identify additional relevant studies.

This comprehensive search strategy ensured coverage of high-quality and relevant literature for the study.

5. Results and Thematic Synthesis

5.1 Descriptive Overview of Selected Studies: The final sample consisted of 70 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2024. The distribution of studies indicates a growing scholarly interest in emotional intelligence and work life balance, particularly in the last decade. A majority of the studies were conducted in service-oriented sectors, including banking, healthcare, and education, reflecting the increasing importance of emotional competencies in high-interaction work environments. Geographically, the literature is dominated by studies from developing economies, including India, where rapid organizational changes and socio-cultural dynamics create unique challenges for employees, particularly women. Methodologically, the majority of studies employed quantitative approaches, with survey-based designs being the most common. However, there remains a relative scarcity of integrative and theory-driven research that examines the underlying mechanisms linking emotional intelligence and work life balance.

5.2 Thematic Analysis: The thematic synthesis of the selected studies revealed four dominant themes that explain the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance.

5.2.1 Emotional Intelligence as a Personal Resource: A consistent finding across the reviewed literature is the role of emotional intelligence as a critical personal resource that enhances individuals' ability to cope with workplace demands. Drawing from the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, emotional intelligence enables employees to regulate emotions, manage interpersonal relationships, and maintain psychological resilience.

Studies indicate that employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence demonstrate greater adaptability and are better equipped to handle job pressures, which contributes to improved well-being and work life balance (Nanda & Randhawa, 2020; Perumal & Aithal, 2023). This reinforces the conceptualization of emotional intelligence as a foundational capability that directly influences employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

5.2.2 Stress Management as a Mediating Mechanism: The analysis highlights stress management as a central mechanism through which emotional intelligence influences work life balance. Emotional intelligence enhances individuals' ability to identify stressors, regulate emotional responses, and adopt effective coping strategies. Consistent with Stress and Coping Theory, employees with higher emotional intelligence experience lower levels of perceived stress, which reduces the likelihood of burnout and emotional exhaustion. This, in turn, enables them to maintain a more stable and balanced integration of work and personal life domains. The findings suggest that the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance is not solely direct but operates significantly through stress reduction pathways.

5.2.3 Work Family Conflict as a Key Outcome: Another prominent theme emerging from the literature is the role of work family conflict as a critical factor affecting work life balance. Studies consistently report that high levels of work family conflict are associated with reduced well-being, lower job satisfaction, and diminished work life balance. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in mitigating work family conflict by enabling individuals to manage emotional demands, communicate effectively, and maintain clear role boundaries. From the perspective of spillover theory, emotional intelligence helps reduce the negative transfer of stress from the workplace to the family domain (Choi et al., 2019; Abbasi et al., 2025). This highlights that emotional intelligence contributes to work life balance not only by enhancing internal coping mechanisms but also by reducing external role conflicts.

5.2.4 Moderating Role of Organizational and Family Support: The thematic analysis also underscores the importance of contextual factors, particularly organizational and family support, in shaping the effectiveness of emotional intelligence.

Supportive organizational environments, characterized by flexible work arrangements, empathetic leadership, and employee-centric policies, enhance employees' ability to utilize their emotional competencies effectively. Similarly, family support provides emotional and practical assistance that reduces external pressures and facilitates better role integration (Sembiring et al., 2024).

These findings align with Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that supportive environments amplify the positive impact of emotional intelligence on work life balance while further reducing stress and work family conflict.

5.3 Integrated Model Synthesis: Synthesizing the findings across studies, a clear pattern emerges indicating that emotional intelligence functions as a central mechanism influencing work life balance through multiple pathways. First, emotional intelligence directly enhances work life balance by improving emotional regulation and coping ability. Second, it indirectly influences work life balance through stress management, reducing the negative impact of job demands. Third, emotional intelligence minimizes work family conflict, thereby reducing role interference between work and personal life.

Furthermore, the strength of these relationships is contingent upon contextual support systems, particularly organizational and family support, which act as reinforcing factors. This integrated synthesis supports the conceptual framework proposed in this study and demonstrates that the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance is multidimensional, involving direct, mediated, and moderated effects.

6. Key Findings: The thematic synthesis leads to the following key insights:

- Emotional intelligence is a critical personal resource that enhances employees' ability to manage workplace demands.
- Stress management serves as a key mediating mechanism linking emotional intelligence and work life balance.
- Work family conflict is a significant outcome that negatively affects work life balance but can be mitigated through emotional intelligence.
- Organizational and family support strengthen the effectiveness of emotional intelligence and facilitate better work life balance.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of integrating individual competencies with contextual support systems to achieve sustainable work life balance in high-pressure work environments.

7. Discussion: The present study provides a systematic and theoretically integrated understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance in the banking sector. By synthesizing findings across multiple studies, the research offers insights into the direct, indirect, and contextual mechanisms through which emotional intelligence influences employee well-being.

The findings reinforce the central role of emotional intelligence as a critical personal resource, consistent with the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage job demands, regulate emotional responses, and maintain psychological resilience. This supports the view that emotional intelligence not only enhances individual coping capacity but also contributes directly to improved work life balance. A key contribution of the study lies in highlighting the mediating role of stress management. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence significantly reduces perceived stress by enabling individuals to adopt effective coping strategies. This aligns with Stress and Coping Theory, which emphasizes the role of cognitive and emotional regulation in managing stress. The results suggest that the relationship between emotional intelligence and work life balance is largely explained through this stress reduction mechanism, underscoring the importance of psychological processes in determining employee outcomes (Michel et al., 2011; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). The study also confirms the critical role of work family conflict as a mechanism linking emotional intelligence and work life balance. In line with Spillover Theory and Work Family Conflict Theory, the findings indicate that stress and emotional strain experienced at work can extend into the family domain, negatively affecting balance. However, emotional intelligence mitigates this effect by facilitating better emotional regulation, communication, and boundary management. This demonstrates that emotional intelligence operates not only within the workplace but also across life domains, influencing overall well-being. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the moderating influence of organizational and family support. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, supportive organizational environments enhance employees' ability to utilize their emotional competencies effectively. Flexible work arrangements, supportive leadership, and employee-centric policies reduce stress and improve balance. Similarly, family support provides emotional and practical resources that enable individuals to manage dual-role demands, particularly in socio-cultural contexts where family responsibilities are significant (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Hammer et al., 2009).

Importantly, the study extends existing literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives into a unified framework. While prior research has often examined emotional intelligence and work life balance in isolation, this study demonstrates that the relationship is multidimensional, involving direct effects, mediating mechanisms, and contextual influences. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of employee well-being in high-pressure work environments such as banking. The findings also have practical relevance. Organizations should focus on developing emotional intelligence competencies through training and development programs, while simultaneously creating supportive work environments that reduce stress and facilitate work life balance. Such integrated interventions can enhance employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Overall, the study contributes to both theory and practice by demonstrating that emotional intelligence is a central mechanism through which employees navigate complex work and life demands, supported by organizational and family contexts.

8. Contributions of the Study: This study makes several important contributions to the existing literature on emotional intelligence and work–life balance.

8.1 Theoretical Contribution. The study advances theoretical understanding by integrating multiple frameworks, including the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, spillover theory, and emotional labour theory, into a unified conceptual perspective. It moves beyond fragmented approaches by explaining how emotional intelligence influences work–life balance through mediating mechanisms such as stress management and work–family conflict, while also incorporating moderating contextual factors. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of employee well-being in high-pressure work environments.

8.2 Methodological Contribution. Methodologically, the study adopts a systematic review approach based on PRISMA 2020 guidelines, ensuring transparency, rigor, and replicability in the selection and synthesis of literature. By combining structured screening, quality assessment, and thematic analysis, the study enhances the reliability of findings and contributes to the growing body of systematic and theory-driven research in organizational behavior.

8.3 Practical Contribution. From a practical perspective, the study highlights the importance of emotional intelligence as a key competency for managing workplace stress and achieving work–life balance. The findings provide actionable insights for organizations, particularly in the banking sector, to design interventions that enhance employee well-being and performance.

9. Limitations of the Study. Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the review is limited to studies published in selected databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. As a result, relevant studies published in other databases or grey literature may not have been included, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the review.

Second, the study relies on secondary data and is subject to inherent biases associated with systematic reviews, such as publication bias and selection bias. Although efforts were made to ensure rigorous screening and quality assessment, the findings are dependent on the quality and scope of the selected studies.

These limitations suggest that the results should be interpreted with caution and highlight the need for further empirical validation.

10. Future Research Directions. The present study opens several avenues for future research.

First, the conceptual framework developed in this study can be empirically tested using advanced analytical techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM). Future studies can validate the proposed relationships and examine the strength of direct, mediating, and moderating effects.

Second, future research can extend the scope of analysis by examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and work–life balance across different sectors and cultural contexts. Comparative studies across industries and countries can provide deeper insights into the generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, longitudinal studies can be conducted to examine how emotional intelligence influences work–life balance over time, providing a dynamic perspective on employee well-being.

11. Conclusion: This study provides a comprehensive and theoretically integrated understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and work–life balance in the banking sector. By synthesizing existing literature, the study demonstrates that emotional intelligence plays a central role in enhancing work–life balance both directly and indirectly through stress management and reduction of work–family conflict.

The findings highlight the importance of combining individual competencies with supportive organizational and family environments to achieve sustainable employee well-being. The study contributes to theory, methodology, and practice, and offers a strong foundation for future empirical research and organizational interventions aimed at improving work–life balance in high-pressure work settings.

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