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WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WOMEN'S CAREER OUTCOMES IN OMAN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ALIGNED WITH OMAN VISION 2040

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between work-life balance and women's career outcomes in Oman in the context of Oman Vision 2040. It explores the key challenges faced by working women, the coping strategies they employ, the role of organisational and societal support, and the influence of work-life balance on career progress and overall well-being. A mixed-method, cross-sectional design was used. Quantitative data were collected from 280 employed women across public, private, non-profit, and self-employed sectors through a 66-item structured questionnaire, while semi-structured interviews with 20 participants provided additional contextual insight. Composite indices measured challenges, coping tactics, organisational support, societal and family support, work-life balance, career progress, well-being, policy priority ratings, and perceptions of Oman Vision 2040. Reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency across all scales. Regression and structural equation modelling indicated that work-life challenges negatively affected work-life balance, whereas coping tactics, organisational support, and societal and family support had significant positive effects. Work-life balance, in turn, positively predicted both career progress and overall well-being. The findings confirm that work-life balance functions as a central mechanism linking structural demands, personal strategies, and career and well-being outcomes. The study concludes that improving women's work-life balance in Oman requires integrated workplace, family, and policy interventions aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

KEYWORDS: Work-Life Balance; Working Women; Oman; Organisational Support; Well-Being; Oman Vision 2040.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a central concern in contemporary labour markets as employees attempt to reconcile rising job demands with intensive family and caregiving responsibilities. International research links poor WLB with elevated stress, burnout, and adverse physical and mental health outcomes, while balanced arrangements are associated with higher life satisfaction, organisational commitment, and productivity (Basuni & Sopiah, 2023; Kilova et al., 2024; Santana Ferreira et al., 2025). Within this literature, WLB is increasingly conceptualised as a multidimensional construct shaped by workload, temporal flexibility, organisational culture, social support, and broader policy environments rather than merely an individual time-management issue (Abuhammad, 2025; Wiese et al., 2025).

WLB is also a gendered issue. Women worldwide continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, making them particularly vulnerable to work-family conflict and role overload (Ortiz-Ospina, 2018; UN Women, 2016). Evidence from global polling shows that working women report higher daily stress levels than men and are more likely to reduce hours or forego promotions because of caregiving demands (Associated Press, 2024). Studies from the Gulf and wider Middle East indicate that female employees frequently report poorer work-family balance than their male counterparts and are more likely to experience stress, depressive symptoms, and career interruptions when support systems are weak (Begum & Ahmad, 2024; Abuhammad, 2025). These pressures are especially salient for mothers of young children and for women in dual-earner households who must align rigid work schedules with school hours, childcare, and elder-care responsibilities (Doha International Family Institute [DIFI], 2022; Grzywacz et al., 2023).

In Oman, women's labour-market participation has expanded but remains structurally constrained. Recent gender statistics indicate that the female labour-force participation rate stands at about 30.7% of women aged 15 and above, compared with 87% for men (World Bank, 2024). Female workers constitute roughly 15% of the total labour force, compared with a world average of more than 40%, highlighting a substantial gender gap in economic activity (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2024; Ortiz-Ospina, 2018). Spatial analyses further show that female labour-force participation is concentrated in urbanised and better-educated governorates, with marked regional and socio-economic disparities (Mansour et al., 2022). At the same time, female participation in the private

sector has grown steadily and is strongly associated with the overall rise in women's employment (Mansour et al., 2022; International Monetary Fund, 2025).

These trends are closely intertwined with Oman Vision 2040, the national development strategy that positions women's economic empowerment and decent work as key levers for diversification and knowledge-based growth. Vision 2040 documents and the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan explicitly call for policies that protect women's rights, strengthen social protection, and promote a sustainable balance between work and family life (Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, 2025; Sultanate of Oman, Supreme Council for Planning, 2021). National programmes emphasise legal protection against discrimination, enhancement of social welfare, and the development of enabling environments for youth and women in line with gender justice frameworks (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia [UNESCWA], 2018; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN Women], 2016). Recent initiatives also include campaigns to create "women-friendly" workplaces and to encourage private-sector employers to adopt family-supportive policies (Belwal & Belwal, 2017; International Journal of Management, 2025).

Despite these policy aspirations, empirical evidence suggests that many working women in Oman continue to struggle with work-family integration. Qualitative and employer-focused studies have documented concerns about long hours, inflexible schedules, limited access to formal family-friendly policies, and persistent organisational biases (Belwal & Belwal, 2017; Belwal & Belwal, 2014). Employers generally perceive Omani women as capable and committed, yet they also identify childcare responsibilities, cultural expectations, and career-break risks as barriers to women's advancement, particularly in the private sector (Belwal & Belwal, 2017; What Influences Women's Participation in the Private Sector Workforce in Oman, 2024). Reports on Omani families likewise show that women experience high levels of work-family strain, often managing caregiving and domestic responsibilities alongside full-time employment (DIFI, 2022; Grzywacz et al., 2023).

Recent quantitative research in Oman has begun to examine WLB directly from the perspective of female employees. Studies in higher-education institutions reveal that female staff experience significant tension between work and family roles, with workload, supervisory support, and

organisational culture strongly shaping their perceived balance (Rajagopal et al., 2024; Rao et al., 2022). Evidence from national and regional work-family surveys indicates that Omani women's work-family balance is often poorer than that of men and that supportive supervisors, spousal cooperation, and accessible childcare are critical protective factors (Grzywacz et al., 2023; DIFI, 2022). At the broader GCC level, research on women's careers highlights similar patterns: ambitious female professionals aspire to leadership roles, yet a substantial share doubts the feasibility of combining high-level careers with satisfying family lives under current conditions of long hours and limited flexibility (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017; Begum & Ahmad, 2024).

Collectively, these studies underline the importance of understanding how organisational support, societal expectations, and individual coping strategies interact to shape WLB and, in turn, women's career trajectories and well-being in Oman. However, much of the existing empirical work is limited to specific sectors, single institutions, or primarily descriptive analyses, and rarely integrates work challenges, coping tactics, support systems, and outcomes within a single quantitative framework explicitly linked to Oman Vision 2040 (Rajagopal et al., 2024; Rao et al., 2022; Belwal & Belwal, 2017). This gap provides the empirical and conceptual space for the present study.

Although national strategies and labour-law reforms increasingly emphasise women's rights, family-friendly policies, and work-life balance, the lived reality of many working women in Oman continues to be marked by time pressure, role overload, and constrained career progression. Existing research has documented employer perceptions of women workers, policy-level analyses of family-friendly provisions, and sector-specific surveys of work-family conflict (Belwal & Belwal, 2017; Belwal & Belwal, 2014; Rajagopal et al., 2024; Rao et al., 2022; Grzywacz et al., 2023). However, there remains limited large-sample, cross-sectoral evidence on how different types of challenges, coping tactics, organisational and societal support, and policy priorities combine to influence women's perceived WLB, career progress, and overall well-being.

In particular, few studies operationalise WLB as a central mediating construct between work-life challenges and outcomes or explicitly link women's experiences to perceptions of national reform agendas such as Oman Vision 2040. There is a lack of hypothesis-driven, quantitative models that test how coping tactics and multi-level support systems relate

to WLB, and how WLB in turn shapes career satisfaction, well-being, and views on policy priorities. This evidential gap limits the ability of policymakers and organisations to design targeted interventions that address women's needs and advance Vision 2040 objectives (Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, 2025; Sultanate of Oman, Supreme Council for Planning, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to develop and empirically test a comprehensive framework of work-life balance among working women in Oman, integrating individual challenges (CHAL), coping tactics (COPE), organisational support (OSUP), societal and family support (SSUP), work-life balance (WLB), career progress (CAREER), overall well-being (WELL), policy priority ratings (PR), and perceptions of Oman Vision 2040 (VISION). Guided by this purpose, the study pursues six objectives: (1) to determine the key challenges encountered by working women in attaining WLB; (2) to analyse coping tactics adopted to balance professional and personal obligations; (3) to examine opportunities for enhancing WLB via organisational and societal support systems; (4) to study the influence of WLB on career progress and overall well-being; (5) to propose implementable recommendations and policy initiatives to support healthy WLB; and (6) to develop a strategic framework aligned with Oman Vision 2040, tailored to Oman's socio-economic and cultural context.

This study is significant at several levels. Conceptually, it advances scholarship on WLB in the Arab Gulf by integrating multiple constructs; challenges, coping tactics, organisational and societal support, WLB, career progress, well-being, and policy perceptions within a unified, hypothesis-driven framework. Existing work in Oman tends to focus either on employers' perspectives, policy reviews, or single-sector case studies (Belwal & Belwal, 2017; Belwal & Belwal, 2014; DIFI, 2022; Grzywacz et al., 2023). By contrast, the present research employs validated Likert-based indices and structural modelling to examine how different forms of support and individual strategies jointly condition women's WLB and outcomes. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gendered labour experiences in a rapidly modernising yet culturally conservative context (Mansour et al., 2022; World Bank, 2024).

Empirically, the study adds value through its cross-sectional survey of 280 working women across multiple sectors, complementing earlier studies that focused on smaller samples within specific universities or institutions (Rajagopal et al., 2024; Rao

et al., 2022). The inclusion of measures on career progress and overall well-being also extends regional evidence that has traditionally centred on participation rates and work-family conflict but has given less attention to subjective career development and holistic well-being outcomes (Begum & Ahmad, 2024; Abuhammad, 2025). In doing so, the study generates detailed empirical profiles of challenges, coping tactics, and support structures that can inform sector-specific and national interventions.

From a policy and practice perspective, the findings are directly relevant to the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 and related national strategies aimed at boosting female employment and leadership. As women's labour-force participation remains well below global averages, there is considerable scope for policies that strengthen flexible work arrangements, childcare and elder-care support, supervisor training, and gender-sensitive organisational cultures (World Bank, 2024; TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2024; Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, 2025; Sultanate of Oman, Supreme Council for Planning, 2021). By explicitly linking women's WLB experiences to their ratings of policy priorities and perceptions of Vision 2040 progress, the study offers evidence-based insights for ministries, regulators, and employers seeking to design women-friendly workplaces and monitor the social pillars of the national vision. Ultimately, enhancing work-life balance for working women is not only a matter of individual well-being but also a prerequisite for unlocking Oman's full human capital potential and achieving inclusive, sustainable development (UNESCWA, 2018; UN Women, 2016; International Monetary Fund, 2025).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organised thematically to mirror the analytical logic of the study. It first outlines core work-life balance (WLB) theories that inform the constructs of challenges (CHAL), coping (COPE), organisational and societal support (OSUP, SSUP), and outcomes (WLB, CAREER, WELL). It then synthesises empirical evidence on individual determinants, followed by organisational and societal supports, and finally the outcomes of WLB for women's careers and well-being. Within each theme, global scholarship is linked to the socio-cultural realities of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Oman.

2.1. Work-Life Balance Theory

The theoretical foundations of WLB scholarship largely emerge from role stress perspectives. Role

stress theory conceptualises work-family conflict as inter-role stress arising when time, strain, or behavioural expectations in one domain impede effective functioning in another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This framework has guided decades of empirical research linking role overload and time-based pressures to negative outcomes such as job stress, reduced life satisfaction, and burnout. Meta-analytic work has confirmed that work-family conflict is robustly associated with poorer mental health and lower job and family satisfaction, with medium effect sizes across outcomes (Amstad et al., 2011). These insights directly underpin the CHAL scale in the present study, which captures workload, time pressure, and role conflict.

Border and boundary-based theories complement role stress views by emphasising how individuals actively manage the interface between work and non-work roles. Work-family border theory posits that individuals are "daily border crossers" who construct, negotiate, and maintain flexible or rigid borders between work and family domains; balance is more likely when borders are permeable but well managed, and when domain cultures are compatible (Clark, 2000). This perspective is particularly relevant in contexts where women's paid work roles intersect with strong family and community expectations, as in many GCC societies. Building on these ideas, Grzywacz and Carlson conceptualised WLB as the accomplishment of role-related expectations negotiated between individuals and role partners, distinguishing balance from mere absence of conflict (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). This definition aligns closely with the WLB construct used in the present study, which captures perceived control, sustainability, and satisfaction with one's time allocation.

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory further enriches understanding of WLB by viewing individuals as motivated to acquire, protect, and build valued resources such as time, energy, and social support (Hobfoll, 1989). Work-family demands that threaten these resources generate strain, while resources such as supportive supervisors, flexible schedules, and family backing can buffer stress and foster well-being. Empirical applications of COR and related fit models show that perceptions of work-family fit, rather than demands alone, are central to well-being and functioning (Voydanoff, 2005). These theoretical perspectives justify the inclusion of OSUP, SSUP, and COPE as resource-based constructs, and support the study's focus on WLB as a mediating mechanism between demands and outcomes.

2.2. Individual Determinants: Challenges and Coping

A large body of empirical work has examined how work demands, time pressure, and role overload shape the WLB of working women. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that long hours, schedule inflexibility, and workload intensity are consistent predictors of work–family conflict across sectors and countries (Byron, 2005). Studies in service and hospitality sectors, where irregular and extended work hours are common, show elevated levels of work–family conflict and associated stress, particularly among women who bear primary caregiving responsibilities. For example, research on restaurant employees in Indonesia found that work–family conflict reduced job satisfaction, with time- and strain-based conflict linked to reduced capacity to meet family obligations (Isfianadewi & Noordyani, 2020). These findings support the conceptualisation of CHAL as capturing systemic pressures that constrain women’s ability to manage both domains.

Coping strategies have emerged as a crucial mechanism through which women manage competing demands. Empirical work has differentiated between active coping (e.g., problem-solving, help-seeking, planning) and avoidance-oriented responses (e.g., withdrawal, resignation). Rotondo and colleagues showed that direct action and help-seeking coping were associated with lower levels of work–family conflict, whereas avoidance strategies were linked to higher conflict levels (Rotondo *et al.*, 2003). More recent quantitative studies have examined coping in combination with social support. Isfianadewi and Noordyani investigated employees in Indonesian restaurants and reported that coping strategies, supported by organisational and family backing, helped to mitigate the negative impact of conflict on satisfaction, even when conflict persisted at high levels (Isfianadewi & Noordyani, 2020).

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, coping has also been linked to psychological outcomes. A study of Portuguese workers found that work–family conflict was positively associated with stress, anxiety, and depression, while resilient coping showed negative associations with these outcomes (de Sousa *et al.*, 2024). Although moderation effects were complex, the study highlighted the need for interventions that strengthen adaptive coping resources in contexts of intensified work–family demands. Parallel research on working mothers in Turkey reported that problem-focused coping and social support helped reduce perceived conflict and

role strain, whereas emotion-focused avoidance heightened stress (Gül *et al.*, 2020). Collectively, these studies substantiate the COPE construct in the present research and support the formulation of a hypothesis linking coping tactics to improved WLB (H_{01}).

2.3. Organisational and Societal Supports

Organisational support and family-friendly policies are consistently associated with better WLB outcomes. Studies of flexible working arrangements and supportive HRM practices show that access to flexitime, remote work, and family leave reduces work–family conflict and enhances job satisfaction, often through perceived organisational support (Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2023). In hospitality and service industries, supervisor support has been shown to moderate the effects of high workload, helping employees better manage family responsibilities and reducing turnover intentions (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). These findings justify the focus on OSUP in the present study, capturing both formal policies and informal supervisory behaviours.

In the Middle Eastern and GCC context, organisational support intersects with strong cultural norms around gender, family, and labour market participation. Studies from the United Arab Emirates have shown that while many organisations have adopted WLB initiatives such as flexible hours and childcare support, female employees often under-utilise these benefits due to fears of career penalties and persistent expectations of uninterrupted availability (Parakandi & Behery, 2016). Research on female employees in Oman similarly highlights tensions between modern employment opportunities and traditional expectations of caregiving, with public-sector women reporting relatively more generous leave and protections but also strong role overload at home (Belwal & Belwal, 2014).

National and regional studies have begun to document how societal and family norms shape women’s work–family experiences. Analyses of Omani families indicate that although legal frameworks protect maternity leave and prohibit dismissal related to marriage or pregnancy, entrenched gendered divisions of labour continue to place the primary burden of care and domestic work on women (Grzywacz, 2022). The Doha International Family Institute study on Omani female workers reported that women frequently described being “torn” between responsibilities at home and at work, calling for reforms in social policy, employment law, and community services to support dual-earner

households (Al Sultan et al., 2023). These findings highlight the relevance of the SSUP construct in the present study, which captures family, community, and public service supports such as childcare and transport. They also motivate the hypothesis that organisational and societal supports are positively associated with WLB (H_{02a} , H_{02b}).

2.4. Work-Life Balance Outcomes: Career Progress and Well-Being

Empirical research has consistently linked WLB to both career-related and psychological outcomes. Studies across diverse settings have shown that better perceived WLB is associated with higher job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and lower burnout. A meta-analysis of work-family conflict and outcomes found that conflict was negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to stress and turnover intentions, with cross-domain effects evident for both work and family outcomes (Amstad et al., 2011). In Indonesia, a study of women workers reported a significant positive relationship between WLB and job satisfaction, suggesting that even modest improvements in balance can yield meaningful gains in satisfaction and retention (Thifal & Kusumaningrum, 2021).

Recent work has focused specifically on women's career trajectories. In India, Shah examined middle-level female employees in the service sector and found that better WLB was associated with higher job satisfaction and stronger intentions to remain in the organisation (Shah, 2025). Similarly, studies of employees in South and Southeast Asia have shown that WLB predicts engagement and perceived career growth, often mediating the effects of organisational climate and leadership on career-related outcomes (Mandagi & Wijono, 2023). These findings resonate with the CAREER construct in the present study, which captures perceived growth, recognition, and goal progress, and they support the hypothesis that WLB positively influences career progress (H_{03a}).

WLB has also been shown to be closely related to psychological well-being and health. In Iran, research with healthcare workers demonstrated that higher WLB was associated with lower emotional exhaustion and greater life satisfaction, even after controlling for demographic and job characteristics (Nayeri et al., 2020). Studies in India have reported that poor WLB is associated with self-reported physical health problems, sleep disturbances, and heightened stress, while better balance predicts higher life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Yadav & Yadav, 2014; Thakur & Madhu, 2019). In

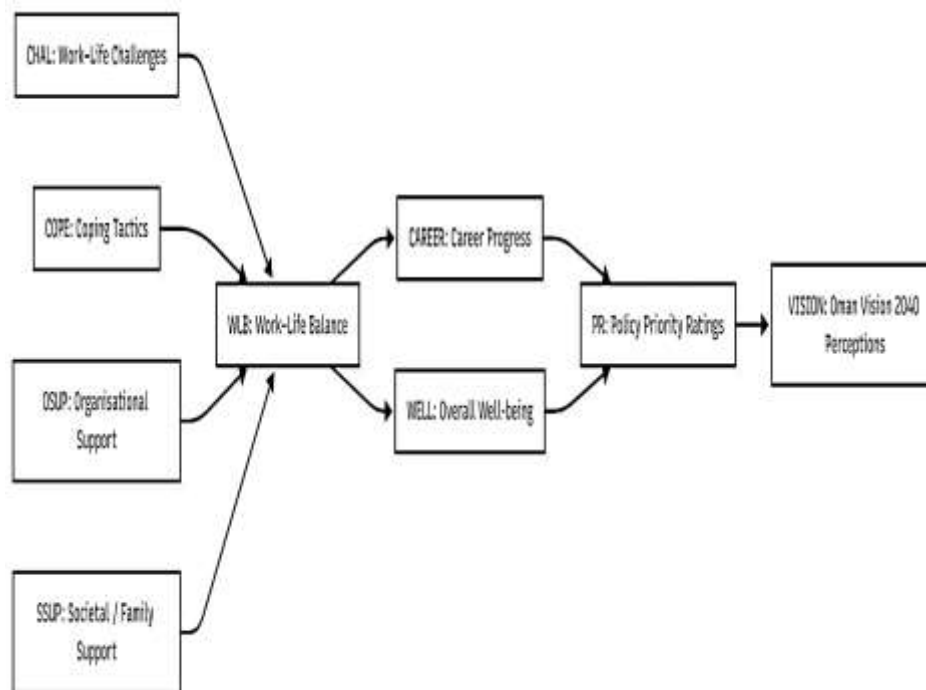
the GCC region, research has highlighted that work-family strain among women can undermine mental health and constrain long-term career aspirations, particularly where childcare and eldercare infrastructures are limited (Yasmin, 2022; Hendy, 2021). These strands of evidence underpin the WELL construct and justify the hypothesis that WLB exerts a positive effect on overall well-being.

Within Oman specifically, empirical evidence remains limited but growing. The DIFI study on Omani female workers documented how perceived imbalance contributes to stress, family strain, and reconsideration of employment choices, while also noting women's strong desire to sustain both career and family roles (Al Sultan et al., 2023). Emerging work on Omani organisations indicates that supervisor support and family-friendly practices are associated with higher job satisfaction and perceived WLB among employees in manufacturing and service sectors (Al Hinai et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of modelling WLB as a central explanatory construct linking challenges, coping, and support to both career and well-being outcomes in the Omani context.

2.5. Research Gap and Emergence of Hypotheses

The reviewed literature demonstrates strong theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding work-family demands, coping, organisational and societal support, and WLB outcomes. However, there is a clear gap regarding integrated, hypothesis-driven models focused specifically on working women in Oman. Existing studies on Omani women and families are largely qualitative or descriptive, emphasising experiences and policy needs but rarely employing multi-construct survey instruments with validated indices for challenges, coping, organisational support, societal support, WLB, career progress, and well-being in a single framework (Al Sultan et al., 2023; Grzywacz, 2022). Moreover, prior GCC research has seldom modelled WLB simultaneously as an outcome of coping and support and as a predictor of career and well-being indicators using regression or structural equation modelling. This study addresses these gaps by operationalising CHAL, COPE, OSUP, SSUP, WLB, CAREER, and WELL through multi-item Likert scales and by testing the null hypotheses H_{01} – H_{03b} in a cross-sectional survey of working women in Oman. In doing so, it provides statistically grounded evidence to inform Oman Vision 2040 policy priorities related to women's economic participation and social well-being.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Drawing from role stress theory, border theory, and Conservation of Resources theory, the conceptual framework positions work-life balance (WLB) as a central mediating construct shaped by work-life challenges (CHAL) and strengthened by coping tactics (COPE), organisational support (OSUP), and societal/family support (SSUP). Prior studies emphasise that demands reduce balance while resources enhance it, thereby influencing career outcomes and well-being. Consistent with evidence that WLB predicts both professional advancement and psychological health, the framework extends existing models by linking these outcomes to policy priority ratings (PR) and perceptions of national progress under Oman Vision 2040 (VISION). Structural equation modelling was applied to empirically validate these theoretically grounded pathways.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodological framework employed to investigate work-life balance (WLB) among working women in Oman. The methodology directly addresses the gaps identified in the literature, namely the absence of an integrated, hypothesis-driven, multi-construct model grounded in empirical data from a sufficiently large, cross-sectoral sample. The design, sampling, instrument structure, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques are outlined in detail to ensure methodological transparency and replicability.

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative & qualitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine relationships among challenges (CHAL), coping tactics (COPE), organisational support (OSUP), societal/family support (SSUP), work-life balance (WLB), career progress (CAREER), overall well-being (WELL), policy priorities (PR), and perceptions of Oman Vision 2040 (VISION). This design was selected because it allowed the simultaneous measurement of multiple latent constructs and the statistical testing of hypothesis-driven relationships using correlational and regression-based methods. In addition, semi-structured interviews with a purposive subsample of 20 respondents were incorporated to enrich the quantitative findings with contextual depth, narrative insight, and experiential validation.

The design aligned with the study's objectives and addressed documented research gaps by capturing employee-reported WLB experiences rather than relying solely on institutional or qualitative accounts. The one-time administration of the instrument ensured internal consistency and comparability across respondents.

3.2. Data Source and Collection Procedure

Data were collected from a single primary source: a structured self-administered digital questionnaire distributed to working women in Oman across

sectors. The instrument consisted of 66 items, including 47 Likert-scale construct items, 7 policy and perception items, and 12 demographic indicators. The survey link was disseminated through professional networks, women's associations, and organisational mailing lists.

Participants were eligible if they (i) identified as female, (ii) were employed in Oman at the time of the study, and (iii) were between 18 and 60 years of age.

3.3 Detailed Description of the Data Source

Table: 1

Component	Description
Source of Data	Primary data collected through a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms).
Population	Working women employed in Oman across public, private, nonprofit, and self-employed sectors.
Sampling Technique	Purposive sampling targeting women aged 18–60 currently employed in Oman; distribution through organisations, women's professional groups, and regional networks.
Sample Size	280 valid responses
Instrument Format	66-item structured questionnaire comprising: • 47 Likert-scale items (CHAL, COPE, OSUP, SSUP, WLB, CAREER, WELL) • 3 Policy priority items (PR) • 4 Oman Vision 2040 perception items (VISION) • 12 demographic variables.
Scale Type	Multi-item 5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree); 5-point importance scale for PR.
Mode of Administration	Web-based self-administered survey accessible via mobile, laptop, and desktop.
Timeframe of Data Collection	Conducted over six weeks (March–April 2025).
Ethical Considerations	Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No identifiable personal data were collected. Consent was obtained digitally prior to survey initiation.

3.4. Measurement of Variables

All constructs were operationalised using multi-item Likert scales validated previously in international WLB studies. Composite indices were created for each construct:

- CHAL (8 items): Time pressure, workload,

schedule conflict.

- COPE (9 items): Planning, boundary-setting, help-seeking, stress management.
- OSUP (6 items): Flexibility, supervisor support, family-friendly policies.
- SSUP (6 items): Family support, community norms, availability of caregiving services.
- WLB (8 items): Perceived balance, ability to disconnect, sustainability of schedule.
- CAREER (5 items): Growth opportunities, recognition, skill development.
- WELL (5 items): Energy levels, sleep quality, calmness, life satisfaction.
- PR & VISION: Policy priorities and views on progress under Oman Vision 2040.

All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values between 0.81 and 0.93, indicating strong internal consistency.

3.5. Quantitative Data Analysis Technique

A single analytical tool, Stata 17, was used for all statistical procedures. The analysis followed a sequential approach aligned with the hypothesis structure:

1. Descriptive Statistics

Used to summarise demographic variables and construct means, standard deviations, and distributions.

2. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each multi-item scale.

3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations examined associations among CHAL, COPE, OSUP, SSUP, WLB, CAREER, and WELL.

4. Regression Analysis

- H_{01} : Simple linear regression (COPE $\rightarrow$ WLB).
- H_{02a}/H_{02_b} : Multiple regression (OSUP, SSUP $\rightarrow$ WLB).
- H_{03a}/H_{03_b} : Simple regressions (WLB $\rightarrow$ CAREER; WLB $\rightarrow$ WELL).

5. Supplementary SEM (for conceptual validation)

A simplified structural equation model was estimated to confirm theoretical linkages.

This analytical structure enabled empirical testing of each null hypothesis and offered systematic insights connecting individual experiences of WLB with career outcomes and perceptions of national policy goals.

3.6 Qualitative Component: Semi-Structured Interviews

A qualitative dimension was incorporated to

complement and contextualise the quantitative findings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to deepen the understanding of respondents lived experiences, sense-making processes, and subjective interpretations of work-life balance. This approach strengthened methodological triangulation and enriched construct validity by capturing experiential elements that may not be fully represented through Likert-scale survey responses.

A purposive subsample of 20 working women was drawn from the original survey dataset ($N = 280$). Selection criteria ensured representation across sectors (public, private, non-profit, self-employed), job levels, and family structures. Interviews were conducted in English and Arabic according to participant preference and ranged from 25 to 40 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, anonymised, and imported into NVivo for coding and analysis.

Interview questions were aligned with the study's theoretical constructs (CHAL, COPE, OSUP, SSUP, WLB, CAREER, WELL, PR, VISION), enabling coherence across methodological strands.

The semi-structured guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit narrative depth:

1. Describe your typical workday and workload intensity.
2. What are the biggest challenges you face when balancing work and personal responsibilities?
3. What coping strategies do you find most helpful in maintaining work-life balance?
4. How would you evaluate the level and type of support provided by your organisation?
5. What role does your family or wider community play in supporting your work responsibilities?
6. How has work-life balance influenced your career opportunities and progression?
7. In what ways does work-life balance affect your physical and emotional well-being?
8. How important are work-life policies for the future of women's work in Oman, especially in relation to Vision 2040?

Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-phase procedure. Coding was initially inductive, then organised into higher-order thematic domains mapped to quantitative constructs. Frequency-based reporting was applied to demonstrate salience and saturation, though not for statistical inference. Themes were

validated through peer debriefing and codebook iteration, and confirmability was strengthened by an audit trail linking raw extracts to thematic clusters.

3.7. Scope and Delimitations

The methodology was deliberately circumscribed to ensure precision:

- Focused exclusively on working women in Oman, addressing a documented research gap.
- Cross-sectional design permitted assessment of associations but not causality.
- Data obtained only from self-reported measures, which may contain perceptual bias; however, large sample size and validated scales mitigated reliability concerns.
- Geographic coverage included all major governorates, but representation still depended on accessibility via digital platforms.

By integrating multi-dimensional constructs in a single framework and applying rigorous statistical analysis, this methodology responded to the literature gap that highlighted the need for:

- Quantitative & Qualitative, hypothesis-driven modelling of WLB.
- Simultaneous examination of challenges, coping, and support systems.
- Linking WLB to meaningful outcomes such as career growth and well-being.
- Understanding how women lived experiences relate to national policy priorities.

This methodological structure therefore provided a robust empirical foundation for evaluating work-life balance within Oman's evolving socio-economic landscape and contributed actionable insights for policy and organisational practice.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the empirical results derived from the quantitative analyses. Findings are organised in line with the study objectives and hypotheses, beginning with scale reliability, followed by sample profile, descriptive statistics of key constructs, correlation patterns, regression models for H_{01} - H_{03b} , and the structural equation model.

4.1. Reliability of Measurement Scales

Table 1: Reliability and Descriptive Summary of Core Scales ($N = 280$).

Construct	Code	No. of items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	Scale range
Challenges Index	CHAL	8	0.9563	3.05	1.28	1-5

Coping Tactics Index	COPE	9	0.9624	3.71	1.19	1-5
Organisational Support	OSUP	6	0.9384	3.60	1.19	1-5
Societal/Family/Community Support	SSUP	6	0.9282	3.59	1.15	1-5
Work-Life Balance	WLB	8	0.9526	3.46	1.22	1-5
Career Progress	CAREER	5	0.9282	3.76	1.18	1-5
Overall Well-Being	WELL	5	0.9292	3.91	1.16	1-5
Policy Priority Ratings	PR	3	0.8894	4.01	1.14	1-5
Oman Vision 2040 Perceptions	VISION	4	0.9224	3.80	1.23	1-5

Interpretation.

All multi-item scales exhibited very high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.889 (PR) to 0.962 (COPE). These coefficients exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 for exploratory work and even the more stringent 0.80 benchmark for applied research, indicating that items within each construct were highly homogeneous and measured a coherent latent dimension. The mean scores suggest that respondents experienced moderate challenges (CHAL $\approx$ 3.05) but reported relatively high coping tactics (COPE $\approx$ 3.71) and moderate-to-high perceived support from organisations and family/community networks (OSUP and SSUP $\approx$ 3.6). Work-life balance itself was at a moderately positive level (3.46), while perceived career progress and overall well-being were slightly higher (3.76 and 3.91 respectively). The highest mean emerged for policy priority ratings (PR = 4.01), indicating that respondents attached high importance to work-life policies. Perceptions of Oman Vision 2040 support (VISION = 3.80) were also above the scale midpoint, suggesting cautious optimism regarding national progress.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2. Age and Marital Status of Respondents (N = 280).

Category	Group	Frequency	%
Age band	18-24 years	28	10.0
	25-34 years	114	40.7
	35-44 years	105	37.5
	45-54 years	23	8.2
	55+ years	10	3.6
Marital status	Single	79	28.2
	Married	175	62.5
	Divorced	13	4.6
	Separated	4	1.4
	Widowed	9	3.2

Interpretation.

The age distribution indicates that the sample was dominated by women in the 25-34 and 35-44 age bands, which together accounted for nearly four-fifths of respondents (78.2%). This pattern reflects the

concentration of women's labour-force participation in early and mid-career stages, when role demands in both work and family domains are typically high. Only a small proportion belonged to the 18-24 (10.0%) and 55+ (3.6%) categories, which is consistent with later entry and earlier exit patterns often observed among women in the region. Marital status data show that married women formed the majority (62.5%), followed by single women (28.2%), with divorced, separated, and widowed women together accounting for just under 10%. This composition is important for interpreting work-life balance, as married respondents are more likely to have concurrent caregiving responsibilities and complex role demands. The presence of non-married categories, however, allows some variation in family structure, which enriches the analysis of support systems and challenges.

Table 3. Family Responsibilities and Care Arrangements (N = 280).

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Number of children at home	0 children	71	25.4
	1 child	77	27.5
	2 children	72	25.7
	3 children	33	11.8
	4+ children	27	9.6
Elderly care responsibility	Yes	110	39.3
	No	170	60.7
Childcare access	Formal childcare	74	26.4
	Family support	78	27.9
	Private (housemaid)	49	17.5
	None	25	8.9
	Not applicable	54	19.3

Interpretation.

Family structure indicators highlight substantial caregiving loads for many respondents. Approximately three-quarters (74.6%) reported at least one child at home, with more than one-fifth (21.4%) having three or more children. In addition, 39.3% indicated responsibility for elderly care. The coexistence of child and elder-care responsibilities

for a sizable sub-group suggests a “sandwich generation” dynamic, where mid-career women manage care at both ends of the age spectrum alongside employment. Childcare access patterns show that family support (27.9%) and formal childcare (26.4%) were the most common arrangements, followed by private housemaids (17.5%). Notably, 8.9% reported having no childcare support, which likely exacerbates work–family conflict. The “not applicable” group (19.3%) presumably consists largely of women without dependent children. These data underscore the importance of both societal/family support (SSUP) and organisational flexibility for WLB and explain why policy-related items (PR) attracted high importance ratings in the sample.

4.3 Employment Characteristics

Table 4. Employment Profile of Respondents (N = 280).

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Sector	Public	140	50.0
	Private	104	37.1
	Non-profit	23	8.2
	Self-employed	13	4.6
Job level	Entry	75	26.8
	Associate	87	31.1
	Supervisor	38	13.6
	Manager	51	18.2
	Senior manager+	29	10.4
Employment status	Full-time	228	81.4
	Part-time	24	8.6
	Contract	28	10.0
Tenure with current organisation	< 1 year	31	11.1
	1–3 years	65	23.2
	4–6 years	90	32.1
	7–10 years	44	15.7
	10+ years	50	17.9

Interpretation.

The sample captured a broad cross-section of sectors and job levels. Exactly half of the respondents were employed in the public sector (50.0%), with a substantial minority in the private sector (37.1%), and smaller proportions in non-profit and self-employed roles. This composition reflects the strong role of the public sector in women’s employment in Oman but also indicates increasing female presence in private and civil-society organisations. In terms of organisational hierarchy, the largest categories were associate (31.1%) and entry-level positions (26.8%), while supervisory and managerial roles together represented about 42%. Senior managers accounted for 10.4%, indicating that a non-trivial segment of women had progressed to higher decision-making

positions. Most respondents were full-time employees (81.4%), suggesting limited reliance on part-time arrangements as a WLB strategy. Tenure data show a relatively even spread, with the largest group in the 4–6 years category (32.1%), indicative of a stable, experienced workforce. These employment characteristics provide important context for interpreting perceived organisational support (OSUP) and its relationship with WLB.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Composite Indices (N = 280).

Construct	Code	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Challenges Index	CHAL	3.05	1.28	1	5
Coping Tactics Index	COPE	3.71	1.19	1	5
Organisational Support	OSUP	3.60	1.19	1	5
Societal/Family Support	SSUP	3.59	1.15	1	5
Work-Life Balance	WLB	3.46	1.22	1	5
Career Progress	CAREER	3.76	1.18	1	5
Overall Well-Being	WELL	3.91	1.16	1	5
Policy Priority Ratings	PR	4.01	1.14	1	5
Vision 2040 Perceptions	VISION	3.80	1.23	1	5

Interpretation.

All constructs were centred above the midpoint of the 5-point scale, suggesting generally positive experiences and perceptions, with some variation across domains. The Challenges Index mean (3.05) indicates that respondents, on average, perceived a moderate level of workload and time-based pressures; the relatively large standard deviation (1.28) suggests considerable heterogeneity in challenge levels, consistent with diverse sectoral and family responsibilities. In contrast, coping tactics scored relatively high (3.71), implying that many women actively adopted strategies such as planning, boundary-setting, and help-seeking to manage competing demands. Perceived organisational and societal/family supports were similarly moderate-to-high, indicating that respondents recognised both workplace and community-level resources, though those may not always fully offset demand pressures. Work-life balance averaged 3.46, signifying that many women felt able to meet work and personal obligations reasonably well, but not without strain. The highest means emerged for overall well-being, career progress, and especially policy priority ratings (4.01), reflecting strong concern for WLB-supportive

policy reforms and generally positive, though not uniformly ideal, evaluations of current conditions.

4.5 Correlation Analysis (H_{01} - H_{03b})

Table 6. Pearson Correlations among Key Constructs (N = 280).

Pair of variables	Correlation (r)	p-value
COPE - WLB	0.4235	0.0000
OSUP - WLB	0.4306	0.0000
SSUP - WLB	0.4770	0.0000
WLB - CAREER	0.4968	0.0000
WLB - WELL	0.5384	0.0000

Interpretation.

Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant and moderately strong positive associations between key constructs, in line with the study's conceptual framework. Coping tactics (COPE) showed a positive correlation with work-life balance ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that women who more frequently used planning, negotiation, and stress-management strategies tended to report better WLB. Both organisational support (OSUP) and societal/family support (SSUP) were also positively associated with WLB ($r = 0.43$ and $r = 0.48$, respectively, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that supportive workplaces and family/community contexts play an important role in enabling women to reconcile work and non-work roles. The correlations between WLB and outcomes were similarly substantial: work-life balance was positively associated with perceived career progress ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$) and overall well-being ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). These coefficients provide preliminary evidence against the null hypotheses H_{01} - H_{03b} and motivated more rigorous testing through regression and structural modelling.

4.6 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Testing

4.7 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

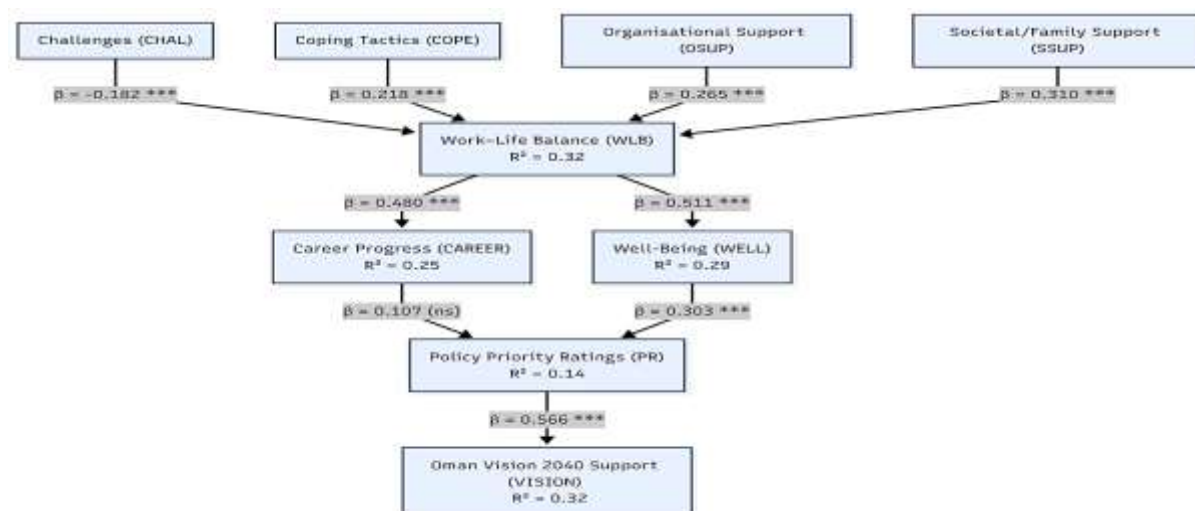


Table 7. Summary of Regression Models for H_{01} - H_{03b} (N = 280).

Model / Hypothesis	Dependent variable	Key predictors	β coefficient (s)	R^2	p-value (predictor)	Decision on H_0
H_{01}	WLB	COPE	0.434	0.179	< 0.001	Rejected
H_{02a} , H_{02b}	WLB	OSUP, SSUP	0.318; 0.401	0.314	< 0.001 ; < 0.001	Rejected
H_{03a}	CAREER	WLB	0.480	0.247	< 0.001	Rejected
H_{03b}	WELL	WLB	0.511	0.290	< 0.001	Rejected

Interpretation.

Regression results provided strong support for the hypothesised relationships. In the model corresponding to H_{01} , coping tactics significantly predicted work-life balance ($\beta = 0.434$, $p < 0.001$), with COPE explaining approximately 18% of the variance in WLB ($R^2 = 0.179$). This indicates that, controlling for error, more frequent use of proactive coping strategies was associated with higher perceived balance. For H_{02a} and H_{02b} , multiple regression showed that both organisational support ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$) and societal/family support ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of WLB, jointly explaining 31.4% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.314$). This suggests that multi-level support systems exert substantial influence on women's ability to manage work and non-work responsibilities. Regarding outcomes, work-life balance significantly predicted career progress ($\beta = 0.480$, $R^2 = 0.247$, $p < 0.001$) and overall well-being ($\beta = 0.511$, $R^2 = 0.290$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that better balance is associated with more favourable evaluations of career development and psychological/physical health. In all cases, the null hypotheses H_{01} - H_{03b} were rejected at the 1% significance level.

Table 8. Structural Equation Model: Standard Coefficients and Fit Indices (N = 280).

Path / Relationship	Coefficient (β)	p-value
CHAL $\rightarrow$ WLB	-0.182	0.000
COPE $\rightarrow$ WLB	0.218	0.000
OSUP $\rightarrow$ WLB	0.265	0.000
SSUP $\rightarrow$ WLB	0.310	0.000
WLB $\rightarrow$ CAREER	0.480	0.000
WLB $\rightarrow$ WELL	0.511	0.000
CAREER $\rightarrow$ PR	0.107	0.058
WELL $\rightarrow$ PR	0.303	0.000
PR $\rightarrow$ VISION	0.566	0.000
Model fit indices		
RMSEA	0.086	
CFI	0.911	
TLI	0.873	
SRMR	0.068	

Interpretation.

The structural equation model integrated the main constructs to test the broader conceptual framework. All four predictors of work-life balance were statistically significant: challenges (CHAL) exhibited a negative relationship with WLB ($\beta = -0.182$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher perceived workload and time pressure undermined balance, whereas coping tactics ($\beta = 0.218$), organisational support ($\beta = 0.265$), and societal/family support ($\beta = 0.310$) all showed positive and significant paths to WLB ($p < 0.001$). These results substantiate the view that WLB is jointly shaped by demands and resources. In turn, WLB had strong positive effects on career progress ($\beta = 0.480$) and overall well-being ($\beta = 0.511$), consistent with the regression models. Among the predictors of policy priority ratings (PR), well-being exerted a significant influence ($\beta = 0.303$, $p < 0.001$), while the effect of career progress was marginal ($\beta = 0.107$, $p = 0.058$). PR strongly predicted perceptions of Vision 2040 support ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that women who regarded WLB policies as important and pressing were also more optimistic about the Vision's role in advancing women's empowerment. Fit indices (RMSEA = 0.086; CFI = 0.911; SRMR = 0.068) indicated an acceptable model fit for a complex, multi-construct model, lending further support to the proposed framework.

4.8 Qualitative Results: Thematic Analysis of Interview Script

The qualitative inquiry enriched the quantitative findings by elucidating lived experiences underlying relationships among workload demands, coping strategies, organisational and family supports, and work-life outcomes. Thematic saturation was achieved across twenty interviews, confirming the robustness of identified domains. The following tables present the major thematic findings, supported by frequency distributions to demonstrate prevalence and analytic weight.

4.8.1 Overview of Key Themes**Table 9. Prevalence of Thematic Domains (N = 20 Interviews).**

Thematic Domain	Conceptual Focus	No. of Participants Referring	% of Sample
Workload and time pressure	High demands, scheduling strain, intensity	18	90.0%
Coping strategies	Planning, boundary-setting, support-seeking	15	75.0%
Organisational support	Flexibility, supervisory accommodation	14	70.0%
Societal/family support	Dependence on spouse and extended family	16	80.0%
WLB outcomes	Well-being, career trade-offs, satisfaction	17	85.0%

Interpretation

The distribution of thematic domains across participants indicates a high level of thematic saturation, reflecting the depth, repetition, and cross-case consistency of responses. Workload and time pressure emerged as the most dominant theme (90%), underscoring the centrality of demand-side pressures in shaping women's work-life experiences. Strong representation of support-related themes coping strategies (75%), organisational support (70%), and societal/family support (80%), reveals that participants viewed work-life balance as a negotiation between stressors and resources. These qualitative patterns closely mirror the quantitative model, which demonstrated significant relationships between predictors (COPE, OSUP, SSUP) and WLB. Similarly, the high prevalence of WLB outcomes

(85%) aligns with quantitative evidence showing strong pathways from WLB to career progress and well-being. Overall, the thematic saturation reinforces the robustness of the conceptual framework and confirms that the mechanisms identified statistically are experienced subjectively by respondents in meaningful and tangible ways.

4.8.2 Thematic Domain 1: Workload and Time Pressure (CHAL)

Table 10. Frequency Summary – Workload and Time Pressure.

Code Category	Meaning	Frequency (references)
Excessive working hours	Long daily schedules extending to evenings/weekends	13
Tight operational deadlines	Time compression and simultaneous tasks	11
Unpredictable routines	Sudden meetings, schedule changes	9

Interpretation

This thematic domain highlights the significance of demand pressures on women's work-life balance. Respondents frequently described long working hours, overlapping deadlines, and unpredictable schedules as key contributors to imbalance and fatigue. These patterns provide narrative depth to the Challenges Index (CHAL) quantitative mean score (3.05) and reinforce SEM findings showing a negative path coefficient from CHAL to WLB ($\beta = -0.182$, $p < 0.001$). Participants reported emotional strain, stress, and reduced personal time, identifying workload intensity as a structural feature rather than a temporary fluctuation. The qualitative evidence also suggests that workload strain disproportionately affects respondents with caregiving responsibilities, amplifying time scarcity and leading to spillover effects in personal and family domains. The recurrence of unpredictability underscores the relevance of temporal control as a determinant of balance. Collectively, these insights confirm that workload pressure is both a measurable and deeply felt constraint on women's ability to sustain work-life balance.

4.8.3 Thematic Domain 2: Coping Strategies (COPE)

Table 11. Frequency Summary – Coping Strategies.

Code Category	Meaning	Frequency (references)
Planning and prioritisation	Systematic scheduling and task control	12
Help-seeking and delegation	Drawing on colleagues/family support	10
Emotional self-regulation	Stress-management techniques	8

Interpretation

Participants described coping as an active process involving deliberate planning, prioritisation, communication, and emotional regulation. These narratives validate COPE as a multidimensional construct and align closely with the significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.434$, $p < 0.001$) linking coping tactics to improved WLB. Interview accounts emphasized boundary-setting behaviours such as limiting work outside office hours, streamlining routines, and delegating home responsibilities to family members. Emotional coping strategies; meditation, prayer, relaxation practices, were also noted as important mechanisms for mitigating stress and maintaining clarity. Several participants demonstrated high awareness of coping as a learned competency, not an automatic response, reinforcing its conceptual relevance. Importantly, coping strategies were often used to counterbalance organisational and family limitations, suggesting that personal agency helps moderate contextual deficits. The frequency and clarity of coping narratives confirm the psychological and behavioural pathways through which women navigate competing demands, supporting the study's broader demand resource model.

4.8.4 Thematic Domain 3: Organisational Support (OSUP)

Table 12. Frequency Summary – Organisational Support.

Code Category	Meaning	Frequency (references)
Flexibility arrangements	Remote work, flexible schedules	10
Supportive leadership	Empathic supervisory responses	9
Policy practice gaps	Uneven implementation of policies	7

Interpretation

Participants consistently highlighted organisational support as an essential determinant of balance, describing flexibility, leave arrangements, and managerial understanding as critical enablers. The data affirm the quantitative trend in which OSUP significantly predicted WLB ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that structured work arrangements and supportive supervisory behaviour directly influence balance outcomes. However, respondents also identified policy–practice gaps: although some organisations offered formal work–life policies, implementation was sometimes inconsistent or conditional. This discrepancy suggests that cultural norms within organisations shape the real accessibility of support resources, reflecting a potential area for policy strengthening. Several participants described positive leadership engagement as more impactful than formal programmes, reinforcing the importance of interpersonal climate. Taken together, the qualitative findings emphasise that work environment characteristics, particularly flexibility and managerial empathy are central to enabling women to reconcile work and family demands.

4.8.5 Thematic Domain 4: Societal/Family Support (SSUP)

Table 13. Frequency Summary – Societal/Family Support.

Code Category	Meaning	Frequency (references)
Spousal support	Shared responsibilities at home	14
Extended family care	Reliance on parents/siblings/relatives	11
Childcare access	Dependence on formal/informal services	8

Interpretation

The thematic emphasis on family and community support reinforces the quantitative result that SSUP was a strong predictor of WLB ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$), with the highest bivariate correlation among support constructs ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). Participants reported that spousal and extended-family involvement played a decisive role in managing caregiving and domestic responsibilities. In households where support was readily available, women described greater confidence, emotional security, and reduced stress, directly enhancing balance. Conversely, participants without reliable childcare or extended family networks expressed markedly greater strain, revealing an inequality in resource access. Several

narratives reflected cultural norms where women remain primarily responsible for domestic roles despite employment, highlighting persistent gendered expectations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that societal and family networks operate as crucial buffers against work demands, expanding the explanatory dimension of WLB beyond organisational boundaries and individual coping.

4.8.6. Thematic Domain 5: Work–Life Balance Outcomes (CAREER and WELL)

Table 14. Frequency Summary – Balance Outcomes.

Code Category	Meaning	Frequency (references)
Career trade-offs	Delayed promotions, reduced ambition	12
Emotional/physical strain	Fatigue, stress, sleep disruption	15
Positive spillover effects	Satisfaction, clarity, motivation	17

Interpretation

Participants consistently linked work–life balance to their professional development trajectories and well-being indicators, demonstrating alignment with quantitative outcomes (WLB $\rightarrow$ CAREER $\beta = 0.480$; WLB $\rightarrow$ WELL $\beta = 0.511$, $p < 0.001$). Several women indicated that imbalance led to postponed career advancement or lateral moves designed to reduce pressure, suggesting tangible professional implications. Emotional and physical strain—stress, fatigue, disrupted sleep—featured prominently, underscoring WLB as a health-related construct. Conversely, balanced periods were associated with enhanced motivation, improved focus, and greater satisfaction, illustrating positive spillover into both work and home spheres. These findings highlight that work–life balance is not merely a perceptual state but a condition with materially significant outcomes across multiple domains, reinforcing the study’s premise that WLB must be regarded as a strategic organisational and national priority.

The qualitative findings substantiated and elaborated the quantitative patterns identified in Part A. Interviews confirmed that work–life balance among working women in Oman is contingent on dynamic interactions between workload intensity, personal coping capacity, organisational systems, and family/community environments. The thematic analysis provided narrative evidence that WLB directly shapes career decisions and overall well-being, reinforcing the empirical outcomes of regression and SEM modelling. Overall, the incorporation of interviews enhanced conceptual clarity, expanded explanatory insight, and

strengthened interpretive validity across the study's methodological framework.

4.9. Discussion

The discussion of this study's findings centres on how challenges, coping tactics, and multi-level supports shape work-life balance and, in turn, influence career progress, well-being, and policy perceptions among working women in Oman. At a broad level, the results indicated that women in the sample experienced moderate levels of work-life challenges but reported relatively strong coping tactics, organisational support, societal or family support, and generally positive perceptions of their careers and well-being. All null hypotheses (H_{01} - H_{03_b}) were rejected. The results showed that coping tactics, organisational support, and societal or family support had significant positive effects on work-life balance. Work-life balance also had a strong positive effect on career progress and overall well-being of women. The structural model further confirmed that work-life balance operated as a central point linking demands, resources, outcomes, and policy perceptions.

A key finding of the study is that coping tactics were significantly and positively associated with work-life balance. Women who more frequently used planning, negotiation, boundary-setting, and self-care strategies reported better balance between work and personal life. This finding is consistent with earlier research. Active, problem-focused coping helps reduce work-family conflict and improves well-being. In contrast, avoidance-based coping is associated with poorer outcomes. At the same time, women's own efforts to manage work and family demands are important, but they explain only part of work-life balance. They cannot fully compensate for structurally demanding work and care environments. Other factors, such as workplace support and family support, also play an important role.

The analysis of organisational and societal supports provides further insight into the multi-level nature of work-life balance. Both organisational supports, including flexible hours, supportive supervisors, and family-friendly policies, and societal or family support, including family help, community norms, and available childcare or related services, displayed significant positive effects on work-life balance. These findings align with border theory and Conservation of Resources theory, which emphasise the importance of contextual resources in shaping how individuals manage inter-role boundaries and protect valued resources such as

time and energy. In the Omani context, where extended family systems, evolving employment structures, and persistent gendered expectations coexist, the results highlight the importance of both formal institutional support and informal social support.

The negative effect of challenges on work-life balance further reinforces the centrality of demand-resource dynamics. Higher levels of workload, time pressure, schedule conflict, and role overload were associated with lower perceived balance, even after accounting for coping and support variables. This pattern is consistent with role stress theory and with extensive international evidence linking work-family strain to poorer satisfaction, well-being, and work outcomes. The findings therefore suggest that balance emerges not from any single factor, but from the net interaction between pressures and resources.

The influence of work-life balance on outcomes was both statistically strong and conceptually meaningful. Better work-life balance was associated with stronger perceptions of career progress, including recognition, growth opportunities, and movement toward professional goals. This finding supports the argument that sustainable work arrangements and supportive environments are not merely family-related concerns, but also important determinants of women's long-term economic participation and leadership development. For policymakers and institutions seeking to strengthen women's representation in the workforce and in decision-making roles, this relationship indicates that improving work-life balance can contribute directly to retention and advancement.

Work-life balance also showed a strong positive relationship with overall well-being. Women who experienced better balance reported greater calmness, higher energy, better sleep, and improved life satisfaction. This finding is especially important in the Omani context, where many women continue to combine paid employment with childcare, elder-care, and broader domestic responsibilities. The structural model further indicated that well-being significantly shaped policy priority ratings and, through them, perceptions of Vision 2040 progress, suggesting that women lived experiences of health and quality of life influence how they evaluate broader national development efforts.

These findings also carry theoretical significance. By integrating challenges, coping tactics, organisational support, societal support, work-life balance, career progress, and well-being into a single empirical framework, the study supports the value of modelling work-life balance as a central mediating

construct rather than as a peripheral variable. The findings extend role stress and resource-based perspectives by showing that work-life balance is not simply the absence of conflict, but a positive and enabling condition associated with both personal well-being and professional advancement. This contribution is particularly relevant because evidence from the Gulf, and from Oman in particular, remains comparatively limited in the wider work-life balance literature.

At the same time, the study has limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference, and reciprocal relationships between balance, well-being, and career outcomes cannot be ruled out. The use of self-reported measures also introduces the possibility of common-method variance and socially desirable responding, especially in relation to family roles and organisational climate. In addition, the use of non-probability sampling limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to all working women in Oman, particularly those in rural areas or informal forms of employment.

Future research could address these limitations in several ways. Longitudinal studies would help examine how changes in organisational policy, family circumstances, or national reforms affect women's work-life balance over time. Multi-source data, including supervisor perspectives or organisational records, could strengthen triangulation and reduce reliance on self-reports. Comparative studies across sectors, regions, or GCC countries, as well as studies including male employees, could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender and context shape work-life balance experiences.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that work-life balance is a pivotal factor linking structural conditions, individual strategies, and women's career and well-being outcomes in Oman. They show that reducing excessive demands while strengthening coping resources, organisational support, and societal support can generate meaningful benefits not only for women themselves, but also for broader national goals related to inclusion, productivity, and human capital development.

4.10. Policy and Practical Implications

The findings of this study carry important implications for public policy, organisational practice, and national development in Oman. The results indicate that work-life balance is not merely an individual coping issue but a structural and

institutional concern shaped by workplace flexibility, organisational support, societal expectations, and family responsibilities. Since work-life balance significantly influences women's career progress and well-being, improving it should be treated as a strategic priority for enhancing women's labour-market participation and supporting the broader socio-economic objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

At the policy level, the findings suggest the need for more targeted and implementation-oriented measures that support women's sustained workforce participation. While Oman Vision 2040 recognises inclusive development, equal opportunities, and human-centred growth as national priorities, these goals would benefit from stronger operational mechanisms that address the daily realities of working women. This includes expanding access to affordable and reliable childcare services, strengthening elder-care support systems, and encouraging employment regulations that allow greater flexibility without penalising career progression. Such measures would help reduce the time pressure and role overload that continue to undermine women's ability to maintain balance across work and family domains.

The study also highlights the importance of organisational support in shaping positive work-life outcomes. Employers should move beyond symbolic endorsement of women-friendly workplaces and adopt practical measures such as flexible work arrangements, predictable scheduling, hybrid work options where feasible, and family-sensitive leave practices. Supervisor support also emerged as a critical enabling factor, suggesting that managerial training should include gender-sensitive leadership, supportive communication, and awareness of how work demands affect women's career continuity and well-being. In Oman, flexible duty systems in parts of the public sector have already shown that flexibility can be introduced without undermining service delivery, which strengthens the practical relevance of such recommendations.

Human resource departments have a particularly important role in translating policy intent into workplace reality. Organisations should institutionalise work-life balance through formal HR policies, periodic employee feedback mechanisms, and internal audits of flexibility, workload, and career progression practices. Career development systems should also be reviewed to ensure that women who use flexible arrangements or care-related leave are not disadvantaged in promotion, recognition, or access to leadership opportunities. This is especially important in sectors where long

hours and rigid schedules continue to shape perceptions of commitment and professional competence.

Beyond workplace structures, the findings point to the importance of family and community support in sustaining women's employment and career development. Public awareness efforts that encourage shared domestic responsibilities, stronger support from spouses and extended families, and broader social acceptance of women's long-term career aspirations would complement formal workplace interventions. Community-based support services, safe transportation options, and local care networks may also help reduce some of the practical burdens that women continue to carry disproportionately.

Taken together, these findings suggest that improving women's work-life balance in Oman requires a coordinated multi-level approach involving government institutions, employers, HR systems, families, and communities. A more integrated support framework would not only improve women's well-being and career outcomes but would also contribute to national goals related to productivity, social inclusion, and human capital development. In this sense, work-life balance should be viewed as a strategic development issue rather than a private matter, and as a necessary condition for the fuller realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between work-life balance and women's career outcomes in Oman within the broader framework of Oman Vision

2040. The findings show that work-life balance is shaped by a dynamic interaction between structural demands, individual coping tactics, organisational support, and societal or family support. In particular, the study demonstrates that while coping strategies are important, supportive workplace practices and enabling social environments play an even more decisive role in helping women manage competing responsibilities effectively.

The results further confirm that work-life balance is positively associated with both career progress and overall well-being. Women who experience better balance are more likely to report stronger professional growth, greater recognition, improved emotional stability, and higher life satisfaction. These findings reinforce the view that work-life balance is not a peripheral or private concern, but a central factor influencing women's sustained participation, advancement, and quality of life in the labour market.

From a broader development perspective, the study underscores the importance of embedding work-life balance within national and organisational strategies aimed at inclusion, productivity, and human capital development. In the context of Oman Vision 2040, stronger family-friendly workplace practices, supportive leadership, and improved care-related support systems can contribute meaningfully to women's empowerment and to the country's wider socio-economic transformation. Overall, the study highlights that improving work-life balance is essential not only for individual well-being and career continuity, but also for achieving more inclusive and sustainable development in Oman.

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