

ISSN (Print): 1060-6076
ISSN (Online): Applied

The Journal of African Development
2026; Vol 7: Issue 1
https://www.afea-jad.com/

Intervening Role of Affective Commitment Between Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention: A Study of Nurses in Jammu and Kashmir

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Cite This Paper as: Syed Murtaza Kamal Bukhari, Nida Feroz Andrabi, Prof. Riyaz Ahmad Rainayee (2026) Intervening Role of Affective Commitment Between Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention: A Study of Nurses in Jammu and Kashmir..The Journal of African Development 1, Vol.7, No.1, 1277-1289

KEYWORDS

Affective Commitment; Employee Retention; Health Sector; Mediation Analysis; Work Life Balance.

ABSTRACT

Background: In the modern healthcare sector, nurses often face immense work pressures and unpredictable schedules that disrupt their work-life balance, leading to emotional fatigue, low commitment, and high attrition. Given their critical role in patient care, retaining nurses is essential. This study investigates how work-life balance influences nurses' retention with an emphasis on the mediating role of affective commitment. Methodology: The study employs a cross-sectional and quantitative approach. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires from nurses in healthcare institutions across J&K, India. Out of the 261 questionnaires that were distributed, 211 valid responses were received and subsequently used for analysis. The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in two steps. In step 1, the reliability and validity of the constructs were evaluated, and in step 2, the hypothesizedrelationships amongthe variables – work life balance, affective commitment, and employee retention – were assessed. Results: Findings reveal that work-life balance positively and significantly impacts affective commitment as well as employee retention. Moreover, affective commitment significantly impacts employee retention, besides mediating the connection between work-life balance and employee retention. The results underscore the significance of emotional attachment in fostering retention. Conclusion: Work -life balance enhances nurse retention both directly and indirectly via affective commitment. To foster affective commitment and prevent nurse attrition, healthcare administrators must design policies that promote work-life balance. This study adds to the existingliterature by confirming the mediating function of affective commitment in the work-life balance and employee retention connection within the healthcare context..

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business era, managing job and life-related responsibilities is one of the major issues encountered by employees. An imbalance in job and life roles is a major reason for employees, especially female workers, to leave their jobs (Kakar et al., 2021). Conversely, an efficient work-life balance (WLB) develops psychological wellbeing among workers (John et al., 2020), which results in several favourable outcomes like satisfaction, commitment, and retention in addition to increased productivity (Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Oyewobi et al., 2022; Sindhuja & Subramanian, 2020). For

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female employees, work as well as family holds paramount importance. They often prioritize roles that allow for flexibility and support their work-life balance, which, conversely, influences their intention to remainwith an organization (Rajagopal et al., 2024)...

The WLB conflict can arise due to extended working schedules, decreased social activities and other demands (Gutek et al., 1991; Hsu et al., 2019), which ultimately result in emotional exhaustion, lower satisfaction and weaker commitment (Adams et al., 1996). A few sectors where an imbalance in work and life roles can cause low employee satisfaction include banking, retail, and healthcare. In the health sector, this imbalance is especially evident among nurses (Van Zyl -Cillié et al., 2024), who often face extended shifts, emotionally demanding tasks, and unpredictable schedules. Nurses represent one of the critical segments of professionals involvedin patient care, and the image of a healthcare institute depends largely on the efficiency of these nurses. They face intense mental and physical demands due to staff shortages, extended working schedules, and holiday forfeiture (Ejebu et al., 2021; Garrett & McDaniel, 2001). Support from hospital administration for balancing work and personal life can foster affective commitment among nurses, enhancing retention. The importance of nurses cannot be overstated since they are an important asset of any healthcare institution and an initial point of contact for patients seeking medical assistance and support (Zarei, 2016). Their commitment at the workplace is, therefore, vital to keep them engaged in their job roles.

A relevant theoretical background for comprehending the workplace relationships among nurses in healthcare institutions is Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET suggests that workplace relationships are fostered on reciprocal exchanges, where positive actionsby oneparty aremet with positive responses by theother (Whitman, 2021). This implies that when hospitals support nurses by providing flexible working schedules or assistance with family responsibilities, nurses perceive these initiatives as valuable benefits and feel acknowledged and respected by their employers. This cultivates a feeling of obligation and loyalty, strengthening affective commitment and eventually leading to enhanced employee retention. Building on this theoretical perspective and the challenges highlighted above, this study aims to empirically assess how work-lifebalanceinfluences affective commitment andemployeeretention amongnursesin the Jammu and Kashmirhealth sector, while also examining the mediating role of affective commitment in this relationship.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to "an employee's efforts toward performing both the work and life roles well, such that the roles of one domain do not have any harmful effect on the other" (Parkes & Langford, 2008). As a n important characteristic of the contemporary workplace, WLB has been commonly linked to favorable employee outcomes, including employee retention (ER) (Chaudhuri et al., 2020; Shockley et al., 2017).

Empirical studies across regions and sectors have frequently shown that WLB contributes significantly to retention. For instance, Hashim et al. (2016) found a strong correlation between WLB and ER in Malaysia, while Tirta and Enrika (2020) discovered similar results among Indonesian millennials, particularly when combinedwith recognition andreward. Among Indian banks, Sindhuja and Subramanian (2020) identified WLB as an important predictor of retention. More recently, Zainal et al. (2022) highlighted the role of WLB beyond work environment factors, and Bahar et al. (2022) discovered its influence both directly and indirectly via job satisfaction among Gen Y workers. An investigation among nurses further supported this linkage, associating WLB with reduced turnover intention (Gautam et al., 2025).

Considering the established link between work-life balance and employee retention as highlighted above, the present study hypothesises that:

H1: Work-life balance significantly impacts employee retention

Work-Life Balance and Affective Commitment

Meyer & Allen (1991) describe 'affective commitment' as "the employee's emotional relationship to, identification with, and involvement in an organization." It occurs when an employee is content and feels affection toward the firm (Dalkrani & Dimitriadis, 2018). Usadolo et al. (2022) assert that the degree to which employees' motives are fulfilled by an organization shapes their levels of affective commitment. Studies have frequently highlighted a considerable link between WLB and affective commitment (AC) (Kibozi & Michael, 2018; Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). When workers are allowed to maintain an equilibrium between professional and personal duties, theygenerate loyalty towards the organization, and their affective commitment increases. Studies across sectors, includingbanking(Kabir & Rahman, 2019), manufacturing(Udin, 2023), and healthcare (Shabir & Gani, 2020) demonstrate that effective WLB fosters employee loyalty and strengthens affective commitment. Similarly, Olii et al. (2024) discovered that WLB and job satisfaction significantly impact commitment, while Al-Hawary et al. (2023) observed that WLB predicts both affective and normative commitment in a Turkish food company.

Grounded in the above findings, this study hypothesises that:

H2: Work-life balance (WLB) significantly impacts affective commitment

Affective Commitment and Employee Retention

Employee retention denotes an organization's voluntary initiative to foster an atmosphere that retains employees over a prolonged period. As per Kyndt et al. (2009), "employee retention involves a set of workplace norms and practices aimed at enhancing the engagement of employees." An employee's commitment is reflected by his intention to remain with the company (Bulut & Kulha, 2010). Studies have reported a robust correlation between commitment and the retention of employees**.** For example, the study by Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) revealed a significant association between organizational commitment, perceived organisational support and employee retention. Among the three organizational commitment factors, affective, normative, and continuance, affective commitment has been reported by many as an important predictor of employee retention. In the Brazilian IT company, Ramalho et al. (2018) found that affective commitment (AC), along with normative commitment significantly predicts employees' turnover intention. Similarly, Wickramasinghe and Perera (2022) found AC positively and significantly impacting employee retention as well as mediating the nexus between overall productivity maintenance and staff retention. In the Ghanaian context, Gyensare et al. (2016) discovered a strong inverse connection between AC and employees' quitting intention, implying that affective commitment cultivates trust and readiness among workers to follow their employers' vision and decreases employees' intention to leave. In a study among bank employees in Nepal, Yukongdi and Shrestha (2020) concluded that AC, besides job satisfaction, inversely impacts employees' intention to leave. Among Gen. Z in Vietnam, Tran et al. (2025) found affective commitment to be one of the significant factors impacting employees' turnover intention.

Given the above literature, this study hypothesises that:

H3: Affective commitment significantly impacts employee retention

Affective Commitment as a Mediator between Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention

Studies indicate that affective commitment serves as a significant mediator among several variables. Sharma and Dhar (2016), for instance, discovered that affective commitment strongly mediates the connection between burnout, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, and employee performance. Similarly, Alkhateri et al. (2018) found a significant mediating impact of affective commitment between perceived supervisory support and employees' intention to quit. Anita et al. (2020) discovered a critical role of affective commitment between work-life balance and job performance in an investigation involving female employees. Wickramasinghe and Perera (2022) discovered a considerable bearing of affective commitment on the connection between total productive maintenanceand employee retention. Yunita et al. (2023) discovered that affective commitment serves as a bridge between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and career growth among female manufacturing workers in Indonesia. Yadav et al. (2024) found affective commitment mediating the relationship between high performance work systems and learning orientation. Wang & Yang (2025) found affective commitment alongwith psychological brand ownership to mediate the connection between Value co-creationpractices and consumers' brand loyalty.

From the stated literature, thus, it becomes evident that affective commitment plays a pivotal role among various variables. Moreover, prior studies have shown that work-life balance (WLB) substantially influences affective commitment, and affective commitment significantly influences employee retention, implying that affective commitment (AC) may mediate the nexus between work-life balance (WLB) and employee retention (ER). Thus, the study hypothesises that:

H4: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between work life balance and employee retention

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Instruments Used

Data were obtained using self-administered questionnaires consisting of four sections – demographics, work-life balance, affective commitment, andemployeeretention. The Parkes and Langford (2008) scale was used to assess work-life balance, affective commitment was assessed using statements from Lee et al. (2001), and employee retention was assessed using statements from Kyndt et al. (2009) (Table 1). The study utilised a 5 -point Likert scale, with values from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1: Questionnaire Items

Constructs	*Item codes*	*Items*
Work Life Balance (WLB)	**wlb1**	My institution assists me in maintaining a good balance between job and personal responsibilities.
	wlb2	I can carry out my family duties while still doing what is required from me at work
	wlb3	I have a social life outside of work
	wlb4	I can stay involved in non-work interests and activities
Affective Commitment (AC)	**ac1**	This institution has a great deal of personal meaning for me
	ac2	I feel this institution's issues as my own
	ac3	I don't feel a strong sense of belonging to my institution (R)
	ac4	I don't feel emotionally connected to my institution (R)
	ac5	I don't feel like a family member at my institution (R)
Employee Retention (ER)	**er1**	I feel satisfied with the work I do at my institution
	er2	I perceive a future for myself within this institution
	er3	I love working for this institution
	er4	The work I am doing is important to me
	er5	If I want to do a different job, I would first look at the possibilities within this institution

Pre-testing and Pilot Study

To ensure the comprehensibility of questionnaire items, pre-testing was conducted on a sample size of 30 using the 'debriefing' technique, and the participants were asked about any difficulty they faced while responding to questionnaire statements. Following the feedback, the wordings of the statements were changed wherever necessary. After pre-testing, a pilot study was conducted on a sample size of 50 to assess reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS. All items exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.6 (Field, 2019), so no items were dropped.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study follows a cross-sectional and empirical approach. The participants comprised nurses of several health care institutionsof Jammu and Kashmir, India. Data were gatheredusingself-administered questionnaires servedto respondents both offline (43%) and online (57%), through convenience sampling. The questionnaire comprised items measuring work-life balance, affective commitment, and employee retention (see Table 1). A total of 261 nurses participated in the survey, out of which 211 returned validly filled questionnaires, depicting a response rate of 80.8%.

Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents includes age, length of service, and education. Out of the 211 valid responses, respondents belonging to the age category of 28-37 accounted for the highest number of 93 (44.07%). Education-wise, graduates represented the largest number with 127 respondents (60.18%). Regarding length of service, the highest number of respondents, i.e., 77 (36.49%) had over 15 years of service (Table 2).

Table: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics	Class	Frequency	Percentage
Education	Graduation	127	60.18
	Post-graduation & above	84	39.82
	Total	**211**	**100**
Age (in yrs.)	18-27	53	25.12
	28-37	93	44.07
	38-47	37	17.54
	Above 47	28	13.27
	Total	**211**	**100**
Length of service (in yrs.)	1-5	32	15.16
	6-10	47	22.27
	11-15	55	26.08
	Above 15	77	36.49
	Total	211	**100%**

Common Method Variance

Since the data was gathered via self-administered questionnaires, there was the probability of common method bias (CMB) (a phenomenon wherein respondents demonstrate similar responses due to the same data collection method for both dependent and independent variables). To check CMB, the Herman Single factor approach was applied, and the results yielded a total variance of 31.063% attributed to one factor, which was below the 50 per cent threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This depicts that CMB is not a critical concern in the present analysis.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This study analysed structural equation modeling (SEM) in two phases using SmartPLS. In first phase, the measurement model was assessed, and in the second phase, the structural model was evaluated.

Measurement Model Assessment

The assessment of the measurement model was done to determine the connection between the indicators and the constructs and to establish the consistency and accuracy of the constructs using the algorithm procedure in SmartPLS. The results revealed Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (C.R.) to surpass the threshold of 0.7 (Malhotra & Dash, 2015), establishing the reliability of the variables. Moreover, the scores of AVEs exceeded 0.5, with C.R. values exceeding AVEs (Table 3). This confirms the convergent validity of the variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was examined. The results revealed no discriminant validity concerns as all the correlation scores remained below the threshold of 0.90 (Table 4) as proposed by Kline (2023).

Table 3: Item Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, CR and AVE values

Construct	Item loadings		Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
AC	ac1	0.753	0.826	0.878	0.590
	ac2	0.787			
	ac3	0.767			
	ac4	0.801			
	ac5	0.731			
ER	er1	0.724	0.836	0.880	0.550
	er2	0.713			
	er3	0.774			
	er4	0.732			
	er5	0.757			
WLB	wlb1	0.770	0.780	0.858	0.602
	wlb2	0.777			
	wlb3	0.783			
	wlb4	0.775			

Source: SmartPLS

AC = affective commitment, ER = employee retention, and WLB = work life balance

Table 4: HTMT Ratio

	AC	ER	WLB
AC			
ER	0.696		
WLB	0.558	0.726	

Source: SPSS

Structural Model Assessment

To evaluate the structural model, the study employed Hair et al. (2014) guidelines, wherein first the collinearity assessment was conducted, followed by the assessment of path coefficients (hypotheses testing), explanatory power of the model (R^2), effect size (f^2), and the predictive relevance of the model (Q^2).

The collinearity evaluation indicated no issues, as the VIF (variance inflation factor) scores were less than the threshold value of 5 as suggested by Hair et al. (2014) (see Table 5).

Table 5: VIF scores

Items	VIF Values
ac1	1.503
ac2	1.627
ac3	1.610
ac4	1.530
ac5	1.660
er1	1.525
er2	1.503
er3	1.531
er4	1.527
er5	1.515
wlb1	1.781
wlb2	1.680
wlb3	1.943
wlb4	1.865

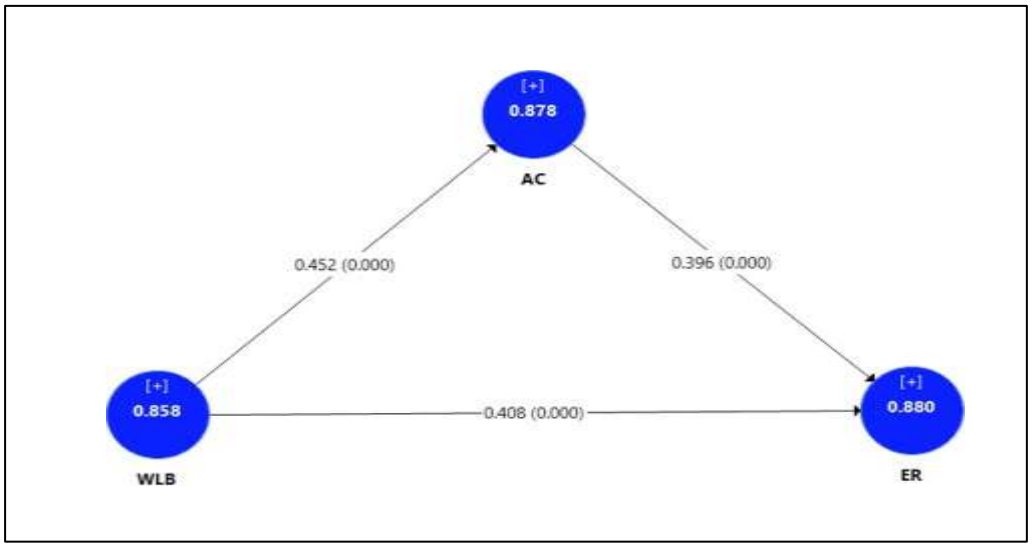
Source: SmartPLS

After assessing the collinearity, path coefficients were examined using the bootstrap procedure in SmartPLS. The results demonstrated a favorable and significant correlation between work-life balance and employee retention, work-life balance and affective commitment, as well as between affective commitment and employee retention with β coefficients of 0.408, 0.452, and 0.396, respectively (Table 6, Figure 1).

Table 6: Assessment of Path Coefficients

Hypotheses/Paths	β	SD	T Statistics	CI (Bias Corrected 95%)		p Values
				LL	UL	
H1: WLB -> ER	0.408	0.050	8.092	0.310	0.506	0.000
H2: WLB -> AC	0.452	0.056	8.111	0.342	0.562	0.000
H3: AC -> ER	0.396	0.053	7.494	0.292	0.500	0.000

Source: SmartPLS, CI = Confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit, and UL = Upper Limit



Source: SmartPLS

Figure 1:

Thus, the hypotheses H1 (Work life balance significantly impacts employee retention), H2 (Work life balance significantly impacts affective commitment), and H3 (affective commitment significantly impacts employee retention) stand accepted. The results were consistent with those of Shockley et al. (2017), Hashim et al. (2016), and Tirta & Enrika (2020). After the assessment of collinearity and path coefficients, the explanatory/predictive power of the model (R^2) was evaluatedand the result yielded values of 0.211 and 0.447 respectively, implying that work life balance (WLB) explains 21.1% of variance in affective commitment (AC), while WLB and AC together explain 44.7% of variance in employee retention (ER) reflecting a moderate explanatory power of the model (Hair et al., 2014). The f^2 (effect size) assessment revealed values of 0.239 and 0.257, respectively, implying that the omission of WLB or AC from the model would have a significant impact of 23.9% and 25.7% on the R^2 value of employee retention. The assessment of the model's predictive relevance (Q^2) yielded values greater than 0 (0.231 and 0.332), indicating that the model possesses predictive relevance for the outcome constructs – employee retention and affective commitment.

Mediation Analysis

To examine the mediating influence of affective commitment on the relationship between work-life balance and employee retention, the bootstrapping procedure by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was employed in SmartPLS (see Table 7).

Table 7: Mediation Analysis

Direct Paths	***β***	**SD**	**T Statistics**	**P Values**
Work-life Bala nce -> Employee Retention (c)	0.408	0.050	8.092	0.000
Work-life Balance -> Affective Commitment (a)	0.452	0.056	8.111	0.000
Affective Commitment -> Employee Retention (b)	0.396	0.053	7.494	0.000
Indirect Path (H4)				
Work-life Balance -> Affective Commitment -> Employee Retention	0.178	0.051	4.011	0.000

Source: SmartPLS

The results as illustrated in the Table 7, show the significant direct effects of work life balance on employee retention (β = 0.408, p-value <.01), work life balance on affective commitment, (β = 0.452, p <.01), and affective commitment on employee retention (β = 0.396, p <.01). Moreover, with the inclusion of affective commitment as the mediating factor, the indirect connection between work life balance and employee retention still remains significant (β = 0.173, p <.01). Thus, the hypothesis, "affective commitment mediates the relationship between work lifebalance and employeeretention" stands accepted. To know the strength of mediation, VAF (variance accounted for) score was assessed as $\{\frac{0.452*0.396}{.452*.396+.408} * 100 =$

30.37%}. The resultant VAF value (30.37%) ranged between 20 – 80%, implying that 'affective commitment' serves as a partial mediator between work-life balance and employee retention. Moreover, the mediation is complementary, as the direct and indirect effects are significant and align in the same direction (Zhao et al., 2010).

5. DISCUSSION

Nurses are integral to patient care and enhancing the reputation of healthcare institutions. Operating at the forefront, they frequently serve as the primary point of contact, and their conduct immediately affects patients ' emotional and physical welfare (Hall et al., 2026). Job satisfaction among nurses cultivates a positive environment, enhancing communication and trust between patients and the healthcare system. Among the elements influencing nurses' satisfaction, dedication, and retention, work-life balance (WLB) stands out as a critical determinant (Gautam et al., 2025). A well-balanced work-life dynamic allows nurses to manage job-related stress more effectively, diminishes burnout, and enhances commitment and retention intentions, ultimately resulting in improved patient care and a happy work environment. Th e present study examined the impact of work-life balance on employee retention, with affective commitment functioning as a mediating factor. Three hypotheses were evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. The path coefficient of 0.408 , $p<0.01$ for H1, signifies a substantial positive effect of work-life balance on employee retention, suggesting that when nurses successfully balance their obligations at work and home, their likelihood of staying with their employer increases. The statistical significance of H2 (β coefficient = 0.452, $p<0.01$) indicates a positive and substantial correlation between work-life balance and affective commitment. This implies that an elevated work-life balance enhances affective commitment among nurses. Consequently, when nurses achieve a favorable work-life balance, they are more inclined to cultivate an emotional connection to their business. Furthermore, the path coefficient of 0.396 , $p<0.01$ for H3, indicates that nurses who experience emotional commitment to their roles are more inclined to remain in their positions. The results were in concurrence with the results of Shokley et al. (2017), Silaban and Margaretha (2021) Al-Hawary et al. (2023) and Perreira et al. (2018). The mediation analysis (H4) unveiled a considerable impact of affective commitment between work-life balance and employee retention (path coefficient = 0.178, $p<0.01$). This indirect pathway suggests that work-life balance affects retention directly as well as indirectly by cultivating affective commitment. Affective commitment functions as a conduit by which work-life balance enhances employee retention.

This study adds to the existingbodyof literatureon 'worklife balance' by assessingits connection with'employee retention with the intervening effect of affective commitment among the nurses of healthcare institutions in J&K, India. While prior research has focused on the association between WLB and factors like job satisfaction, engagement, commitment, performance and retention (Casper et al., 2011; Kasbuntoro et al., 2020; Zainal et al., 2022) to the best knowledge of the researcher, this study is probably the first to explore the mediating function of affective commitment between work-life balance and employee retention among the nurses in Jammu and Kashmir, India. Hence, this study makes an important contribution to prior research in this regard.

Besides theoretical contribution, this study has practical consequences for hospital administrators and policymakers. The findings underscore the critical need to institutionalize work-life conducive practices in healthcare institutions throughout Jammu and Kashmir and beyond. Managers can encourage retention by implementing flexible scheduling, ensuring appropriate staffing to avoid overload, providing childcare assistance, and building an inclusive work culture. In areas like Jammu and Kashmir, where healthcare resources are already limited, retaining experienced nursing staff is critical to sustaining healthcare services. This study thus gives evidence-based insights for creating retention strategies that prioritise the well-being of frontline healthcare providers.

6. CONCLUSION

This study underlines thecritical role of work-life balance(WLB) in improvingemployeeretention amongnurses in Jammu and Kashmir, India, with affective commitment functioning as a mediating factor. The findings demonstrate that nurses who experience a better balance between their professional and private lives are more likely to stay with their employers, both directly and through increased emotional attachment to the organization. These insights not only strengthen the theoretical understanding of WLB–retention connection but also offer practical implications for healthcare institutions seeking to enhance workforce stability.

While this research offers valuable insights, it is subject to certain constraints that provide scope for future research. Being region-specific, conducted in India's union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the results may not be generalized to other parts of the country. Researchers are advised to conduct and compare similar studies across different regions to assess the consistency of results. Moreover, as this study emphasised the impact of work-life balance (WLB) on employee retention, future researchers may examine the influence of WLB on other outcomes such as career satisfaction, employee behaviour, and workplace happiness. Additionally, as the research employed a cross-sectional design, longitudinal studies are recommended to see deviations in employee perceptions over time. Moreover, the quantitative design of this study may

lack comprehensive contextual insight. Researchers may integrate qualitative data, like interviews or open -ended responses, to gain deeper insight into nurses' experiences and the underlying mechanisms influencing the observed relationships. Finally, while this study investigated the mediating role of affective commitment between WLB and retention, future research could evaluate other potential mediators such as perceived organizational support, organizational trust, organizational identification, and job embeddedness.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests..

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