Research Article

Unlocking potential: Understanding the role of work-life balance and affective commitment in driving employees' performance at the hospitality sector

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the direct impact of work-life balance on employee affective commitment and employee performance within the hotel industry employees in Saudi Arabia, as well as the indirect role of affective commitment on the relationship between the other two variables. Self-administered surveys were provided to a randomly selected sample of employees as part of the research, which used a quantitative technique. Structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis of 441 valid responses showed substantial positive correlations between W_L_B and both E_P and A_C, with A_C also having a major positive effect on E_P. The study also proved that A_C mediates the relation between W_L_B and E_P. These insights offer hospitality leaders insightful advice on how to foster a work-life balance and increase affective commitment among employees. This will eventually lead to better performance and a thriving, high-performing workforce in the Saudi hotel industry.

Keywords: work-life balance; affective commitment; employee performance; hospitality sector; Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

In the fiercely competitive Saudi Arabian hospitality market, where top-notch service and satisfied customers are essential, staff performance plays a crucial role in shaping the firm's longevity and profitability[1]. The industry's demands, including extended and unpredictable work hours, high guest expectations, and the necessity for strong interpersonal skills, highlight the importance of investigating factors influencing employee effectiveness[2-5]. Work-life balance (W_L_B) is considered garnering increased attention concept psychological behavior[2]. The hospitality business, comprising hotels, restaurants, travel, and leisure activities, depends on a devoted and motivated staff to deliver visitors with unique experiences[6]. However, the fundamental qualities of work within this sphere sometimes need a delicate balancing between professional commitments and personal well-being[7]. Based on the research conducted by Xu et al.[8], W_L_B denotes an individual's attempt to manage time and resources efficiently, distributing them between job needs and personal hobbies. It entails setting limits, prioritizing duties, and

embracing leisure activities to recharge and refresh. Moreover, establishing open communication inside the workplace cultivates a culture that respects personal time and obligations outside of work hours[9].

Affective commitment (A_C) has emerged as a psychological concept studied in an organizational research context. Employee workplace attachment describes the emotional bond and sense of identity that workers develop with their job and workplace[10,11]. A_C measures an individual's level of positive emotional attachment, loyalty, and sense of belonging to the company[12]. Employees that have high levels of affective commitment (A_C) are more inclined to participate in discretionary activities, exhibit loyalty, and actively contribute to corporate objectives. The kind of emotional commitment is differentiated by a real commitment to staying with the organization driven by good feelings, as opposed to simple obligation or perceived economic rewards[13]. Employee performance plays a major role in shaping the success of the hospitality business[14,15]. Satisfied and engaged personnel are more likely to give outstanding service, resulting to customer loyalty and a strong business reputation[14]. However, a knowledge gap exists regarding the specific factors influencing performance outcomes within the context of work-life balance in hospitality[16].

Drawing on the SET, this study seeks to thoroughly analyze the root causes of E_P in the hospitality industry, with a particular emphasis on the effects of W_L_B and the mediating influence of A_C. Also seek to better understanding of how A_C influences the impact of W_L_B on E_P by examining the interactions between these factors. This research provides useful insights for designing organizational practices and policies. Hospitality executives may improve overall job performance by creating work cultures that promote W_L_B and A_C.

2. Literature review

2.1. Work-life balance and employee performance

Numerous research [e.g.,17-19] reinforced that W_L_B and E_P playing a pivotal role in organizational success. A positive W_L_B, achieved through harmonious work-life integration, fosters job satisfaction and well-being. Supportive workplace cultures promoting W_L_B contribute to improved mental and physical health[2,4]. When employees can manage work alongside personal needs, a sense of fulfillment and contentment emerges[3,6]. The positive emotional state directly correlates with increased engagement, motivation, and ultimately, higher E_P[4]. Furthermore, W_L_B acts as a protective factor against burnout and stress, minimizing declines in performance caused by chronic job stressors[1]. A recent study carried out by Rathi and Islam[20] argued that less stress and greater control over W_L_B lead to increased focus, creativity, and efficiency, resulting in improved overall productivity. Based upon the previously mentioned reasoning, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1: W_L_B has a significant direct influence on E_P.

2.2. Work-life balance and affective commitment

W_L_B and A_C exhibit a mutually reinforcing relationship, significantly impacting workplace dynamics[21-23]. A positive W_L_B, achieved through the effective integration of professional and personal demands, fosters a foundation for increased A_C among employees[24,25]. When employees feel supported in managing both work and personal commitments, it cultivates loyalty, attachment, and emotional connection towards the organization[26]. The heightened A_C, in turn, reinforces positive W_L_B by promoting a workplace culture characterized by employee dedication, engagement, and a willingness to contribute discretionary effort[27,28]. According the study of Marseno and Muafi[29] the interaction among W_L_B and A_C leads to an upward spiral that not only boosts individual well-being but also fosters a more committed and robust workforce. Based on the aforementioned investigation, we argue that:

H2: W_L_B has a significant direct influence on A_C.

2.3. Affective commitment and employee performance

Several studies such as Udin et al.[30]; Park et al.[14]; Rana & Singh[31]; Grego-Planer[32] and Shafiq et al.[33] highlighted that A_C has emerged as an integral component in developing E_P within workplaces. Emotional tie and involvement with the organization serve a major part in determining the devotion, inspiration, and voluntary attempts that workers invest in work[14]. Employees with strong affective commitment are prospective to go above and beyond their job obligations, displaying true enthusiasm and dedication to theenterprises[33]. This emotional engagement adds to a pleasant work environment, promoting teamwork, resilience, and a feeling of shared objectives[34]. Consequently, heightened emotional commitment translates into higher employee performance, defined by greater productivity, work satisfaction, and a beneficial influence on team relations[14,35]. Organizations that foster and prioritize affective commitment among their employees are likely to benefit from a more engaged and high-performing team, ultimately enhancing the overall success and sustainability of the business in today's ever-evolving workplace[14,30]. Building on this basis of knowledge, the current study puts forward the following hypotheses:

H3: A_C has a significant direct influence on E_P.

2.4. The role of affective commitment in the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance

A_C serves as a vital mediator in the complex interplay between W_L_B and E_P[36,37]. When employees 'experience a positive work-life balance, marked by the balanced integration of work and personal life, it cultivates a profound emotional attachment to the organization[38]. This intensified A_C, characterized by loyalty and identification, is crucial in translating the benefits of a balanced work-life into enhanced job performance[39]. Employees who are emotionally engaged are more inclined to invest discretionary effort, display increased dedication, and contribute positively to their roles[5]. A_C acts as a driver, enhancing the positive effects of an encouraging W_L_B, creating a reciprocal relationship that not only raises employee performance but also fosters a resilient and engaged workforce, subsequently boosting organizational success and sustainability in the contemporary workplace[5,37,39].These findings lead us to formulate the following hypothesis:

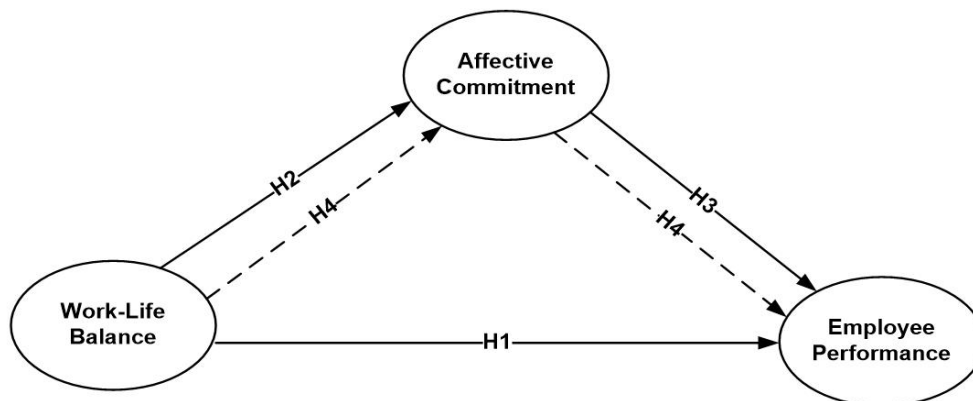H4: A_C mediates the relationship between W_L_B and E_P.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Study constructs

Measuring and evaluatingW_L_B variable, eight items developed from derived from Taşdelen-Karçkay and Bakalım's[40], these items including for example: "I am able to meet my needs and the needs of the important people in my life"; "I am successful in balancing my multiple life roles"; "I am equally satisfied with my roles in my family and professional life"; and "I feel loyal to my roles in my family life and my professional life". Considering EP variable, five items that were taken from Jansson and Yperen[41] were used to gauge how well an employee performed; these items included "the fulfillment of the responsibilities outlined in the job description by the employee"; "the worker's compliance with all official job performance requirements"; "the worker's fulfillment of all duties mandated by the position, the worker's inability to overlook certain facets of the assigned tasks"; and "the ability of the worker to carry out his or her primary responsibilities". In terms of AC variable, which were adapted from Meyer and Allen[42] and quoted by Nguyen et al.[43], are as follows: "I'm glad I chose to work for the current organization"; "I constantly have the impression that the issues and challenges the organization encounters affect me personally"; "I feel as though my current workplace is a second home"; "I consider myself to be fully integrated into the present organization. I feel like I am a part of the organization, and it is like a family"; "The current organization holds particular significance for me". The scale for every variable displayed strong dependability values greater than 0.90.

3.2. Research population and sampling

In order to achieve the aim of the research, this research mainly focused ona convenience sample of hotel employees. According to Veal[44], a study with an infinite population would have to base its sample size on an estimated 20,000 persons because official data and statistics on the actual number of festival participants in Saudi Arabia are absent. The sample size for this study was established using Stephen Sampson's formula, which is provided below[45]. Therefore, 372 participants make up the study's sample size.

$$n = \frac{N x p(1-p)}{[[N-1\, x(d^2 \div z^2)] + p[1-p]]}$$

In this context, "n" denotes the sample size, "N" refers to the population size, "z" indicates the confidence level (set at 95%), and "p" represents the probability distribution.

3.3. Data collection

Using a self-administered questionnaire, participants provided primary data for this study, which used a quantitative approach. Prior to release, the questionnaire underwent testing, evaluation, and revisions in response to feedback from a panel of scholars and industry professionals in the tourism field. The questionnaire was distributed to 455 employees in January and February of 2024. A total of 441 questionnaires were filled out, resulting in a 96.9% response rate. After that, a statistical analysis was done. When mailing the surveys, significant effort was taken to keep our commitment to ethical concerns for the survey participants, providing them the ability to openly voice their thoughts while protecting their right to the privacy of their personal information. The four components of the questionnaire are constructed to suit the goals of the research activity. Three sections made up the questionnaire: one asked about demographics, and the other two asked about the three characteristics this study examined: A_C, W_L_B, and E_P. Participants were asked to evaluate each of these attributes using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strong disagreement and 5 represented strong agreement.

3.4. Data analysis

Excel Sheet 2010 and the statistical program SPSSvs24 were used to examine the demographic characteristics of the study sample and analyze the descriptive data. In addition, the study hypotheses were tested and the interrelationships between all variables were examined using structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM V.4.1.0.6).

4. Results

4.1. Convergent validity

A convergent validity test was conducted to construct the model, considering the evaluation of the variables' validity, reliability, and other study elements. All components showed a high level of reliability, exceeding the 0.7 benchmark set by Hair et al.[46]. Furthermore, the composite dependability [CR] of every study variable was evaluated, and every result was found to be higher than the suggested cutoff point of 0.7, as determined by Bryman and Cramer[47] and Hair et al.[46]. The average variance extracted [AVE] values for every variable also surpassed the 0.5 cutoff point set by Fornell and Larcker[48]. The validity and reliability of the model are supported and validated by these findings taken together. **Table 1** delineates the specific findings.

Table 1. Convergent validity

Constructs	Item	Loadings	α	AVE	CR
(W_L_B) "Source: Taşdelen-Karçkay and Bakalım [40]"	W_L_B1	.928	.932	.684	.944
	W_L_B2	.744			
	W_L_B3	.919			
	W_L_B4	.768			
	W_L_B5	.953			
	W_L_B6	.890			
	W_L_B7	.732			
	W_L_B8	.928			
(A_C) "Source: Meyer and Allen [42], as cited in Nguyen et al [43]".	A_C1	.744	.886	.650	.926
	A_C 2	.842			
	A_C 3	.950			
	A_C 4	.953			
	A_C 5	.953			
	A_C 6	.785			
(E_P) "Source: Jansson and Yperen, [41]"	E_P1	.953	.838	.636	.880
	E_P2	.890			
	E_P3	.893			
	E_P4	.965			
	E_P5	.744			

4.2. Discriminant validity

To ensure the model's results were reliable and accurate, we used statistical tests called cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion[48]. These tests helped us confirm that the model was valid and that all the variables used were different from each other [see **Tables 2, 3, and Figure 2**][49].

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variables	W_L_B	AC	EP
W_L_B	**.917**		
AC	.742	**.896**	
EP	.652	.798	**.942**

* *The square root of AVE is in bold values.*

According to the preceding table's results, each study variable explains variance in its constituent parts more successfully than the other factors in the model taken as a whole. This adds to illustrate the discriminant validity of the model, agreeing with the requirements specified by Fornell and Larcker[48] as well as Hair et al. [46].

Table 3. Discriminant validity - cross loading

	W_L_B	A_C	E_P
W_L_B1	**.928**	.644	.532
W_L_B2	**.744**	.464	.541
W_L_B3	**.919**	.623	.563
W_L_B4	**.768**	.429	.388
W_L_B5	**.953**	.561	.664
W_L_B6	**.890**	.760	.453
W_L_B7	**.732**	.464	.422
W_L_B8	**.928**	.688	.584
A_C1	.416	**.744**	.444
A_C2	.622	**.842**	.542
A_C3	.466	**.950**	.548
A_C4	.622	**.953**	.466
A_C5	.454	**.953**	.568
A_C6	.555	**.785**	.488
E_P1	.664	.488	**.953**
E_P2	.464	.564	**.890**
E_P3	.488	.612	**.893**
E_P4	.464	.555	**.965**
E_P5	.545	.465	**.744**

Table 3 demonstrated the discriminant validity of the research model, as suggested by Chin[50]. This is evident because each item within a construct has a stronger loading on its intended construct than on any other construct within the model.
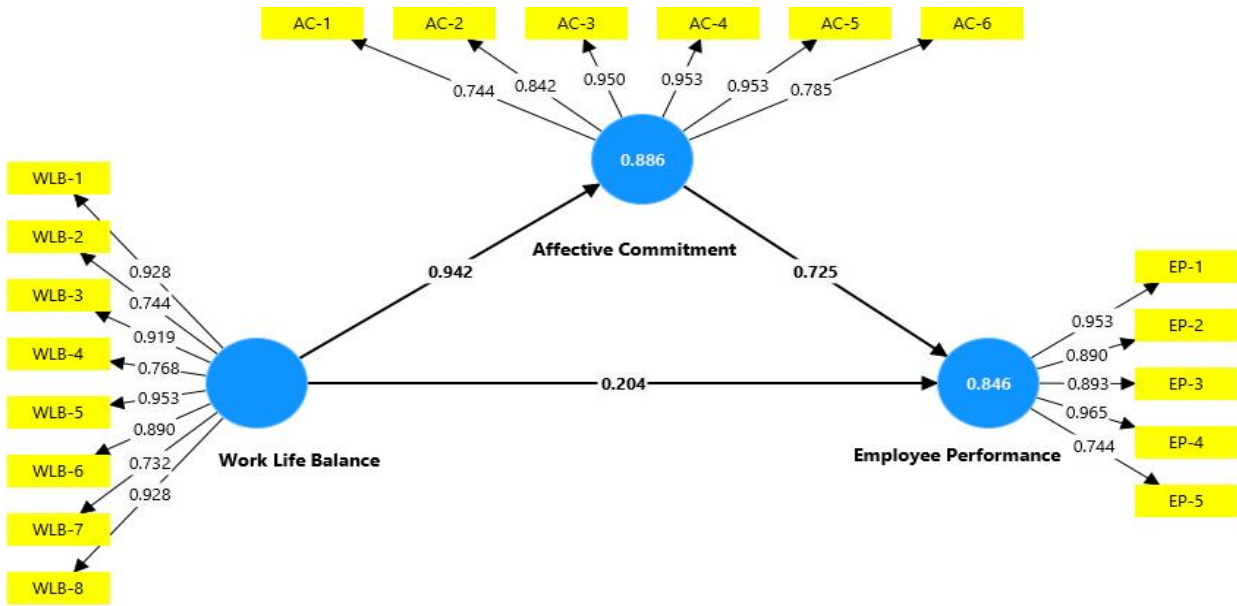
Figure 2. Measurement model

4.3. Coefficient of determination [R²]

The model's capacity to explain the variance in the dependent variable through the independent variable was evaluated using the coefficient of determination [R^2]. Following Chin's[50] guidelines, the findings in **Table 4** revealed that the independent variable "W_L_B" accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable "E_P," whereas it explained a moderate amount of variance in the dependent variable "AC."

Table 4. R² for the latent endogenous variables

Variables	R²	Result
EP	.846	High
AC	.886	High

4.4. Effect size [f²]

Each external latent variable's unique influence on the internal latent variable was examined using the effect size "f²" test. The findings showed that the external latent variable "W_L_B" had a sizable effect size on the internal latent variables "EP" and "A_C," suggesting a significant influence. According to Cohen's[51] criterion, **Table 5** illustrates the moderate effect size of "A_C" as an external latent variable on "E_P" as an internal latent variable.

Table 5. Effect size [f²]

Variables	E_P	A_C
W_L_B	.684 [Large]	.412 [Large]
A_C	.388 [Large]	

4.5. Model goodness of fit [GoF]

The suggested model for this study was tested using the Goodness-of-Fit [GOF] test to ensure that it was a reliable model for comprehensive fit measurement. In accordance with Chin's[52] guidelines, this assessment evaluated the model's overall performance, measurement quality, and structural integrity.

$$GoF = \sqrt{R^2 x\ AVE}$$

$$GoF = 0.753$$

The results of the GoF test, based on the criteria set by Wetzels et al.[53], can be utilized to evaluate the model's fit in this study, demonstrating that it meets the reliability standards to be considered a comprehensive global PLS model.
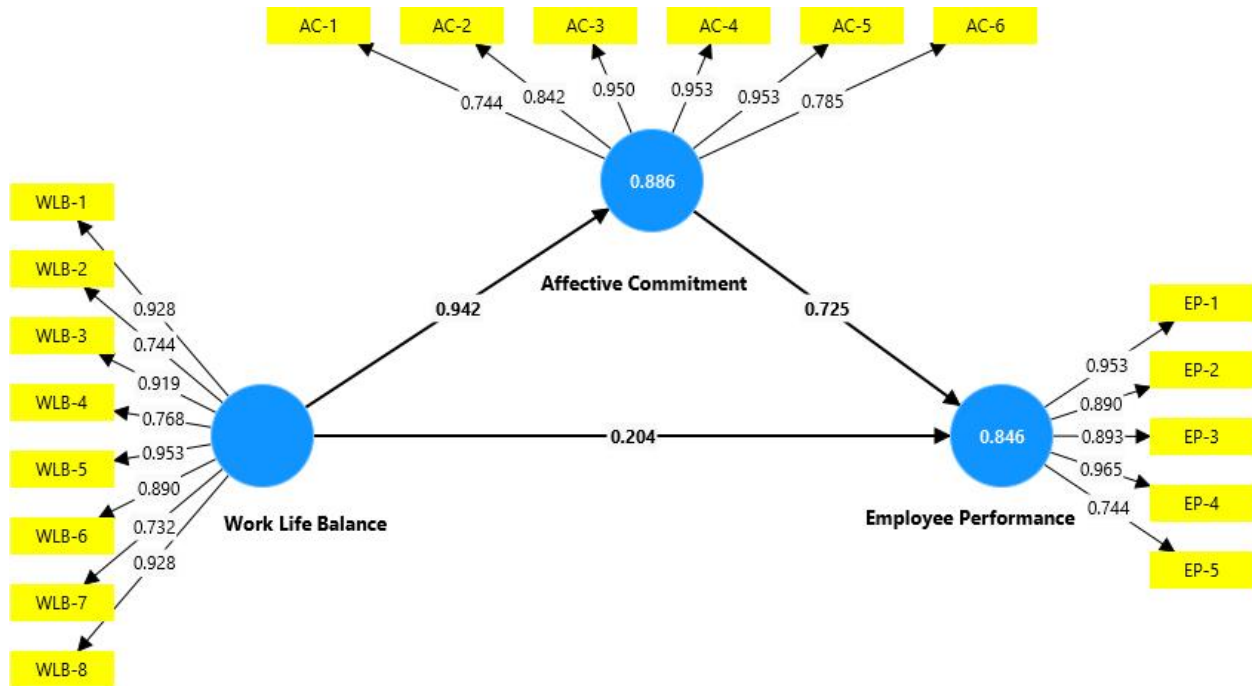

Figure 3. The final model

4.6. Testing research hypotheses [significance of path coefficients]

A significance test on the path coefficients was conducted to evaluate the validity of the study's hypotheses, aiming to determine the extent to which the proposed theoretical model aligns with the main study data [see **Table 6**].

Table 6. Studypath coefficient

Hypothesis	Beta	SE.	T-Value	P-values	Results
H-1: W_L_B -> E_P	.204	.045	4.50	.000**	Supported
H-2: W_L_B ->A_C	.942	.005	186.013	.000**	Supported
H-3: AC ->EP	.725	.044	16.621	.000**	Supported
H-4: W_L_B ->A_C -> E_P	.683	.038	17.974	.000**	Supported

*Significant at P** = 0.000*

This study proposed three direct hypotheses and one indirect hypothesis [see **Figure 1**]. The findings from the structural equation model [see **Tables 5 & 6, Figures 3 and 4**] indicated that "W_L_B" has a significant positive influence on both "E_P" [β = 0.204, P = 0.000] and "A_C" [β = 0.942, P = 0.000], thereby confirming hypotheses H1 and H2. Additionally, "A_C" demonstrated a significant positive effect on "E_P" [β = 0.725, P = 0.000], which supports hypothesis H3. The SEM results also highlighted the mediating role of "A_C" in the relationship between "W_L_B" and "E_P" [β = 0.683, P = 0.000], as the bootstrapped confidence interval's lower and upper bounds were both above zero. This suggests that zero was not included

in the interval, and the P value of 0.000 aligns with the guidance provided by Preacher and Hayes[54]. Consequently, these results affirm the mediating role of affective commitment, thus validating hypothesis H4.
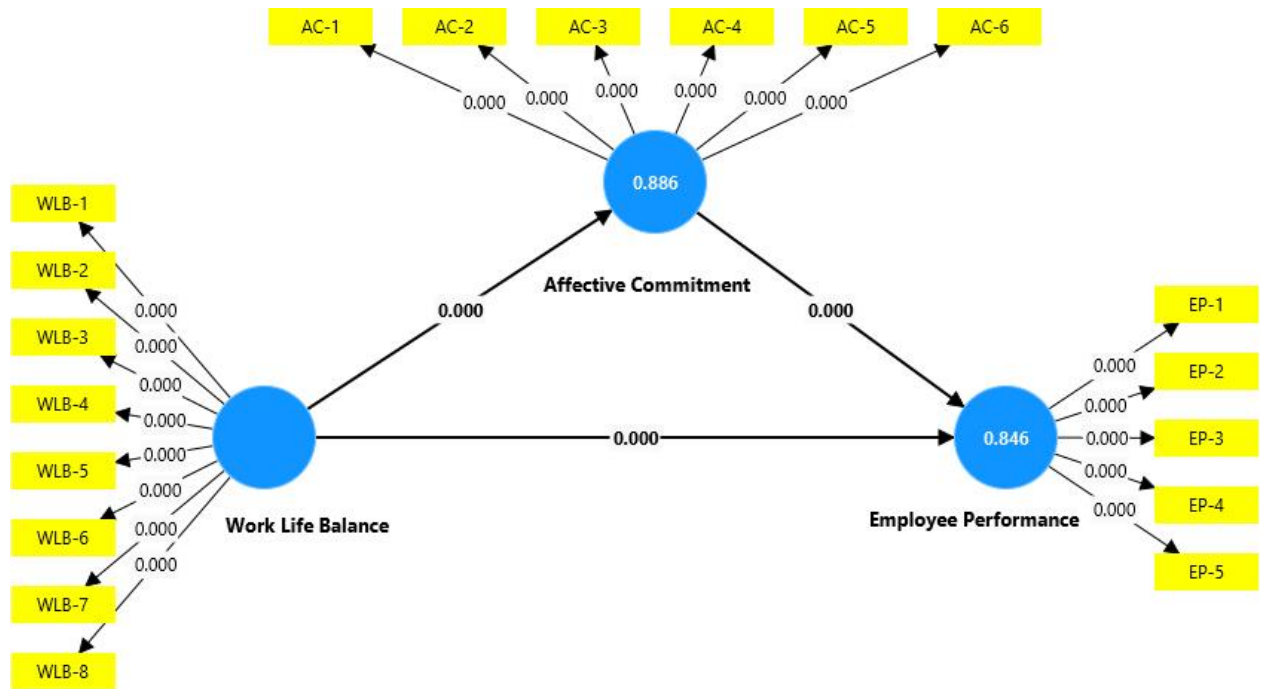

Figure 4. Significance of path coefficients

5. Research discussions and implications

This study, grounded in social exchange theory (SET), explored the relationship between work-life balance (W_L_B), affective commitment (A_C), and employee performance (E_P) within the Saudi Arabian hotel industry. The findings revealed a positive and significant association between W_L_B and both A_C and EP. Consistent with previous research by[4], this study confirmed that W_L_B is a key predictor of employee performance. Furthermore, the results aligned with the findings ofMarseno and Muafi[29], demonstrating that W_L_B fosters emotional commitment among employees. Additionally, the study established a positive relationship between A_C and EP, mirroring the findings of Park et al.[14],this indicates that emotionally committed employees tend to exhibit higher levels of productivity, job satisfaction, and overall performance. A notable finding was the indirect effect of WLB on EP through the mediating role of A_C. This suggests that W_L_B positively influences E_P primarily by enhancing employees' affective commitment. This conclusion is supported by the study of Agustina et al.[37], which emphasized the pivotal role of A_C in strengthening the relationship between W_L_B and E_P through resilient and engaged working conditions.

This study has made significant contributions to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of work-life balance, affective commitment, and employee performance in the hotel industry. By demonstrating the mediating role of affective commitment, the study has filled a gap in existing literature. The findings offer valuable managerial insights, highlighting the importance of fostering a work-life balance culture and prioritizing employee affective commitment. By doing so, hotel managers can positively influence employee performance. The study's results can inform initiatives aimed at creating thriving and high-performing work environments within the Saudi Arabian hotel industry. By recognizing and leveraging the interconnectedness of these factors, managers can implement strategies that enhance employee well-being and productivity.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate both the direct and indirect relationships among work-life balance (W_L_B), affective commitment (A_C), and employee performance (E_P) within the context of the Saudi Arabian hotel industry. A sample of 392 hotel employees was used for data collection, and descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS to profile the demographic characteristics of the participants. To explore the hypothesized relationships between the variables, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed. The results demonstrated that W_L_B had a significant and positive influence on both A_C and E_P. Moreover, the mediating role of A_C in the relationship between W_L_B and E_P was substantiated, indicating that A_C serves as a crucial link that enhances the effect of W_L_B on employee performance. These findings underscore the importance of fostering work-life balance to elevate affective commitment and, subsequently, employee performance in the hospitality sector. The insights derived from this study have potential implications for the development of workplace policies and strategies aimed at improving employee well-being and organizational performance in the Saudi Arabian hotel industry. By recognizing the interdependencies between these variables, managers can design more effective interventions to create supportive and high-performing work environments.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, T.A. and A.H.; methodology, T.A.; software, T.A.; validation, T.A. and A.H.; formal analysis, T.A.; investigation, T.A.; resources, A.H.; data curation, T.A. and A.H.; writing—original draft preparation, T.A. and A.H.; writing—review and editing, T.A. and A.H.; visualization, A.H.; supervision, T.A. and A.H.; project administration, T.A. and A.H.; funding acquisition, T.A. and A.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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