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The Role of Work-Life Balance in Mediating the Influence of Flexible Work Policy on the Performance of Ustadzah in Boarding Tahfizh Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract. *Female teachers (ustadzah) in residential Qur'an memorization (tahfizh) boarding schools teach, supervise memorization, and care for students in a setting where the boundary between work and personal life is often blurred. This study aims to describe ustadzah's perceptions of flexible work policy, work-life balance, and performance, and to examine the effect of flexible work policy on ustadzah performance, both directly and through work-life balance. Conservation of resources theory serves as the overarching theory, supported by work/family border theory and social exchange theory. This explanatory quantitative study uses a census of active ustadzah at Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima, Karanganyar, Indonesia. Data were collected through an anonymous 44-item questionnaire measuring flexible work policy in four dimensions, work-life balance in three dimensions, and performance in two dimensions adapted from the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire. The data were analyzed descriptively and with partial least squares structural equation modeling in SmartPLS 4, using second-order constructs and bootstrapped indirect effects. Of the 231 questionnaires distributed, 174 were usable (75.3%). Ustadzah perceived flexible work policy (mean 3.45), work-life balance (3.54), and performance (3.70) as high, with the lowest scores on scheduling that considers personal needs and on work intruding into personal time. Flexible work policy positively affected work-life balance (β = 0.473; p < 0.001) and performance (β = 0.237; p = 0.001), and work-life balance positively affected performance (β = 0.450; p < 0.001). The indirect effect through work-life balance was significant (β = 0.213; 95% CI 0.135–0.300); all four hypotheses were supported, and work-life balance acted as a complementary (partial) mediator. The findings support the conservation of resources view that organizational resources carry over into inter-role balance and performance, while the direct path is consistent with social exchange theory. Boarding school managers are advised to consider ustadzah's personal needs when drawing up teaching and duty rosters, protect their personal and memorization review time, limit daily working hours, and share replacement duties fairly.*

Keywords: *Balance; Flexible; Performance; School; Work.*

1. Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are Islamic educational institutions that, according to Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, carry out the functions of education, preaching, and community empowerment. Among the various types of Islamic boarding schools, boarding school *tahfizh* (memorization) have a unique work pattern. Students live on the boarding school grounds, while Quran memorization activities take place in a circle of recitation (*halaqah*), which requires daily memorization, review, and monitoring of memorization progress. For female religious teachers, work does not always end with teaching hours. *Halaqah* guidance can continue with student care in the dormitory, on duty, and managing memorization administration, so that work hours can extend beyond formal class hours.

This situation places female Islamic teachers (*ustadzah*) in two demanding roles that both require significant time and energy: their roles as educators and caregivers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and their roles in family and personal life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) explain that the pressures of these two roles, which are not fully aligned, can lead to conflict between work and family. In boarding schools, this problem can be more acute because the physical and temporal boundaries between work and residence are not always clear. Work/family boundary theory states that a person's balance is influenced by how strong, flexible, and permeable the boundaries between work and family are (Clark, 2000). Female Islamic teachers who live in Islamic boarding schools or work as musyrifah (religious leaders), for example, may face boundaries that are more permeable than teachers in non-boarding schools.

This phenomenon needs to be interpreted in light of the actual conditions at the research site. The *Isy Karima Qur'an Tahfizhul Ma'had* in Karanganyar, Central Java, employs 546 employees, 231 of whom are active female religious teachers (*ustadzah*) whose duties include teaching *tahfizh*, general Islamic subjects (*diniyah*), dormitory management, and structural duties. The 2024 Employee Regulations Book issued by the Isy Karima MTQ Personnel Team stipulates standard working hours for *ustadz* and *ustadzah* at 30–36 hours per week. Dormitory management, on-duty duties, and additional halaqah (religious gatherings) take place outside of formal school hours, so the actual workload of *ustadz* holding more than one role has the potential to exceed this standard.

One way institutions respond to the demands of dual roles is by providing flexibility in work arrangements. Hill et al. (2008) define workplace flexibility as the ability of workers to determine when, where, and for how long they work on work-related tasks. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this flexibility can take the form of changing *halaqah* schedules, rotating dormitory duty schedules, temporarily reducing the workload for pregnant or breastfeeding female teachers, and providing special leave for family matters. Isy Karima implements a number of such work arrangements for female teachers as an ongoing personnel practice, although they have not yet been formalized. The question is whether

these arrangements are perceived to improve the work-life balance of female teachers, and whether this balance translates into their performance.

Conservation of resources theory (COR) provides a framework for answering these questions. This theory starts from the assumption that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect resources they value, and that stress arises when resources are threatened with loss, actual loss, or no increase after investment (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Within this framework, flexible work policies can be viewed as organizational conditions that protect or increase the time and energy resources of religious teachers. Protected resources enable a balance between roles, and this balance provides space for religious teachers to invest their energy in their work.

Empirical evidence on this relationship is not yet consistent. Several studies have found that flexible work arrangements have a positive effect on work-life balance and performance, and that work-life balance mediates the relationship (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Ismail & Michael, 2025; Tabobo, Djahum, & Lusiana, 2026; Yussa, Amin, & Sumarni, 2024). Conversely, Darmayanti, Soemartono, and Marwan (2026) found no mediating role for work-life balance among female employees, and Saifullah (2020) reported that work-life balance had no effect on the performance of Muslim female employees. A meta-analysis by Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, and Shockley (2013) also showed that the relationship between work flexibility and work-family conflict is generally small and depends on the type of flexibility studied. This heterogeneity suggests that the role of work-life balance as a link between flexibility and performance still needs to be tested, especially in different work contexts, such as offices and companies.

Gaps are also evident in the research context. Research on work-life balance in Islamic educational institutions found in this research primarily examines its relationship with job satisfaction (Amalia, Hasanuddin, & Jumawan, 2025; Putra, Hasanah, & Murniyati, 2022) or with factors correlated with it, such as intrinsic motivation and leadership (Irawan, Ruswandi, & Irawan, 2019). Research on teachers examining flexibility and performance is generally conducted in regular schools (Johari, Yean Tan, & Tjik Zulkarnain, 2018; Li & Albattat, 2025; Riskarini, Trirahayu, Kurniawati, & Ardianto, 2024). The search did not find any research examining the chain of flexible work policies, work-life balance, and performance among female Islamic teachers in boarding tahfizh Islamic boarding schools, a context with more blurred work-family boundaries and a form of flexibility different from office work. The initial search was conducted during the proposal preparation and updated in October 2026 through web search engines and national journal portals with the keywords work flexibility, work-life balance, performance, ustadzah, and pesantren along with their English equivalents. The closest study found was Hanan, Saefulloh, Putra, Wirtadipura, and Ardie (2026), which examined work-life balance as a mediator between the influence of the *pesantren* environment and leadership style on the performance of *pesantren* teachers, not the influence of flexible work policies.

Based on this description, the problems identified in this study are as follows.

1) The demands of the role in a boarding school for *tahfizh* have the potential to disrupt the balance between the work and personal life of the female teacher because the boundaries between the two are not always clear.

2) *Isy Karima* have implemented a number of flexible work arrangements, but it is not yet known how female teachers perceive these arrangements and whether they relate to their work–life balance and performance.

3) Previous research findings on the influence of work flexibility and work-life balance on performance, as well as on the mediating role of work-life balance, have not been consistent.

This study focuses on the influence of flexible work policies on the performance of Islamic teachers, both directly and through work-life balance. The scope is limited to active Islamic teachers at the *Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima*, Karanganyar. Flexible work policies are measured based on the teachers' perceptions of the availability of work arrangements at the institution, not from a macro-level policy evaluation. Because it was conducted at a single institution, the results of this study are not intended to be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools, but can serve as a reference for Islamic boarding schools with similar characteristics.

2. Research Methods

This research is quantitative explanatory research. Explanatory research aims to explain the relationships between variables through hypothesis testing. This type of research aligns with the second through fifth research questions, which examine the influence of flexible work policies on work-life balance and performance, as well as the mediating role of work-life balance. The first research question, which examines the perceptions of female religious teachers, is answered through descriptive analysis of the same data. Data were collected once through a survey (cross-sectional design). Because the data were collected at a single point in time, the relationships between the variables tested were hypothesized relationships based on theory. This study did not directly test causal sequences. The research was conducted at the *Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima*, Jalan Solo–Tawangmangu Km 34, Pakel, Gerdu, Karangpandan, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. This location was chosen because it is a boarding school for *tahfizh* that implements a number of flexible work arrangements for female teachers as an ongoing employment practice, although not yet outlined in official documents, and is accessible to researchers for research using a census design. The researcher also works within the Isy Karima environment. This position is controlled through data collection procedures described in subsection 3.4. Data collection was carried out in July 2026.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Variable Description

1) General Description of Research Object

Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima began with the determination of Dr. Tundjung Soelaksono Soeharso, Sp.OT, to provide a center for preaching and education of the Qur'an for the community. Through a deliberation of YSPI Isy Karima and DDII, Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima was established in Karanganyar in 1998 with KH. Wahyuddin as the first mudir and Ust. Syihabuddin Abdul Mu'iz as the person in charge of *tahfizh*. Its first program, *Ma'had 'Aly Tahfizhul Qur'an* (MALTIQ), educated 16 students who received full scholarships to memorize 30 juz of the Qur'an and study the sciences of sharia.

Isy Karima then founded various educational units from early childhood to tertiary levels, namely MATIQ-PK (2000), KB-RA Karima Ulya (2007), MIT and STIQ (2010), IMTAQ and ICID (2012), MQBA (2013), and IMTAQ Shighor (2018). These institutions are committed to providing Qur'an-based education to produce a generation of knowledgeable, noble-moraled, and beneficial Qur'an memorizers for the community.

Ma'had is located on Jalan Solo–Tawangmangu Km 34, Pakel, Gerdu, Karangpandan, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, and is currently led by KH. Apip Najaruddin, S.Pd.I Al-Hafizh as the Leader (Mudir). At the time of the research, Ma'had fostered 1,634 students with 546 employees, and 231 of them (42.3%) were active *ustadzah*. The ustadzah carried out the duties of teaching tahfizh in *halaqah*, teaching *diniyah* or general subjects, managing the dormitory as *musyrifah*, and structural or administrative duties.

The work conditions for ustadz and *ustadzah* are regulated in the 2024 Personnel Regulations Book issued by the MTQ Isy Karima Personnel Team (Appendix D). The book stipulates standard working hours for all *ustadz* and *ustadzah* at 30–36 hours per week. Flexible work arrangements as measured in this study, such as schedule changes, permission for family matters, division of tasks and duties, and leniency for *ustadzah* under certain conditions, are in effect and implemented as personnel practices, but have not yet been formalized in official documents. This condition aligns with how this study measures flexible work policies, namely as *ustadzah*'s perception of the availability of rules and practices, rather than as the content of written documents.

2) Response Rate and Respondent Identity

Questionnaires were distributed to all 231 active female Islamic teachers according to the census design. A total of 198 questionnaires were returned (85.7%) and 33 questionnaires were not returned. Data examination followed the rules in subsection 3.6.1 and excluded 24 questionnaires for four reasons, each six questionnaires: (1) respondents did not state their consent so the questionnaires were not filled out; (2) incomplete answers, with the number of blank items ranging from 9 to 22 items or 20.5% to 50.0% of the 44 items, thus exceeding

the 15% limit; (3) uniform answer patterns across all items; and (4) duplicate entries. Thus, 174 questionnaires were eligible for processing, or 75.3% of the distributed questionnaires and 87.9% of the returned questionnaires (Table 4.1).

The number of 174 respondents exceeds the minimum number of 99 respondents set in sub-chapter 3.2. Using formula (1), this number is sufficient to detect a path coefficient as small as 0.19 at a significance level of 5% and a power of 80%.

Table Response Rate

Information	Amount
The questionnaire was distributed	231
Questionnaire returned	198 (85.7%)
Questionnaire not returned	33
The questionnaire is not suitable for processing	24
The questionnaire is worth processing	174
Processable response rate (%)	75.3

Source: processed primary data, 2026.

Respondent identities are presented in Table Percentages were calculated from 174 respondents. Respondents were allowed to select more than one task for the task being performed, so the total percentages exceed 100%.

Table Respondent Identity

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Age	≤ 30 years	38	21.8
	31–40 years	81	46.6
	41–50 years	46	26.4
	> 50 years	9	5.2
last education	High school/Islamic high school/equivalent	26	14.9
	Diploma	11	6.3
	S1	118	67.8
	S2	17	9.8
	Other	2	1.1
Marital status	Not married yet	43	24.7
	Marry	127	73.0
	Divorce on death	4	2.3
Number of children	Not yet/not available	70	40.2
	1	23	13.2
	2	50	28.7
	3	24	13.8
	≥ 4	7	4.0
Age of the youngest child	No children	70	40.2
	< 2 years	17	9.8

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
	2–6 years	37	21.3
	7–12 years	33	19.0
	> 12 years	17	9.8
Taking care of other family members	Yes	72	41.4
	No	102	58.6
Residence	In the dormitory/Islamic boarding school environment	74	42.5
	Outside the Islamic boarding school	100	57.5
Length of service	< 2 years	29	16.7
	2–5 years	64	36.8
	6–10 years	59	33.9
	> 10 years	22	12.6
Average length of service per day	≤ 6 hours	23	13.2
	7–8 hours	62	35.6
	9–10 hours	67	38.5
	> 10 hours	22	12.6
Tasks to be executed (can be more than one)	Tahfizh teacher (halaqah)	65	37.4
	Islamic religious/general subject teacher	72	41.4
	Musyrifah/dormitory caretaker	72	41.4
	Structural/administrative tasks	68	39.1
	Not filling	25	14.4

Source: processed primary data, 2026.

Table shows that the respondents were predominantly female religious teachers (46.6%) aged 31–40 years and had a bachelor's degree (67.8%). Most respondents were married (73.0%), and 59.8% had children. The characteristics most closely related to dual roles were seen in three areas. First, 31.0% of respondents had a youngest child aged six or under, including 9.8% whose youngest child was under two. Second, 41.4% of respondents also cared for other family members, such as parents or in-laws. Third, 42.5% of respondents lived in dormitories or Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), creating a thin physical boundary between their workplace and their home.

In terms of work demands, 51.1% of respondents worked more than eight hours per day, consisting of 38.5% working 9–10 hours and 12.6% working more than 10 hours. A total of 92 respondents (52.9%) held more than one type of task, for example teaching and being a musyrifah. Each type of task was carried out by 37–41% of respondents. A total of 25 respondents (14.4%) did not check any type of task. These data indicate that the dual role demands described in Chapter I were indeed experienced by the majority of respondents.

This length of service data needs to be compared with the standard working hours stated in the Employee Regulations Book, which is 30–36 hours per week. Working more than eight hours per day for just five days would amount to more than 40 hours per week. Therefore, at least half of the respondents reported working hours exceeding the upper limit of the institution's standard. This difference likely stems from duties outside formal school hours, such as dormitory maintenance, on duty, and additional halaqah (Islamic religious gatherings), which are not always counted as working hours. Because length of service is measured by self-reported categories, this figure reflects perceived workload, not official work hours.

3.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model evaluation began with a collinearity check. The VIF value between the performance predictor variables, namely flexible work policy and work-life balance, was 1.288, below the threshold of 3. Thus, there were no collinearity issues in the structural model (Hair et al., 2019).

Common method bias was tested using full collinearity (Kock, 2015), calculated from the latent variable scores output from SmartPLS. The VIF values for full collinearity were 1.376 for flexible work policies, 1.603 for work-life balance, and 1.561 for performance. All values were below 3.3, thus indicating no serious common method bias. These results are consistent with the procedural controls implemented, namely anonymity, neutral data collection officers, and different frequency scales for the performance variables. However, this test does not completely eliminate the possibility of bias, particularly in the path from flexible work policies to work-life balance, as both variables were measured with the same agreement scale in consecutive sections of the questionnaire.

The R^2 value for work-life balance was 0.223 (adjusted R^2 0.219). This means that flexible work policies explain 22.3% of the variation in work-life balance, and this apparent power is weak. The R^2 value for performance was 0.359 (adjusted R^2 0.352). This means that flexible work policies and work-life balance together explain 35.9% of the variation in ustadzah performance, and this apparent power is between weak and moderate (Hair et al., 2019). The remaining variation is explained by other factors outside the model, such as work motivation, leadership, and religious culture, as found in previous studies (Darmayanti et al., 2026; Riskiyanto et al., 2026).

The effect size (f^2) of flexible work policies on work-life balance is 0.288 and is considered medium. The effect size of work-life balance on performance is 0.245 and is also considered medium, while the direct effect size of flexible work policies on performance is 0.068 and is considered small. This pattern indicates that the contribution of flexible work policies to performance is channeled more through work-life balance than directly.

Table Structural Model Evaluation Summary

Track	VIF	f^2	Category f^2	R^2 of the objective variable
X → Z	1,000	0.288	currently	Z = 0.223
Z → Y	1,288	0.245	currently	Y = 0.359
X → Y	1,288	0.068	small	Y = 0.359

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

Predictive relevance was tested using the PLS predict procedure using 10-fold cross-validation repeated 10 times (Shmueli et al., 2019). The Q^2predict values for all endogenous variable indicators ranged between 0.162 and 0.214, thus all above zero (Table 4.13). Furthermore, the root mean square error (RMSE) of the PLS model for all indicators was smaller than the RMSE of the linear regression (LM) comparison model. According to Shmueli et al. (2019), this condition indicates that the model has high predictive power.

Table PLS predict Results

Indicator	Q^2predict	RMSE PLS	RMSE LM
Time balance (Z1)	0.214	0.891	0.909
Balance of engagement (Z2)	0.181	0.910	0.924
Balance of satisfaction (Z3)	0.162	0.921	0.933
Task performance (Y1)	0.164	0.920	0.930
Contextual performance (Y2)	0.175	0.915	0.930

Note: RMSE is calculated on standardized dimension scores. Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

1) Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping 10,000 subsamples in SmartPLS 4, using a two-tailed test, at a 5% significance level, according to the decision rules in Table 3.5. The results are presented in Table 4.14 and Figure.

Table Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Track	Coefficient	Elementary School	t	p	IK 95%	Decision
H1	X → Z	0.473	0.053	8.87	< 0.001	0.365–0.575	Accepted
H2	Z → Y	0.450	0.073	6.12	< 0.001	0.299–0.588	Accepted
H3	X → Y	0.237	0.073	3.26	0.001	0.096–0.378	Accepted
H4	X → Z → Y	0.213	0.042	5.03	< 0.001	0.135–0.300	Accepted

Description: SD = bootstrap standard deviation; IK = bootstrap percentile confidence interval. Total effect X → Y = 0.450 (t = 7.17; p < 0.001). Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

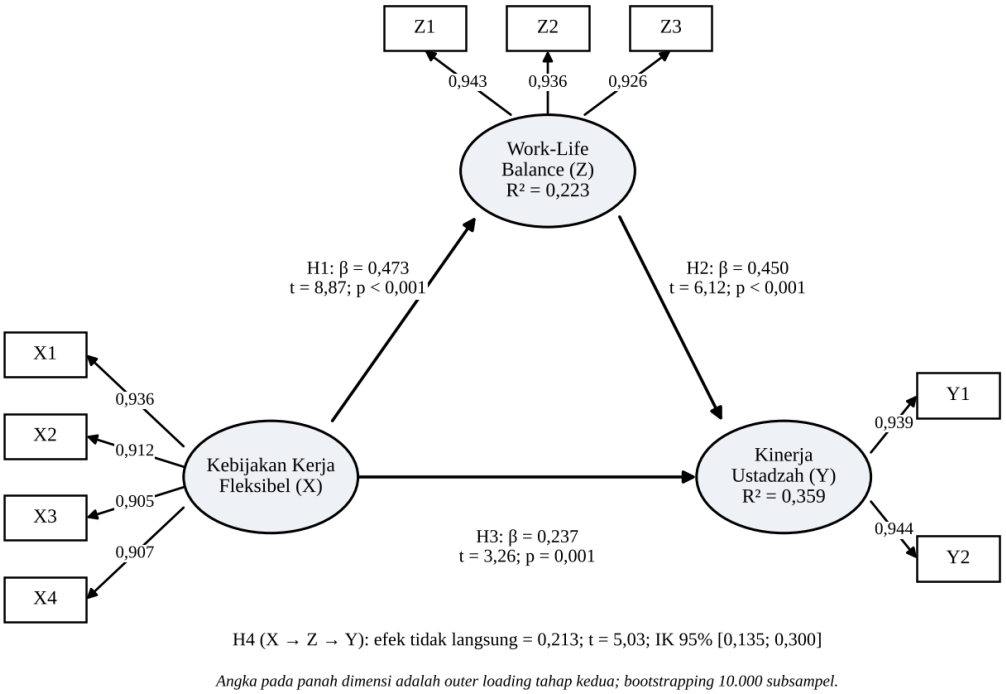


Figure Bootstrapping Structural Model Results
Source: processed from SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

The first hypothesis states that flexible work policies have a positive effect on the work-life balance of female religious teachers. The path coefficient X → Z is 0.473 with t = 8.87 and p < 0.001, and a 95% confidence interval of 0.365–0.575. The coefficient is positive and significant, so H1 is accepted. The higher the female religious teacher's perception of the availability of flexible work arrangements, the higher the perceived work-life balance.

The second hypothesis states that work-life balance has a positive effect on the performance of religious teachers. The path coefficient Z → Y is 0.450 with t = 6.12 and p < 0.001, and the 95% confidence interval is 0.299–0.588. The coefficient is positive and significant, so H2 is accepted. Islamic teachers who experience a better balance between work and personal life report more frequent task performance and contextual performance.

The third hypothesis states that flexible work policies have a positive effect on the performance of female teachers. The direct path coefficient X → Y is 0.237 with t = 3.26 and p = 0.001, and a 95% confidence interval of 0.096–0.378. The coefficient is positive and significant, so H3 is accepted. This direct effect is smaller than the effect of flexible work policies on work-life balance and the effect of work-life balance on performance.

The fourth hypothesis states that work-life balance mediates the influence of flexible work policies on the performance of female teachers. The specific indirect effect X → Z → Y is 0.473

× 0.450 = 0.213, with t = 5.03, p < 0.001, and a 95% confidence interval of 0.135–0.300 that does not contain zero. The indirect effect is positive and significant, so H4 is accepted.

The type of mediation is determined according to Table 3.6. The indirect effect is significant (H4) and the direct effect is also significant in the same direction (H3), so work-life balance acts as a complementary mediator or partial mediator (Zhao et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2021). The total effect of flexible work policies on performance is 0.450, and approximately 47.3% of this total effect is channeled through work-life balance. The second to fifth research questions are thus answered: flexible work policies have a positive effect on work-life balance and performance, work-life balance has a positive effect on performance, and work-life balance partially mediates the effect of flexible work policies on the performance of female teachers.

2) Discussion of Research Results

The discussion of each hypothesis is arranged in the same order, namely findings, their relation to theory, comparison with previous research, interpretation in the context of boarding tahfizh Islamic boarding schools, and managerial aspects that explain the results.

a. The Impact of Flexible Work Policy on Work-Life Balance

Flexible work policies have a positive and significant effect on the work-life balance of female Islamic teachers (β = 0.473; p < 0.001; f^2 = 0.288). This coefficient is the largest influence in the model. Theoretically, this finding supports the COR theory, which views organizational conditions that provide control over time and energy as a resource that protects individuals from resource loss due to role demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This finding is also in line with the work-family boundary theory, which states that balance is more easily achieved when individuals have control over the boundaries between work and family (Clark, 2000).

These findings align with studies that found a positive effect of flexible work arrangements on work-life balance in junior high school teachers (Riskarini et al., 2024), working women (Benu et al., 2024), government employees (Darmayanti et al., 2026; Tabobo et al., 2026; Yussa et al., 2024), and university staff (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024). The coefficient in this study is close to the findings of Eshun and Segbenya (2024) (β = 0.456). This coefficient is larger than the generally small effect in Allen et al.'s (2013) meta-analysis. One possible explanation is measurement differences: this study measured flexibility as the perceived availability of various arrangements, whereas the meta-analysis separated the form of flexibility and the direction of work-family conflict. Another possibility is common method bias, as flexible work policies and work-life balance were measured by the same respondents using the same agreement scale, so this coefficient may be larger than the true relationship.

In the context of boarding Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) for memorizing the Quran, this influence is understandable because the work demands of female teachers often arise outside of formal class hours, such as additional halaqah (Islamic religious gatherings),

dormitory duty, and student mentoring. The ability to change schedules, special permission, and leniency for female teachers with small children provide space to meet family needs without neglecting obligations. However, the R^2 of 0.223 indicates that most of the variation in work-life balance is determined by other factors, such as workload, family support, and task characteristics.

From a managerial perspective, descriptive results indicate that the most perceived flexibility is the incidental flexibility proposed by the female teachers themselves, while the arrangement of teaching and duty schedules that consider personal needs is still in the moderate category. The influence of flexible work policies on work-life balance can likely be further strengthened if consideration of personal needs is included from the schedule planning stage, not only through permission requests or schedule changes.

b. The Influence of Work-Life Balance on the Performance of Ustadzah

Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on the performance of female teachers ($\beta = 0.450$; $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 0.245$). This finding supports the principle of COR theory that individuals with adequate resources are better able to invest resources to obtain subsequent results (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Female teachers whose time, attention, and satisfaction are distributed equally have more energy to plan lessons, maintain focus on student memorization targets, and develop themselves.

These findings align with research on teachers in Malaysia (Johari et al., 2018), private school teachers in Indonesia (Osman et al., 2024), government employees (Darmayanti et al., 2026; Tabobo et al., 2026; Yussa et al., 2024), university staff (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024), and Badriah et al.'s (2026) meta-analysis on teacher performance. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, Hanan et al. (2026) also found a positive effect of work-life balance on teacher performance. This finding differs from Saifullah (2020), who found no effect of work-life balance on the performance of female Muslim employees. This difference may be related to sample size, as Saifullah's (2020) study only involved 35 respondents and used different performance measures.

In the context of a tahfizh Islamic boarding school, the role of a female teacher extends beyond teaching, but also through maintaining the quality of daily student lectures and reflections. This type of work demands concentration and patience, which can easily be depleted when the teacher lacks rest time or is constantly burdened with family obligations.

From a managerial perspective, the lowest work-life balance scores relate to work taking up personal time, personal prayer time, and the ability to be fully present with family. These three aspects are the most relevant entry points for managers to improve performance through work-life balance, for example, by setting time limits for work communication outside of work hours and protecting the female teacher's personal study time.

c. The Influence of Flexible Work Policy on the Performance of Ustadzah

Flexible work policies had a direct positive and significant effect on the performance of Islamic teachers (β = 0.237; p = 0.001; f^2 = 0.068), although the effect size was small. This finding supports social exchange theory, which explains that employees who receive benefits from an organization tend to reciprocate with efforts and behaviors that benefit the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Islamic teachers who feel that their family's needs are cared for by the institution may reciprocate by diligently teaching and participating in Islamic boarding school activities.

This finding aligns with Li and Albattat (2025), who found a direct effect of flexible working hours on teacher performance of nearly the same magnitude (β = 0.234), as well as studies on university staff and government employees (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Tabobo et al., 2026; Yussa et al., 2024). The coefficient in this study is much smaller than the finding of Eshun and Segbenya (2024) (β = 0.619). This can be explained because some of the influence of the flexible working policy in this study is channeled through work-life balance.

The small direct effect may be related to the risk of work intensification noted by Kelliher and Anderson (2010). In Islamic boarding schools, flexibility for a female teacher often means additional work for the other teacher who replaces her, so the incentive to respond to institutional policies can be offset by additional burdens and perceptions of unfairness (Kossek et al., 2015).

d. The Mediation Role of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance partially mediates the effect of flexible work policies on female teachers' performance (indirect effect = 0.213; 95% CI 0.135–0.300). Since the direct effect is also significant in the same direction, the type of mediation is complementary mediation. Approximately 47.3% of the total effect of flexible work policies on performance is channeled through work-life balance.

These findings support the COR theory's notion that resource acquisition tends to trigger subsequent acquisitions and that resources move along a continuum (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The continuum begins with flexible work policies as conditions that increase control over time, continues with work-life balance as a state of balanced resources across roles, and ends with performance as a result of resource investment in work. The partial mediation suggests that COR theory needs to be complemented with social exchange theory to explain the direct pathway, which remains significant.

This finding aligns with Eshun and Segbenya (2024), Ismail and Michael (2025), Tabobo et al. (2026), and Yussa et al. (2024), and is closest to Tabobo et al. (2026), who also found partial mediation. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, Hanan et al. (2026) also found partial mediation of work-life balance, albeit with the influence of the Islamic boarding school environment and leadership style on teacher performance. This finding differs from

Darmayanti et al. (2026), who found no mediating role for work-life balance in female employees and instead found work motivation as a mediator. This difference suggests that the role of work-life balance as a bridge depends on context. In boarding Islamic boarding schools for tahfizh (religious) studies, the boundaries between work and personal life are not clear, making the balance between roles a relevant pathway for the influence of flexible work policies on performance. However, the work-life balance of female Islamic teachers who live in dormitories is not different from those who live outside Islamic boarding schools (Table 4.6), so the relevance of this pathway seems to be more related to work demands than to the place of residence.

From a managerial perspective, these mediation findings suggest that flexible work policies will have a greater impact on performance if they truly improve the balance of female teachers, rather than merely exist on paper. Policies that simply increase options without reducing the amount of work time that consumes personal time are likely to have only a small immediate effect. Therefore, evaluations of personnel policies should not only consider the types of arrangements available but also monitor whether female teachers perceive a better balance.

4. Conclusion

The problem of this research is that it is not yet known whether the flexible work policy in boarding *tahfizh* Islamic boarding schools has an effect on the performance of female teachers and whether this effect occurs through work-life balance. Based on data from 174 female teachers of *Ma'had Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima*, the flexible work policy has a positive and significant effect on female teachers' performance, with a total effect of 0.450. This effect occurs through two channels, namely the direct path (0.237) and the indirect path through work-life balance (0.213). Thus, work-life balance partially mediates the effect of the flexible work policy on female teachers' performance. Descriptively, female Islamic teachers perceived flexible work policies, work-life balance, and their performance as high, with average scores of 3.45, 3.54, and 3.70, respectively. Weaker aspects included scheduling teaching and shifts that consider personal needs, online meetings, protecting personal time from Islamic boarding school work, and time for personal worship.

5. References

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