

## Work-life balance

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### Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of work-life balance (WLB), concerned with the relationship between an individual's work and non-work lives. It first introduces and discusses the complexity of work-life balance as a concept and then examines how national, organisational, and temporal contexts may shape how it is understood and enacted. In addition, the chapter critically reviews formal and informal approaches to managing work-life balance for both employees and the organisation. While interest in work-life balance has been widespread and received much attention in academia, institutional and organisational agendas, and public discourse, to date, there has been limited attention given to its meaning and implementation in non-western contexts. This chapter addresses this gap by including a case study in the Chinese context. Using 'Beyond Management Consulting Ltd', as a case study, the opportunities for and challenges of managing work-life balance are discussed in the Chinese context. The chapter concludes by emphasising the complexity and dynamic nature of the notion of work-life balance and the necessity of considering inclusivity in how work-life balance is managed.

### The Conceptualisation of Work-life Balance

Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners have tended to place emphasis on **work-life balance** by as a means to enhance employee well-being. Work-life balance concerns the relationship between the work and non-work aspects of people's lives. It may seem easy to understand at face value, but an established definition is lacking in the literature (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019). One reason for this is because the work and non-work domains have evolved.

‘Work’ traditionally refers to full-time, permanent employment based on the ‘standard employment relationship’ (Bosch, 2004). The consideration of ‘life’ has often been seen as interchangeable with ‘family’, particularly for women with dependent children. Yet, over the past few decades, the scope of what is considered in the work and non-work domains has changed and developed in a more holistic way. A contemporary understanding of work needs to incorporate diverse arrangements and employment relationships, such as part-time and gig economy work. More diverse life patterns may mean that people wish to balance other aspects of their non-work lives with work in addition to family responsibilities, including for example, leisure activities, community involvement, volunteering, and supporting extended families (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

The other reason lies in the problematic definition of ‘balance’. Some definitions imply balance as an equal distribution of time, energy and commitment between the work and non-work domains (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). However, this overlooks the diverse ways individuals may manage their multiple roles and where they allocate priority rather than seeing them as equal. Considering that Greenhaus and Allen (2011) propose work-life balance as an overall appraisal of how individuals’ satisfaction in their work and non-work roles are consistent with their priorities at any given time. Therefore, how individuals perceive work-life balance and prioritise their work and non-work roles and activities in their personal context is critical to understanding their work-life balance experience.

### **The Perception of Work-life balance**

How work-life balance is understood may be shaped by multiple factors at the national, organisational and temporal levels. At the national level, the opportunities and constraints stemming from legal, economic, and social structures can influence individual perceptions and how they experience the work and life interface and organisational support (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017; Le *et al.*, 2020). For example, as early as 2000, the UK

government promoted a framework, the ‘work-life balance Campaign’, which encouraged employers to introduce family-friendly practices to assist employees in improving the balance between their work and lifestyles while allowing them to fulfil their business goals. This was subsequently embedded in legislation, with the ‘right to request flexible working’ provisions introduced for parents and extended to cover all employees in 2014, alongside the strengthening of maternity and paternity leave rights in 2021. Similarly, since 2017, European countries such as France, Italy, Spain and Ireland have implemented the right of employees to disconnect from work-related technology outside of working hours. While there has been some controversies regarding how these provisions can be implemented in practice, the evidence shows that they had a positive and beneficial influence on employees’ work-life balance (Kossek *et al.*, 2022).

Unlike much of the industrialised West, Asian developing countries like China and India tend to have given less consideration to work-life balance and to date, only limited flexible working and family-friendly work policies are available to employees (Le *et al.*, 2020). Significantly, national culture shapes an individual's expectations and perceptions of work-life balance and consequently influences an individuals’ work-life experiences. Manifestations of culture relevant to the work-life interface pertain to gender in work and care roles. For instance, in countries like Italy and Portugal, a common pattern can be observed, where men are primarily involved in paid work, while women are primarily engaged in non-work roles (Lewis, 2009). Another aspect of culture that affects the work-life interface is the relationship between individuals and groups. Countries of collectivist cultures (e.g. China and India), as opposed to individualist cultures (e.g. the US and UK), should experience less work-life conflict. This is mainly because work is viewed as a form of self-sacrifice that brings honour to the family. In addition, the emphasis on high performance-oriented culture or human-oriented culture also plays a significant role. In cultures that

prioritize high performance and competitiveness, individuals may experience greater work-life imbalance. On the other hand, in cultures that value a more human-oriented approach and emphasize the well-being of individuals, there may be a higher likelihood of achieving work-life balance (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017).

Taking the Chinese context as an example, rapid economic development has given employees access to higher incomes. However, it has also resulted in increased stress, due to long working hours norms and intensification of performance requirements, brought about by the move to marketisation in the Chinese economy. While growing legal protection requires employers to pay attention to employees' leave entitlement and well-being, there is little regulation from the government and/or initiatives on work-life balance and flexible working from employers. Advocacy of work-life harmony is often in conflict with an established 'sacrificing oneself for one's work' culture. This paradoxical situation explains, to some extent, why Chinese employees tend not to be sensitive to work-life conflict, instead seeing it simply as 'as a matter of fact' (Xiao & Cooke, 2012).

At the organisational level, formal regulations and culture affect employees' work-life balance perceptions and experiences (Kossek *et al.*, 2022; Daverth *et al.*, 2016). Formal regulation can take the form of legislation and government policies, such as the right to request flexible working and company work-life initiatives such as hybrid working and on-site childcare facilities. Negotiation between the employee and line managers over working arrangements also directly affects employees' work-life balance, for example where managers can grant temporal flexibility and leave if employees need to deal with a personal emergency. Research shows that informal arrangements between employees and their line managers are widespread and may be better able to accommodate individual work-life preferences (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). In addition, an individual's work-life balance is likely influenced by what is normative, feasible, and socially acceptable in the particular workplace (Lewis &

Beauregard, 2018). Organisational culture, such as long working hours and ‘ideal worker’ expectations could be detrimental to the legitimacy and use of work-life policies. By contrast, a supportive work-life culture can foster the uptake of work-life policies and practices (Daverth *et al.*, 2016).

At the temporal level, the meanings of work-life balance can shift and evolve in response to specific events and changes in specific places (Lewis *et al.*, 2016). This is due to the dynamic nature of work and personal lives, which are influenced by technology, social norms, and economic conditions. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted work-life balance, as many employees were forced to work from home and juggle work and personal responsibilities in new ways (see Introduction Chapter 1). This shift resulted in a greater concern for work-life balance and interest in flexible work arrangements, with the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life and the need for better support systems to help employees manage their responsibilities (Kossek *et al.*, 2022). The evolving nature of work-life balance underscores the importance of ongoing research and adaptation of work-life balance policies and practices and culture to reflect the changing needs and realities of the workforce.

### **Why Organisations Manage Work-Life Balance**

There are three main rationales for organisations to help employees achieve a better work-life balance. First, many organisations draw on a ‘**business case**’ for implementing better work-life balance practices. Organisational support for employees’ work-life balance can be seen as a win-win situation by improving employees’ lives and concurrently boosting organisational performance. Effective support for work-life balance is also seen as helping organisations attract and retain a more diverse range of employees, reduce absenteeism and turnover caused by conflicting demands, and increase employee commitment through feeling

valued by their employer, potentially contributing to organisational success (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

Second, there is a '**legal case**' for facilitating a satisfactory work-life balance, since the employer must follow the external form of job regulations making appropriate policies and practices to manage the workforce. Legal regulation of working hours and the right to flexible working arrangements is linked to work-life balance. The latter, in particular, has grown in significance in recognising employees' desire for a better work-life balance and the need for greater protection of workers who work non-standard hours, often due to non-work commitments. For example, a recent extension of the legal provisions in the UK allowed employees to request flexible working arrangements, such as part-time working, changes to start and finish times and compressed hours, without a minimum qualification period of employment. Similarly, in Australia, the Fair Work Act 2009 allows parents and carers to apply for flexi-time options. Moreover, indirect legal requirements, such as 'duty of care', where an employer has a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and others who might be affected by their work activities, are also crucial to employees' work-life balance. In the Netherlands, employers have a statutory duty to take care of employees' safety and health, both physical and psychosocial, including work-life balance. Accordingly, governments have been proactive in encouraging employers to consider how employer and employee needs can be matched and to offer the best possible working conditions for employees.

Third, there is a '**social case**' for managing employees' work-life balance, meaning that understanding and caring for employees' work-life balance can be seen as a demonstration of corporate social responsibility (Norman & MacDonald, 2004). Organisational leaders are expected to recognise their responsibilities in an effort to ensure that their employees do not work in a way that unduly interferes with their personal lives, leading to a detrimental impact

on individual well-being and social inequality in terms of gender and class (Álvarez-Pérez *et al.*, 2020).

## How Organisations Manage Work-Life Balance

Managing work-life balance generally involves a formal approach, such as work-family/life policies and practices and contextual support, including fostering a positive work-life culture and the provision of support from managers and co-workers (Kossek *et al.*, 2022; Daverth *et al.*, 2016).

**Formal approaches to work-life balance** may originate from two main channels, statutory entitlements and company initiatives. Firstly, governments enact statutory regulations and social policies related to employees' work-life balance, which serves as a foundation for organisations to set up work-life balance policies and practices (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017). Secondly, organisations may 'top up' these policies by initiating work-life balance practices to benefit employees for 'business case' (Kossek *et al.*, 2022). Exemplar definitions and categories of work-life balance policies and practices can be found in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 The definition and categories of work-life balance policies and practices**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                        |                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Definition</b>  | “Any organisational programmes or officially-sanctioned practices designed to assist employees with fulfilling paid work with other fundamental life roles such as family, education or leisure. (Ryan & Kossek, 2008: 295)” |                        |                                                                                                                |
| <b>Content and</b> | Flexible working                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Flexible working hours | Part-time work is usually defined as regular paid employment with fewer hours than the average full-time work. |

|            |                                  |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| categories | arrangements                     |                                                                                                                                            | Flexitime permits employees to vary their start and finish times, provided that their contracted number of hours are worked.                                                                         |
|            |                                  |                                                                                                                                            | Job sharing involves sharing a full-time job between two employees.                                                                                                                                  |
|            |                                  |                                                                                                                                            | A compressed working week is where employees work the total number of weekly or monthly hours but over fewer days than is the workplace norm, e.g. total hours worked over four days instead of five |
|            |                                  | Flexible workplace                                                                                                                         | Remote working: working away from the workplace (e.g., at home or in other locations)                                                                                                                |
|            | Leave entitlement                | Statutory maternity leave, paternity leave, and family leave.                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|            | Caring support                   | On-site childcare and financial/informational assistance with childcare and elder-care services                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|            | Support and well-being programme | Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) including facilities such as an on-site gym, stress management programme, employee counselling schemes |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

(Ryan & Kossek, 2008:295; Beauregard & Henry, 2009)

While formal approaches to managing work-life balance are increasingly on employer agendas, the extant evidence is mixed regarding whether policies and practices enhance job performance by reducing work-life conflict (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Understanding employee perceptions of work-life balance policies and practices is crucial in explaining work-related outcomes. If employees view the practices as unfair, unresponsive or unhelpful, they may be less likely to engage with the organisation and may seek opportunities elsewhere. By contrast, if employees view the practices as supportive, effective, and transparent, they may be more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, motivated to perform at a high level, and committed to the organisation's goals. Therefore, availability, their experiences, and the effectiveness perceived by employees could be key indicators in identifying the effect of work-life balance policies and practices (Kossek *et al.*, 2022).

The availability of work-life balance opportunities may be limited if employers only develop policies and practices symbolically without effective implementation (Williams *et al.*, 2021). Even if the policies and practices are made available, not all members of the workforce may be aware of them and have equal *access* to these policies and practices (Beauregard, 2014). Research on the implementation of work-life balance policies and practices has shown that they are often seen as catering to the needs of specific groups in the workforce, such as working mothers often the primary caregivers for children and other dependents and knowledge workers with high levels of education and in professional and/or managerial roles (who may be more able to negotiate and benefit from these policies and practices). Other groups, like working fathers and employees who live alone, are often seen to be neglected in these policies (e.g., Gatrell *et al.*, 2022; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2018). Inequality in being able to access policies and practices may challenge perceptions of organisational justice and workplace inclusion (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019; Beauregard, 2014).

Even for employees who perceive that work-life balance policies and practices are available, there may be concerns about the potential consequences, making them hesitant to use them. For example, employees may fear facing financial problems if they take (unpaid) parental leave or reduce their hours; remote working could limit employees' workplace networking, viability and social capital accumulation and create barriers to career development and promotion due to reduced 'face time' in the workplace. In addition, the 'flexibility paradox' raised by researchers (Cañibano, 2019) argues that when workers gain more control over when and where they work, they often end up working harder and longer. This can be attributed to imposed and enabled work intensifications. For example, part-time employees may find actually full-time workload is expected from them (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Organisational performance pressure may also result in employees working harder and longer to enhance their competitive edge or market opportunities to perform better in line with the 'ideal worker' norm.

To enable employees to use work-life balance policies and practices effectively, **informal approaches to managing work-life balance**, including cultural, managerial, and co-worker support, play crucial roles (Daverth *et al.*, 2016). Work-life culture can be defined as is 'shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives' (Thompson *et al.*, 1999, p. 416). Culture signals the approach of an organisation to valuing the employees' work-life balance and includes the extent to which they are aware and willing to support employees achieving a satisfactory. This might be signified by the accommodation of employees' family and personal commitments; managers being willing and able to support employees' work-life balance; and employees feeling able to use the work-life balance policies and practices open to them (Daverth *et al.*, 2016). Research shows that a supportive work-life culture can increase the uptake rate of work-life balance policies and practices

which is associated with lower work-family conflict (Talukder, 2019), enhanced job attitudes (Beauregard & Henry, 2009) and employee retention (Lamane-Harim *et al.*, 2021).

Work-life culture is often cultivated and transmitted at the group level, where managers and co-workers play a significant role in supporting employees. Managerial support is "the extent to which managers were supportive and sensitive to employees' family responsibilities" (Thompson *et al.*, 1999, p. 417). Line managers can play a critical role in the effective implementation of work-life balance policies and practices, ensuring employees feel able to utilise them. They can also help identify and address barriers that employees may face in achieving a satisfactory balance between work and life. Managers can also act as role models by overtly prioritising their own work-life balance and encouraging employees to do likewise. Positive managerial support fosters more positive employee attitudes and is thus identified as an important determinant of employee commitment and turnover intentions (Lamane-Harim *et al.*, 2021). However, perceived differentiation and favouritism may arise from managers providing 'support', that could counter the positive effects of work-life balance policies and practices by raising concerns over organisational justice (Beauregard, 2014).

Co-worker support involves sharing knowledge and expertise, providing encouragement and tangible assistance, and showing appreciation and unselling. Co-workers may assist colleagues by, for example, helping with competing tasks, taking over some responsibilities, allowing them to leave work early to deal with -work issues, and listening to their concerns. Although understudied research indicates that co-workers' support influences the workplace environment and work-life balance by enabling individuals to manage multiple duties (Koessek *et al.*, 2022).

The interaction of formal and informal approaches to managing work-life balance may create a benign cycle in employees' work-life experience: the perceived availability of work-

life policies and practices can be enhanced with a supportive work-life cultural context; and in turn with the take up of policies and practices, the cultural context can be strengthened, thus facilitating greater WLB in the workplace (Daverth, *et al.*, 2016). In the following case study, the interplay between these two approaches and the potential work-related outcomes are discussed in the context of managing work-life balance in a Chinese organisation.

## **Managing Work-Life Balance: A Case Study of Beyond Management Consulting Ltd. in China**

### **Background**

Paying attention to facilitating employees' work-life balance seemed urgent for Chinese organisations. Many Chinese employees were inured to extremely long working hours (e.g., the normalised '996 working hour pattern meaning working from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, 6 days per week, i.e., 72 hours per week), and the long-standing expectation of 'sacrificing oneself for one's work' culture (Xiao & Cooke, 2012). Meanwhile, the increasing living costs and caring responsibilities of working-age employees peaked following the ending of the one-child policy and a rapidly ageing society (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Such work-life tensions among employees would leave a twin threat of changes for organisations to deal with, affecting employee engagement, talent attraction, and retention. Instead of accepting stressful jobs and work-life tensions as they used to, employees started pushing back from the 'hustle' workplace to chill out or directly resigning jobs for their 'inner peace'. However, unlike many Western developed countries, few formal policies and practices related to work-life balance were initiated and implemented in Chinese organisations to address these issues. Jun, the CEO of Beyond Management Consulting in Shanghai, China, has keenly captured their employees' work-life challenges and decided to practice flexible work arrangements for employee engagement and retention.

## Flexible work arrangement trails in Beyond Ltd

Beyond Ltd is a management consulting firm that endeavours to provide audit, assurance, tax and consulting services at a cost lower than the leading consulting firms. In 2012, Jun co-founded the company, and to date, the company have been growing up to 97 employees, headquartered in Shanghai, serving clients in East and Southeast Asian areas. The *mission* of Beyond is ‘delivery beyond expectation service to clients.’ For doing so, Beyond always puts a high priority on its employees – known as Beyonders? - and values their talent and well-being to deliver the mission.

In 2022, Jun noticed several employees resigning for reasons of work-life conflict. Therefore, after discussing with their HR department, he proposed a flexible working arrangement to avoid future talent turnover. The basis of this was allowing employees to work from home and choose their working hours as long as they delivered the task. All the employees can request flexible working arrangements as they wish, subject to the line manager’s approval. Since the trial launched in September 2022, it has been observed that some employees appreciate the policy and plan to use it to balance personal and working life; line managers often grant this flexibility depending on business needs, and usually, client-facing specialists in each department must show up during regular 9-5pm office hours. Meanwhile, more problems are occurring in the implementation, as the following example illustrates.

Is the flexible work arrangement only limited to female employees?

Rui, a consultant with a 1-year-old child, was among the first employees to use the flexible working arrangement. She chose to work late afternoon and evening while her husband cared for their baby. She always completes tasks promptly. Xing works with Rui as

a client-facing specialist. Considering Rui's working hours, Xing tended to check Rui's work in the morning before sending it to clients. However, Xing found that Rui's work usually needs amendments but was unable to reach Rui to do so. Xing did them himself and sent them to the client on time.

Xing came to Jun saying that some employees are not reachable during regular office hours, which led him to complete tasks outside of his responsibility and office hours regularly. Xing also shared his personal issues with his sick dad in the hospital, asking Jun to allow him to work flexibly so he could care for his dad. Jun tried to convince Xing to take several leaves of absence instead, given the nature of his role. Disappointed by this reply, Xing implied that he had got a job offer from another competitor company. Jun remained calm and asked to meet and discuss next time to give him time to assess the overall situation. Xing stepped out the Jun's office, mumbling "Is the flexible work arrangement only limited to female employees with childcare? "

Jun pondered over the conversation and wondered if adopting this flexible working arrangement was wise. However, it allows employees to achieve a better work-life balance, which could lead to increased work engagement and productivity. On the other hand, it could confuse communication, like Rui and Xing's case. It could also lead to tensions between employees, as some might feel they are taking on extra work because of the flexible working arrangement of their colleagues. Jun then decided to step back and evaluate the company's current policies and guidelines around flexible working arrangements and support employees' work-life balance effectively and fairly.

## **Conclusion**

Work-life balance concerns the relationship between the work and non-work aspects of individuals' lives. As discussed in the chapter, this seemingly straightforward term, in reality,

is complicated and dynamic. This is because, on the one hand, the domains of work and non-work have evolved by including a broader consideration of work and non-work activities; on the other, it is challenging to establish the meaning of 'balance' in time, involvement, and satisfaction across multiple roles and life domains. How employees perceive 'balance' between work and personal life in diverse contexts influences whether they see balance as feasible and attainable, the supports they expect or would like, and the 'choices' they can make. Therefore, more needs to be known about the meaning and inclusiveness of the work-life balance concept by researching those working in non-standard work contexts and those where childcare is not the dominant, or sole element of 'life'. In addition, more longitudinal research is needed to track how the meanings of work-life balance change over time within a given context to understand the dynamic in greater depth.

Multiple intersecting contexts at national, organisational and individual levels critically affect employees' perceptions of work-life balance. We examined different national contexts to show how the national legal, economic, and social structures and cultural values can influence individual perceptions and experiences of the work-life interface and organisational support for nonwork (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017; Le et al., 2020). In particular, we discussed how work-life balance is perceived in a less well-researched country, China. Its specific economic, institutional and socio-cultural characteristics provide potentially novel and fertile perspectives for the work-life balance discourse in the global context. How work-life balance is viewed in different contexts, raises important questions or both scholarship and practice regarding how and why the meanings of work-life balance might vary cross-culturally.

Organisations play a crucial role in shaping employees' work-life perception and experience for 'business', 'legal' and 'social' cases. When institutionalising work-life balance policies and practices, scope to nurture and develop a supportive work-life culture is needed

to enable and strengthen the policy implementation, generating more positive work attitudes and behaviours. However, business pressures, cost concerns, lack of work-life balance awareness, and potential career penalties can constrain the effect of managing work-life balance for employees. In addition, our understanding of managing employees' work-life balance in less-regulated settings and emerging economies remains very limited. Scholars and practitioners could usefully focus on managing work-life balance in a non-western context. The case study in this chapter has explored whether the prevalent work-life balance practice - flexible working arrangement in the West, can be implemented effectively in China, where limited awareness and regulations have developed in managing work-life balance. This case study leads to further discussions and reflections on the importance of developing contextualised policies and practices to address the work-life tension facing employees in particular national, organisational and temporal contexts.

### **Student Activity**

Based on the case study above, please answer the following questions:

1. Is it wise to offer flexibility to the workforce in a Chinese organisation like Beyond Ltd?  
Please discuss in terms of business, social and legal cases.
2. Should Beyond Ltd. repeal the initiative and return to traditional office work hours? If he does, how will he ensure that talent will retain?
3. If Beyond Ltd. chooses to continue the flexible work arrangements, what would the firm need to do to change the perceptions of employees using the flexible working arrangement? Moreover, what could be the best options to maintain a sense of harmony among employees and clients?

4. Is there a possibility to popularise a flexible work arrangement widely in a national context, like China, with limited legal regulation on work-life rights? Please critically analyse the possibility and challenges.

### **Practice Questions**

1. Brainstorming activity: decipher how your work-life balance is formed.
  - Think about and write down any factors from national, organisational, family, professional, or individual levels that affect your experience of work-life balance;
  - Select four dominant factors that affect your work-life balance and explain why they are influential;
  - After reflecting on these factors, summarise how you feel about your work-life balance.
2. As a people or HR manager, how would you design a work-life balance improvement arrangement for yourself and your team, respectively?
3. As the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated work flexibility, hybrid working, which entails a mix of office-based and remote working, has become a firmly established option for many organizations (Xu, 2023). How does this way of working affect employees' work-life balance? And how might organisations wish to apply hybrid working to ensure it works effectively?

### **Glossary of Key Concepts**

**Flexible working** refers to working arrangements which differ from what has traditionally been seen as a standard way of working, typified as full-time, permanent, at a designated workplace and at defined times. Most commonly, flexible working involves changing where

and when work is done and the amount of time worked, although some definitions include a more comprehensive range of arrangements. The emerging form of flexible working - hybrid working combines a part-remote and part-office schedule.

**Managerial support** in the context of managing work-life balance is referred to as the extent to which managers are supportive and sensitive to employees' family responsibilities. Managers can offer emotional support (e.g. talk to employees about their family and personal commitments); instrumental support (e.g. interpret policies and practices in a way that responds to an individual employee's work and family needs); lead by example; creative work-life balance management (e.g. strategically and innovatively restructure work to facilitate employee effectiveness on and off the job).

**Perceived availability of work-life practices** pays attention to what extent employees are aware of the availability of work-life balance practices in their organisations. Due to the knowledge gap, employees do not equally know and use the available work-life practice. Perceived availability, compared to the availability of the practices, is identified as a more important predictor of several behavioural outcomes, such as employees' take-up of these practices.

**The Flexibility paradox** illustrates the potential downsides and risks of flexible working. Flexible working does not always provide employees with work-life balance and positive well-being. Instead, it can blur the lines between work and life. This means workers are expected to do overtime in return for greater control over when and where they work or feel they are being done a favour by being given more flexibility which makes them feel they have to work harder and longer, with work encroaching on family life.

**The ideal worker norm** emphasises firm boundaries between work and personal life, guided by the assumption that devoted full-time employees either do not have outside responsibilities or have someone to take care of any such responsibilities for them.

**Work-life balance** is an overall appraisal of how individuals' effectiveness and satisfaction in work and personal roles are consistent with their life values at a given time and in context.

**Work-family conflict** is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects. The conflict could come from either side: work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW).

**Work-life culture** is also known as work–family or work–home culture. It is the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding how an organisation supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives.

**Work-family enrichment** is the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other. The enrichment could come from either side: work enriches family, and family enriches work.

**Work intensification** can refer to the work effort or pace required in a job ('intensive work intensification') or the number of hours required ('extensive work intensification'). It can be an organisational tool to increase the productivity of an existing workforce. However, work intensification could negatively impact employees' well-being and work-life balance (i.e., exhaustion, burnout, stress).

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