

Work and Life in the Sport Industry: A Review of Work-Life Interface Experiences Among Athletic Employees

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Objective: To review the literature on work-life interfaces in the sport industry, focusing on athletic trainers, coaches, athletes, and other sport personnel.

Data Sources: Studies were identified using SPORT-Discus, PsychINFO, and Google Scholar. Search terms included *work-family balance*, *work-life balance*, *work-family conflict*, *work-life conflict*, *work-family enrichment*, and *work-life enrichment*. These search terms were used in different combinations and configurations in the search process.

Study Selection: Included studies were peer-reviewed journal articles, with primary data collection, and published in English. In the articles, researchers also examined some aspect of the work-family interface in relation to the sport industry.

Data Extraction: The initial searches returned 110 articles. Of these, 21 articles were removed for a lack of focus on the sport industry, for being a duplicate, or for focusing outside the work-life interface in sport. A total of 89 articles remained for a full analysis. An additional 20 articles were then removed because the authors either did not collect primary data or

focused outside our study purpose. Therefore, 69 articles were included in the review.

Data Synthesis: The theoretical framework, study population, population region, methods, article focus, and findings from the articles were recorded. Articles were then grouped based on the study population focus (eg, athletic trainer, coach, or other).

Conclusions: The results suggested that investigators' primary interests were athletic trainers and coaches, primarily with respect to work-life balance and work-life conflict. Less attention was paid to international participants, athletes, and topics related to work-life enrichment. The field will continue to progress as more populations and perspectives are studied. Furthermore, an additional emphasis on positive organizational behaviors, such as work-life enrichment and life-work enrichment, will move the literature forward and answer useful questions with both theoretical and practical outcomes.

Key Words: work-life balance, work-life conflict, work-life enrichment

Key Points

- Athletic trainers, coaches, athletes, and general athletic industry employees experienced challenges in balancing the work-life interface, most frequently brought on by organizational sources.
- Researchers reported widespread coping strategies for improving work-life balance and decreasing work-life conflict, primarily stemming from the individual level.
- Future authors can extend the literature by being clear about constructs, examining new contexts, exploring enrichment, and promoting organization-level solutions.

For scholars interested in the sport industry, the study of the work-life interface continues to develop as the industry, society, and people change. The importance of human resources in this industry cannot be overstated, and the critical elements of life satisfaction, job satisfaction, career retention, and positive work engagement are important considerations. Consequently, understanding the work-life interface is beneficial, as it has the potential to influence all of these areas.^{1,2}

The work-life interface includes important constructs such as balance, conflict, and enrichment (see Figure 1 for a summary of each construct).^{3–5} In general, these constructs highlight the challenges and rewards people experience as they negotiate the various demands and obligations associated with work and nonwork activities and role partners. Work-life balance is independent of conflict and enrichment, which means that balance is neither the absence of conflict nor the presence of enrichment.⁶ Rather, it is defined as both a psychological and relationship

construct.^{3,6} As a psychological construct, *balance* indicates an overall level of contentment regarding meeting work and nonwork demands,⁷ namely, a state in which a person's self-evaluation of effectiveness and satisfaction with work and nonwork roles are consistent with his or her personal priorities.² As a relationship construct, balance has been defined as meeting the expectations of role partners and successfully negotiating and sharing these obligations in both the work and nonwork domains.⁶ In a work-life conflict, work and nonwork responsibilities are often incompatible in terms of a personal resource (eg, time, attention, and energy) or role obligation (eg, behaviors, habits, and practices).⁴ *Work-life enrichment* refers to how multiple life roles can be beneficial and is "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role."⁵

As scholars interested in sport have continued to study the work-life interface and its various constructs, 2 main bodies of research have emerged that focus on coaches and

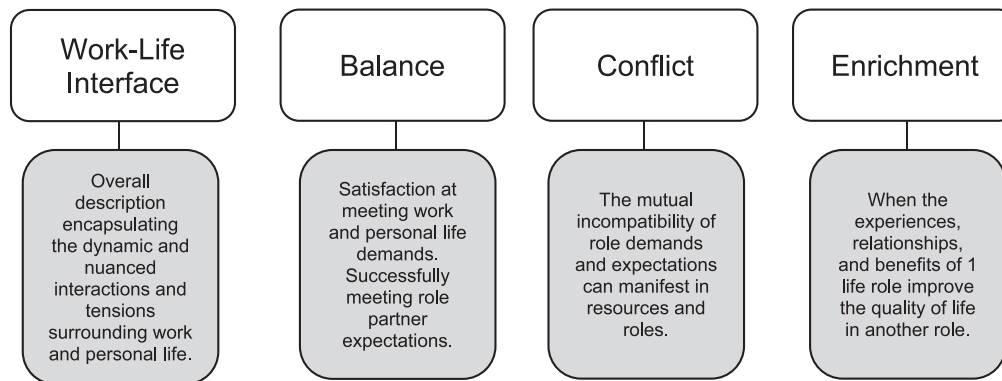


Figure 1. Definitions of work-life constructs.

athletic trainers (ATs). Coaches provide a useful context for examining the work-life interface of employees in sport because of the demanding job pressures, publicly visible and criticized performances, irregular work schedules, broad and competing stakeholder demands, face time requirements, and information overload.⁸ Most of the current literature has focused on collegiate coaches,^{1,9,10,11} but some researchers^{12–14} have addressed the experiences of coaches at the high school level.

In much the same way, athletic training is distinct because of its status as a health care profession that often operates within a sport organization. Especially in the collegiate and professional sport contexts, an AT may be placed in a challenging position as the athletic department emphasizes athletic and financial success and the AT must focus on the health and welfare of the athletes. In addition, ATs lack full control over their schedules and must adapt to the demands and requirements of coaches and other athletic department staff. Athletic trainers are faced with odd hours, unpredictable competition seasonality, working nights and weekends, pressure to prepare athletes for competition, last-minute schedule changes, and working under supervisors who are typically not medical professionals.² Consequently, coaches and ATs are 2 populations that provide a useful and insightful context for examining and gaining an in-depth understanding of the work-life interface, especially in terms of balance, conflict, and enrichment. Some investigators examined the work-life interface of employees and others within sports such as students preparing to enter the field,¹⁵ graduate assistants,¹⁶ general collegiate athletic department staff,¹⁷ conference commissioners,¹⁸ and athletic directors.¹⁹ This work^{15–19} highlighted the antecedents, various work-life outcomes, and coping mechanisms for managing work and nonwork obligations.

Also, scholars^{1,9,20} suggested that working in the sport industry can be challenging because of its seasonality, high time requirements, requirements for travel, irregular scheduling, requirements for face time, lack of autonomy, and lack of staff. In general, challenges resulted from various influences, including sociocultural (eg, gender expectations), organizational (eg, level of administrative support), and individual (eg, role salience) factors.^{2,21} Furthermore, authors^{10,20} found that those working in athletics experienced moderate to high levels of work-life conflict, regardless of sex, marital status, family status, or job position. Common coping strategies included organizational and individual tactics, such as cultivating a family-

friendly work culture, building support networks at work and away from work, improving planning and organizing skills, creating strict priorities, integrating work and personal life when possible, and building boundaries between work and personal life activities as needed.^{9,12,22,23}

As investigation of the field expands, it is important to occasionally pause to review the nature and extent of the research that has been completed.²⁴ Such an overview can produce important insight into the trends in the field and guide future scholars to examine less developed areas. Thus, the purpose of our study was to provide an up-to-date review on the work-life interface in the sport literature, focusing on research conducted on ATs, coaches, and other sport personnel. We consolidated research findings, assessed current methods and conceptual trends, and identified avenues for future study. Consequently, our findings will assist future authors by identifying gaps in the current literature and acting as a platform from which to help drive research in this field.

METHODS

Although several different types of reviews are possible when assessing the extent and nature of research within a given topic, for this study, a scoping review was chosen.²⁵ A *scoping review* is the process of mapping the existing literature in a given area of study, which can be especially useful when the literature upon which the review is based is broad. The information generated by researchers examining the work-life interface of people working in the sport industry is growing rapidly, but the theoretical frameworks, study designs, and measurements used vary. A scoping review has a broader purview. It can be advantageous for reviewing a body of literature because it is not as restrictive regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review.²⁶ Because a scoping review has a wider range of types of selection criteria, it can be useful for identifying broad parameters and gaps in the body of literature.²⁷ For this study, our scoping review followed the framework outlined by Arksey and O'Malley,²⁵ along with the modifications recommended by Levac et al.²⁸ In general, the 5 steps required for this kind of scoping review are (1) identify the research question or purpose, (2) identify the relevant studies, (3) select the studies, (4) chart the data, and (5) collate, summarize, and report the results.^{25,28} Please see Figure 2 for a visual schematic of this process.

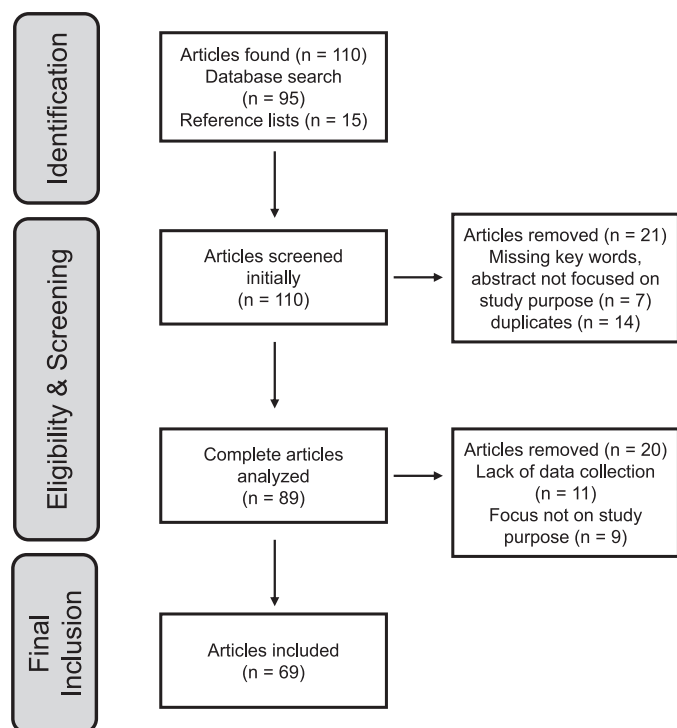


Figure 2. Flow diagram showing article identification, screening, and selection process.

Literature Search Strategy and Study Selection

We searched 3 electronic databases to find literature for this study: SPORTDiscus, PsychINFO, and Google Scholar. New articles were added to the study until October 31, 2020. We selected a variety of search terms to find articles, including *work-family balance*, *work-life balance*, *role balance*, *work-family conflict*, *work-life conflict*, *role conflict*, *work-family enrichment*, *work-life enrichment*, *role enrichment*, *coach*, *trainer*, *athletic trainer*, *collegiate athletics*, *athlete*, and *athletics*. These search terms were used in different combinations and configurations in the database search process. The results were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English.

For each article, we examined the article title, key words, abstract, and reference list. If the title or key words matched those of interest for this study, the article was initially included for analysis. Searching the reference list was also valuable for finding articles not returned via the initial search; this process resulted in 110 total articles. This broad list of articles was then preliminarily refined by removing duplicates and examining the abstract and key words to see if it was appropriate for the scope of the review. Overall, this process of removing articles resulted in a total of 89 articles that were downloaded for full analysis.

Charting the Data

We then performed a more thorough examination of these 89 articles via critical reading and extracting information. For each article, these data were recorded in a spreadsheet: participant demographics (ie, number, gender, and geographic location), role in athletics (ie, *AT*, *coach*, *athlete*, or *other*), study design (ie, methods), theoretical perspectives and frameworks (ie, conceptuali-

zation of work-life interface and broader overarching theory), and focus of the article as related to the work-life interface (ie, balance, conflict, and enrichment). During this process, we removed several articles because either the research was outside the scope of the study or primary data were not collected, which produced a final list of 69 peer-reviewed, published articles (Tables 1–3).

RESULTS

Our purpose was to provide an up-to-date review of the literature on the work-life interface, specifically focusing on the sport industry and research conducted on ATs, coaches, and other sport personnel. We selected 69 peer-reviewed, published studies to obtain insight into the current focus of work-life studies in sport. In addition, we highlighted new directions for researchers examining this topic. In the following sections, we provide summary information about the sample characteristics, athletic role, study designs, theoretical frameworks, and article focus.

Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics of the 69 studies highlighted areas in which researchers have focused their work. This information also allows future scholars to explore populations that have received less attention. Of the selected studies, 53.62% ($n = 37$) focused on a mixed sample of men and women, 24.64% ($n = 17$) focused on women only, 13.04% ($n = 9$) focused on men only, and in 8.69% ($n = 6$), participant gender was not reported. Most of the investigations (82.61%, $n = 57$) originated in the United States. Several international studies were also completed, but the locations of these populations were somewhat scattered: 1 sample each was obtained from Australia, France, Iran, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, most participants were either ATs (49.28%, $n = 34$) or coaches (28.99%, $n = 20$). However, a few authors focused on athletes (7.25%, $n = 5$), general athletic department staff (4.35%, $n = 3$), or students looking to become ATs (4.35%, $n = 3$). In addition, conference commissioners, athletic directors, and referees were each the focus of at least 1 study.

Study Design and Theoretical Frameworks

Researchers used qualitative (57.97%, $n = 40$), quantitative (33.33%, $n = 23$), and mixed-methods (8.69%, $n = 6$) designs for collecting data. For the qualitative methods, semistructured in-depth interviews (50.72%, $n = 35$) were the primary source of data, with additional data provided by focus groups (2.89%, $n = 2$). Longitudinal interviews and observations were sources in 1 investigation. For the quantitative studies, the primary data-collection method was cross-sectional web-based surveys (33.33%, $n = 23$); another method was a mix of surveys and online journaling. Researchers of mixed-methods studies used both surveys and interviews as primary data-collection techniques (7.25%, $n = 5$).

Several theoretical frameworks were applied. Although a general discussion of balance and conflict framed most works (26.1%, $n = 18$), other theoretical areas of focus were burnout (4.35%, $n = 3$), workaholism (4.35%, $n = 3$), and

Table 1. Overview of Studies^a Focused on Athletic Trainers Continued on Next Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Key Findings
Barrett et al (2016) ²⁹	Burnout and WLB	Qual	Focus groups and interviews	Balance and conflict	23, 9/14	ATs recognized WLB and burnout as future challenges and felt coping strategies could be used to mitigate them.
Benes and Mazerolle (2014) ³⁰	Social cognitive framework for career choice	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	26, 7/19	Senior ATs noted potential negative (long hours, low salary, and WLC concerns) and positive (dynamism and an enjoyable profession) aspects of their career choice.
Eason et al (2014) ³¹	Mentorship	Qual	Interviews	Balance	27, 0/27	When work role models and mentors maintained balance themselves, female ATs viewed them as valuable resources for promoting WLB.
Eason et al (2018) ²	Multilevel model	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Balance and enrichment	299, 169/130	Authors created and validated multilevel WLB scale among ATs. The scale gives insight into the complexity of the work-life interface, especially as it relates to job satisfaction and career intentions.
Eason et al (2019) ³²	WLB and job satisfaction	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	30, 14/16	ATs discussed how job satisfaction and future career intentions were influenced by identity, motivation, and conscientiousness. Organizational factors (staff size, hours worked, salary, work schedule, and autonomy) strongly influenced job satisfaction and career intentions.
Eason et al (2020) ³³	Work-family guilt	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	257, 93/162 ^b	ATs reported WFG was predicted by WFC and that both WFG and WFC increased as work hours increased, regardless of sex.
Eberman et al (2019) ³⁴	WLB and workplace policies	Quant	Survey	Balance	783, 375/404 ^b	Many ATs were unaware of formal workplace policies. However, orientations increased confidence in and awareness of these policies.
Gnacinski et al (2020) ³⁵	Occupational recovery	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Balance	144, 71/73	Recovery Experience Questionnaire was validated for use among ATs. The authors proposed this questionnaire as an aid in determining the relationship between occupational recovery and WLB.
Goodman et al (2015) ³⁶	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	18, 13/5	Head ATs reported organizational challenges rooted in a lack of autonomy and high work role demands. WLB strategies hinged on prioritization, boundary setting, and integrating family and work.
Goodman et al (2017) ³⁷	Role congruency theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	8, 5/3	Collegiate ATs experienced both benefits and drawbacks (role strain [conflict], WLC).
Kahanov et al (2010) ³⁸	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Balance and conflict	411, 0/411	Motherhood role increased WLC and career exits. Administration should consider parental needs in regard to workplace flexibility and workplace support systems.
Mazerolle and Eason (2015) ³⁹	Preference theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance	27, 0/27	Female ATs conveyed traditional sex ideologies about family roles and parenting responsibilities. Individual- and sociocultural-level factors influenced career and family goals.

Table 1. Continued From Previous Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Key Findings
Mazerolle and Eason (2016) ⁴⁰	General WLB	Qual	Interviews, longitudinal	Balance	6, 3/3	Time of year, organizational demands, and life stage reduced WLB, whereas adaptability, mindset, supervisor support, coworker support, personal support, and engagement in leisure or family time increased WLB.
Mazerolle and Eason (2016) ⁴¹	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	22, 0/22	Head ATs who were mothers reported work demands, time of year, and motherhood demands increased WLC. Planning, attitude, support networks, and workplace integration increased WLB.
Mazerolle and Eason (2018) ⁴²	WLB and workplace climate	Qual	Interviews	Balance	30, 14/16	ATs discussed family-friendly work climates as useful facilitators of WLB in allowing for autonomy related to work scheduling and encouraging employees to put family first. Cultural support promoted workplace integration, which increased WLB.
Mazerolle and Gavin (2013) ⁴³	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	18, 0/18	Female ATs highlighted supportive work and home environments, flexible schedules, and good time-management skills as increasing WFB. Successful WFB mentors were seen as potential role models.
Mazerolle and Goodman (2013) ⁴⁴	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance	8, 5/3	A family-oriented and supportive work environment, developing nonwork interests, and individual strategies were important factors influencing WLB for ATs at the organizational level.
Mazerolle and Hunter (2017) ⁴⁵	Professional work commitment	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	27, 27/0	ATs indicated that a positive work environment increased professional commitment. However, time spent away from family and feeling underappreciated increased the feeling of an overworked climate, which decreased professional commitment.
Mazerolle and Hunter (2018) ⁴⁶	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance	27, 27/0	ATs working for professional sport organizations identified barriers to WLB: demanding nature of the job, being on call, and time requirements. Facilitators were building boundaries to disengage from work, family and spousal support, and support from organizational staff.
Mazerolle et al (2008) ⁴⁷	General WLB	Mixed methods	Survey and interviews	Conflict	Survey: 587, 324/263; interviews: 12, 6/6	Contributors to WLC included long work hours, travel, inadequate staffing, and lack of control over schedules, regardless of marital status, family status, or sex.
Mazerolle et al (2008) ⁴⁸	Job and life satisfaction	Mixed methods	Survey and interviews	Conflict	Survey: 587, 324/263; interviews: 12, 6/6	As ATs experienced higher levels of WFC, job satisfaction decreased, and burnout and intention to leave the profession increased.
Mazerolle et al (2011) ⁴⁹	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	28, 13/15	For collegiate ATs, high work demands, less schedule flexibility, and staffing patterns increased WLC. Supportive personal network and using organizational policies improved WLB.

Table 1. Continued From Previous Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Key Findings
Mazerolle et al (2013) ⁵⁰	NA	Qual	Interviews	Balance	27, 0/27	Female ATs depended on support systems, prioritization of family time, compartmentalization of work and family, and exercise as strategies to promote WFB. Informal sources of support, such as coworkers, were especially important. Head ATs realized their role as influential in helping subordinates achieve WLB by encouraging disengagement from work, cooperation in the workplace, and providing support and understanding.
Mazerolle et al (2015) ⁵¹	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	18, 13/5	Collegiate female ATs thought that continuing a career in AT might be incompatible with having a family.
Mazerolle et al (2015) ⁵²	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	27, 0/27	ATs reported moderate levels of WLC. Job demands and staffing concerns increased WLC, especially work overload. Supervisor and peer support, as well as personal networks and time away from work decreased WLC and increased WLB.
Mazerolle et al (2015) ⁵³	General WLB	Mixed methods	Survey and interviews	Conflict	Survey: 244, 114/128 ^b ; interviews: 13, 5/8	Both men and women described above-average WFC, especially those in collegiate and secondary school settings. Those who felt more comfortable using work-leave benefits had less WFC.
Mazerolle et al (2015) ⁵⁴	WLB and workplace policies	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	246, 110/136	Time away from work, support networks, and keeping work and personal life separate were coping strategies for achieving WLB. Factors reducing WLB included time of year, job demands, and spouse and family needs.
Mazerolle et al (2015) ⁵⁵	General WLB	Mixed methods	Survey and online journaling	Balance	22, 22/0	Career ATs indicated that role identity, workplace fit, and setting rewards increased career longevity. Promotion of WLB by coworkers, supervisors, family, and friends enhanced long-term career success.
Mazerolle et al (2016) ⁵⁶	Career longevity	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	14, 11/3	Female ATs identified organizational, individual, and sociocultural reasons for departing the field. Missing out on family activities, low salaries, and sexism decreased retention intentions.
Mazerolle et al (2017) ⁵⁷	Retention, attrition, and departure justifications	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	12, 0/12	ATs reported using informal workplace policies more frequently than other forms of support to increase WLB. Participants felt more formal policies supported by administration would lead to greater WLB.
Mazerolle et al (2017) ⁵⁸	General WLB	Qual	Interviews	Balance	21, 11/10	Moderate levels of coping behaviors, combined with emotional stability, allowed ATs to manage personal and professional lives more effectively, thereby increasing WFB.
Mazerolle et al (2018) ⁵⁹	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Balance and conflict	423, 193/230	

Table 1. Continued From Previous Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Key Findings
Mazerolle et al (2018) ⁶⁰	Career transitions	Qual	Interviews	Balance	31, 6/25	First-year ATs recognized that WLB was important for increasing commitment to the profession. Relationships, enjoyment, and professional responsibilities also increased commitment intentions.
Pitney et al (2011) ⁶¹	NA	Mixed methods	Survey and interviews	Conflict	Survey: 415, 212/203; interviews: 14, 6/8	Moderate WFC was present; average work hours per week and WFC scores were positively and significantly related. Organizational (colleagues and administration) and personal (family understanding work demands) supports were influential in reducing WFC.
Romero et al (2018) ⁶²	Role strain	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	152, NA	ATs acknowledged role strain, including overload, ambiguity, incongruity, and incompetence and intersender, intrasender, and role conflict. Role overload and conflict were the most influential factors in moderate- to high-level role strain.
Romero et al (2018) ⁶³	Role strain	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	34, 34/0	Male ATs discussed role strain stemming from competing expectations of the athletes, organization, and league, resulting in WLC. Improved organizational communication and increased staffing were recommended to reduce role strain.
Singe et al (2020) ⁶⁴	General WLB and support	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	474, 243/231	WFC was universally experienced among both men and women ATs. Time-based conflict was the greatest area of concern. Social support networks from coworkers, peers, and family reduced this conflict.

Abbreviations: ATs, athletic trainers; ATSS, athletic training students; NA, not available; Qual, qualitative; Quant, quantitative; WFC, work-family conflict; WFG, work-family guilt; WLB, work-life balance; WLC, work-life conflict.

^a The population region for all studies was the United States.

Table 2. Overview of Studies Focused on Coaches Continued on Next Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Population Region	Key Findings
Bentzen et al (2017) ⁶⁵	Burnout	Mixed methods	Survey and interviews	Conflict	Survey: 92, 86/6; Interviews: 4, NA	Norway	Coaches reported FWC as a challenge for work recovery. However, coaching motivation influenced recovery activities and decreased burnout symptoms over a long season.
Bruening and Dixon (2007) ⁹	Multilevel model	Qual	Focus group	Conflict	41, 0/41	US	Coaching mothers discussed self-awareness, organization and time management, sacrificing aspects of work, support networks, work-hour flexibility, and family-friendly work policies and culture as useful coping strategies to reduce WFC.
Clarkson et al (2019) ⁶⁶	Hegemonic masculinity	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	12, 0/12	England	Female coaches experienced many challenges, including sexism, high levels of scrutiny, WLC, and gender bias. Mentoring, informal professional support, and male advocacy helped them succeed.
Darvin (2020) ⁶⁷	Role congruency theory	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	12, 0/12	US	Female former assistant coaches reported WLC. Many who were single without children discussed how a lack of non-nuclear family connections with cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, nephews, etc, pushed them out of the field.
Dawson et al (2016) ⁶⁸	Career development theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance	6, 6/0	Australia	Coach career development faced challenges related to WFB.
Dixon and Bruening (2007) ¹	Multilevel model	Qual	Focus group	Conflict	41, 0/41	US	Coaching mothers were influenced by individual, organizational, and sociocultural inputs. Work climate and culture constrained lower-level attitudes and behaviors, eg, conflict and time management.
Dixon and Sagas (2007) ⁶⁹	Organizational support theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	253, NA	US	Organizational support fully mediated life satisfaction. WFC partially mediated the relationship between organizational support and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction partially mediated the effect of organizational support and WFC on life satisfaction.
Graham and Dixon (2017) ¹²	Role theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance, conflict, and enrichment	24, 24/0	US	Male high school coaches struggled to find balance, experienced high levels of conflict, and found enrichment through many sources.
Graham et al (2019) ¹⁰	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Balance and conflict	2265, 1433/832	US	When forced to choose between work and family, work pressure, family pressure, and role saliency were influential factors.
Joncheray et al (2019) ⁷⁰	Interactionist theory	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	41, 33/8	France	Coaches' passion for coaching and high levels of work commitment reduced WLB. Some increased WLB by reducing administrative tasks, avoiding unnecessary travel, and creating periods of high devotion to family to balance periods of overcommitment to coaching.
Lundkvist et al (2016) ⁷¹	Workaholism and WLC	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	261, NA	Sweden	Coaches with higher levels of WLC also had high levels of work exhaustion. Those with higher levels of exhaustion were at higher risk for burnout.
Olusoga and Kenttä (2017) ⁷²	Burnout	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	2, 2/0	Sweden	Coaches reported WLC as a contributing factor to burnout and reduced career commitment.

Table 2. Continued From Previous Page

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Sample Size, Men/Women	Population Region	Key Findings
Polat et al (2018) ⁷³	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	114, 83/31	South Africa	Coaches suggested family-friendly work policies (ie, organizational support) could reduce WLC and enhance work and nonwork satisfaction.
Ryan (2008) ¹³	Role theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	147, NA	US	School size, coach age, and role preference (teacher or coach) were significantly related to increased role conflict. The number of sports coached significantly reduced role conflict.
Ryan and Sagas (2006) ⁷⁴	Role theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	147, NA	US	Highly related teacher-coach roles often resulted in satisfaction with both roles. Role interference reduced satisfaction. Only teaching role satisfaction affected turnover intent.
Ryan and Sagas (2009) ⁷⁵	Organizational turnover	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	346, NA	US	Pay satisfaction and occupational turnover were directly related, but WLC mediated the relationship. Coaches who are unsatisfied with their pay may be more aware of WLC.
Ryan and Sagas (2011) ⁷⁶	Ecological theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Enrichment	628, 411/217	US	Supervisor support both reduced conflict and increased enrichment for coaches. Increased autonomy decreased conflict and increased enrichment.
Sagas and Cunningham (2005) ⁷⁷	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	115, 52/63	US	Collegiate assistant coaches of female teams did not experience high levels of conflict other than moderate levels of time-based conflict. Time-based conflict was not connected to job satisfaction.
Sage (1987) ¹⁴	Role theory	Qual	Interview and observations	Conflict and enrichment	50, NA	US	High school teacher-coach role overload and role conflict led to role strain. Coping mechanisms included prioritizing certain roles and leaving coaching. Coaching role offered rewards beyond teaching role.
Schenewark and Dixon (2012) ¹¹	Role theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict and enrichment	282, 192/90	US	Collegiate coaches with families experienced conflict and enrichment bidirectionally. However, WFC was higher than FWC, and WFE was lower than FWE.

Abbreviations: FWC, family-work conflict; FWE, family-to-work enrichment; NA, not available; Quant, quantitative; Qual, qualitative; WLC, work-life balance; WLB, work-to-family enrichment; WFE, work-to-family enrichment; WFC, work-life balance.

Table 3. Overview of Studies Focused on General Athletic Employee Personnel

Reference (Year)	Theoretical Framework	Type of Study	Methods	Article Focus	Population	Sample Size, Men/Women	Population Region	Key Findings
Dixon et al (2006) ⁷⁸	Role conflict	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	Athletes	9, 9/0	US	Minor league baseball players' coping mechanisms for single players included a separationist strategy. Players with families struggled with the dual role and adopted an integration strategy. Tension sources were travel, lack of pay, and performance stress.
Fathi et al (2020) ⁷⁹	General WLB	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	Government sport organization employees	260, NA	Iran	WFC and the intention to seek employment elsewhere were significantly related. Authors suggested a flexible work situation would improve work performance and reduce WLC.
Hollings et al (2014) ⁸⁰	Career development for athletes	Qual	Interviews	Balance	Athletes	11, 5/6	New Zealand	Athletes who progressed from junior to senior competition levels embraced imbalance among sport, education, and work ambitions. Those who tried to balance life with athletic goals did not advance.
Hong et al (2019) ⁸¹	Organizational support theory	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	Referees	260, 231/29	South Korea	Internal motivation reduced WLC and acted as a mediator between perceived organizational support and WLC.
Huml et al (2020) ⁸²	Workaholism, engagement, WLC	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	General athletic department employees	4167, 2175/1992	US	Among collegiate athletic department employees, WLC mediated the relationship between work engagement and workaholism. WLC may prevent highly engaged workers from becoming workaholics.
Palmer and Leberman (2009) ⁸³	Constraint theory and role identity	Qual	Interviews	Balance and conflict	Athletes	9, 0/9	New Zealand	Elite athlete mothers discussed the need to use timing and physical space and build supportive networks to maintain WFB.
Simmons et al (2016) ⁸⁴	Role conflict	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	Athletes	11, 11/0	US	Family support via coparticipation, emotional understanding, and logistics were useful for reducing WLC. Role management, time management, and prioritization were important coping strategies.
Smith et al (2017) ¹⁶	Career construction theory	Qual	Interviews	Conflict	Graduate students	25, 0/25	US	Graduate assistants faced challenges related to balancing work, career development, academics, and personal obligations.
Taylor and Wells (2017) ¹⁹	Institutional theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance	Athletic directors	10, 0/10	US	Female athletic directors reported WLB created significant barriers for women wishing to advance in collegiate athletic careers. Authors discussed collegiate athletics' incompatibility with family life, resulting in tension.
Taylor et al (2018) ¹⁸	Career construction theory	Qual	Interviews	Balance	Conference commissioners	8, 0/8	US	Female conference commissioners described how work-life negotiation strategies, especially focusing on integrating work and family together, were helpful in increasing WFB.
Taylor et al (2019) ¹⁷	Workaholism, burnout, WLC	Quant	Survey, cross-sectional	Conflict	General athletic department employees	4453, 2427/2025 ^a	US	Workaholism must be a part of the discussion about nonwork commitments. Organizations should be specifically aware of coaches and the consequences that differentiate high work engagement from workaholism.
Tekavc et al (2015) ⁸⁵	Holistic athletic career model	Qual	Interviews	Conflict and balance	Athletes	12, 6/6	Slovenia	Elite-level athletes addressed challenges balancing academic, athletic, and social roles. Some noted how the demands of their sport resulted in social trade-offs. Enriching outcomes of this tradeoff were goal accomplishment, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction.

Abbreviations: Qual, qualitative; Quant, quantitative; NA, not available; WFB, work-family balance; WFC, work-family conflict; WLB, work-life balance; WLC, work-life conflict.

^a The remaining participants did not disclose gender.

role strain (2.89%, (n = 2). Additional specific theories were used as frameworks (eg, role congruency theory, organizational support theory, career construction theory, multilevel model of the work-life interface). However, application of these theories was somewhat scattered and inconsistent.

Article Focus

The focus of each article was also important to map, as it showed the primary aim. For consistency among studies, we classified each as balance, enrichment, or conflict. Some had a combination of these perspectives and were classified as such. Most authors examined conflict (46.38%, n = 32) or a mix of conflict and balance (23.19%, n = 16). Balance was the next most common focus (24.64%, n = 17), with researchers either entirely or partially focusing on enrichment (7.25%, n = 5). Some counts overlapped because the focus was split among 2 or 3 of the possible constructs. Also, some scholars used different verbiage for conflict, such as *interference*, but we classified these articles as conflict focused as well.

Summary of Article Findings

Although our goal was to map the ways in which the work-life interface has been studied in the sport industry, it is still beneficial to summarize and highlight the key findings of these studies. Such a summary provides practitioners and researchers with insight into both the items that are well understood and those that are less well understood. A summary of each study is available in Tables 1, 2, and 3. However, in the following section, we briefly highlight the connections and commonalities among the studies.

In this body of literature, the experiences of work-life conflict and struggles with work-life balance were nearly universal.^{17,64} In a single study,⁷⁷ the researchers reported collegiate assistant coaches experienced only mild levels of work-life conflict but commented on the surprising nature of this finding. Several common causes of increased work-life conflict and reduced levels of work-life balance were identified among the investigations. For ATs, coaches, and other sport personnel, most sources of increasing work-life conflict or reduced levels of work-life balance were organizational factors. Of the organizational factors, the most typically cited sources of tension were work demands,^{10,40,41,46,47,49,53,63,64} work climate,¹ lack of autonomy,^{9,32,49} travel requirements,^{1,9,46,47} low salaries,^{32,78} managerial incompetency,⁶² role strain,^{37,62} long work hour requirements,^{1,9,12,32,40,46} and inadequate staffing.^{47,53,63} Individual factors were also important reasons for increases in work-life conflict or decreases in work-life balance. These individual factors included items such as personal life stage,^{29,30,38,40} age,^{13,29,30} workaholism,^{17,82} and career stage.^{13,16,29,30} In some studies, the family situation (eg, being a parent) was discussed as an individual contributing factor.^{9,12,38,41,52} However, a number of authors clearly outlined that work-life conflict was experienced by both men and women^{10,11,33,47,64} and pointed out that those without children also experienced increased levels of work-life conflict and reduced work-life balance as a result of working in sport.^{16,47,67} From a sociocultural perspective,

sexism and gender bias were commonly cited sources of tension.^{12,57,66}

Along with reporting frequent sources of tension based on working in sport, scholars described successful coping strategies for reducing work-life conflict and increasing work-life balance. The coping strategies included improving time management,^{12,43,84} compartmentalizing work and personal life,^{12,50,55,78} integrating work and personal life,^{12,18,36,42,78} using formal workplace supports,^{54,61} using informal workplace supports,^{58,66} cultivating family-friendly work climates,^{42,43,44,45,51,61} calling on coworker support,^{31,43,46,51,53,55,56,61} setting work boundaries,^{36,44,46,51,53,55,70} finding successful mentors,^{31,43,66} increasing workplace flexibility,^{43,79} increasing autonomy,⁷⁶ managing priorities,^{14,36,42,50,84} maintaining consistent physical exercise,^{18,50} relying on supervisor support,^{46,53,56,61,76} and reducing roles or tasks.^{14,70} Although using organizational supports, such as formal workplace policies, was discussed less often, orientation sessions increased the awareness of and confidence in them and administrator support.^{34,58} Authors^{9,12,46,53,64,67,83} also determined that nonwork social support (eg, support from spouse, family, extended family, or friends) was a strong influence in decreasing work-life conflict and increasing work-life balance. Many researchers^{2,13,14,32,38,67,70,72} found that participants viewed the sport industry as fundamentally incompatible with having a balanced life⁵² and saw career exit and change as the only solutions for restoring work-life balance.

As we indicated, working in sport presents several challenges for achieving work-life balance, especially from an organizational perspective. That is, the primary sources of challenge to the work-life interface come from organizational pressures and dynamics. To compound this challenge, those working in sport believe the primary responsibility for coping rests with the individual. It appears that working in the sport industry, no matter the capacity, is associated with tension and stress regarding the work-life interface. Consequently, understanding these dynamics remains important for those researching the work-life interface in sport. In the following section, we suggest ways the field might continue to progress.

DISCUSSION

The body of literature focused on the work-life interface of those working in the sport industry is expanding. Of the 69 articles included in this study, 56 were published between 2011 and 2020, and 38 of those were published between 2016 and 2020. This suggests a rapidly expanding scholarly conversation centered on ways to help ATs, coaches, athletes, and others in the sport industry achieve balance between work and nonwork activities, reduce conflict, and enrich their work and personal lives. With that in mind, several areas in the literature need clarification. Additionally, certain research questions still need to be asked and answered. In the following sections, we discuss these needs in more detail.

Clarity With Terminology

One area that may benefit the overall field would be unified and clear definitions of the terms related to the work-life interface. For example, several researchers used work-family language instead of work-life language.

Typically, as long as the work-family construct is being used to describe work and family life, this language is descriptive and useful. However, if *work-family* is used to describe populations generally and not specifically in the context of actual family dynamics, more inclusive work-life terminology should be used.

Another area that could be improved is the use of the terms *balance* and *conflict*. As noted in the introduction, balance and conflict are constructs with specific, independent meanings. That is, balance is not defined as the absence of conflict.⁸⁶ Yet when discussing experiences of balance and conflict in sport, investigators often used the terms interchangeably, which may cause confusion among readers and practitioners. In addition, some authors^{37,62,74} used *role conflict* in place of *work-life conflict* or the construct of *interference* instead of *conflict*. A new scholar in the field who wants to examine the work-life interface of employees in the sport industry may feel confused and uncertain about these terms and meanings. Being particular about terminology and focusing with clarity on specific, independent constructs will help advance the literature.

Research Questions Outstanding

In this scoping review, we also highlighted gaps in the field that require attention. Some of the biggest needs are advancing scholarship on enrichment, developing an international voice, considering directionality, and characterizing the athlete perspective. Future researchers should highlight the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other individuals and racial and ethnic minority populations. Furthermore, comparing work-life interface policies, procedures, and cultures among sport organizations would also provide useful insight. As mentioned in the Results, only 7.25% ($n = 5$) of the sample explored enrichment. As the trend toward positive organizational behavior studies increases,⁸⁷ looking at enrichment will be more important. Consequently, focusing on enrichment and its antecedents, experiences, and outcomes will be a rich area of study.

Another gap in the literature is the failure to highlight international populations. Although samples from several countries were included in this review, most researchers focused on US populations (82.61%, $n = 57$). Broadening the literature beyond the United States will likely allow a more nuanced understanding of the work-life interface to emerge. Input from people working in sport who have different priorities, cultures, experiences, and perspective on negotiating work and nonwork responsibilities will enhance the literature and demonstrate the nuances of these experiences. In general, examining cultural differences between work-life enriching places of employment and those filled with conflict, as well as how different races and ethnicities view the experiences of managing work and nonwork obligations in the sport industry, will broaden our understanding. Characterizing international populations may be challenging for those focusing on ATs, however, as many countries do not yet recognize this profession.⁸⁸ Even so, pushing outward to include broader populations where possible will enrich the literature.

Clearly, the work-life interface is bidirectional.⁴ That is, just as work influences personal life, personal life can conflict with or enhance work life. However, few

researchers have addressed this bidirectionality in detail. In several studies^{9,12,22,23} in this review, the importance of building support networks outside work was discussed. Thus, examining the experiences of life-work enrichment or life-work conflict and their outcomes on work could contribute to the literature.

Finally, giving a voice to athletes' experiences of managing various life roles would add to the literature. Based on anecdotal evidence, gaining access to athletes as research participants can be a major challenge. Nonetheless, athletes likely have distinct experiences and perspectives that are important to examine. Exploring these perspectives may provide important contributions to the overall understanding of the work-life interface. Exploring athletes' perspectives will also probably have important outcomes for practitioners, as understanding coping strategies or outcomes of conflict may provide avenues for performance enhancement.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although a scoping review was useful in allowing us to address the current literature on the work-life interface in sport, this study was not without its weaknesses. As with many scoping reviews, our investigation suffered from a lack of evaluation about the quality of the articles reviewed.²⁴ That is, all articles included in the scoping review were weighed equally despite their quality. This leads to a potential for bias in the overall results. To combat this bias, we provided extensive notes on and insights into the articles used for the review (Tables 1–3), as well as a transparent description of the process used to find and review the articles that were included in the final study.

A second weakness, which is true of all review types, is that our review likely missed important articles not contained in the databases or not identified in the citations during the article collection process. Because the literature on the sport industry is broad, we encourage researchers to publish reviews to guide the advance of new work in the field. In addition, because of the nature of the review, we included only studies that involved data collection. This necessitated the removal of several important and influential manuscripts that have shaped the discussion of the work-life interface in sport. Although these omissions were regrettable, it was important to apply a consistent set of selection criteria to the articles in the final sample, which resulted in the removal of several.

The culture of sport and its emphasis on performance, competition, and winning have serious outcomes for those working in the field. Consequently, more study is needed to progress our understanding of the experiences of various populations working in and around sport. Gaining insight into the theoretical and practical sides of the work-life interface will provide useful and important findings, which can be used to slowly improve the ability of those in the sport industry to successfully manage work and nonwork obligations and improve their overall quality of life.

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