

Navigating The Media Maze: Perceived Work-Life Balance Among Women Journalists

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ABSTRACT

Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is a dream for anyone with multiple roles to play in their daily routines. Women journalists are no exception, and their work requires them to possess a broad range of knowledge and skills to deliver accurate and timely information to the public. Despite having multiple responsibilities in their personal lives, women journalists have embraced this challenge. However, issues such as long working hours, inflexible work schedules, excessive workloads, the dual responsibility of childcare, workplace discrimination, lack of support from supervisors and family, and the spillover of work into family life can make it challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This study aims to explore the perception of women journalists towards work-life balance. The Spillover and Role Theories offer insights into the challenges faced by women journalists in balancing their personal and professional lives. The study conducted in-depth interviews with 16 journalists, including single and married women, working in various environments at the media headquarters and state bureau. The perception towards work-life balance was categorised into three themes: work and family environment, mental well-being, and personality traits. This article highlights the difficulties that women journalists face in managing their diverse roles during the convergence period of the media industry and emphasises the need to address work-life balance concerns in the Malaysian media sector.

Keywords: *Women, journalists, work-life balance, Spillover Theory, Role Theory.*

INTRODUCTION

Historically, women were expected to take care of their homes and families, which led to them being perceived as marginalised due to their lack of access to power, influence, and public recognition (Beazer et al., 2023). However, in recent years, more and more women have entered the workforce and secured high-paying jobs in various fields, including technical, professional, and non-professional sectors. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the social status and position of women in society (UN Women, 2023).

Despite these advancements, women journalists continue to face challenges. In a report by The National Union of Journalists Peninsular Malaysia and The International Federation of Journalists (2021), it was noted that a more gender-sensitive environment is needed to address issues such as childcare, household responsibilities, and caring for family members, including infants, children, and the elderly.

The Deloitte's Women @ Work: A Global Outlook Report examines the lives of 5,000 employed women in 10 different countries. The report indicates that in 2023, despite some signs of improvement, women's mental health continues to be poor and there is still stigma among employers regarding this issue (Deloitte, 2023). It was found that when women hold higher positions, they face increased role conflicts (Shahida et al., 2015). Therefore, women perceive role conflict as a significant obstacle to their career advancement. However, it is acknowledged that the roles of wife and mother are crucial for strengthening family unity (Syamsuddin, Ali & Yusuf, 2023).

Over the years, technology has been advancing rapidly across the globe, and media has played a significant role in shaping society. However, the field of journalism has faced challenges due to the digitalisation of news media and new opportunities presented by digital technology (Ahmad, 2023). Media has evolved into an industry that covers all aspects of life, including religion, education, politics, business, health, entertainment, and other similar things. Unfortunately, the percentage of women in the media industry is relatively low. Eddy et al. (2023) conducted a study on 12 markets within the journalism industry and found that only 22% of the top 180 editors across the 12 countries are women, with men occupying the majority of top editor positions in all 12 countries. Work-life balance (WLB) is crucial for both the organisation and its employees in today's complex organisational environments (Ahmed, 2022). WLB does not only refer to the split between work-life and non-work-life, but women in the modern career environment continue to face more WLB issues despite numerous support given (Robinson, 2023).

Balancing professional and personal obligations has become a crucial problem for women journalists in today's media environments. While they are charged with informing the public, they frequently encounter various difficulties. Women journalists, in particular, face a hard time navigating the complex interactions between established gender roles, changing workplace dynamics, and the unrelenting demands of the digital era. This introduction lays the groundwork for an in-depth analysis of how women journalists balance their professional journalistic careers with their personal lives. Thus, this study addresses the following research question: what is the perception of women journalists towards WLB? Theoretically grounded in Spillover and Role Theories, the research question is analysed using a dataset gathered from in-depth interviews with women journalists.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of this research is to investigate the perception of women journalists in the Malaysian media industry towards WLB. It is known that WLB affects men and women in different ways (Örnebring & Möller, 2018). As women are expected to juggle multiple roles, it is important to take into account both work and personal responsibilities. Women often struggle to meet the expectations placed on them, which are influenced by societal ideas of what it means to be a

“respectable” woman (Ansari, 2016). The concept of “respectable femininity” demands that women excel both at work and at home while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This issue is present across all fields of work, but there has been relatively little research into WLB in the media and journalism industry, especially in Malaysia (Örnebring & Möller, 2018). While journalistic style, scope, and ethics are often the focus of journalism studies in Malaysia (Haidir, Hassan, Kasa, & Sabil, 2023), there is a lack of research investigating the WLB of women journalists in this field.

As media organisations adapted to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0), they also standardised their structures by implementing new media systems to replace the old ones. This has led to an increase in workload for journalists, who need to keep up with the technological changes in the industry. Consequently, the work overload can result in individuals having to strike a balance between work and family life. As a result, journalists, particularly working mothers and young women journalists, face high job stress and burnout. This is further exacerbated by having to cope with solo or *mojo* journalism practices (Salzmann, Guribye & Gynnild, 2021).

Despite the progress made in promoting WLB, many people still struggle to balance multiple roles. For instance, working mothers who are also journalists may find it challenging to juggle both responsibilities, leading to exhaustion. This can result in employees feeling dissatisfied with their lives and eventually quitting their jobs to pursue new opportunities (Viererbl & Koch, 2021).

As highlighted by Noda (2020), the impact of WLB practices on women in the workplace varies, and serious work-life conflict indicates poor WLB. This raises important questions about how women in journalism perceive their WLB, especially in an industry that demands fast-paced work to keep up with advancing technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we will delve into the current state of women working in the journalism industry and explore the concept of WLB in the journalism profession. We will adopt the Spillover and Role theories as the primary research framework to explore the relationship between WLB and the work experiences of women in journalism. These theories will be used as a lens to investigate how the demands of the profession may affect the personal lives of women working in journalism, and how this may have implications for their job satisfaction, career progression, and overall well-being.

Women in Journalism

The past 30 years have seen a significant focus in media and journalism research on the gender context in journalism production and representation. Women in journalism are now acknowledged as media professionals. While some women were able to join daily news coverage in the mid-19th century, it was not until advertising profits became fundamental to the success of a newspaper that more women started to enter news coverage in larger numbers. However, they remained a minority and were limited to covering “lighter” subjects such as fashion, domestic issues, and society gossip (Dhiman, 2023). Women still face the glass ceiling issue and constitute a minority in leadership roles within the media industry (Cunha & Martins, 2023).

Journalism depends on a patriarchal system that is built on the notion of two sexes, which forms the backbone of most societies' cultures. Despite the fact that women's educational attainment has a positive and statistically significant impact on the percentage of women journalists (Burton, 2018), women are underrepresented in media work. The "boys' club" culture that exists in most male-dominated newsrooms in Malaysia is rooted in patriarchal gender stereotypes and customs, which inevitably leads to gender bias (International Federation of Journalists, 2021). Furthermore, there are fewer women in senior editorial positions such as editor, chief of bureau, and director (Wei, 2023). This gender imbalance is also reflected in recruitment practices as well as sexist, insulting headlines and misogynistic reporting of stories (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Journalism is a male-dominated industry, characterised by its male culture, practices, norms, and values. Without (or with fewer) women in the media, the happenings perspective of a country would only be told from a man's point of view (Burton, 2018). Although women have been working in this field for a considerable amount of time, there are still doubts about their capabilities. In the past, women were mostly confined to domestic roles, which created a barrier between them and professional opportunities. Consequently, women are at a disadvantage in decision-making, but this is not due to their innate weaknesses or inability. Instead, it is the lack of resources that hinder women from realising their full potential.

WLB and Women Journalists

Achieving WLB means being able to meet the demands of work and personal life while experiencing satisfaction in all areas of life. WLB can be achieved by compartmentalising job tasks and life, but employees have started embracing work-life integration that acknowledges the interdependence of work-life and home-life and aims to foster a positive interaction between them. To determine the balance of an individual's life and career, several important considerations must be taken into account, including environmental factors such as family, workplace, and community. In terms of the workplace environment, it is argued that WLB applies to individuals who have control over when, where, and how they perform their jobs. Additionally, individual and organisational resources are important in promoting WLB effectively (Ferreira & Gomes, 2023).

According to Noda (2020), achieving a good WLB has a positive impact on life satisfaction in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. However, research suggests that women face more challenges in achieving WLB due to issues such as long working hours, job rigidity, work overload, childcare responsibilities, workplace discrimination, lack of support from supervisors and family, and work spillover into family life (Tasnim et al, 2017). Additionally, studies have shown that WLB, organisational climate, and mentoring significantly affect women's career development (Cunha & Martins, 2023). Women often deal with these issues on a micro level when managing both family and work, making it even more challenging for them to find WLB compared to men (Lendák-Kabók, 2020).

Several studies have highlighted the presence of structural inequalities and the role of individual factors in balancing work and family life. For instance, Chaudhary et al. (2022) revealed that the WLB of Indian women journalists has a significant impact on their quality of life, while Muyidi, Zhang, and Gist-Mackey (2023) found that perceptions of gender discrimination among

Saudi women journalists have a positive relationship with job stress. Esparza (2019) conducted a study on European women journalists and discovered that achieving work-life balance is a significant challenge for them. She also observed that women journalists have to work harder to reach management positions, earn lower salaries, and are more vulnerable and precarious than their male counterparts. Additionally, women journalists who are also caregivers may find it challenging to balance their professional and family responsibilities (Dhiman, 2023).

Spillover and Role Theories

This study is based on two major theories: Spillover Theory and Role Theory. Spillover Theory seeks to understand the relationship between work and family, focusing on the work-family interface and divided into positive and negative spillover (Schüttengruber, Krings & Freund, 2023). According to this theory, employees tend to take the feelings, sentiments, manners, abilities, and actions they developed in their family life to work and vice versa. Scholars also pointed out that spillover theory implies the transfer of expertise from one area to another, also known as instrumental spillover. Snyder, Johnson, and Kozimor-King (2021) found that females reported more positive work-to-family spillover than males. Their study also revealed that those working in both print and television newsrooms faced challenges in balancing work and family life due to digital technology. Positive and negative spillover also had significant effects on WLB and work-family conflict (Bakker et al., 2023; Huang, Mao & Zhan, 2023; Lott & Wöhrmann, 2023).

Role Theory is an important concept when discussing WLB issues that women journalists face. However, it has not been widely explored in previous studies. This theory highlights the numerous roles that women journalists must fulfil. According to Role Theory, gender roles are based on commonly accepted beliefs about the attributes of men and women (Lesch, Scharfenkamp & Wicker, 2023; Van der Horst, 2016). The theory suggests that when a person experiences role instability, they may feel uncertain, anxious, and confused about their decisions, which can lead to ineffective performance. Women's roles both inside and outside the household are crucial to their WLB, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction, as per this theory.

To establish the theoretical framework of this study, two theories have been considered. The Spillover Theory examines how experiences in both work and personal life can have an impact on individual well-being, with both positive and negative outcomes taken into account. This theory is particularly relevant for women journalists who work in newsrooms that rely on digital technology. On the other hand, Role Theory places great emphasis on identifying the various roles that women journalists play, highlighting the importance of these roles in achieving a better WLB, as well as the challenges and responsibilities they face in different social contexts. Taken together, these theories provide an understanding of how women journalists can balance their work and personal lives. Role Theory emphasises the importance of recognising and appreciating the different roles they play, while Spillover Theory identifies how experiences in one domain can affect the other. By addressing both the spillover of experiences and the multiple responsibilities they have, this combined perspective can inform research and initiatives aimed at helping women journalists achieve a better WLB.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a qualitative research design was used, which involved conducting in-depth interviews with 16 women journalists. The sample was selected using a purposive snowball sampling method. The selection criteria for informants included women journalists who had at least three years of experience in the field, currently attached to or had experience working in media agencies in Malaysia, either in headquarters or state bureaus, and who were either married or single. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face, over the phone, or through email, depending on the journalist's schedule. The researchers ensured that the participants fully understood the study's objectives before agreeing to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and the participants' identities were protected at all times. The media organisations chosen for the study were among the largest media companies.

Thematic analysis is a method used to organise and describe data. One of the benefits of this approach is that it does not require the use of pre-existing theoretical frameworks, making it more accessible (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Researchers were free to use a wide range of frameworks, which is another advantage of using this method. Thematic analysis provides a detailed thematic description of the entire data set, making it a useful approach for researchers exploring new or under-researched areas. The analysis requires several levels of interpretation of the data, and the result provides a clear understanding of the relationship between themes and the purpose of the study.

The analysis process involves four critical stages: (i) identifying initial themes or concepts, (ii) labelling or tagging data, (iii) sorting the data by theme or concept, and (iv) summarising or systemising the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). Researchers use thematic analysis to identify differences between factors and variables related to the issue being studied. For instance, data gathered from interviews with women journalists were categorised and summarised based on their perception of WLB.

FINDINGS

The research was conducted through a series of in-depth interviews with 16 women journalists from different backgrounds, including those in charge of state bureaus and agency headquarters. The data collected from the interviews was analysed to identify any patterns or common themes that emerged in relation to WLB. Three key themes were identified from the analysis, providing a detailed insight into the perceptions of these women journalists.

The first theme that emerged was the impact of work and family environment on WLB. The journalists shared their experiences of challenges they faced in balancing their work commitments with family responsibilities. The second theme was mental well-being, which included factors such as stress, burnout and coping mechanisms. Lastly, the third theme was personality traits, where the journalists discussed how their individual personalities influenced their ability to balance work and personal life.

Overall, this research provides a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by women journalists in maintaining a healthy WLB. The three themes identified offer valuable insights into ways in which organisations can support their employees in achieving a better balance between work and personal life.

Profiles of Informants

For the study, 16 informants were selected who work as journalists or stringers in various media agencies. Most of them have graduated with a degree in Mass Communication or Media Studies. The informants were selected from different media companies such as Berita Harian, Sinar Harian, BERNAMA (at the headquarters and state bureau), Radio Televisyen Malaysia, Utusan Malaysia, Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI), and Media Selangor. They are categorised as single or married and work in two different environments, namely the state bureau and agency headquarters. Eight of them are single women, while the other eight are married. Most married women have at least one child, while the single journalists are living with their parents and/or other family members. Moreover, all of them have worked at the headquarters before relocating to the state. The summary of the informants’ profiles is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of informants

Informant	Age	Current position	Experience as a Journalist	Marital Status / No. of Children
INF1	Early thirties	Creative Executive cum Journalist	9 years	Single, staying with family, looking after ill father.
INF2	Late twenties	State squad journalist	5 years	Single, lives with grandmother after parents passed away
INF3	Early thirties	State squad journalist	12 years	Single, lives alone
INF4	Mid-thirties	Assistant chief journalist	14 years	Married, three children
INF5	Mid-thirties	Stringer	10 years	Married, two children
INF6	Mid-thirties	Journalist	14 years	Married, three children
INF7	Mid-thirties	Journalist	14 years	Married, three children
INF8	Mid-forties	Journalist cum media personnel	25 years	Married, six children
INF9	Mid-thirties	Journalist	9 years	Married, three children
INF10	Mid-thirties	Journalist	13 years	Married, a child
INF11	Early thirties	Journalist	5 years	Single lives with parents and other family members
INF12	Late twenties	Stringer	3 years	Married, one child
INF13	Late twenties	Journalist	5 years	Single lives with family
INF14	Late thirties	Journalist	More than 14 years	Single, lives alone after parents passed away
INF15	Late twenties	Stringer	3 years	Single, lives with family
INF16	Mid-thirties	Journalist	14 years	Single, lives alone

Perception of Women Journalists towards Work-life Balance

To answer research question on the perception of women journalists towards the WLB, an analysis was conducted. Achieving proper WLB can be challenging, but it is a satisfying state of coordination between an employee’s fundamental work requirements and their private lifestyle. The analysis revealed three main factors that women journalists face under the WLB issue - the work and family environment, mental well-being, and personality traits.

i) Work and Family Environment

The journalism industry is being significantly impacted by a rapidly changing media environment, which has resulted in the emergence of new media channels, especially social media platforms. Journalists are increasingly using smartphones and tablets to access both mainstream and social media news stories, use them as sources of news, react to them, publish their own stories, or make comments. Technologically, smart devices have made it possible for journalists to produce news stories while on the move. All women journalists have agreed with this argument. However, some of them have also highlighted the pros and cons of this transformation.

People are more attracted to watch the video that catches their attention or something interesting, and I am still learning to do video editing. Thus, I just learned all of these since we, journalists compete with each other to survive within the industry. (INF5)

More burdensome for journalists when there is an era of change in media organisations after the existence of the Internet. (INF9)

As senior journalists, INF4 and INF6 have stated that for news pieces that involve video editing, they usually rely on their junior colleagues for assistance. They only edit raw footage and organise the storyline, as they admit that they are not very skilled in video editing.

I can only edit a simple video. (INF4)

Another advantage working in HQ is I can learn directly from video editors when it comes to video editing. Sometimes I will ask them directly to edit for me. (INF6)

The emergence of new communication technology presents both opportunities and challenges for traditional media professions, particularly in the field of journalism. Although the presentation and layout of news may change, the content will remain the same. These transformations have brought significant benefits to journalistic organisations, but also unsettling changes in work conditions and routines, and have blurred the lines separating different roles in a journalistic workplace. Thus, one of the key areas for improvement is the ability of journalists to multitask and acquire diverse skills.

Women have traditionally been tasked with managing the home in various cultures and communities. The informants interviewed agreed that they have multiple roles, including the responsibility of being a mother. INF6, INF9, and INF12 mentioned how stressful it can be to juggle these responsibilities, particularly with young children, but having a spouse who understands the nature of their work as journalists has helped to reduce their workload in doing household chores.

My child is about three years old. Our living room is always messed up with her things. Our working hour is not flexible, not like other working mothers, especially in HQ. I admit that I rarely clean my house because I do not have much free time.

Having a good and understanding husband is blessed for me. He is the one helping me with the house chores when I'm on duty. (INF6)

Once a journalist, you are forever a journalist. I always hold on to those words. Even though I am busy, I will never neglect my children. I was once asked to quit working, but the current financial situation demands that we both work. (INF9)

My husband is an understanding and an independent person. He usually prepared his working attire by himself. Based on my experience, when my child was about four months old, I have urgent news need to cover. Since it was around 2 am, I bring along my husband and my child to the location. (INF12)

Women play a crucial role in the family, not only by taking care of their spouse and children, but also by educating their children. This education not only benefits the children, but also the family, community, and nation as a whole. In the case of INF4, her children were mostly teenagers and young adults, so they were able to help with household chores.

My eldest child is a middle schooler. Sometimes I rely on her to take care of her siblings. So, I have to raise her being an independent and responsible person. (INF4)

Women also play a crucial role in ensuring the health of their family members. In a family, it is often the responsibility of women to take care of sick or incapacitated family members. All the respondents agreed with this statement. For example, INF1 mentioned that she is currently taking care of her sick father and sometimes needs to take leave to take him for medical check-ups.

I am used to doing it by myself (referring to follow-up treatment for her father). Sometimes I need to take leave. If it is an emergency, I have to ask my colleague to take over my job. We will take turns because of short of staff when working in the state. (INF1)

INF2 and INF3 have different marital statuses. INF2 shared that she and her siblings were raised by their grandmother after their parents passed away. It took her grandmother a while to understand her job as a journalist. On the other hand, INF3 mentioned that she visits her parents in her hometown during her off-days. She also spoke about how supportive and understanding her parents are regarding their children's work.

At first, my grandmother always asked about my work schedule, but now she quite understands. I once took her to the case location and let her witness how a journalist work. (INF2)

My parents have no problem with the way I work. Although they are entirely open-minded parents, they often remind me of the boundaries as a woman and a Muslim. (INF3)

Achieving WLB is crucial for women who have various important roles in a different kind of family environment. Women who work face two significant challenges at home: managing household chores and taking care of their children, especially when they have their own family. It is evident that the role of women in a different kinds of family environment is vital in determining their WLB.

ii) Mental Well-being

In the creative media industry, technological advancements and ecological shifts have required organisations and employees to adapt to change and ensure their well-being. According to Amdan, Abdullah, and Md Syed (2022), journalists must prepare themselves to work in a flexible and multitasking environment, while also developing their digital technology skills. The media industry is considered a front-runner in adopting digital transformation, as noted by Nadkarni and Prügl (2021). To be a good employee, an individual must possess high emotional intelligence, which enables them to overcome conflicts, bridge gaps, and view problems positively, preparing themselves to overcome obstacles more efficiently than others. However, as humans, we cannot escape emotional tension, which contributes to stress. All informants agreed on this point and admitted that sometimes they bring their work conflicts home, such as:

Working as a journalist has inflexible time and a random number of new assignments that we need to cover especially in the state. We do not have enough staff to cover the whole state news or cases. Sometimes, within one day, we need to report two or three news stories... (INF1)

People might think single people rarely feel stressed since we are living alone. My way to alleviate stress is by watching a movie at the cinema or doing window shopping. Sometimes I rest at home. (INF2)

INF4 and INF5, who are married, feel pressured when asked to return to HQ.

I get overwhelmed when I received an order to return to HQ as soon as possible. My spouse works here, and my kids go to school here. Although my spouse allowed me to go back to HQ, as a mother, it was a difficult decision to be made. After discussing with the company and family, I returned to HQ. But it was not for a long time before I asked to be transferred back to the state. (INF4)

The cases in the state are not many compared to HQ. So, I enjoy working here. After I got married, I have to work again in HQ. At that time, it was hectic where the company was cutting off staff and my daughter was still breastfeeding, and I

decided to quit my job. Soon after, I applied to work as a stringer at another newspaper and served in the state until now. (INF5)

For INF6 and INF7, working at HQ is challenging due to the physical and mental demands of different news desks.

Working at HQ is very challenging. The news can happen in any second. For those who have a family, it is hard at first. Especially for the newlywed couple, that's why the spouse should understand how their partner works. Work as a journalist is always challenging, especially mentally and physically. The nature of women, we have a soft heart and easily feel pressured when we cannot take it. But still, we do not want to show that we are weak. So, we have to become a cold-hearted person and decide not based on feelings. (INF6)

I was assigned to the crime desk on my first day working as a journalist. I did not expect that my mental and physical are strong enough at that time. Of course, I feel pressured. I was a junior at that time. I have to communicate with my seniors and learn from them. It was hard for me to get a source from the authorities at first, but luckily other journalists from another company help me a lot. Crime desk journalists from the various company form a group and naming ourselves as 'Crime Busters'. (INF7)

Understanding and tolerance between spouses is crucial for the mental and physical health of employees in INF8 and INF9.

For working women, it is difficult for us to be a professional, especially when we have our own family. If our partner cannot understand the nature of work, it is hard and then easy to have a conflict between us. That is the reason why some journalists decided to quit their job because their spouse asked them to. (INF8)

I am grateful to have a husband who understands and comprehends the passion of his wife, and we always believe in the 'give-and-take' approach in dealing with the career-family matters. (INF9)

As a journalist, women often face pressure while on duty and this can be especially difficult for those who have families to care for. It is important for these women to maintain control over their emotions and mental health so as to not negatively impact their relationships with family or colleagues. Support from loved ones is crucial in maintaining a healthy balance. When an individual feels supported by their family, it can greatly affect their life and give them a sense of purpose and direction.

iii) Personality Traits

Personality traits refer to the unique set of traits that define an individual and distinguish them as a person. There is a belief that an individual's personality can influence their behaviour, especially in their working environment when dealing with different people. However, some argue that an individual's personality will not affect their emotions and behaviour as long as they work professionally.

Undoubtedly, a journalist's work is different from other mechanical, mental, or routine physical tasks, as journalism is predominantly an intellectual pursuit. Journalists' personality traits may change according to their work environment, especially during work. This was observed by INF1, INF3, and INF5.

Working as a journalist, we meet different kind of people with different status and background. So, I think that is a personality trait that is important for a journalist. We can be a bit aggressive but remember our boundary as a journalist. The advantage and disadvantage also have to be concerned. (INF1)

Journalist needs to examine the situation first. For example, if the journalist wants to interview the deceased's family, we should put ourselves as a family member too. It is important for a journalist not to ask a question that may upset the family. (INF3)

A journalist's personality changes according to their work situation, especially regarding the way they want to gain information. Stand with your words. (INF5)

According to INF2 and INF7, an individual's personality can have both positive and negative aspects, and the dominant traits may naturally impact their work. If negative personality traits are prevalent in their life, it can be challenging for them to concentrate on their work and succeed in the industry.

Our personality can be good and bad. If our good personality affects our behaviour, then it should be no problem. The problem is if our bad personality influences our behaviour, and our emotions will get worse during working hours. It will show that we are immature and unprofessional. (INF2)

People with bad personalities who influence the way they work will not be able to survive in this industry. People who are happy with their work-life will naturally show their good personality. (INF7)

INF8 disagreed with the statement. She believed that personality would not influence behaviour if professional in career and personal life.

I think a person's personality will not affect individual behaviour if they were able to control their emotions and behaviour. It seems like there is a need for a professional attitude among employees. If we are a professional, we will avoid our career and personal life mixed with each other. (INF8)

INF6 suggests that support from superiors or colleagues can help an individual reach their full potential, and that emotions can impact those around them.

I assume, if we enjoy doing the work that we love, we will automatically feel happy. We will try our best, especially after we receive compliments from superiors and colleagues. I feel excited when I was assigned to the investigation section. So, I will be all out when I get an assignment. (INF6)

Two types of personalities are often observed among people, namely good and bad personalities. Having a good personality can greatly impact one's working environment in a positive way. However, if an individual's bad personality traits are dominant, controlling them can become a daunting task.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the challenges and opportunities faced by women journalists in Malaysian media agencies, as well as their perception of WLB. These findings are consistent with previous research on WLB among women journalists. The concept of "respectable femininity" is relevant to the women journalists in this study, as they are expected to excel at both finishing work at home and the office to achieve WLB. While respectable femininity generally involves women prioritising their family above work through domestic, caring, and social roles and moral propriety (Hussein, 2017), women journalists must also balance their careers and family commitments.

The findings of Snyder et al. (2021) indicate that women face more work-family related issues than men, which is consistent with our own findings. Women journalists who work in newsrooms reported that digital technology has made it even more difficult for them to balance work and family responsibilities. Our research suggests that WLB can be achieved through factors such as work and family environment, mental well-being, and personality traits. A woman journalist's WLB is largely determined by her work environment. With the transformation of the journalism industry and the rise of digitalisation, women journalists may experience both advantages and disadvantages. These changes have led to the dissemination of news content through social media platforms, radically changing the way journalists obtain and share news stories. As a result, journalists must acquire new skills, which can add to their workload. However, if a journalist has mastered these skills, the factor of the working environment's impact on their WLB can be diminished.

Achieving WLB is influenced by various factors, including the family environment. Women, in particular, face multiple responsibilities in their family roles, which can affect their ability to attain WLB. Married women, for instance, have to juggle with different roles as a daughter, wife, and mother, while unmarried women only have to focus on their role as a

daughter. Married women are more burdened as they are responsible for their family's needs, but this also has a positive effect on their relationship with their children and partner. Media employees who have children at home are more likely to struggle with compressed work schedules. While childcare is an essential responsibility for working parents, it is usually a short-term challenge that can be resolved. The study findings suggest that dividing family roles is crucial for achieving WLB and preventing any adverse effects on women's lives and their families.

Achieving a good WLB is influenced by several factors, including mental well-being. One's mental health can affect their work and family environments and the people around them. A positive environment can contribute to better mental health, while a negative one can have the opposite effect. Personal traits also play a critical role in achieving a good WLB, as they determine an individual's ability to respond to challenges. Work conflicts are reported to occur more frequently than family conflicts, making it important to develop strategies to overcome them. Personality traits can influence behaviour, especially in response to the environment. This means that personality can either help or hinder an individual's ability to avoid conflict, both internally and externally.

This research aims to identify the factors that affect women journalists in achieving WLB. Achieving WLB is crucial for individuals to manage their time effectively between their work and family life, regardless of their marital status. The study has identified several fundamental requirements that need to be addressed to create a working environment conducive to women journalists achieving WLB. The journalism industry must adapt to the changing needs of its audience, which requires women journalists to be flexible. In addition, women journalists should also focus on creating more time for their jobs and taking care of their families. Therefore, the researchers suggest that a quantitative study should be conducted to assess the level of WLB in the Malaysian media context. As the nature of work in the journalism industry changes, more women journalists find it difficult to balance their work responsibilities with their family duties. Future research should focus on understanding the various roles that women journalists play in the current period.

CONCLUSION

This study adds to the current wave of research on journalism and WLB among women journalists in Malaysian media agencies by providing qualitative data about individual journalists' insights into their perceived WLB. Past studies on WLB in Malaysia mainly focused on overall employees rather than on gender-specific research. This highlights the need to intensify research on women journalists, as their work nature is different and they play different roles in achieving WLB. The study emphasises the ongoing importance of "respectable femininity" and highlights the need for women journalists to succeed in both their professional and household duties. However, there are many obstacles that they face, such as time management issues, gender stereotypes, unstable employment, and expectations of gendered roles in addition to higher workloads that are exacerbated by the effect of digital technology.

The Spillover theory sheds light on the complex interplay between family and professional obligations, especially as it pertains to married women. Role theory emphasises the importance of acknowledging varied roles as well as the difficulties and misconceptions that women journalists must overcome. The study also indicates growing competitiveness within the

journalism sector, which is being fuelled by new media. While this competition poses difficulties, it can also act as a catalyst for advancement and recognition in the workplace. Importantly, despite the obstacles they confront, the shifting media landscape presents opportunities for women journalists to acquire useful skills that may be applied throughout their careers.

This research recommends that media organisations should provide better policies and opportunities for women journalists. Specifically, they should develop flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies that help women in the early stages of their careers, especially those who struggle to balance work with pregnancy and child-rearing, particularly when they have to work late at night. Childcare facilities should be provided at or near the workplace so that nursing mothers can conveniently transition between childcare and work responsibilities. Intervention programmes are necessary to help alleviate work-related stress caused by family role conflicts. These initiatives will help advance underrepresented women in the media. The work-life balance of women journalists is crucial to providing essential information on managing their responsibilities.

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