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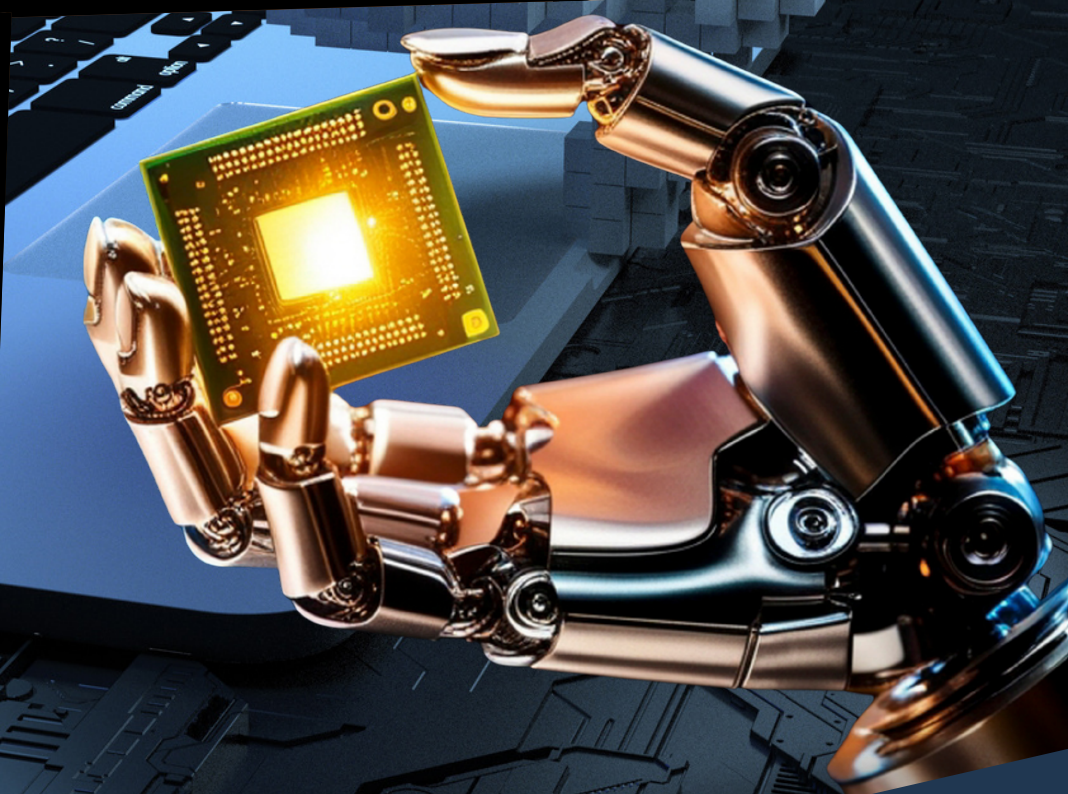


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WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND THE FUTURE OF EMPLOYEES' WELL-BEING

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INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) remains central to global discussions on employee wellbeing, organisational performance, and social sustainability. As workplaces transition towards hybrid and flexible models, there is increased attention to mental health, alongside the need to respond to evolving employee expectations. Consequently, organisations are increasingly required to clearly define what constitutes balance and systematically assess its effects. Scholars have acknowledged WLB as multidimensional (Abraham & Philip, 2025; Bello et al., 2024). However, there remains conceptual ambiguity regarding whether 'balance' refers to equal time allocation, subjective satisfaction, boundary control, or role enrichment.

Recent research positions work-life balance as a core determinant of psychological health, job satisfaction, and sustainable performance in modern organisations (Bello et al., 2024). Contemporary scholarly literature indicates that while early discussions predominantly emphasised gender-based role expectations, current perspectives have shifted towards a more holistic view, encompassing the dynamic interaction between work, family life, leisure activities, and personal development across diverse occupational contexts (Abraham & Philip, 2025; Bello et al., 2024). This shift reflects the recognition that WLB is not solely a gendered issue but rather a multidimensional construct affecting all employees, irrespective of their demographic background.

Previous academic literature consistently demonstrates an association between positive work-life balance and improved employee well-being. Employees who experience balance reported higher levels of job satisfaction, stronger mental health, and reduced burnout (Volk et al., 2024; Wulantika & Atifah, 2024). Empirical models demonstrate that stress and burnout partially account for the impact of WLB on psychological well-being and job satisfaction, suggesting that effective mechanisms for stress management are essential for maintaining balance (Erlinda & Sawitri, 2025; Shafariah & Gofur, 2025).

Furthermore, organisational-level research indicates that flexible scheduling, supportive

leadership, and structured work–life policies significantly enhance employee motivation, satisfaction, and retention. These practices also contribute to improved productivity and organisational reputation, thereby reinforcing the strategic importance of work–life balance as a component of long-term organisational sustainability (Tiwari et al., 2025).

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Despite its recognised benefits, achieving balance remains challenging for many employees. Excessive workloads, blurred boundaries between professional and personal time, and the pressures associated with remote and flexible work arrangements frequently disrupt daily routines and hinder recovery periods. Importantly, previous studies indicate that flexibility alone does not automatically translate into balance. Instead, flexible arrangements may intensify stress and prolong working hours when high workloads persist or role expectations remain unclear (Rostini et al., 2025). Research has found that in high-demand sectors such as academia and public service, there is a distinct negative relationship between burnout and work-life balance, highlighting the cognitive and emotional strain resulting from sustained performance pressures and continuous role demands (Sharma et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the view that both structural and psychological stressors can undermine balance, even in environments that formally promote flexibility.

Improving work-life balance requires action at multiple levels. At the individual level, strategies such as boundary-setting, effective time management, and prioritising rest and recovery are consistently associated with enhanced well-being and increased job satisfaction. At the organisational level, implementing flexible work arrangements, providing accessible mental health resources, and fostering supportive management practices play a decisive role in improving employee well-being and sustained performance (Adhikari & Gyawali, 2024). Together, these insights suggest that work-life balance is not merely an individual responsibility; it is a shared organisational and structural commitment, which requires alignment between individual strategies and institutional support systems.

CONCLUSION

Work-life balance has become a fundamental determinant of employee well-being and organisational sustainability in an increasingly complex and demanding work environment. The discussion highlights that evolving work arrangements, individual needs, and organisational practices influence balance, making it a dynamic process rather than a fixed state. Although effective work-life balance is consistently associated with improved mental health, higher job satisfaction, and reduced burnout, persistent challenges, such as excessive workloads and intensified performance expectations, continue to hinder its achievement. Looking ahead, future efforts should prioritise the development of holistic work-life balance frameworks that move beyond simple time-based flexibility to incorporate workload regulation and psychological safety. Organisations should invest in leadership training that emphasises wellbeing-oriented management, conduct regular assessments of employee stress and workload levels, and design inclusive work-life balance policies that accommodate diverse life stages and occupational contexts. At the individual level, there should be greater attention towards strengthening self-management skills, boundary control, and recovery practices. By adopting proactive, evidence-informed strategies, organisations can better safeguard the long-term well-being of their employees and sustain productivity and resilience in a rapidly evolving work environment.

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