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WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG DUAL-CAREER COUPLES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

Suhanom Mohd Zaki[1,2]*, Sharizan Sharkawi[3], Norzanah Mat Nor[4], Mohd Aidil Riduan Awang Kader[5], Nor Akmar Nordin[6], Wati Abdul Rahman[7]

[1]Arshad Ayub Graduate Business School, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
[2] Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang Branch Jengka Campus, 26400 Bandar Tun Abdul Razak Jengka, Pahang, Malaysia
suhanom@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1499-4862
[3]Arshad Ayub Graduate Business School, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
sharizan_sharkawi@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2921-8711
[4]Arshad Ayub Graduate Business School, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
norzanah@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3942-2780
[5] Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang Branch Jengka Campus, 26400 Bandar Tun Abdul Razak Jengka, Pahang, Malaysia
aidilriduan@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4799-2177
[6] Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, 81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia
akmar_nordin@utm.my https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3467-1369
[7] Human Resource Department, Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd, Jalan Pantai Baharu, 59200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
watiabdrahman@yahoo.com https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3657-8531
*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Work-life balance has become an increasingly important concern for dual-career couples as both partners navigate competing occupational, family, and personal responsibilities within rapidly changing work environments. Despite growing scholarly attention to work-life balance, the literature remains fragmented across organisational, psychological, gender, and family perspectives, limiting a comprehensive

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understanding of the intellectual development and collaborative structure of research concerning dual-career couples. Therefore, this study provides a bibliometric analysis of the evolution, influential contributions, geographical distribution, thematic structure, and international collaboration patterns of this research domain. Bibliographic records were retrieved from the Scopus database using an advanced search strategy centred on two key concepts, "work-life balance" and "dual-career couples," covering publications from 2017 to August 2026. Following systematic screening and data refinement, 234 publications were retained for analysis using Scopus Analyzer, OpenRefine, and VOSviewer. The findings discovered substantial growth in scholarly interest, with publication output peaking in 2025 at 58 articles (24.79%). Indonesia and the United Kingdom were the most productive countries, each contributing 40 publications (17.09%). At the same time, the United Kingdom recorded the strongest international research influence with 2,676 citations and a total co-authorship link strength of 21. The most highly cited publication accumulated 687 citations. Keyword co-occurrence analysis identified work-life balance as the dominant concept (197 occurrences; Total Link Strength (TLS) = 260), closely interconnected with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, flexible work, employee performance, and work-family conflict. Overall, the findings present an expanding yet geographically uneven research landscape and highlight the need for stronger cross-national collaboration and greater integration of dyadic perspectives to advance understanding of work-life balance among dual-career couples.

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Keyword:

Bibliometric, Dual-Career Couples, Work-Life Balance, Work-Family Conflict

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Introduction

Work-life balance among dual-career couples involves multidimensional negotiation between two careers, shared family responsibilities, and personal well-being. Dual-earner and dual-career households represent a growing proportion of contemporary working families, particularly in developed and urbanising societies, placing this issue increasingly within organisational and policy research (Li et al., 2025; Shockley et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2025). Both partners pursue paid employment while managing domestic labour, caregiving, and relational commitments, creating a more complex work-family interface than in single-earner households (Shockley et al., 2024; Xie, 2023; Yu et al., 2025). The increase of dual-career couples reflects broader changes, including higher female education, heightened labour-force participation, and greater reliance on dual incomes for economic stability (Jidi et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2025; Zaman & Shahid, 2023). However, organisational cultures and domestic expectations have not changed at the same pace, requiring couples to resolve contemporary employment demands with traditional assumptions about caregiving, time, and gender (Jidi et al., 2023; Scurry &

Clarke, 2021; Xie, 2023). Thus, work-life balance in dual-career relationships extends beyond personal lifestyle choices and represents a structural and relational issue shaped by workplaces, households, and broader social norms (Kollár & Kováčiková, 2025; Scurry & Clarke, 2021; Shockley et al., 2024).

A central insight in recent research is that work-life balance among dual-career couples cannot be understood solely from an individual perspective because partners' experiences are interdependent. The work-family interface is increasingly viewed as a dyadic process whereby one partner's work demands, stress, and time pressures spill over into non-work life and cross over into the other partner's well-being, satisfaction, and mental health (Li et al., 2025; Lott & Wöhrmann, 2022; Mutter & Thorn, 2025). Long working hours, shifts, and work-related communication during leisure time can increase conflict and reduce work-life balance satisfaction, with these effects extending to partners through strain pathways (Lott & Wöhrmann, 2022). Heavy paid and unpaid workloads also limit couple interaction, recovery time, and shared leisure, contributing to depression, lower subjective well-being, and reduced job satisfaction among both partners (Li et al., 2025; Schnettler et al., 2024). During COVID-19, family-to-work conflict became particularly evident, with greater conflict linked with psychological distress and lower job satisfaction among mothers and fathers, while crossover effects sometimes operated through fathers' distress (Schnettler et al., 2024). This dyadic perspective extends work-life balance beyond childcare and role conflict. Couples without children also experience considerable non-work responsibilities and conceptualise balance through autonomy, flexibility, control, and alignment between career and care orientations (Boiarintseva et al., 2021, 2022).

At the same time, the literature demonstrates that work-life balance among dual-career couples remains deeply gendered. Even when both partners contribute income, women typically shoulder a larger share of household chores, childcare, and emotional labour, creating a double burden rather than an equal redistribution of work (Kollár & Kováčiková, 2025; Li et al., 2025; Zaman & Shahid, 2023). Traditional gender norms continue to position men as earners and women as caregivers, influencing both unpaid work and career decisions within households (Biwalkar & Purang, 2025; Mortejo, 2024; Xie, 2023). Evidence from India demonstrates that couples often adopt a family-priority ideology in which work supports family goals, although this interdependence remains shaped by gender-differentiated provider and nurturer identities (Biwalkar & Purang, 2025). Similar patterns occur in Pakistan, where dual-career couples experience role overload, work-family conflict, and greater strain following childbirth, particularly when organisational and policy support is limited (Rahman et al., 2023; Zaman & Shahid, 2023). These inequalities also have career effects. Australian longitudinal evidence reveals that household income arrangements shape unpaid labour and women's promotion prospects, whereas men's career progression remains comparatively less affected by household responsibilities (Yu et al., 2025).

Due to these pressures, dual-career couples adopt strategic and adaptive practices to sustain both careers and family functioning. Professional couples use strategies of sacrifice, ongoing compromise, and giving ground to advance two careers within constraints of geography, schedules, and family needs (Scurry & Clarke, 2021). Other studies emphasise time management, communication, collaboration, self-care, and negotiated flexibility as practical approaches to balancing employment and caregiving responsibilities (Mortejo, 2024). Hybrid and remote work add complexity by blurring work-home boundaries and requiring couples to jointly manage temporal, physical, behavioural, communicative, and psychological boundaries

(Mutter & Thorn, 2025). Emerging typologies indicate that hybrid contexts affect couples differently. Some become egalitarian strategists or dual-centric integrators, while others use flexibility to maintain hierarchy or temporarily prioritise one partner's career (Mutter & Thorn, 2026). Motivation and interdependence are also important, with Indian evidence suggesting that work and family may function as complementary rather than competing domains, while findings from Delhi associate stronger motivation with better work-life balance among dual-career couples (Arunima & Nangia, 2022; Biwalkar & Purang, 2025).

Overall, the literature portrays work-life balance among dual-career couples as a dynamic process shaped by occupational demands, gender arrangements, household management, and institutional support. Better work-life integration is associated with lower stress, while flexible work policies, supportive leadership, family-friendly scheduling, and mental health support can sustain household well-being (Li et al., 2025; Savithri et al., 2026). Organisational support is particularly important when flexibility is limited, overtime cultures persist, or family policies are inadequately implemented (Jidi et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025; Scurry & Clarke, 2021). External resources, including childcare, paid leave, domestic assistance, and extended-family support, may reduce these pressures, although such support may not fully compensate for demanding workloads and unequal household responsibilities (Li et al., 2025; Xie, 2023). Recent reviews therefore position dual-career couples within broader cultural and policy environments, where household well-being depends on both the allocation of responsibilities between partners and institutional provisions for flexibility, security, and opportunity (Biwalkar & Purang, 2025; Shockley et al., 2024).

Despite these advances, knowledge remains dispersed across organisational, family, gender, psychological, and work-family perspectives, making the intellectual structure, geographical distribution, and collaborative landscape of this research domain difficult to establish. The emphasis on individual-level work-life experiences also highlights the need to examine the extent to which relational and dyadic perspectives have been incorporated, despite recognition that partners' work and family experiences are interdependent (Biwalkar & Purang, 2025; Boiarintseva et al., 2022; Xie, 2023). Therefore, this study provides a systematic bibliometric assessment of work-life balance among dual-career couples from 2017 to August 2026 by examining publication trends, influential publications, leading countries and citation performance, dominant and emerging themes, and international collaboration through country-level co-authorship networks. The analysis consolidates the fragmented knowledge base, clarifies the intellectual and geographical development of the field, and identifies directions for advancing future research on work-life balance among dual-career couples.

Research Question

The present bibliometric study examines the development and intellectual structure of research on work-life balance among dual-career couples. Five interrelated research questions provide a framework for mapping the field's growth, influence, thematic development, and collaborative landscape. Hence, the study addresses the following questions:

- RQ1: How has the volume of scholarly publications on work-life balance among dual-career couples evolved from 2017 to August 2026?
- RQ2: Which publications are the most influential in research on work-life balance among dual-career couples, as measured by citation impact?

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- RQ3: Which countries are the leading contributors to research on work-life balance among dual-career couples in terms of publication output and citation performance?
- RQ4: What are the dominant and emerging research themes in work-life balance among dual-career couples, as revealed through keyword co-occurrence analysis?
- RQ5: What patterns of international research collaboration characterise research on work-life balance among dual-career couples, as revealed through country-level co-authorship networks?

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis provides a systematic, quantitative approach to mapping the intellectual structure and development of a research field through the organisation and evaluation of bibliographic data (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). Beyond descriptive indicators such as publication outlets, temporal trends, and influential authors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometric methods reveal conceptual and intellectual relationships within a body of knowledge. Robust analysis requires a rigorous literature retrieval process involving careful search-term formulation, database searching, and systematic screening of retrieved records. These procedures support the construction of a reliable dataset from which meaningful scholarly patterns can be identified (Fahimnia et al., 2015). Scopus was selected as the primary database because of its extensive multidisciplinary coverage and comprehensive bibliographic and citation information (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). To maintain scholarly rigour and consistency, the analysis was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding other document types such as books and lecture notes (Gu et al., 2019). Accordingly, relevant publications within the research domain, published between 2017 and August 2026, were systematically identified and retrieved from Scopus to establish the final dataset for subsequent bibliometric analysis.

Data Search Strategy

The data collection process was systematically designed to create a focused, methodologically consistent dataset for examining work-life balance among dual-career couples. Scopus was selected as the bibliographic database due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature and suitability for bibliometric analysis. The search was conducted in article titles using the term “work-life balance” and restricted to 2017 to 2026, English-language publications, journal articles, the Business, Management and Accounting subject area, and publications with a final publication status, as illustrated in Figure 1. These restrictions were deliberately applied to enhance the relevance and comparability of the retrieved literature by concentrating on established scholarly contributions within the management and organisational domain. The search, conducted on 7th August 2026, initially identified 3,053 records. This relatively large number reflects the broad, multidisciplinary nature of work-life balance scholarship, which encompasses diverse populations and occupational contexts beyond dual-career couples. Therefore, starting with a broader work-life balance search was useful for maximising the initial coverage of potentially relevant studies and reducing the risk of prematurely excluding publications that addressed dual-career relationships without explicitly using this terminology in their titles.

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Following identification, the 3,053 records were systematically screened for relevance to dual-career couples, resulting in the exclusion of 2,819 records due to duplication or insufficient relevance. Consequently, 234 publications, representing approximately 7.7% of the initially identified records, met the eligibility criteria and constituted the final bibliometric dataset. This substantial reduction is analytically meaningful, indicating that although work-life balance is an established research domain, only a limited proportion of the literature explicitly addresses the experiences and dynamics of dual-career couples. This pattern suggests that the intersection of work-life balance and dual-career relationships remains a relatively specialised area within the broader literature. The rigorous screening process also strengthened the conceptual coherence of the dataset by excluding studies involving unrelated populations or contexts. Accordingly, the final corpus of 234 publications provides a focused basis for examining publication trends, influential contributions, geographical patterns, intellectual structures, emerging research themes, and collaborative patterns associated with work-life balance among dual-career couples.

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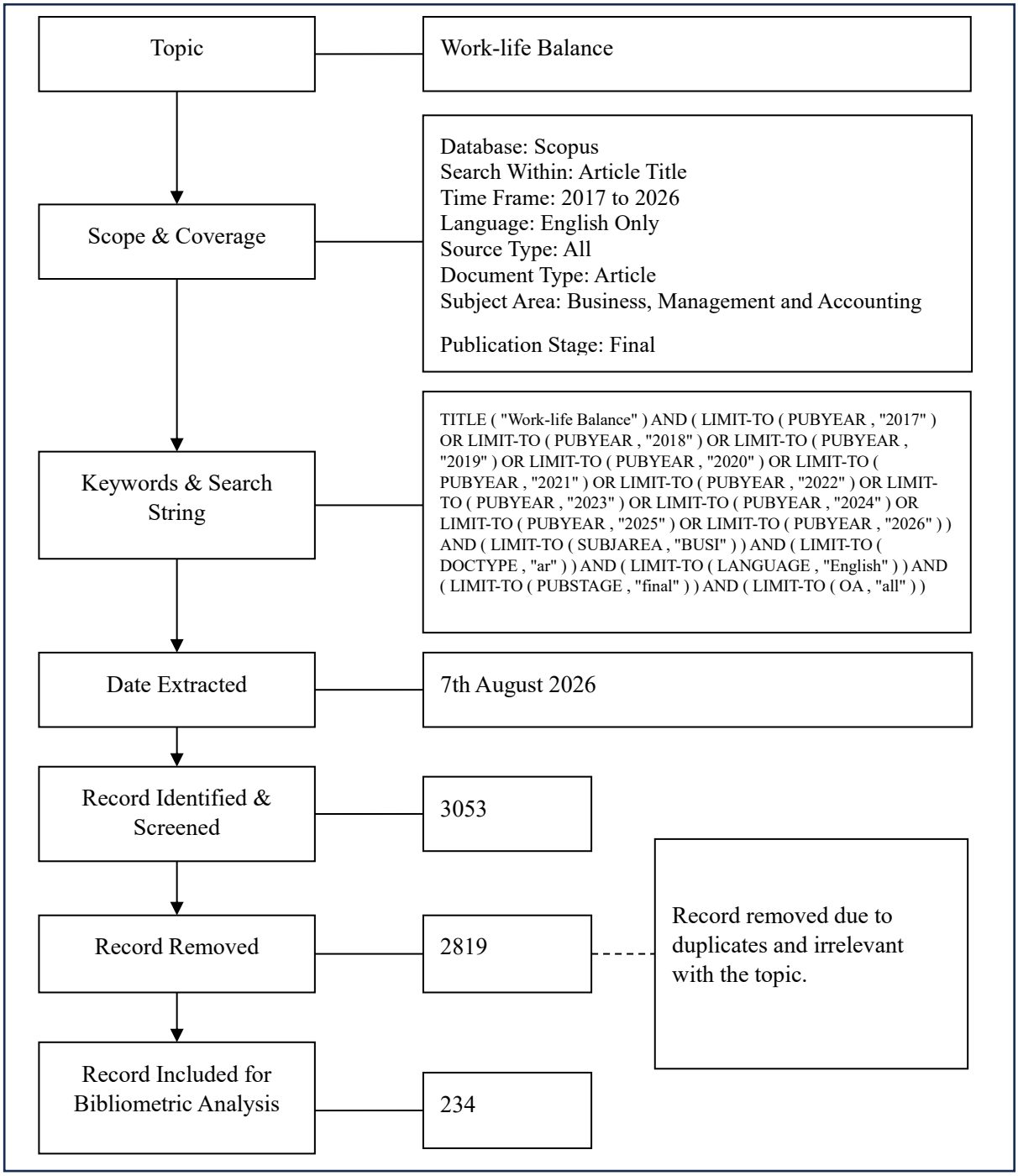

Figure 1: Flow Diagram of The Search Strategy (Page, Mckenzie, Et Al., 2021; Page, Moher, Et Al., 2021)

Data Analysis

VOSviewer is a widely established bibliometric software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017). Designed specifically for the construction, visualisation, and interpretation of bibliometric networks, the software enables researchers to examine complex relationships within scientific literature through network, overlay, and density visualisations. It supports multiple forms of

bibliometric analysis, including co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, citation, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. A particular strength of VOSviewer is its ability to transform large, complex bibliographic datasets into intuitive visual maps that systematically group related items into clusters. This functionality facilitates identifying influential contributors, intellectual relationships, thematic structures, and emerging research patterns within a particular knowledge domain. Its interactive interface, customisable visualisation features, and compatibility with bibliographic data obtained from major scholarly databases have contributed to its widespread application in contemporary bibliometric research.

In this study, bibliographic records were retrieved from the Scopus database for publications spanning 2017 to August 2026. The extracted dataset contained relevant bibliographic information, including publication year, article title, author names, source title, citation counts, and author keywords. Following systematic screening and data refinement, the final dataset was analysed using VOSviewer version 1.6.21 to construct and examine bibliometric networks related to the intellectual and thematic development of research on work-life balance among dual-career couples. The analysis focused on identifying meaningful patterns, connections, and clusters within the selected literature. The software's mapping and clustering functions enabled systematic identification and visual representation of relationships among bibliographic entities, thereby facilitating a clearer interpretation of underlying research structures and scholarly connections that may not be readily apparent from conventional descriptive statistics alone.

Methodologically, VOSviewer applies the Visualisation of Similarities (VOS) mapping technique to position bibliometric items in a low-dimensional space based on the strength of their relationships (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). In the resulting maps, the distance between two items generally reflects their degree of relatedness, whereby items positioned closer together indicate stronger relationships than those farther apart. Although the VOS approach shares conceptual similarities with Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) (Appio et al., 2014), it differs in its optimisation and normalisation procedures. It is specifically designed to accommodate bibliometric network data. In particular, VOSviewer commonly employs Association Strength (AS) normalisation to standardize co-occurrence relationships and account for differences in the overall occurrence frequencies of individual items (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007). The AS between items (i) and (j) can be expressed as follows:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j},$$

which is “proportional to the ratio between, on the one hand, the observed number of co-occurrences of i and j and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent” (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

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Result and Discussion

RQ1: How Has the Volume of Scholarly Publications on Work-Life Balance Among Dual-Career Couples Evolved From 2017 To August 2026?

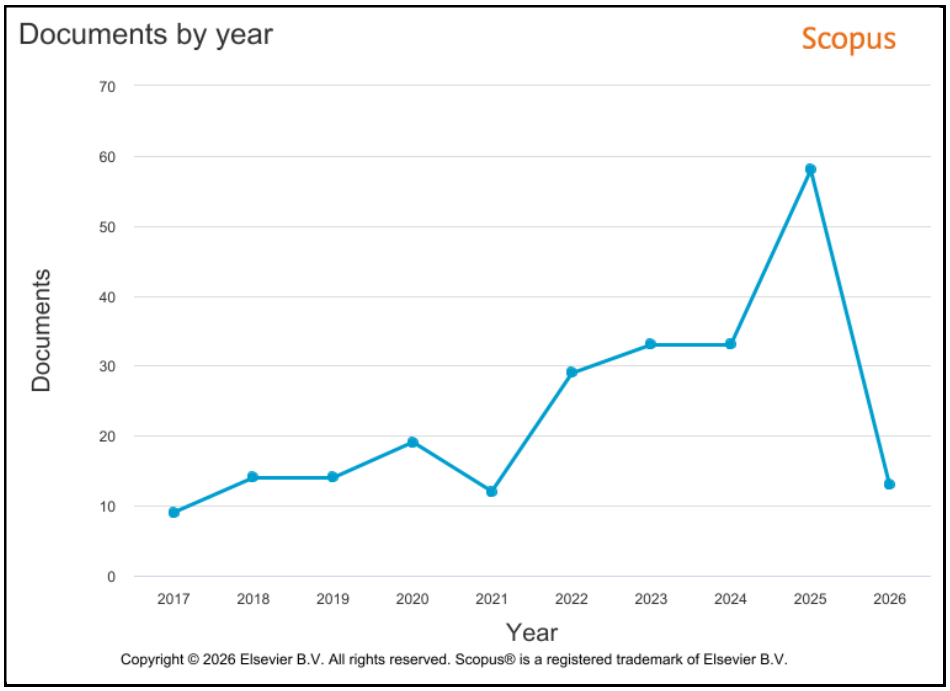

Figure 2: Trend of Research in Work-life Balance by Years

Table 1: Trend of Research in Work-life Balance by Years

Year	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
2026	13	5.56
2025	58	24.79
2024	33	14.10
2023	33	14.10
2022	29	12.39
2021	12	5.13
2020	19	8.12
2019	14	5.98
2018	14	5.98
2017	9	3.85

Figure 2 presents the annual publication trend, demonstrating generally increasing scholarly interest in work-life balance among dual-career couples from 2017 to 2026, although some fluctuations are evident. Research output was relatively limited during the early years, increasing from only nine publications (3.85%) in 2017 to 14 publications (5.98%) in both 2018 and 2019, as shown in Table 1. The number subsequently rose to 19 publications (8.12%) in 2020 before declining to 12 (5.13%) in 2021. The increase observed around 2020 may partly reflect heightened scholarly attention to work-family dynamics during the COVID-19

pandemic, when lockdowns, remote working, school closures, and intensified caregiving responsibilities disrupted established boundaries between work and family life. These circumstances were particularly consequential for dual-career couples, as both partners had to negotiate occupational and domestic demands simultaneously. More importantly, the subsequent increase to 29 publications (12.39%) in 2022 and 33 publications (14.10%) in both 2023 and 2024 indicates that interest in the topic persisted beyond the immediate pandemic period. This sustained growth may reflect broader transformations in contemporary employment, including hybrid and flexible work arrangements, increased digital connectivity, changing gender and caregiving roles, and growing organisational concern for employee well-being. Collectively, these developments have strengthened the relevance of examining work-life balance as an individual experience and as an issue shaped by the interconnected work and family demands of both partners.

A particularly notable development is the sharp increase to 58 publications in 2025, accounting for 24.79% of the total publications and representing the highest annual output during the study period. This constitutes an approximately 75.8% increase from 2024, suggesting a substantial acceleration in scholarly attention to the field. The surge may reflect the maturation of research initiated during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods, alongside growing recognition of the complexities dual-career households face in managing simultaneous career advancement, caregiving responsibilities, household demands, and personal well-being. It may also indicate a conceptual shift towards understanding work-life balance through relational and dyadic perspectives, whereby the work experiences and resources of one partner can influence the well-being and work-family experiences of the other.

In contrast, only 13 publications (5.56%) were recorded in 2026. However, this apparent reduction should not be interpreted as a decline in research interest, as the 2026 data cover only publications indexed up to August 2026. Additional publications may be indexed during the remaining months of the year, and bibliographic databases may also experience indexing delays. Overall, the pattern from 2017 to 2025 provides stronger evidence of a progressively expanding research domain. The pronounced growth in recent years suggests that work-life balance among dual-career couples has become increasingly significant amid evolving work arrangements, changing family structures, and growing recognition of the interdependence between partners' work and family experiences.

RQ2: Which Publications Are the Most Influential in Research on Work-Life Balance Among Dual-Career Couples, As Measured by Citation Impact?

The citation analysis reveals a strong concentration of scholarly influence around research addressing remote work, changing employment arrangements, gender relations, and work-family boundaries. Felstead and Henseke recorded the highest citation count, with 687 citations for their 2017 study on the growth of remote working and its implications for work effort, well-being, and work-life balance, substantially exceeding the second-ranked article by Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva (353 citations). The prominence of Felstead and Henseke can be attributed in part to their relatively early examination of remote working, before such arrangements became widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study provided an important conceptual and empirical foundation for subsequent research on flexible and remote work. Similarly, Kelliher et al.'s reconceptualisation of work-life balance for the twenty-first century has attracted considerable attention as it challenges conventional assumptions that work and non-work domains are clearly separated spheres. The third-ranked study by

Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir (321 citations) further demonstrates the growing importance of the family and gender dimensions of work-life balance, particularly during COVID-19. Collectively, the three most-cited publications suggest that highly influential scholarship in this domain extends beyond the traditional notion of balancing time between work and family. It highlights how technological change, flexible working arrangements, gendered responsibilities, and increasingly permeable boundaries reshape individuals' and couples' experiences of work and non-work life.

The remaining highly cited publications reinforce this transition and demonstrate the field's multidimensional development. Shirmohammadi et al. (227 citations) and Adisa et al. (137 citations) specifically examined remote work and boundary management during COVID-19, indicating how the pandemic accelerated scholarly interest in the reconfiguration of work-family boundaries. Le et al.'s systematic review of work-life balance in Asia (177 citations) is particularly important, as it broadens the literature, which has historically been influenced by Western perspectives, and highlights the significance of cultural and institutional contexts in shaping work-life experiences. Meanwhile, Warren's examination of gig work (119 citations), Adisa et al.'s investigation of patriarchy and women's work-life balance (115 citations), Braun and Peus's study of the crossover of work-life balance perceptions (108 citations), and Wolor et al.'s examination of work-life balance and employee performance during COVID-19 (107 citations) illustrate the theoretical and contextual diversity of influential research.

Of particular relevance to dual-career couples, Braun and Peus's focus on crossover demonstrates that work-life balance may transcend the individual level, with perceptions and experiences potentially transferring between interconnected individuals. Overall, the citation pattern suggests that the field's intellectual development has been shaped by three interconnected concerns: changing forms of work, the permeability of work-family boundaries, and the relational and socio-cultural conditions under which work-life balance is negotiated. These themes strongly support extending future research beyond individual-level perspectives toward more explicit dyadic approaches, particularly in dual-career households where one partner's work and family experiences are inherently intertwined with the others.

Table 2: Top 10 Highly Cited Publications in Work-Life Balance Research

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
1	Felstead A.; Henseke G. (Felstead & Henseke, 2017)	Assessing the growth of remote working and its consequences for effort, well-being and work-life balance	2017	New Technology, Work and Employment	687
2	Kelliher C.; Richardson J.; Boiarintseva G. (Kelliher et al., 2019)	All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century	2019	Human Resource Management Journal	353
3	Hjálmsdóttir A.; Bjarnadóttir V.S. (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021)	"I have turned into a foreman here at home": Families and work–life balance in times of COVID-19 in a gender equality paradise	2021	Gender, Work and Organisation	321

4	Shirmohammadi M.; Au W.C.; Beigi M. (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022)	Remote work and work-life balance: Lessons learned from the covid-19 pandemic and suggestions for HRD practitioners	2022	Human Resource Development International	227
5	Le H.; Newman A.; Menzies J.; Zheng C.; Fermelis J. (Le et al., 2020)	Work–life balance in Asia: A systematic review	2020	Human Resource Management Review	177
6	Adisa T.A.; Antonacopoulou E.; Beauregard T.A.; Dickmann M.; Adekoya O.D. (Adisa et al., 2022)	Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on Employees' Boundary Management and Work–Life Balance	2022	British Journal of Management	137
7	Warren T. (Warren, 2021)	Work–life balance and gig work: 'Where are we now' and 'where to next' with the work–life balance agenda?	2021	Journal of Industrial Relations	119
8	Adisa T.A.; Abdulraheem I.; Isiaka S.B. (Adisa et al., 2019)	Patriarchal hegemony: Investigating the impact of patriarchy on women's work-life balance	2019	Gender in Management	115
9	Braun S.; Peus C. (Braun & Peus, 2018)	Crossover of Work–Life Balance Perceptions: Does Authentic Leadership Matter?	2018	Journal of Business Ethics	108
10	WOLOR C.W.; SOLIKHAH S.; FIDHYALLAH N.F.; LESTARI D.P. (WOLOR et al., 2020)	Effectiveness of E-Training, E-Leadership, and Work Life Balance on Employee Performance during COVID-19	2020	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	107

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RQ3: Which Countries Are the Leading Contributors to Research on Work-Life Balance Among Dual-Career Couples in Terms of Publication Output and Citation Performance?

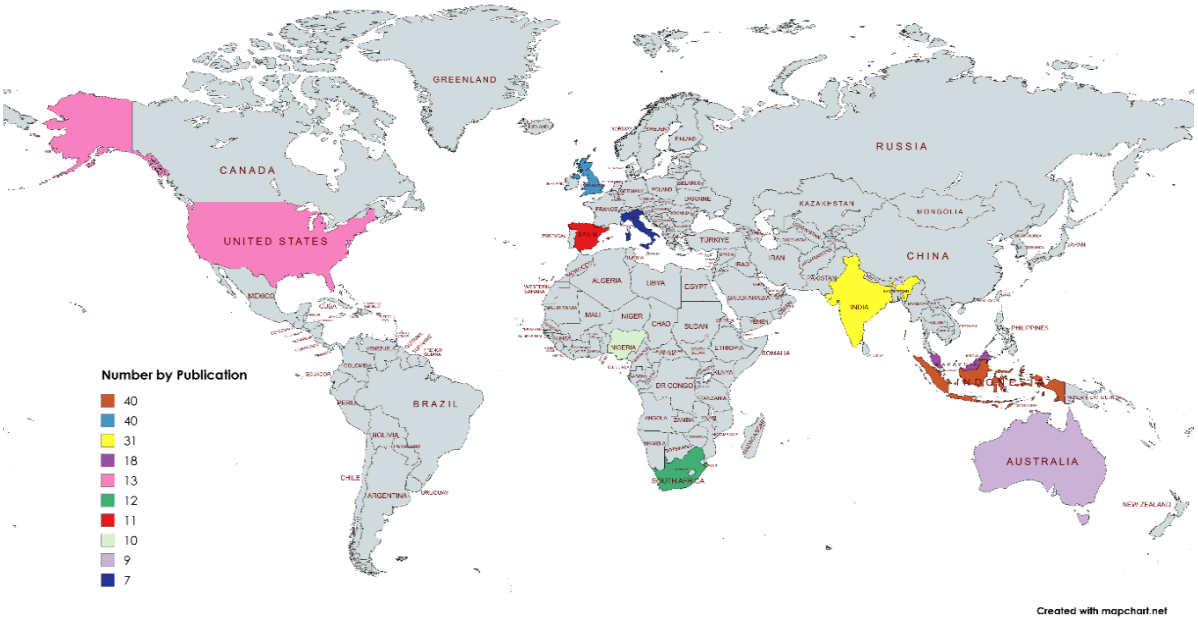

Figure 3: Top 10 Countries Contributing to Research on Work-life Balance

Figure 3 illustrates that research on work-life balance among dual-career couples is characterised by substantial contributions from both emerging and developed economies. Indonesia and the United Kingdom jointly recorded the highest publication output, with 40 publications each (17.09%), followed by India with 31 publications (13.25%) and Malaysia with 18 publications (7.69%). Collectively, Indonesia, India, and Malaysia account for a considerable proportion of the publications among the leading countries, highlighting the strong presence of Asian scholarship in this research domain. This pattern may reflect rapid socioeconomic transformation, rising female labour-force participation, the expansion of dual-earner households, and the continued coexistence of demanding professional roles with culturally embedded expectations around family and caregiving responsibilities. These conditions provide a particularly relevant context for investigating how couples negotiate competing career and family demands.

The United Kingdom's equally prominent position may reflect the maturity of work-family scholarship within its management and employment-relations literature, along with sustained academic and policy attention to flexible working, gender equality, employee well-being, and family-responsive employment practices. Thus, although Indonesia and the United Kingdom represent markedly different socioeconomic and institutional contexts, their comparable publication outputs suggest that work-life balance has emerged as a significant research concern across diverse employment and family systems.

Beyond the four leading contributors, the United States (13 publications; 5.56%), South Africa (12; 5.13%), Spain (11; 4.70%), Nigeria (10; 4.27%), Australia (9; 3.85%), and Italy (7; 2.99%) further demonstrate the geographical breadth of the literature. The representation of countries across Asia, Europe, North America, Africa, and Oceania indicates that managing the interface

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between career and family responsibilities is globally relevant, not confined to a particular cultural or economic setting. Notably, the presence of South Africa and Nigeria among the 10 most productive countries, alongside Indonesia, India, and Malaysia, also points towards an increasing diversification of scholarship beyond the Western settings that have historically shaped much of the work-family literature.

Nevertheless, the uneven distribution of publications suggests that the current knowledge base remains geographically concentrated, potentially limiting the generalisability of established work-life balance assumptions across different cultural and institutional environments. Experiences of dual-career couples likely vary with labour-market conditions, welfare and childcare systems, organisational support, gender norms, extended-family involvement, and societal expectations around paid and unpaid work. Consequently, greater research attention to underrepresented countries and cross-national comparative studies is warranted to establish whether existing theoretical explanations are universally applicable or require contextual refinement. Such efforts can advance a more inclusive and globally representative understanding of work-life balance among dual-career couples.

RQ4: What Are the Dominant and Emerging Research Themes in Work-Life Balance Among Dual-Career Couples, As Revealed Through Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis?

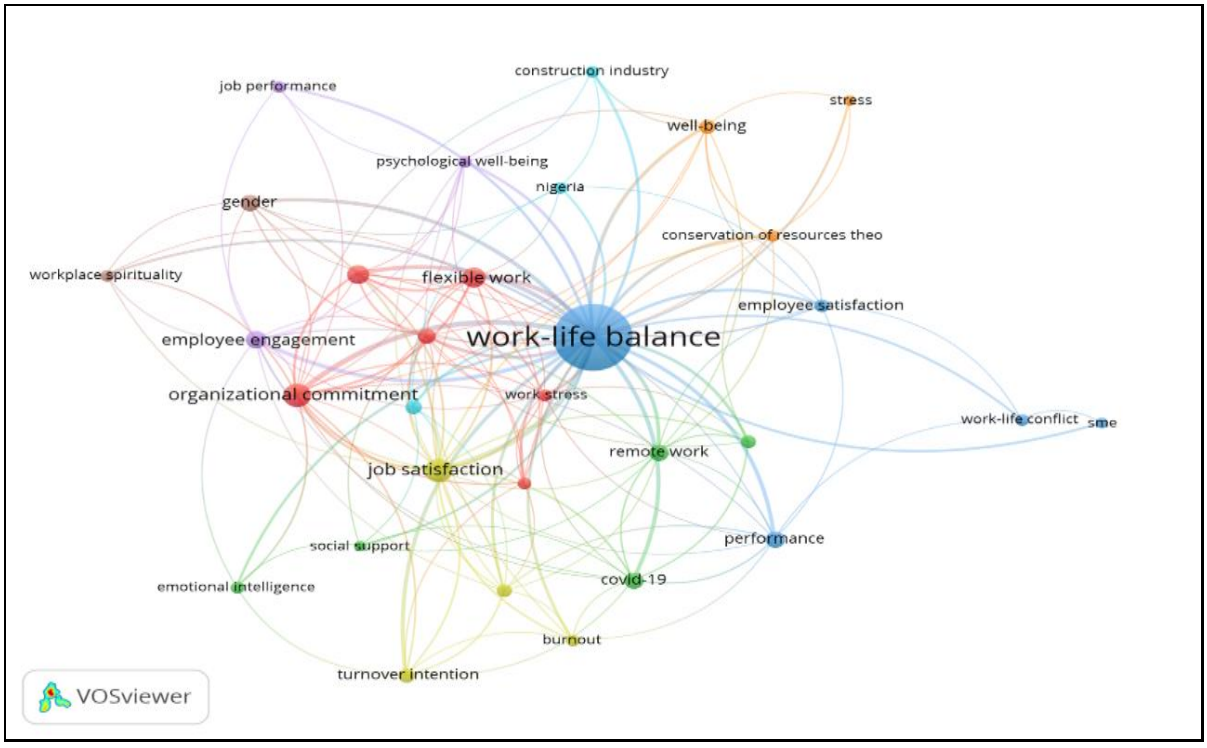

Figure 4: Network Visualisation Map of Keywords' Co-Occurrence

As illustrated in Figure 4, the keyword co-occurrence network is strongly centred on "work-life balance," which records 197 occurrences and the highest Total Link Strength (TLS = 260), confirming its dominant and connective role within the intellectual structure of the literature. Among the associated keywords, job satisfaction (26 occurrences; TLS = 67) and organisational commitment (24; TLS = 58) exhibit particularly strong prominence, followed by flexible work (18; TLS = 42), employee performance (16; TLS = 36), and employee

engagement (14; TLS = 28). This pattern indicates that scholars examine work-life balance not as an isolated employee experience, but in relation to key organisational attitudes and outcomes. The relatively strong links between job satisfaction and organisational commitment suggest that scholars have consistently connected employees' capacity to reconcile work and non-work responsibilities with their attachment to, satisfaction with, and contribution to their organisations. Similarly, the presence of employee performance, engagement, turnover intention, employee retention, and job performance demonstrates a strong human resource management and organisational performance orientation within the literature. Particularly noteworthy is work-family conflict (11 occurrences; TLS = 30), which possesses a comparatively high link strength relative to its frequency, suggesting that although it appears less frequently than several other keywords, it is strongly interconnected with the broader network. Collectively, these relationships indicate that the field has increasingly conceptualised work-life balance as an organisationally consequential phenomenon, in which difficulties or resources at the work-life interface may influence employee attitudes, well-being, retention, and performance.

Figure 4 further reveals the contextual and theoretical diversification of work-life balance research through keywords associated with changing work arrangements, employee well-being, and socio-demographic conditions. The co-occurrence of COVID-19 (13 occurrences; TLS = 26), remote work (13; TLS = 22), work from home (8; TLS = 16), and flexible work reflects the pandemic's substantial influence and the subsequent transformation of working arrangements in this research domain. These keywords suggest a shift towards examining work-life balance under increasingly permeable spatial and temporal boundaries, where greater flexibility may simultaneously provide autonomy and intensify interference between work and family roles. In parallel, keywords such as gender, women, well-being, psychological well-being, work stress, burnout, stress, social support, and emotional intelligence demonstrate growing recognition that work-life balance involves psychological and relational processes in addition to organisational outcomes.

The appearance of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (7 occurrences; TLS = 17) is theoretically significant because it indicates an emerging effort to explain work-life experiences through the accumulation, protection, and depletion of valued personal and contextual resources. Nevertheless, the network contains relatively limited explicit reference to terms such as dual-career couples, spouses, partners, or dyadic relationships. This absence is particularly revealing for the present study. Despite substantial research linking work-life balance to organisational performance, flexible work, gender, and well-being, the literature remains predominantly individual- and employee-centred. This pattern provides a compelling rationale for extending future scholarship towards a more relational and dyadic understanding of work-life balance, particularly by examining how the resources, demands, and experiences of one partner interact with those of the other within dual-career households.

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RQ5: What Patterns of International Research Collaboration Characterise Research on Work-Life Balance Among Dual-Career Couples, As Revealed Through Country-Level Co-Authorship Networks?

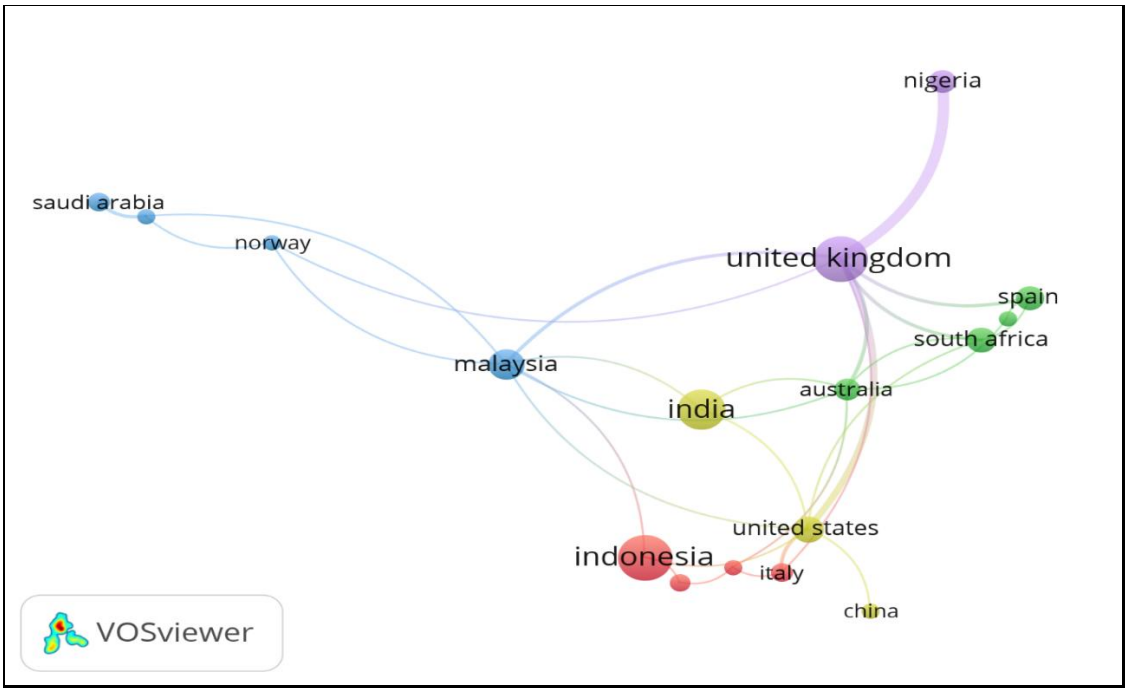

Figure 5: Network Visualisation Map of Co-Authorship by Country in Work-Life Balance Research

As illustrated in Figure 5, the country-level co-authorship network reveals a marked disparity between publication productivity, citation impact, and international collaborative strength in work-life balance research. Indonesia and the United Kingdom jointly recorded the highest publication output, with 40 documents each. However, their positions within the collaboration network differ substantially. The United Kingdom achieved 2,676 citations and the highest TLS (21), compared with Indonesia's 258 citations and a TLS of only 3, indicating that high productivity does not necessarily translate into stronger international connectivity or citation influence. A similar pattern emerges for India, which produced 31 documents but recorded 245 citations and a TLS of 3. In contrast, the United States generated only 13 documents but attained 476 citations and a TLS of 11, while Australia produced just nine documents yet accumulated 738 citations and a TLS of 7. These patterns suggest that the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia occupy relatively influential positions in the international knowledge network despite differences in publication volume. Their stronger collaborative profiles may facilitate greater knowledge exchange, access to complementary expertise, and wider international dissemination, potentially contributing to higher citation visibility. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that research leadership in this field should not be assessed solely through publication counts. Rather, citation impact and network connectivity provide complementary indicators of a country's intellectual influence and integration within the global research community.

The broader structure presented in Figure 5 further indicates that international collaboration remains uneven, with a relatively small group of countries functioning as collaborative hubs while others occupy more peripheral positions. Malaysia demonstrates a comparatively strong

profile with 18 documents, 363 citations, and a TLS of 8, while Nigeria records 10 documents, 295 citations, and a TLS of 7. This finding suggests substantial international connectivity relative to their publication volumes. South Africa (TLS = 5), Spain, Italy, and Pakistan (TLS = 4 each) exhibit moderate collaborative integration, whereas China (TLS = 1), Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, and Portugal (TLS = 2 each) display comparatively limited international linkages. Most notably, Poland recorded a TLS of zero despite producing five documents, indicating no international co-authorship connections within the network under the specified VOSviewer parameters.

Overall, the findings point to a core-periphery configuration in which the United Kingdom serves as the most prominent international collaboration hub, supported by countries such as the United States, Malaysia, Australia, and Nigeria, while several productive countries remain comparatively domestically oriented. This uneven structure matters for work-life balance research because experiences of balancing work and non-work responsibilities are embedded in culturally and institutionally specific conditions, including gender norms, employment practices, family structures, welfare systems, and organisational policies. Strengthening cross-country collaboration, particularly between highly connected and peripheral countries, could therefore enhance comparative scholarship, improve the cross-cultural applicability of existing theoretical frameworks, and contribute to a more globally representative understanding of work-life balance.

Conclusion

This study provides a bibliometric overview of the development of research on work-life balance among dual-career couples from 2017 to August 2026, focusing on publication growth, citation influence, geographical contributions, thematic patterns, and international research collaboration. Based on 234 Scopus-indexed publications, the findings demonstrate a generally expanding research landscape, though publication activity fluctuated over the study period. Research output increased from nine publications in 2017 to a peak of 58 publications in 2025, representing 24.79% of the total dataset. The lower output in 2026 should be interpreted cautiously because the data cover only publications indexed through August. Citation analysis further indicates that influential scholarship has concentrated on remote and flexible work, work-family boundaries, gender, employee well-being, and changing employment arrangements. The most highly cited publication accumulated 687 citations, demonstrating the substantial influence of research examining remote working and its consequences for work-life balance.

The geographical and network analyses reveal important differences between research productivity, citation influence, and international connectivity. Indonesia and the United Kingdom emerged as the most productive countries, with 40 publications each. At the same time, the United Kingdom demonstrated substantially greater citation impact and international collaboration, recording 2,676 citations and the highest TLS of 21. The United States and Australia also displayed relatively strong citation and collaborative performance despite producing fewer publications. These patterns indicate that publication volume alone does not fully capture scholarly influence, as international collaboration and citation visibility add dimensions to research performance. The uneven co-authorship network further suggests that international collaboration remains concentrated around several established research hubs, creating opportunities for stronger partnerships with countries occupying more peripheral positions.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis provides further insight into the field's intellectual structure. Work-life balance occupied the central position with 197 occurrences and a TLS of 260, while job satisfaction, organisational commitment, flexible work, employee performance, employee engagement, and work-family conflict represented prominent interconnected themes. The presence of COVID-19, remote work, work from home, gender, psychological well-being, work stress, burnout, and social support demonstrates that the field has expanded beyond conventional work-family concerns towards changing work arrangements and employee well-being. However, the relatively limited visibility of explicit terms relating to dual-career couples, spouses, partners, and dyadic relationships indicate that existing scholarship remains predominantly employee-centred. This finding identifies an important opportunity to advance the field by better considering partner interdependence and the crossover of work and family experiences within dual-career households.

The findings also carry practical implications for organisations and policymakers. The strong connections between work-life balance and organisational and well-being outcomes highlight the relevance of flexible working arrangements, supportive leadership, manageable workloads, boundary-respecting practices, and family-responsive policies. Nevertheless, several limitations require consideration. The analysis relied exclusively on Scopus and was restricted to English-language journal articles within Business, Management and Accounting, potentially excluding relevant interdisciplinary and non-English scholarship. Citation counts may also favour older publications, while the 2026 dataset remains incomplete. Future studies could integrate multiple databases, broaden disciplinary and geographical coverage, and undertake longitudinal thematic analyses. Greater emphasis on dyadic research designs, partner crossover processes, gender dynamics, and cross-national comparisons would further strengthen the field. Overall, this bibliometric analysis demonstrates increasing scholarly recognition of work-life balance while highlighting the need to position dual-career couples more explicitly as an interconnected unit of analysis. This approach supports a more relational, context-sensitive, and internationally representative understanding of work-life balance.

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