Original Research Article

Perceptions and Coping Strategies: A Study on Work-life Balance Among Male Civil Engineers in Nepal

Arbindra Shahi Khadgi[1], Sanjita Tamang[2]

[1] M.Phil. Scholar, School of Management, Kathmandu University, Nepal.
[2] BBA Student, Ace Institute of Management, Pokhara University, Nepal.

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Correspondence

Arbindra Shahi Khadgi,
M.Phil. Scholar, School of Management,
Kathmandu University, Nepal
Email: arbin.shahi11@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how male civil engineers in Nepal perceive work-life balance and identifies the coping strategies they employ to manage the demands of their profession.

Design/methodology/approach: This study utilized a qualitative research approach within the interpretivist paradigm, employing Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology to explore male civil engineers' lived experiences with work-life balance. Data were gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with ten experienced engineers in Kathmandu Valley, focusing on their professional and personal challenges. The analysis followed Benner's four-step process, and thematized using MAXQDA.

Findings: The study highlights that male civil engineers in Nepal achieve work-life balance through a multifaceted approach that encompasses effective management of professional and personal responsibilities and the development of a personal balance philosophy, while addressing challenges from site supervision and project deadlines. Essential coping strategies include utilizing family support, managing time efficiently, prioritizing tasks, mitigating stress, and engaging in task crafting, reinforcing the importance of a dynamic and proactive approach to balance.

Conclusions: This study highlights that achieving work-life balance is vital for male civil engineers in Nepal, emphasizing that effective time management and robust family support are essential coping strategies; it also highlights the need for organizations to adopt adaptive HR policies and promote job crafting to address the evolving challenges of engineering responsibilities.

Implications: This study highlights the necessity for adaptable theoretical frameworks that reflect the evolving, individualized approaches to work-life balance among male civil engineers. It advocates for organizations and policymakers to implement comprehensive strategies addressing on-site demands, project deadlines, and family support, in order to create flexible work environments and supportive policies that boost employee satisfaction and resilience.

JEL Classification: J24, J28, M54

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and demanding professional landscape, achieving a harmonious work-life balance has become a crucial concern for many individuals, particularly those in high-pressure professions. Civil engineering, a field characterized by complex project demands, tight deadlines, and significant responsibilities, presents unique challenges that can impact professionals' ability to maintain this balance. Male civil engineers, often facing the dual pressures of rigorous project management and personal life commitments, navigate these challenges with varying degrees of success. Understanding their perceptions and coping strategies provides valuable insights into the broader discourse on work-life balance within this demanding field.

In most of the developing countries, including Nepal, the construction industry plays an important role for the growth of economic sector. It plays a vital role and provides more contribution for the development of the country (Ali et al., 2019). Many crucial challenges are faced by the construction industry, such as shortage of skilled human resources, employee turnover and also the challenges related to the work-life balance can be seen among the employee of the construction industry (Tijani et al., 2022). In the current scenario of professional landscapes, the topic related to work-life balance has emerged as a critical aspect influencing the overall well-being and productivity of individuals (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022). The complexities related to the work environment and changing social norms have brought this topic to the attention of both academics and practitioners. Understanding the complex dynamics of work-life balance depends critically on perception and strategies for coping which includes assessment of work-life balance in terms employees own experiences, expectations, and the culture of the organizational they work for. As organizations strive to enhance employee satisfaction, reduce burnout, and optimize productivity, addressing work-life balance in the modern organization by recognizing and accommodating the diverse needs of their workforce becomes very important (Khoury, 2021).

Work life balance can be defined as a high level of engagement in both non-work and work life with the least amount of conflict between social roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2017). Work-life balance occurs when role satisfaction and role efficacy are consistent with personal priorities (Rothbard et al., 2021). Coping strategies are a range of behavioral, psychological, and organizational techniques people use to deal with the demands of their personal and professional lives. Recognizing the components and characteristics of these coping strategies is crucial to promote a positive workplace culture (McFadden et al., 2021).

In a global context, the challenges and perceptions related to work-life balance vary across developed and developing countries. In the context of Nepal, male civil engineers are facing unique challenges such as long working hours, project deadlines, site demands, complex project management lack of motivational factors and often find themselves at the intersection of professional expectations and personal commitments (Paudel et al., 2020). Also, there is a lack of strong policies for employee development makes work-life balance difficult which promotes worst circumstances for employees to multitask forcefully.

The field of civil engineering is not immune to the increasing concern over work-life balance (WLB) within the professional landscape (Tijani et al., 2022). Male civil engineers, in particular, are facing growing disconnection from their personal lives due to the high demands and societal expectations of their profession. The nature of civil engineering projects, characterized by long working hours, tight deadlines, and high-pressure environments, exacerbates stress and perceived imbalance, creating significant challenges in maintaining a healthy balance between professional and personal life (Ng et al., 2004). This imbalance affects the overall well-being of these professionals, impacting both their personal and professional spheres. To mitigate these challenges, it is crucial to employ diverse interventions, including workplace policies that support flexible work hours, remote work options, and mental health initiatives. By examining the coping strategies of male civil engineers, this study aims to identify effective techniques that can be shared and implemented within the industry to improve work-life balance. Understanding these strategies will not only enhance individual well-being but also contribute to a more sustainable and productive professional environment.

In the global context, the dynamics of work-life balance challenges in developing countries differ significantly from those in developed countries. While developed countries often have well-defined policies and support systems, developing countries frequently lack a clear vision and structured approach to maintaining work-life balance (Sánchez-Hernández, 2019). The concept of work-life balance has gained considerable attention, but a noticeable research gap persists, particularly concerning male civil engineers. Existing literature predominantly addresses general work-life balance or focuses on specific professions, neglecting the unique complexities within the engineering sector (Hickey & Cui, 2020). Male civil engineers encounter challenges such as burnout, high turnover intentions, and a lack of motivators. The significance of exploring work-life balance among male civil engineers is highlighted by the increasing recognition of its impact on job satisfaction, productivity, and mental health (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Previous research highlights that effective coping strategies and supportive organizational practices are essential for managing work-related stress and achieving a satisfying balance (Byron, 2005; Kossek et al., 2011). These issues are exacerbated by the absence of robust employee development policies, compelling employees to multitask and disrupting their work-life balance.

So, this study aims to highlight on how male Nepalese civil engineer perceived work-life balance and what are the coping strategies used by male civil engineer for achieving work-life balance and intends to contribute to the insightful knowledge and information for both individuals and organizations in the field of engineering or construction, providing insights that could inform the development of effective policies and support systems.

Literature Review

Work-Life Balance Perspectives and Strategies

The perspectives on work-life balance, emphasizing the struggles and difficulties among various professionals, have become a prominent subject of numerous studies (Mushfiqur, 2018). For instance, research on the work-life balance of working women has found that personal philosophy is key to their perceptions of work-life balance. Their coping strategies include support networks, time management, setting priorities, and task planning (Kibriya, 2021). Similarly, in exploring the perceptions of female medical doctors in Nigeria, time constraints, patriarchal tendencies, and task-pay disparities are identified as significant stressors and sources of work-family conflict. Support from extended family members is highly emphasized as a crucial coping strategy (Akanji, 2020). These studies highlight the multifaceted nature of work-life balance and the diverse coping mechanisms employed by different professionals. The global discussion about work-life balance highlights its complexity within the context of contemporary employment. Scholars define perceptions of work-life balance as an individual's subjective assessment of equilibrium between their professional and personal spheres. Influencing factors such as job demands, family responsibilities, and organizational culture further underscore the intricate nature of these perceptions (Hasan & Rehman, 2021). This complexity is mirrored in the varying definitions and approaches to achieving work-life balance across different professions and cultures.

A seminal study by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) emphasized achieving harmony between work and non-work aspects of life as the essence of work-life balance. This perception comprises both objective and subjective components. Objective elements involve the allocation of time and resources, while subjective aspects delve into an individual's feelings and satisfaction with this distribution (Punam, 2021). Perceptions of work-life balance are shaped by

the compatibility between work and family roles (Grzywacz, 2021). Companies implement diverse strategies, such as flexible hours and telecommuting, to promote work-life balance and provide organizational support (Kossek et al., 2021).

Coping Strategies for Work-Life Balance Across Professions

Balancing work and life are often likened to walking a tightrope, with individual methods and institutional support serving as critical balancing tools (Ren & Caudle, 2016). Coping mechanisms, defined by many scholars as adaptive tools, are essential for effectively managing the demands of professional and personal lives. These strategies, which include time management and social support, are crucial for addressing the challenges posed by the dynamic contemporary workplace (Martínez, 2021). Globally, companies recognize the importance of fostering work-life balance and have implemented diverse strategies, such as flexible work arrangements and supportive organizational cultures. The literature illustrates the contextual nature of coping mechanisms, with studies examining various cultural and occupational contexts. In healthcare, for instance, research with Taiwanese critical care unit nurses highlights the difficulties of balancing work and parenthood, emphasizing the need for coping mechanisms to help nurses adjust to new roles and strike a balance between work and family (Wu et al., 2022). In the academic sector, an investigation into the work-life balance of Pakistani academic women found issues such as lack of departmental support, extra responsibilities, and insufficient free time (Bashir, 2022). Female academics employed various coping mechanisms, such as maintaining composure and determination and avoiding taking work-related tasks home.

The diverse professional demands necessitate distinct coping mechanisms tailored to specific contexts. In engineering, finance, and other fields, individuals adopt strategies that align with their unique work environments and cultural settings. For example, in a study involving male civil engineers in the United States, flexible working hours and supportive workplace policies were found to significantly reduce work-family conflicts and enhance job satisfaction (Bettac, 2021). Similarly, in the financial sector, employees' use of remote work options and mental health initiatives have been shown to improve work-life balance and reduce burnout (Ajayi et al., 2024).

Work-Life Balance Among Male Civil Engineers in Nepal

Work-life balance has emerged as a significant concern in the professional landscape globally, and Nepal is no exception. The construction industry, particularly for male civil engineers, presents unique challenges that can disrupt the balance between professional and personal life. In Nepal, the construction industry is crucial for the nation's development, yet it is characterized by long working hours, tight deadlines, and high-pressure environments (Bista et al., 2024). These factors contribute to significant work-life balance issues for civil engineers. The societal expectations and the demanding nature of their profession often lead to stress and perceived imbalance, adversely affecting their personal lives (Gautam, 2024). A study by Liebrand and Udas (2017) found that 65% of civil engineers in Nepal reported difficulties in managing their professional and personal lives. The lack of flexible work arrangements and supportive organizational cultures further exacerbates these challenges. Similarly, Gautam (2024) noted that male civil engineers often face burnout due to the high demands of their job, leading to a negative impact on their mental and physical health.

Empirical studies in Nepal indicate that the work-life balance of male civil engineers is significantly influenced by organizational policies and cultural norms. According to a survey conducted by Hughes and Bozionelos (2021), 70% of respondents highlighted the absence of work-life balance policies as a primary concern. This finding highlights the need for organizational interventions to support employees in achieving a better balance between work and personal life. Another study by Paudel et al. (2020) revealed that male civil engineers in Nepal frequently experience high levels of stress due to the lack of family support and the societal expectation to prioritize work over family. This societal pressure often results in reduced family time and increased work-related stress. The study also found that engineers who had access to flexible working hours and remote work options reported higher job satisfaction and better work-life balance.

In Nepal, some progressive construction firms have started adopting these practices. For instance, Kalika construction company, Himalayan Builders & Engineers, and Sharma & Company, Lama construction company has introduced flexible working hours and mental health counseling services for its employees. According to a report by Shrestha et al. (2024), employees at these companies reported a 20% improvement in job satisfaction and a 15% reduction in stress levels after these initiatives were implemented. Additionally, personal coping strategies such as effective time management, setting priorities, and seeking social support have been found to be beneficial. A study by Persad (2020) showed that civil engineers who practiced time management and sought support from colleagues and family were better able to manage work-related stress and maintain a healthier work-life balance.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach within the interpretivist paradigm to deeply understand work-life balance from the experiences of male civil engineers (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell et al., 2009). By utilizing phenomenology, specifically Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology, the research explored participants' lived experiences, highlighting the social and dialogical aspects of their professional lives (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Vaidya & Acharya, 2023). The focus on Kathmandu Valley where major construction firms is based ensured the collection of relevant and accurate data. The study involved ten male civil engineers with over four years of experience, selected through purposive sampling to provide in-depth insights into their work-life balance challenges and strategies.

Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews using a set of open-ended questions, which allowed for flexibility and in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences regarding work-life balance. This approach facilitated direct engagement with participants, enabling detailed probing into their professional and personal challenges. Key questions focused on male civil engineers' perceptions of work-life balance and their coping strategies. Participants provided written consent ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and were briefed about recording and data privacy at the beginning of each interview. Data analysis adhered to Benner's (1994) four-step process: transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and identification of paradigmatic examples. Interviews were transcribed and reviewed to extract key concepts, with significant remarks coded and thematized using the free trial version of MAXQDA.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographics of ten male respondents holding the position of civil engineer working as site engineer and project managers provided explicit information on their perceptions and coping strategies related to work-life balance. The researcher gave each participant a pseudonym, ranging from P1 to P10, in order to maintain their identities. Similarly, all the male respondents had at least four years of working experience as a civil engineer.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Current Position	Years of Working experience
P1	Male	Civil Engineer	4
P2	Male	Civil Engineer (Site Engineer)	7
P3	Male	Civil Engineer	6
P4	Male	Civil Engineer	5
P5	Male	Civil Engineer	4.5
P6	Male	Civil Engineer (Site Engineer)	8
P7	Male	Civil Engineer	5
P8	Male	Civil Engineer (Project Manager)	8.5
P9	Male	Civil Engineer (Site Engineer)	6
P10	Male	Civil Engineer (Project Manager)	9

Themes and Sub-Themes

In this study, the transcripts from all ten participants were meticulously reviewed and analyzed multiple times before being coded through thematic analysis, utilizing key words and phrases, as illustrated in the figure below.
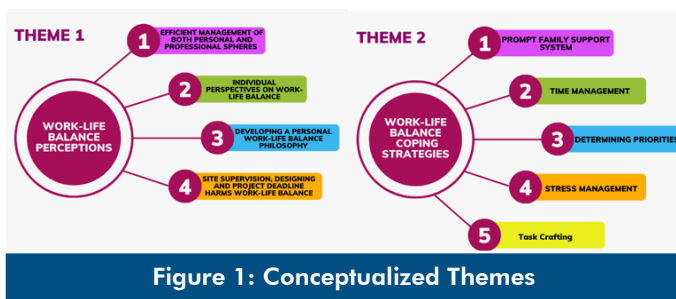

Figure 1: Conceptualized Themes

I. Work-Life Balance Perceptions among Male Civil Engineers

Work-life balance can be defined as the balance that individuals seek between their professional responsibilities and personal life which involves effective time and energy management to avoid work from dominating one's overall well-being, ensuring adequate attention to family, leisure, and personal over all development. The theme "work life balance" mainly emphasize the ability to manage work-related aspects and personal commitments in a way that helps to enhance the harmonious and satisfying life.

This theme contains four sub-themes: Efficient management of both personal and professional spheres, Individual perspectives on work-life balance, developing a personal work-life balance philosophy, and site supervision, designing and project deadline harms work-life balance.

a. Efficient Management of both Personal and Professional Spheres

This sub-theme mainly focuses on the idea that male civil engineers in Nepal perceive work-life balance as skillfully managing both of their professional and personal lives. It involves strategies such as leaving the office on time, prioritizing punctuality, and ensuring effective handling of both work and family responsibilities.

P # 9: *"It is extremely important to maintain work-life balance. I consistently leave the office on time, ensure punctuality during office hours, and manage both professional and family responsibilities efficiently."*

Another participant emphasized that there should be no dishonesty in any domain of life.

P # 4: *"Work-life balance, to me, means absolute honesty in both work and family life. There should be no compromise in fulfilling responsibilities on both aspects of my life."*

One of the participants shared his views as;

P# 5: *"Balancing work and personal life is very crucial. If my clients are satisfied with my work and if my family is happy and healthy, I consider it as successful balance between work and personal life."*

The participants emphasized the equal significance of both family and professional responsibilities, the need for time management, honesty, and an efficient work-life balance plan. The criterion for work-life balance not only includes personal satisfaction but it also includes the well-being of clients and family members, indicating a comprehensive perspective on achieving actual work-life balance.

b. Individual Perspectives on Work-Life Balance

Individual perspectives on work-life balance refers to the diverse and personal opinions that people have about affecting a balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. These perspectives are shaped by factors such as the nature of their career, job type, career stage, and personal choices, influencing how they perceive, prioritize, and navigate the challenges associated with balancing work and personal life.

P # 1: *"Choices are always associated with the cost. If a working civil engineers prioritize their career over family, there might be disruptions. Achieving success in both aspects of life simultaneously is challenging."*

P # 3: *"There's a cost linked to our profession that we must bear. Simultaneous success in both personal and professional domain is often unattainable."*

P # 5: *"Work-life balance can be defined as managing professional responsibilities during office hours and prioritizing family when at home. Success varies, and some days are more challenging than others."*

The narratives of the participants hold different views on work-life balance, recognizing the compromises and challenges associated with their professional and personal responsibilities. Similarly, all the

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participants highlighted the acknowledgment of the cost linked to professional choices, a realistic understanding of the challenges in achieving simultaneous success, and the dynamic nature of balance that requires adaptability.

c. Developing a Personal Work-Life Balance Philosophy

Developing a personal work-life balance involves the intentional and ongoing process of identifying, adopting, and refining individualized principles, values, and skills that guide an individual in effectively managing and harmonizing the demands of both professional and personal aspects of life. Participants emphasized the idea that achieving balance is a personal struggle that involves developing a set of skills or a philosophy. Similarly, they also expressed the belief that these skills and philosophies evolve with experience, support, and commitment over time.

P # 1: *"Work-life balance involves developing skills like delegating tasks, self-reflection, and networking."*

P # 4: *"It's a personal struggle. Acquiring skills to handle family and work without neglecting either is crucial for maintaining balance."*

P # 8: *"Work-life balance is a gradual process which comes with experience, commitment over time and support."*

The above statement highlighted on the dynamic and evolving process involved in attaining and sustaining balance, the importance of personalized approaches, skill development, and the gradual evolution of balance over time. All the engineers highlighted a forward-thinking mindset, perceiving their challenges as a distinctive integration process rooted in experience and continuous commitment.

d. Site Supervision, Designing and Project Deadline Harms Work-Life Balance

This sub-theme highlighted the difficulties and problems faced by civil engineers when attempting to balance their professional duties with their personal lives especially those related to on-site supervision, design responsibilities, and the demands of project deadlines. During the pressures of supervising construction sites, handling complex design works, and meeting project deadlines all the civil engineers pointed out the struggle of maintaining work-life balance. They confessed that the difficulties associated with these responsibilities are impacting their ability to allocate time and attention to personal matters.

P # 2: *"Site supervision is always considered as a challenge tasks; site supervision is not only about being physically present in the site but it also involves unexpected issues arises, such as material delays, unexpected weather changes affecting construction works and complex team management. It's a very difficult task to keep everything on track, and when you add designing and close project deadlines to mix it up, it creates more pressure in the work."*

P # 6: *"Designing is not just about drawing plans; it's about foreseeing potential issues, ensuring structural integrity, and adapting to sudden changes. Aligning the design with the project deadline can be considered as the real challenge. The constant pressure to turn out something extraordinary under pressure to meet deadlines has a negative impact on work-life balance."*

P # 9: *"Project deadlines are like constant battle between delivering quality work and meeting the client's expectations within the allocated timeframe. It's not just about the technical aspects but also about managing stress and maintaining focus when you know the deadline is near."*

The above-mentioned phrases highlight the unpredictability of problems encountered on the job site, the importance of detailed designing, and the constant pressure of approaching project deadlines. Similarly, participants pointed out the need for a harmonious balance that considers the dynamic interplay between these factors, promoting strategic planning, adaptive resilience, and effective time management to achieve balance. Similarly, the majority of engineers concentrated on adapting dynamically to the changing demands of their profession in order to build a dynamic adaptability in managing these challenges.

II. Work Life Balance Coping Strategies

Coping strategies for work-life balance are deliberate and flexible methods for individuals to handle the stresses and difficulties that come with incorporating their personal and work lives. It aims to mitigate stress, prevent exhaustion, and promotes well-being so that people can successfully manage the demands of their personal and professional lives. This theme contains five sub-themes: Prompt family support system, Time management, determining priorities, Stress management and Task Crafting.

a. Prompt Family Support System

This sub-theme mainly focuses on the significance of timely and responsive assistance from family members, particularly spouses and extended family. In this context support consists emotional, practical, and childcare aspects.

P # 6: *"I remember a time when I had to stay late at the construction site unexpectedly due to urgent and unavoidable issues. My wife promptly took care of our children's needs without any hesitation. Support from my spouse has made it easier for me to focus on my work knowing that everything at home was being handled efficiently."*

P # 8: *"My family's immediate response to my work demands has been incredible. There were instances where I had to travel for project assessments on short notice. My wife and parents ensured that family routines were maintained, and my absence didn't disrupt our household functioning."*

P # 10: *"During a crucial project deadline, my extended family played a significant role. My parents and in-laws collaborated to provide support in managing household responsibilities. Their prompt assistance allowed me to concentrate on delivering quality work within the tight timeframe."*

The above-mentioned phrases underscore the significance of a supportive family system, wherein family members demonstrate timely actions and understanding. This support enables male civil engineers to fulfill their professional commitments without experiencing undue stress about home-related responsibilities. On the other hand, Participants also stated that this support system establishes a sense of reliability and allows them to focus on their work, contributing positively to their overall well-being.

b. Time Management

Time Management sub-theme focuses on employing strategies to effectively utilize time, balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments. All the participants focused on prioritizing tasks, making efficient decisions, and optimizing the allocation of time to enhance work-life balance.

P # 1: *"In our civil engineering field, project timelines are very crucial. I've learned to manage my time efficiently by setting clear priorities. For example, during peak project phases, I dedicate specific hours to work-related tasks and ensure I have quality time with my family during less demanding periods."*

P # 4: *"As a civil engineer, unexpected challenges are common. Time management for me involves quick decision-making. I assess the urgency of tasks and allocate time accordingly. This approach allows me to maintain a balance between meeting project deadlines and spending time at home."*

P # 7: *"Time is a valuable resource in our profession. I've developed a habit of planning my week in advance, allocating time blocks for different aspects of my life. This structured approach helps me fulfill both work and family commitments without feeling overwhelmed."*

The above statement highlights time management can be considered as a crucial coping strategy which enables male civil engineers to navigate the dynamic nature of their profession. Participants exhibited a conscious effort to allocate time effectively, ensuring that neither work nor personal life overshadows the other. In the same way, the "Strategic Time Allocation Model" suggests that, given the dynamic nature of engineering projects, mindful and strategic time management is a fundamental component of work-life balance.

c. Determining Priorities

It mainly deals about how male civil engineers in Nepal navigate the challenges of work-life balance by making conscious choices and prioritizing their commitments. In a similar way, this sub-theme explores how male civil engineers decide which aspects of their personal and professional lives are more important.

P # 5: *"Setting priorities became increasingly important to me as my career developed. I used to put my job first, but now that I have a family, my kids come first. The key to managing work and family is determining what is most important at any given time."*

P # 7: *"I think the key to work-life balance is establishing clear specific goals. My kid's demands are evolving as they grow. I put their well-being first while ensuring that my work responsibilities are fulfilled."*

The above statement highlights a dynamic process where individuals continuously evaluate and adjust their priorities based on career progression, family needs, and personal development. This intentional decision-making contributes to a balanced and fulfilling life for male civil engineers.

d. Stress Management

This sub-theme focuses on coping with the challenges of work-life balance by addressing stressors arising from professional and personal demands. Participants shared the strategies employed to mitigate stress and maintain overall well-being.

P # 5, 6, 9: *"Stress is unavoidable in our field, and managing it is crucial. I practice meditation regularly, incorporating yoga into my daily routine and, listening to calming and peaceful music during breaks which helps clear my mind, reduces work-related stress, and allows me to approach challenges with a calmer perspective."*

P # 10: *"Balancing the demands of civil engineering and personal life can be stressful. To manage, I focus on realistic goal-setting and maintaining open communication with colleagues and family. Stress, to me, is a signal to reassess and adjust priorities."*

P # 2: *"In our field, project deadlines and technical challenges often lead to stress. I cope by incorporating mindfulness practices into my routine, taking short breaks to reset during demanding projects. Outside of work, I find comfort in my hobbies, which include hiking and spending time with family."*

Male civil engineers actively use a variety of stress-reduction techniques, including realistic goal-setting, mindfulness, and upholding a strong support network, as well as holistic approaches like yoga, meditation, and music. In addition, these tactics support a better work-life balance and highlights how crucial is proactive stress management in order to overcome professional challenges. Moreover, the "Holistic Stress Resilience Model" can be proposed, highlighting various techniques that male civil engineers employ to cope with stress. According to this model, overall stress adaptability is influenced by a combination of personal (mindfulness, hobbies) and professional (goal-setting, communication) strategies.

e. Task Crafting

The sub-theme "Task Crafting" explores into the ways in which men who work as civil engineers purposefully customize and modify their job duties in order to improve their work-life balance. In order to better align with personal and professional priorities, it involves implementing strategic modifications to the scope and nature of tasks.

P # 1: *"The workload for a civil engineer can be too much. I negotiate with project managers to focus on tasks that align with my strengths This increases my job satisfaction and allows greater efficiency in time management."*

P # 4, 6, 7: *"I usually seek projects that allow for flexible work hours, enabling me to attend to family commitments."*

P # 8: *"Task crafting for me involves optimizing my daily schedule. I negotiate with team members to redistribute workload, allowing me to have concentrated work hours and dedicated family time. It's about making small adjustments that contribute to a more balanced life."*

Among male civil engineers, task crafting-which involves prioritization, negotiation, and tactical changes to job responsibilities emerges as a proactive strategy. Participants emphasized the importance of aligning tasks with personal strengths, seeking flexibility, and optimizing schedules to enhance overall work-life balance. Hence, participants recognized task crafting as an ongoing process that evolves with changing priorities, contributing to a sustainable work-life balance.

Discussions

This study, grounded in interpretivist philosophy and utilizing a phenomenological research design, explores the perceptions and coping strategies related to work-life balance among male civil engineers in Nepal. The thematic analysis revealed four sub-themes under "Work-Life Balance Perceptions" and five sub-themes under "Work-Life Balance Coping Strategies."

Male civil engineers in Nepal emphasize the importance of efficient management of both personal and professional responsibilities. Prioritizing family, effective time management, and an integrated approach to balancing work and personal commitments are key themes. This holistic perspective is supported by previous research emphasizing the multifaceted nature of work-life balance (Riley, 2020; Matz-Costa et al., 2019). Participants stressed the importance of leaving the office on time, punctuality, and effective handling of responsibilities, aligning with studies on holistic approaches to work-life balance (Sheppard, 2016; Oladejo, 2022).

Participants highlighted the challenges of simultaneously achieving success in personal and professional aspects. The inherent costs associated with their profession, such as long hours and high stress, were acknowledged. This finding aligns with research on the trade-offs and difficulties in balancing work and personal life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Additionally, the evolving nature of developing a personal work-life balance philosophy was

emphasized, underscoring the individualized and dynamic process of achieving balance (Fisher, 2001; Ugwu et al., 2016). Developing a personal work-life balance philosophy is an active and evolving process involving skill acquisition, self-reflection, and ongoing commitment. Participants' emphasis on the gradual development aligns with literature suggesting that achieving work-life balance is a dynamic and continuous process (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022; Doherty et al., 2006).

Site supervision, designing, and project deadlines emerged as significant stressors impacting work-life balance. The dynamic and unpredictable nature of on-site responsibilities, the strategic role of detailed designing, and the constant pressure associated with project deadlines were highlighted. These findings resonate with studies emphasizing the demanding nature of engineering professions and the need for adaptive resilience (Woods, 2015; Madni et al., 2001). A prompt family support system plays a crucial role in helping male civil engineers manage work-life balance. Emotional, practical, and childcare support from family members were highlighted as significant factors. This finding aligns with studies demonstrating the positive impact of family support on work-life balance (Frone et al., 1997; Thompson & Prottas, 2006).

Effective time management emerged as a critical coping strategy. Participants emphasized prioritizing tasks, making efficient decisions, and optimizing time allocation, which aligns with research suggesting the importance of strategic time management in work-life balance (Fisher, 2001; Calonia et al., 2023). Determining priorities involves intentional choices and continuous evaluation of professional and personal commitments. This dynamic decision-making process is essential for achieving work-life balance, as supported by studies emphasizing the need for conscious decision-making (Clark, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Coping with stress is crucial for maintaining work-life balance. Participants employed various strategies such as meditation, yoga, mindfulness, and maintaining open communication. These stress management techniques align with research emphasizing the importance of proactive stress reduction for overall well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Sonnentag, 2015). Task crafting allows male civil engineers to customize their job duties to better align with personal and professional priorities. This proactive strategy is supported by literature highlighting the positive impact of job crafting on work-life balance (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Conclusions and Implications

This study provides an in-depth analysis of male civil engineers' perspectives on work-life balance and coping mechanisms in the context of Nepal. It postulates comprehensive insights into the dynamic and evolving concepts influencing individual perspectives taking professional development and personal preferences, into consideration. The study highlights the need for an intersectional understanding of work-life balance dynamics by highlighting the interconnectedness of various elements, such as family dynamics, project deadlines, on-site responsibilities, and cultural influences. The findings suggest that organizations should implement HR policies supportive to balancing their work life and fostering a crafting culture to decrease burnout and increase motivation. Organizations can enhance work-life balance by encouraging job crafting through workshops, training, and enabling female employees to tailor their schedules to personal preferences.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of the work-life balance perceptions and coping strategies among male civil engineers in Nepal. The study sheds light on the evolving philosophies related to work-life balance among male civil engineers. It emphasizes that work-life balance is far from a universally applicable concept but rather involves dynamic, personalized approaches influenced by career stages, personal

decisions, and ongoing experiences. This highlights the necessity for a more flexible theoretical framework that acknowledges the individual's changing priorities and strategies over time. Additionally, the study underscores the need of adopting an intersectional point of view to understand the concept of work-life balance. It highlights the interconnected nature of factors such as professional responsibilities, family dynamics, and cultural influences, urging researchers to consider these intersections for a more holistic comprehension of work-life balance dynamics. This recognition reinforces the need for theoretical frameworks that go beyond simplistic models and delve into the complex interplay of various aspects influencing individuals' perceptions of and approaches to work-life balance.

Organizations can draw practical strategies from this study to enhance support for male civil engineers. For promoting employee satisfaction and well-being, recognizing and addressing challenges related to on-site responsibilities and project deadlines, offering flexible work arrangements, acknowledging the importance of family support, and fostering a workplace culture that values adaptability is very crucial. On the other hand, policymakers can enhance the study's practical insights to draft a policy related to a sustainable work-life balance for male civil engineers. Developing interventions to address specific challenges linked to project deadlines and on-site responsibilities, alongside advocating for family-friendly policies within the engineering sector, can contribute to cultivating a healthier and more resilient workforce. The practical implications offer actionable tasks for organizations and policymakers to create environments that prioritize the well-being of male civil engineers in Nepal.

Limitations and Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the work-life balance perceptions and coping strategies of male civil engineers in Nepal, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research focuses exclusively on male civil engineers, thus omitting the perspectives of female engineers and potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to the entire engineering workforce. Secondly, a notable limitation of this study is the geographical restriction in participant selection, as it exclusively focuses on individuals within the Kathmandu Valley. This narrow scope may limit the diversity of perspectives within Nepal, overlooking potential regional variations in work-life dynamics among male civil engineers. Consequently, the findings might not fully represent the experiences of engineers working in other regions, impacting the generalizability of the study's insights to the broader context of Nepal. Future research on work-life balance among male civil engineers in Nepal could involve longitudinal studies for insights into evolving perceptions and coping strategies.

Similarly, future scholar could focus on working male and female working professions, including law, engineering, and scientists. Additionally, exploring cultural variations, assessing intervention effectiveness, adopting an intersectional approach would contribute to a comprehensive understanding that would direct towards targeted strategies for enhanced well-being. Specifically, this study also provides recommendations for enriching a supportive work environment and influencing policies aimed at improving the sustainable work-life balance of male civil engineers in Nepal.

Conflict of interest

Authors declared having no conflict of interests associated with this study.

Authors ORCID Information

Arbindra Khadgi Shahi iD**:** *https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7810-1098*
Sanjita Tamang iD**:** *https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6109-3689*

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