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Article

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Contemporary Economics

Provided in Cooperation with:

VIZJA University, Warsaw

Suggested Citation: Fuchs, Rosa María; Lopez-Jurado, Renato (2025) : Telework, job autonomy and work-life equation: A model for understanding job embeddedness, Contemporary Economics, ISSN 2300-8814, VIZJA University, Warsaw, Vol. 19, Iss. 3, pp. 290-311, <https://doi.org/10.5709/ce.1897-9254.567>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/330344>

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Primary submission: 02.02.2024 | Final acceptance: 08.03.2025

Telework, Job Autonomy and Work-life Equation: A Model for Understanding Job Embeddedness

Rosa María Fuchs  and Renato Lopez-Jurado 

ABSTRACT

Telework has gained significant relevance in recent years; however, its effects on work-life balance remain unclear, particularly in the context of the evolving and complex nature of work environments in which telework conditions, such as job autonomy, vary. Employee retention poses a significant challenge to human resource management, and the factors that contribute to job embeddedness and its dimensions (links, fit, and sacrifice) are not yet fully understood. For these reasons, this study aims to examine how the extent of telework and job autonomy influence work-life balance and how, in turn, work-life balance affects links, fit, and sacrifice. A non-experimental quantitative design was utilized, with convenience sampling of 175 full-time workers (60.60% engaged in telework) from Lima, Peru, all of whom had at least 6 months of experience in their current positions. Data were collected between November 2022 and the first quarter of 2023 using a virtual survey administered via Google Forms. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis revealed that telework and job autonomy positively influenced work-life balance. Furthermore, work-life balance was found to be positively related to links, fit, and sacrifice. This research enhances the understanding of these relationships from the perspective of conservation of resources (COR) theory. Given these findings, we recommend promoting job autonomy regardless of work modality to enhance work-life balance. Moreover, organizations should invest in practices that support work-life balance to encourage employee retention.

KEY WORDS: telework, job autonomy, work-life balance, job embeddedness.

JEL Classification: J220, J280, J630, M540.

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1. Introduction

Work-life balance has gained research attention owing to the blurring of boundaries between personal life and work caused by information technology (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022). This issue has become particularly relevant in the context of telework, a modality characterized by the use of information technology and has gained prominence due to the pandemic (OECD, 2021). This growing interest is further evidenced by the notable attention this

topic received in academic journals between 2020 and 2022 (Aleem et al., 2023). Workers perceive that telework helps them save money and time and manage other aspects of their lives (Deloitte, 2022). However, this experience is inconsistent (Vleeshouwers et al., 2022). During the pandemic, telework was found to positively influence work-life balance (Tan et al., 2024), but it also had this impact to a lesser extent than before the pandemic (Tufa & Neguț, 2023) or showed no significant relationship (Al Riyami et al., 2023; Campo et al., 2021).

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Therefore, it would be worthwhile to continue to investigate these relationships in a context in which the emergency health conditions and confinement of certain social sectors under which these studies were conducted (Blahopoulou et al., 2022) are no longer present.

The analysis of working conditions benefits from understanding specific contexts as these shape how practices such as telework are adopted and implemented. For example, telework gained popularity in the United States during the oil crisis as a strategy for reducing employee commutes and energy consumption (Allen et al., 2015). More recently, pandemic lockdowns have compelled the global workforce to adopt telework.

In Peru, where this study was conducted, the shift to telework was abrupt. Prior to the pandemic, fewer than 2,000 individuals were reported as teleworkers (Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo [MTPE], 2022), likely due to limited Internet access and a shortage of home-based computer equipment (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2021). Despite the post-pandemic increase, only 5% of Peruvian employees on electronic payrolls currently work remotely (MTPE, 2024). In contrast, teleworkers accounted for 23.8% of the workforce in the United States in 2023 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025), while in 2022, telework incidence exceeded 40% in 13 regions of the European Union (Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2024). Given this contrasting context—likely due to the digital and productivity gaps present prior to the pandemic, which facilitated the adoption of digital technologies by various companies (Calvino et al., 2024)—it is valuable to examine the role of telework in Peru. Despite recent increases in remote-work arrangements, telework has not yet become a widely established practice within the country.

Telework is a product of technological development; however, evidence regarding its relationship with job quality, particularly in Latin America, remains mixed, highlighting the need to explore subjective characteristics related to well-being (Oviedo-Gil & Cala, 2023), such as work-life balance. The literature has documented that Internet use is associated with the permeability of the work and

personal spheres in various ways (Nam, 2014). In this vein, there are inconsistencies in the literature on telework and work-life balance, which may be due to the lack of consensus in the operationalization of these constructs or the omission of critical variables in analyses, such as job conditions (e.g., Elbaz et al., 2023; Metselaar et al., 2023; Palumbo et al., 2022).

Work-life balance has been measured from both a balance and a conflict perspective under the same label, which causes confusion in the literature. This underscores the need to use a measurement that aligns with the conceptual definition of work-life balance, which is distinct from the concept of work-family conflict (Casper et al., 2018). In addition, teleworking one day per week is not equivalent to teleworking five days per week. Research has demonstrated that telework is associated with higher levels of satisfaction, particularly when the weekly frequency is moderate, at which point the benefits become less pronounced (Golden & Veiga, 2005). Therefore, it is important to consider this dimension when measuring telework.

Job characteristics either strengthen or mitigate the effects of this work modality (Wang et al., 2021). One such characteristic is job autonomy, which has been associated with favorable outcomes for workers, including work-life balance (Badri & Panatik, 2020; Haar & Brougham, 2020). The same effect has been found among teleworkers (Becker et al., 2022; Stankevičiūtė & Kunskaja, 2022). However, in the reviewed literature, the contributions of telework and job autonomy as independent variables on work-life balance have not been studied simultaneously, leaving it unclear which of the two factors is more important. Therefore, it is relevant to study the differentiated role of the extent of telework and job autonomy on work-life balance in the post-pandemic context.

Work-life balance is recognized as a significant priority for workers (Deloitte, 2024). A review article has highlighted the benefits of work-life balance, including increased family satisfaction, enhanced job performance, greater work commitment, and higher job satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Consequently, companies must address employees' work-life balance to improve their quality of life and fos-

ter their capacity to excel both professionally and personally (Rathnaweera & Jayathilaka, 2021). In doing so, not only is individual well-being supported, but the economic and social development of nations is also encouraged (Tsaurkubule, 2014). This ability to adapt to the new demands and needs of workers as well as the challenges posed by the environment is particularly crucial in contexts marked by constant uncertainty, where companies must be prepared to implement changes to effectively retain their workforce.

Job embeddedness is a recent approach for studying employee retention. Job embeddedness refers to the web of influences that keep a worker within an organization, and consists of three dimensions: links, fit, and sacrifice (Lee et al., 2014). Previous research has found that work-life balance is positively related to job embeddedness (Fuchs et al., 2021). However, further studies are needed to deepen our understanding of this relationship, particularly by exploring the antecedents of job embeddedness dimensions. Given that employee retention is a priority for human resources departments (Society for Human Resource Management, 2024), this study will be completed by relating work-life balance to each dimension of job embeddedness.

In summary, the present study examines how the extent of telework and job autonomy influence work-life balance and how this balance affects the links, fit, and sacrifice dimensions of job embeddedness. Given that the variables in question can be conceptualized as resources, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which is widely used in the organizational field, was employed to explain their associations (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it responds to the call to study these variables in developing countries (Badri & Panatik, 2020; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021). Additionally, the study considers the extent of telework and job autonomy, recognizing that teleworkers are a heterogeneous group, to identify which of these two resources is most important for work-life balance in a post-pandemic context. Furthermore, we examine the effects of work-life balance on the three dimensions of job embeddedness rather than on the global construct, which will

allow for more targeted actions taken by human resources managers. Finally, this study contributes to overcoming the historical separation between the literature on the work-life interface and job embeddedness by expanding the focus beyond a traditional conflict-centered perspective (Dechawatanapaisal, 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2012) and using the COR theory to explain the relationships between these constructs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Telework

Telework is a labor arrangement in which employees partially or entirely replace their work at the central offices of their organization with work at home, using information technologies as technical tools and a means of communication with colleagues and other involved parties (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Generally, telework involves replacing the physical office, which can limit interactions owing to the physical and psychological distance it creates (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Consequently, not all jobs are suitable for telework, particularly those requiring specialized tools that necessitate in-person presence, such as in the medical field. Additionally, the boundaries between work and personal life tend to blur (Allen et al., 2015), as all activities occur within the same physical space.

While telework is often perceived as beneficial by employees, reporting advantages such as increased flexibility in time management, savings on commuting, improved work-life balance, and reduced transportation costs (Ipsos, 2024), not all telework arrangements share the same characteristics. For example, Nakrošienė et al. (2019) identified a combination of factors that influence the telework experience, including the ability to work during one's most productive hours, reduced communication time with colleagues, the option to work from home when unwell, supervisor trust and support, the possibility of caring for a family member, and the suitability of the working environment at home. Moreover, working from home once a month is different from doing so once a week or throughout the week; hence, the extent of telework is studied here, as it provides more

information in this research area (Athanasiadou & Theriou, 2021).

All forms of flexible work, including telework, reduce turnover intention through the partial mediation of perceived autonomy (Onken-Menke et al., 2018). Moreover, a meta-analysis found that high-intensity telework is beneficial for reducing work-family conflict but counterproductive for relationships with colleagues (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The frequency of telework is associated with positive effects on employee health (e.g., reduced depression, sedentary behavior, and alcohol abuse); however, no significant relationship has been found with stress (Henke et al., 2016). Conversely, Allen et al. (2015) found in their review that telework was negatively related to stress, although the effect was small.

2.2. Job Autonomy

Hackman and Oldham (1975) defined job autonomy as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (p. 162). This concept differs from the definition of autonomy in self-determination theory. According to this conceptual framework, autonomy is a basic psychological need through which a person experiences a subjective sense of psychological freedom and choice regardless of the conditions of the activity (Van Den Broeck et al., 2010).

While these perspectives are related, in the present study, job autonomy is not only the subjective evaluation and internal experience of the worker but also their perception of the work conditions that reflect that state. Given its subjective nature, job autonomy is influenced by various contextual factors. For example, research on Chinese employees revealed a higher likelihood of autonomy in task execution but less autonomy in goal setting within organizations, whereas the opposite pattern was observed in British society (Jiang et al., 2023).

Workers with high levels of job autonomy tend to experience lower burnout and greater work engagement (Becker et al., 2022; Sardeshmukh

et al., 2012). Additionally, it has been extensively documented that job autonomy positively contributes to work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention (Badri & Panatik, 2020; Becker et al., 2022; Stankevičiūtė & Kunska, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, job autonomy moderates the relationship between family demands and work-life balance, as this negative relationship is strengthened when employees experience low job autonomy (Haar et al., 2019).

2.3. Work-life Balance

Work-life balance is defined as an individual's perception of their ability to adequately manage the roles they consider most important (Haar, 2013). This involves adopting an approach in which every individual needs support to achieve balance regardless of whether they have children, a partner, or other family responsibilities (Kossek et al., 2010; Perrigino et al., 2018). In this sense, work-life balance is conceived as a general assessment of the combinations between work and non-work roles without considering the direction of the impact of one domain on the other, whether positive or negative (Wayne et al., 2017).

This definition is important because it surpasses the concept of balance from a conflict-based perspective, where only the negative influence of one domain on the other is studied, ignoring the positive aspects. A meta-analysis by Casper et al. (2018) found a larger effect size of work-life balance on job, family, and life satisfaction compared to work-life enrichment and work-life conflict, which strengthens the understanding of this construct as independent of its predecessors. Even with this clarification, some authors have used conceptualizations and measurement scales related to work-family conflict when referring to work-life balance, which creates confusion in the literature (Chang et al., 2010; Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2022).

Greater work-life balance has been positively associated with job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, life satisfaction, family performance and satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (Haar & Brougham, 2020; Jamal et al., 2021; Pradhan et al., 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Sturges, 2008; Susanto et al., 2022). On the other

hand, lower work-life balance has been linked to job burnout, absenteeism, higher turnover intention, psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, irritability, hostility, and relationship stress (Haar & Brougham, 2020; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Sturges, 2008). An International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022) study on work-life balance around the world noted that a healthy work-life balance among employees is also beneficial for employers: companies benefit from the increased retention of current employees, improved recruitment, lower rates of absenteeism, and higher productivity.

2.4. Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness is a network of influences within an organization that retains workers in their current employment (Lee et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001). Specifically, in the theory, these numerous influences are grouped under the following dimensions: links, fit, and sacrifice. Links describe the formal and informal connections that employees have with colleagues, supervisors, and workgroups (Mitchell et al., 2001). Fit is the perception of compatibility among the values, goals, skills, and personal preferences of the employee and the environment and culture of the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). Conversely, sacrifice is an assessment of the loss of resources and benefits provided by a job (Mitchell et al., 2001). For example, leaving an organization may require an individual to sacrifice valuable connections, status, and influence within the workplace as well as important benefits such as health insurance coverage, career advancement opportunities, involvement in international projects, and paid travel experiences.

Job embeddedness is negatively related to turnover intention (Setthakorn et al. 2024). This relationship is mediated by organizational affective commitment and work engagement (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022). Job embeddedness has also been associated with innovative work behavior, job crafting, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement (Bhowmik et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2019; Susomrith & Amankwaa, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

There have been attempts to study work-life

interface constructs and job embeddedness; however, these efforts have primarily focused on the construct of work-family conflict. For example, a positive relationship between job embeddedness and work-family conflict has been found (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Similarly, mothers who experienced work-family conflict were more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion, guilt, and hostility when they had high job embeddedness (Peltokorpi, 2022). However, these studies do not allow for conclusions regarding causality and do not mean that the relationship between the work-life interface and job embeddedness should be negative. Regarding the influence of work-life balance on job embeddedness as a global construct, a positive relationship between these two variables has been found (Dechawatanapaisal, 2017; Fuchs et al., 2021).

3. Theoretical Background

In accordance with the definitions presented by Sirgy and Lee (2018), work-life balance can be understood as an individual's assessment of the optimal allocation of resources in the roles they value most. Additionally, it can be considered an energy resource that enables the acquisition of new resources (Haar & Brougham, 2020). On the other hand, job embeddedness is a state that represents the resources provided by the organization, making it difficult for an individual to resign for fear of losing them (Kiazad et al., 2015). Consistent with this, various authors have used the COR theory to study the relationship between these constructs and other individual and organizational variables (e.g., Dechawatanapaisal, 2017; Rubenstein et al., 2020; Thakur & Bhatnagar, 2017).

The COR theory posits that an individual's motivation to undertake any action lies in the protection, retention, and acquisition of resources (Hobfoll et al. 2018). Hobfoll et al. (2018) described four principles of the COR theory. First, losing resources is disproportionately more significant than gaining them. Second, individuals invest resources to protect themselves from loss, recover, and gain resources. Third, in the context of losses, gaining resources becomes increasingly important. Fourth, people become aggressive and irrational when they

are faced with limited resources. Additionally, there are resources that are regularly found together with other resources (caravans), and there are contexts that facilitate their acquisition or preservation (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Finally, having a large number of resources protects against loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018), and losing resources generates stress that hinders the ability to cope adequately with demands, leading to a spiral of losses (Hobfoll, 1989).

3.1. Extent of Telework and Work-Life Balance

From a COR perspective, telework can be conceptualized as a context that facilitates the acquisition of new resources (Metselaar et al., 2023). For example, teleworkers prefer this work modality because it enables them to save money, allocate more time to other aspects of their lives, and manage their mental health (Deloitte, 2022). In other words, it allows access to additional resources, such as time, and physical and emotional energy. In this context, if individuals have greater availability because they do not need to commute to their workplace, they will have more time to engage in the non-work roles that they value most.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telework was found to have a negative impact on employee well-being and work-life balance (Elbaz et al., 2023) and only exert a positive influence on work-life balance when teleworkers were satisfied with the modality (Erro-Garcés et al., 2022; Ferreira & Gomes, 2023). However, the emergency context is no longer present as schools and entertainment venues have reopened, and there is greater acceptance of this modality among the population. This translates into greater support from colleagues, generating more resources for individuals to experience better work-life balance (Campo et al., 2021; Talukder, 2019).

Pre-pandemic research found that the extent of telework is positively related to work-life balance (Maruyama et al., 2009; Metselaar et al., 2023). However, when work-life balance is conceptualized as work-family conflict, telework becomes an obstacle to workers' balance (Palumbo, 2020; Palumbo et al., 2022) or exerts no significant influence (Heiden et al., 2021). However, the conflict perspective overlooks the positive influence of one role on another. Additionally, there is now greater legal regulation of telework and increased acceptance of this modality among workers

and employers in Latin America (Chávez, 2022). As a result, the effects of telework may have varied depending on the support culture for this modality within each company before the pandemic when telework was not as widespread. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. The extent of telework is positively related to work-life balance.

3.2. Job Autonomy and Work-Life Balance

Job autonomy can be conceptualized as a conditional resource that enables individuals to prioritize their activities, decide when to execute them, and determine the best way to do so. This perception could make it easier to deal with work-related and non-work demands (Haar & Brougham, 2020). According to the COR theory, individuals invest resources to obtain more resources or protect themselves from loss, and those with a large number of resources can enter a spiral of gains (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this sense, job autonomy can enhance an individual's perception of work-life balance and protect them from the loss of resources (i.e., experiencing significant work-life conflict).

Job autonomy has been found to positively influence work-family enrichment (Badri & Panatik, 2020; Wang et al., 2020) and negatively affect work-family conflict (Badri & Panatik, 2020). Similarly, job autonomy has been found to exert a positive influence on workers' work-life balance (Haar & Brougham, 2020; Haar et al., 2019). During the pandemic, teleworkers experienced greater work-life balance as job autonomy increased (Stankevičiūtė & Kunskaja, 2022), particularly among those who preferred to integrate their roles rather than segment them (Becker et al., 2022). Job autonomy has also been recognized as a work resource, as individuals with low levels of autonomy felt more exhausted as the pandemic progressed (Meyer et al., 2021). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. Job autonomy is positively related to work-life balance.

3.3. Work-Life Balance and Job Embeddedness

Work-life balance is an energy resource, as individuals feel they can effectively deal with both work and non-work demands (Haar, 2013). This is evident in the greater time, physical energy, and emotional energy required to obtain additional

resources. Specifically, individuals who feel that they can adequately address all of the important areas of their lives have greater temporal resources and positive affectivity (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). These resources are managed in their organizations to achieve well-being and increase motivation (Haar et al., 2018). Therefore, employees with good work-life balance can invest more resources in building healthy relationships with their colleagues as well as in networking within the organization for instrumental purposes. It has been found that supervisory family support is positively related to the quality of leader-member exchange (Bagger & Li, 2014). On the other hand, employees who perceive their organization as a center that promotes their well-being share more ideas with others (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

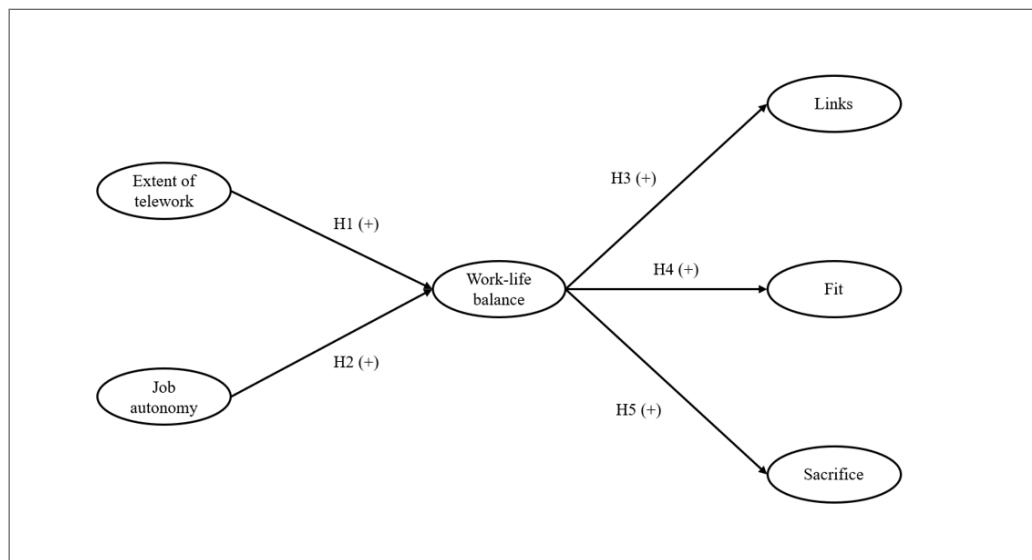
H3. Work-life balance is positively related to the dimension of links.

Furthermore, work-life balance reflects an individual's satisfaction with how they manage their work and non-work roles (Haar, 2013). A higher level of work-life balance correlates with improved

performance in both the work and family domains (Susanto et al., 2022; Wayne et al., 2017). This balance enables employees to preserve and accumulate resources. When employees perform well, they perceive that their skills align with organizational needs, which explains why organizational practices that support work-life balance are positively associated with a better fit between employees and their jobs (Kakar et al., 2021). Moreover, job satisfaction increases (Susanto et al., 2022), fostering a sense that a company's values align with one's own. This perception of alignment can even influence individuals before they join a company, as the belief that organizational rewards fulfill their needs can increase their intention to pursue a career in that field (Bednarska, 2016). Additionally, when workers can allocate energy and time to engage in activities that require technical skills, they are more likely to continue learning and collaborating with the organization's objectives, further strengthening their fit (Kiazad et al., 2015). Therefore, the following is conceivable:

H4. Work-life balance positively influences the dimension of fit.

Figure 1
Research Model



Finally, individuals tend to protect their resources from threats because the loss of resources is disproportionately more important (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, the more resources an employee has, the higher the perceived cost of leaving their current position. Individuals with work-life balance experience higher family satisfaction, job satisfaction, family performance, and parental satisfaction as well as lower cognitive problems and emotional distress (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). In other words, these positive consequences represent a reserve of resources that the worker values highly and does not want to lose (Kiazad et al., 2015). These resources allow them to continue generating new resources and create a spiral of gains (Hobfoll, 1989), which is a strong motivational factor. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5. The relationship between work-life balance and sacrifice is positive.

Figure 1 illustrates the model under investigation, highlighting the hypotheses formulated for the analysis. In summary, it is anticipated that the extent of telework and job autonomy will act as resources, positively influencing work-life balance. Furthermore, work-life balance is expected to serve as a resource that enhances the three key dimensions of job embeddedness: links, fit, and sacrifice. Specifically, it is hypothesized that work-life balance is positively related to each of these dimensions, thereby fostering greater overall job embeddedness.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants and Procedure

The sample comprised 214 full-time workers (40 hours or more per week) from Lima, each with at least six months of experience in their current position. This duration was deemed sufficient for the workers to settle in with the company and adapt to their positions. Additionally, by focusing on full-time employees, we aimed to homogenize the specific characteristics of this work modality compared to others. The participants completed a virtual survey via Google Forms between November 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Recruitment efforts involved collaboration with MBA students for ques-

tionnaire distribution, reaching out to the Peruvian Human Resources Association, and utilization of an alumni and company database from a private Peruvian university. We employed convenience and snowball sampling methods, in line with prior research (e.g., Thakur & Bhatnagar, 2017). A pilot study was conducted to ensure the readability and comprehension of the items.

Two control questions were included (e.g., "If you are reading this sentence, select the option 'Strongly disagree'"). Participants who answered at least one of these questions incorrectly were excluded (39 cases), ensuring that the remaining responses were from those who carefully read the questions. It is important to note that this exclusion did not result in significant differences in the variables of interest. To mitigate common method bias, the questionnaire design and presentation followed Podsakoff et al.'s (2012) guidelines. The scales were presented in a different order than the theoretical proposal, preventing participants from inferring the study hypotheses and adjusting their responses accordingly. The order of the items was randomized. To reduce social desirability bias, it was emphasized that the survey was voluntary and anonymous and that there were no right or wrong answers.

The final sample consisted of 175 workers with a mean age of 43.23 years ($SD = 12.32$). Regarding telework, 60.6% of participants engaged in this modality. Of the total participants, 93.1% worked in the private sector and 6.9% in the public sector. A total of 81.7% had a 5-day workweek, while 17.1% worked for 6 days. Participants had been in their current positions for an average of 5.17 years ($SD = 5.86$) and within their organizations for 9.79 years ($SD = 9.9$). They had 24.59 months of teleworking experience ($SD = 23.03$). Table 1 provides the detailed sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

4.2. Measurement

Extent of telework. The extent of telework was calculated by dividing the number of days the worker worked from home per week by the number of days in their workweek, multiplied by 100%. Metselaar et al. (2023) employed a similar relative measure to calculate the percentage of hours worked from home

Table 1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	N	%
Sex		
Female	103	58.9
Male	72	41.1
Marital Status		
Married	103	58.9
Unmarried	72	41.1
Educational Level		
Completed Postgraduate	93	53.1
Completed Undergraduate	54	30.9
Completed Technical Degree	17	9.7
Others	11	6.3
Presence of Sons and Daughters at Home		
No		
Yes	84	48
Dependents	91	52
No		
Yes	124	70.9
Sector	51	29.1
Education		
Other	81	46.3
Commercial	65	37.2
Financial	16	9.1
Organization Size	13	7.4
Large		
Medium	138	78.9
Small	19	10.9
Micro	10	5.7
Organizational Level	8	4.6
Middle Management		
Entry-Level	75	42.9
Executive	58	33.1
	42	24

Table 2
Study Items

Variable	Example Item
Work-Life Balance	Nowadays, I seem to enjoy every part of my life equally well.
Links (JE)	I work closely with my coworkers.
Fit (JE)	I feel like I am a good match for my organization.
Sacrifice (JE)	I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job.
Job Autonomy	My job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work.

Note. JE = Job Embeddedness.

relative to the total hours worked per week.

For the remaining questions, unless otherwise stated, Likert-type questionnaires with a five-point response scale were used, where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "Strongly Agree." Examples of these items are listed in Table 2.

Work-life Balance Scale. A reflective scale developed by Haar (2013) was used. Responses assessed the individual's level of agreement regarding their ability to enjoy and manage their roles effectively. The initial scale had three items, but one item was removed due to redundancy in the dimension.

Job embeddedness scale. A scale developed by Holtom et al. (2006), as cited in Felps et al. (2009), consisting of nine items, was employed. Although job embeddedness is a second-order formative construct (Lee et al., 2014), we focused on its individual dimensions. Thus, each dimension was treated independently as a construct with reflective indicators. Given that Zhang et al. (2012) hypothesized discriminant validity issues between the dimensions of fit and sacrifice, and considering our preliminary analyses, we followed the factorial structure proposed by Robinson et al. (2014). In this structure, the sacrifice dimension included four items, the fit dimension comprised two items, and the links dimension comprised three items.

Job Autonomy. A three-item reflective scale developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980, as cited in Badri & Panatik, 2020) was used. This questionnaire measures the degree of discretion that employees perceive in their work. Because the original scale was in English, it was translated into Spanish by the research team. It was also reviewed by three expert judges proficient in both languages, each with substantial research and practical experience in human resource management and organizational psychology. The judges showed a high degree of agreement with the evaluated categories of semantic equivalence between the original item and translation, sufficiency, relevance, coherence, and clarity to ensure content validity (MacKenzie et al., 2011). In addition, qualitative feedback was considered for slight modifications to the items. Exploratory factor analysis supported a unidimensional structure.

Control variables. We controlled for the effects of telework experience, sex, position in the organi-

zational hierarchy, actual working hours per week, presence of dependents, presence of sons and daughters at home, and age and years in the organization. Following the recommendations of Carlson and Wu (2012), the control variables must meet high standards for inclusion. As many of these variables lacked strong theoretical support and their inclusion did not alter the proposed model, they have not been reported.

5. Results

This study examined how telework and job autonomy influence work-life balance, and how work-life balance, in turn, affects the dimensions of job embeddedness (links, fit, and sacrifice). These relationships were analyzed using a partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM), which is particularly suited to situations involving a large number of variables and smaller sample sizes (Hair et al., 2021). When working with small samples, unlike covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM offers the advantage of consistent convergence and produces admissible solutions (Henseler et al., 2014). Data analysis was conducted using R Studio 4.2.2 software and the SEMinR package (R Core Team, 2021), following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2021).

5.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using reliability and validity criteria (Table 3). First, the factor loadings of all items exceeded the recommended threshold of .70. However, one item related to sacrifice had a loading of .69. In the social sciences, factor loadings slightly below the recommended threshold are not uncommon and can be retained as long as they are not below .40 (Hair et al., 2021). In this case, the sacrifice item was retained to preserve the dimensional structure because its loading was only slightly below the suggested cutoff.

Then, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and rho_A. Generally, values between .60 and .90 are recommended, as higher values may indicate redundancy in the measurement of the construct (Hair et al., 2021). All values exceeded the required threshold of .70 except for the job autonomy construct, which had a slightly lower Cronbach's alpha and rho_A but still remained close to the

limit. For convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) of the constructs was calculated, and all values exceeded the required threshold of .50 (as shown in Table 3).

Concerning discriminant validity, we used the Heterotrait-Monotrait Method (HTMT) to ensure that the constructs were empirically distinct from one another in the model (Hair et al., 2021). Additionally, bootstrapped confidence intervals were generated to verify whether the HTMT values dif-

fered significantly from one. In total, 10,000 bootstrap samples were used for this purpose. The confidence intervals did not include one. Moreover, as shown in Table 4, the HTMT values did not exceed .85 for conceptually different constructs and .90 for conceptually similar constructs.

5.2. Descriptive Analysis

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables of interest. On average, the workers ex-

Table 3
Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Validity

	λ	α	rho A	AVE
WLB1	.924	.857	.875	.875
WLB2	.946			
AUT1	.753	.672	.689	.605
AUT2	.852			
AUT3a	.723			
FIT1	.919	.831	.833	.855
FIT2	.930			
SAC1	.815	.831	.872	.661
SAC2	.694			
SAC3	.873			
SAC4	.858			
LINKS1	.831	.785	.800	.698
LINKS2	.812			
LINKS3	.862			

Note. WLB = Work-life balance, AUT = Job autonomy, SAC = Sacrifice.

a Values reported after reversing item AUT3.

Table 4
Discriminant Validity Using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Method (HTMT)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Extent of telework	-					
2. Job autonomy	.229	-				
3. Work-life balance	.247	.515	-			
4. Fit	.128	.735	.554	-		
5. Sacrifice	.164	.803	.614	.870	-	
6. Links	.091	.495	.449	.659	.663	-

hibited a moderate level of telework. Additionally, work-life balance and the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness were moderately high. Moreover, the links among job autonomy, job embeddedness fit, and job embeddedness were strong in our sample. Correlations are also presented in Table 6 to provide an overall view of the relationships among the constructs.

5.3. Assessment of the Structural Model

First, collinearity among the model variables was assessed by examining variance inflation factors (VIFs). This is important because the model can be biased by high correlations among its components (Hair et al., 2021). Therefore, it was verified that all VIF values were below five, which was confirmed; thus, collinearity was not an issue in our sample.

The hypotheses were assessed using a bootstrapping procedure, and the results are presented in Table 7. A path coefficient is considered significant at the 5% level if the 95% confidence interval does not include a value of zero. As expected, both the extent of telework and job autonomy positively predicted work-life balance. Additionally, the regression coefficient for job autonomy was nearly twice that of telework, suggesting that job autonomy was a stronger and more important predictor of work-life balance. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Together, these factors explained 17.3% of the variance in work-life balance, which is considered a medium coefficient.

Work-life balance positively and significantly predicted job embeddedness links, job embeddedness fit, and job embeddedness sacrifice. This finding supports Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5. Specifically, work-life balance explained 13.50% of the variance in job embeddedness links, 21.70% of the variance in job embeddedness fit, and 29.20% of the variance in job embeddedness sacrifice. For job embeddedness fit and links, the coefficients were moderate, whereas for job embeddedness sacrifice, the coefficient was high.

6. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine how the extent of telework and job autonomy influence work-life balance and how work-life balance is associ-

ated with the three dimensions of job embeddedness. Three main findings can be highlighted in this study. First, both the extent of telework and job autonomy significantly influenced work-life balance. Second, job autonomy had a greater impact on work-life balance compared to the extent of telework. Third, work-life balance was positively related to job embeddedness. Thus, all of the hypotheses were supported.

While previous studies have demonstrated a negative impact of telework on the work-life interface (Elbaz et al., 2023; Palumbo, 2020; Palumbo et al., 2022), the present research found a positive relationship between telework and work-life balance. This finding aligns with pre-pandemic studies that examined the relationship between the extent of telework and work-life balance (Maruyama et al., 2009; Metselaar et al., 2023), suggesting that telework may serve as a resource. The discrepancy in the literature can be attributed to the differing operationalizations of work-life balance in these studies: Palumbo's studies assessed it as conflict, whereas our research measured it from a balance perspective, considering both positive and negative aspects.

Moreover, the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have intensified resource loss, are no longer relevant. The pandemic contributed to the emergence of additional stressors such as limited access to domestic assistance and a shift to telework with minimal preparation (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). In contrast, now, telework may be perceived as a source of time, well-being, and financial resources (Deloitte, 2022), as evidenced by our participants' strong preference for telework (92.60% favoring this modality over in-person work). According to the COR theory, this abundance of resources supports the acquisition of further resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018), including work-life balance.

Job autonomy was also identified as a resource contributing to the experience of work-life balance, which is consistent with previous studies (Haar & Brougham, 2020; Stankevičiūtė & Kunskaja, 2022). When we conceptualize autonomy as a conditional resource characterized by the flexibility to decide when and how to perform certain activities as well as the possibility of prioritizing them, it follows that employees are better able to manage their family and personal responsibilities with greater energy and control. According

Table 5
Descriptive Analysis

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Extent of telework	36.59%	36.29%	0%	100%
Work-life balance	3.76	0.94	1	5
Job autonomy	4.08	0.70	2	5
Fit	4.07	0.88	1	5
Sacrifice	3.89	0.83	1	5
Links	4.22	0.72	1	5

Table 6
Table of Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Extent of telework	-					
2. Job autonomy	.190	-				
3. Work-life balance	.230*	.39***	-			
4. Fit	.110	.56***	.47***	-		
5. Sacrifice	.150	.60***	.51***	.72***	-	
6. Links	.080	.36***	.37***	.53***	.53***	-

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7
Structural Model Relations

Relations	β	SD	t-value	95% CI	Decision
H1: Extent of Telework \rightarrow WLB	.157	0.067	2.330	[.019, .284]	Accepted
H2: AUT \rightarrow WLB	.368	0.075	4.892	[.227, .522]	Accepted
H3: WLB \rightarrow Links	.374	0.076	4.915	[.228, .525]	Accepted
H4: WLB \rightarrow Fit	.471	0.075	6.317	[.316, .608]	Accepted
H5: WLB \rightarrow Sacrifice	.544	0.058	9.432	[.427, .654]	Accepted

Note. WLB = Work-life balance, AUT = Job autonomy

to the COR theory, having available resources allows individuals to invest in acquiring additional resources, thereby engaging in a gain spiral or preventing resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Our findings support this hypothesis. In line with this reasoning, Meyer et al. (2021) found that job autonomy served as a job resource that mitigated increases in emotional exhaustion among women during the pandemic.

On the other hand, the explanatory power of job autonomy for work-life balance was moderate compared to that of telework, the coefficient of which was small. This suggests that the extent of telework itself may offer a range of resources, such as savings in time and money on transportation, as reported by Ipsos (2024), which inherently contributes to work-life balance. Indeed, reduced commuting time positively affects both job and life satisfaction (Han et al., 2022). However, job autonomy, regardless of work modality, appears to be more critical in enabling workers to meet the diverse needs of their lives. Although work modality is important, the manner in which it is managed is more relevant. In fact, research has found that satisfaction with telework reduces work-family conflict (Erro-Garcés et al., 2022; Ferreira & Gomes, 2023; Urien & Erro-Garcés, 2024). Furthermore, when telework is imposed, meaning it undermines autonomy, work-family conflict tends to increase (Lapierre et al., 2016).

The positive effects of work-life balance on the dimensions of job embeddedness align with our expectations. These results suggest that work-life balance acts as an energy resource that enables workers to enhance job embeddedness. Thus, work-life balance has been found to be positively associated with job embeddedness as a global construct (Dechawatanapaisal, 2017; Fuchs et al., 2021). Theoretically, this is understandable, as work-life balance encompasses a variety of resources that contribute to reduced stress and improved mental health (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). This is crucial for organizational links, as highlighted by Dasgupta (2024), who found that job-related stress among nurses negatively affected team commitment. Furthermore, regarding the concepts of fit and sacrifice, studies have demonstrated that practices promoting work-life balance enhance person-job fit and decrease turnover intentions (Kakar et al., 2021).

As Ampofo and Karatepe (2022) suggest, job embeddedness develops as a result of accumulating re-

sources; in this case, work-life balance makes remaining in the organization more attractive. However, there is also evidence that job embeddedness is positively related to work-family conflict (Ng & Feldman, 2012). One possible explanation for this opposite view is that the relationship between job embeddedness and work-life interface may be cyclical: while work-life balance initially enhances job embeddedness (and work-family conflict reduces it, as shown by Masdipi et al. [2023]), excessive job embeddedness might eventually lead to increased well-being issues and further challenges with work-life balance (Ng & Feldman, 2012). These findings warrant further investigation.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

The proposed model was tested within the Peruvian context, validating the hypotheses and highlighting that the predictive power of the COR theory can be generalized to developing countries. Additionally, this research contributes to the understanding that not all resources contribute equally to the development of work-life balance, with job autonomy demonstrating stronger predictive power than telework. In this sense, working conditions are likely more important than the work modality itself. In this regard, it has been proposed that teleworkers who receive additional resources, such as job autonomy or organizational support, are more likely to continue gaining resources, such as energy and time, leading to a greater work-life balance (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Thus, the COR theory is helpful in identifying resources that enhance work-life balance (Pensar & Rousi, 2023). Furthermore, we add to the evidence that telework is beneficial for work-life balance, given that it is measured consistently with its conceptual definition of balance rather than merely conflict or enrichment.

Moreover, this study contributes to bridging the literature on work-life interface and job embeddedness. Specifically, we observed that work-life balance can be understood as a resource reservoir that facilitates the accumulation of additional resources and retention within the organization. This study also addressed the gap in the literature by examining the antecedents of the dimensions of job embeddedness separately. In this case, it is particularly interesting to see how work-life balance is a more

important resource for sacrifice and fit than for links. Finally, our study employed the COR theory to analyze the relationships between these constructs, a framework that, as shown by our results, has been empirically supported.

6.2. Practical Contributions

On a practical level, given the necessity for business leaders to retain their workforce and respond to employees' demands, we recommend that human resource professionals promote telework within companies because of its positive association with work-life balance. When employees feel that they can effectively balance their multiple roles, they are likely to demonstrate higher performance and contribute to other positive outcomes for the organization (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). However, it is crucial that telework remains voluntary as it allows employees to select the modality that best suits their circumstances (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2024). If teleworking becomes mandatory, it may cease to be beneficial, particularly if an individual's circumstances are not conducive to this arrangement. Instead of serving to generate additional resources, it can create a context that leads to resource depletion. Furthermore, it is essential to implement support programs to assist with adaptation to telework. Research indicates that those with prior telework experience who also enjoy flexibility derive the greatest benefits from this modality (Carlson et al., 2024).

Additionally, it is advisable to promote job autonomy regardless of work modality. Pensar and Rousi (2023) suggested that job autonomy empowers employees to make decisions that best serve their interests, such as organizing their schedules to allocate time for household activities or promoting well-being (Metselaar et al., 2023). Finally, there is a strong case for investing in work-life balance practices to enhance job embeddedness, particularly in terms of perceived sacrifice. Thakur and Bhatnagar (2017) found that initiatives such as telework, flexible hours, parental leave, and childcare assistance positively affect job embeddedness. In addition, rather than focusing on extrinsic motivators, companies should aim to strengthen resources such as job design that enable workers to fully realize their

potential, thereby increasing their desire to remain with the organization (Dechawatanapaisal, 2017).

7. Conclusions

This research contributes to the integration of two important research areas: work-life balance and job embeddedness. It considers the role of different work modalities, specifically in-person work and telework, given that telework was measured as the extent of teleworking, ranging from 0% to 100% of the workweek. This study also explores the influence of job autonomy in a Latin American sample from a developing country. The study highlights the positive relationship of telework, job autonomy, and work-life balance, suggesting that employees who have the flexibility to work remotely and more control over their jobs experience a better balance between their professional and personal lives. Additionally, it examines how work-life balance impacts various dimensions of job embeddedness.

One surprising result is that job autonomy appears to be more important than the work modality itself in terms of work-life balance. In this sense, it is expected that these findings will deepen our understanding of these variables through the lens of the COR theory. The results may provide valuable insight for organizations aiming to improve employee retention and overall working experience by enhancing work-life balance, implementing flexible working arrangements, and designing job environments that promote job autonomy.

8. Limitations

The present study had three limitations. First, the number of participants and non-random sampling method necessitate caution when generalizing the findings. For example, the sample predominantly consisted of highly educated individuals, which may not represent the broader Peruvian population. Nevertheless, beyond the relationship between telework and work-life balance, where the effects of telework may vary depending on its implementation and the type of job that could be related to educational attainment, there is no compelling reason to expect significant differences in the other relationships identified. These are grounded in theoretical considerations regarding the influence of specific resources, such as job autonomy and work-life balance, which are robust on their own.

Although the data were collected from various sectors, the sample exhibited a slight bias toward the educational sector and large enterprises, which should be considered when generalizing the results to other industries or types of organizations. For example, in small companies with less developed human resource departments, telework might exert a different effect on work-life balance. Similarly, in other sectors with highly interdependent tasks, the benefits of telework may not be as favorable as those of job autonomy.

Second, the cross-sectional design of the study limited the ability to establish causal relationships. For example, individuals with a higher work-life balance may be more likely to choose telework or jobs with greater job autonomy. It is also plausible that individuals with strong job embeddedness might experience better work-life balance. Finally, despite adhering to the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2012) to mitigate common method variance, the data were not collected from multiple sources or at different time points.

9. Limitations

While this study was conducted in a developing country, it is essential to replicate it in other countries with broader and more diverse samples, including countries operating under different telework regulations, to determine whether the relationships identified here hold across various contexts. Furthermore, it would be valuable to investigate whether the role of job autonomy remains consistent across other labor sectors and work modalities, such as part-time work. Future research should examine the role of in-person work, even when telework options are available. For example, Koh et al. (2013) found that workers who voluntarily chose to work in person reported higher levels of work-life balance compared to those who lacked the option to choose their work modality.

Moreover, future research could explore why telework demonstrated limited predictive power compared to job autonomy in this study. One hypothesis is that telework may enable individuals to take on additional jobs rather than optimizing their time for better organization and balance. In addition, researchers could explore additional workplace resources that influence work-life balance to assess whether specific job conditions and personal variables (e.g., supervisor support, preference for telecommuting, multitasking

capacity, and family dynamics) mitigate or enhance the advantages of telework. Investigating such dynamics could provide a deeper understanding of how work modalities interact with personal and organizational factors to shape work-life balance. Another promising direction would be to study contextual variables, such as the impact of commute time on the relationship between telework and work-life balance. Telework may offer significant benefits to those with long commutes or heavy traffic, whereas individuals living closer to their workplaces may not experience the same advantages.

Finally, it would be insightful to examine other antecedents of job embeddedness dimensions as well as the contextual factors influencing these constructs. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to test the cyclical hypothesis of the relationship between work-life balance and job embeddedness.

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