



Work-Life Balance: Research and Analysis of Antecedents, Outcomes, and Interventions

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Abstract. The boundaries between work and life have become hazier due to the gig economy and the growth of digitalization, so research on the balance between the two should be combined with the current development trends. This study uses a survey of the literature to sort out how the concept of work-life balance has evolved throughout time, revealing its paradigm shift from “role conflict resolution” to “dynamic resource adaptation”. The article conducts an antecedent analysis of balance from three levels, including personal, organization and society, and then provides a summary of how balancing work and life affects people in both job and non-work-related areas. Based on the above situation, the article integrates and presents the intervention practices that can positively affect the balance in the current situation from the three dimensions of individuals, organizations and society, aiming to provide effective strategic references for individuals, employers and policymakers to improve the balance. The essay concludes by outlining the focus of the present research and suggesting future directions for this field of study under the conditions of technological progress and the emergence of new forms of employment.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Role Conflict, Work-life Conflict, Gig Economy.

1 Introduction

The rapid development of society is bound to reshape harmony between work and life. As digital technology advances and teleworking becomes more popular, the separation between professional and personal spheres is progressively dissolving. The Gig economy has explosive growth around the world, while there should be more research on how the emerging employment form influences the balance of the two. According to the report of the World Health Organization in 2021, workplace stress leads to over 745,000 deaths every year, which highlights the urgency to address the problem of work-life imbalance taking into account the new development trends. However, the existing literature lacks up-to-date research on this topic.

By analyzing prior studies, this paper traces the developmental process of work-life balance interpretations, revealing the transformation of the definition from a single perspective focusing on resolution of role conflicts to a multidimensional and dynamic

concept. Meanwhile, through a review of the literature on causes, consequences and interventions of work-life balance, this paper reiterates history and links it to contemporary challenges, thus pointing out the direction for future research. Finally, under the gap between theory and practical application, this systematic review attempts to provide practical policy references for individuals, employers and policymakers in the increasingly complex work-life domain.

2 The Current Situation of Work-Life Balance

2.1 Evolution of the Definition of Work-Life Balance

The conflict between work and life makes it critical to define and measure the balance between the two. Researchers have offered varying interpretations of work-life balance over time, reflecting their distinct theoretical frameworks. Relevant scholars proposed a core concept of role conflict in 1964. Role-specific demands create inconsistent behavioral expectations, as individuals navigate overlapping responsibilities across different life domains [1]. Under this theoretical perspective, work-life balance constitutes simultaneous fulfillment of occupational commitment and household satisfaction. Since then, the sources of role pressure have been concreted into the work and family roles. The mutual exclusion between the two is specifically manifested in three aspects. The first manifestation is a time conflict. Roles inevitably have restrictions on time allocation, for example, extended working hours may squeeze family life. Secondly, there is stress conflict, which shows that the pressure individuals feel in one role will lead to depressed mood, and then affect the input of another role, for example, work pressure will reduce the quality of family interaction. Finally, there is conflict at the behavioral level. This conflict originates from the incompatibility of role behaviors, as the individual's competitive behaviors in the workplace will have conflicts with the need for family affection and warmth. Subsequently, scholars analyzed the multidimensional nature of work-family conflict through the above three specific manifestations, providing a clear framework for future research. However, earlier studies often equated balance with the "quantity" of role involvement, overlooking the individuals' subjective ranking of the importance of roles, for example, for a person in the period of career advancement, engagement in work becomes more important and priority.

The proposal of the resource allocation theory points out that an individual who wants to reach the balance is required to allocate human capital components like time into different areas of life in a balanced way, so as to achieve satisfaction of experience in various areas [2]. Enlightened by this theory, scholars presented an improved interpretation of the balance, dividing individuals' participation in work and family roles into two dimensions: time and psychological involvement, and distinguishing objective and subjective involvement [3]. The original two-dimensional balance has been developed into a three-dimensional balance. However, despite the introduction of multi-dimensional measurement, studies still imply a static assumption of "equality is balance", ignoring the dynamic changes of individuals' demand for roles. For instance, when families enter the child-rearing period, the demand for family characters will increase greatly, thus changing the original state of individual work-life balance.

With a deeper understanding of personal psychology, relevant scholars then assumed that work-life balance is manifested as the degree of compatibility between effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles and the priority of different roles. This kind of statement regarding the degree of compatibility indicates that scholars have realized that instead of a static judgment, the importance of a certain role will change over time, especially when something important occurs, such as a work promotion, a new child or an illness of family [4]. Then the concept of balance has evolved toward standardization, emphasizing that individual balance is not only affected by subjective and objective aspects, but also presents dynamic characteristics.

2.2 Antecedent Analysis

The transition from a model of static equilibrium involvement to a model of dynamic role compatibility emphasizes the importance of exploring the predictors that affect balance. Based on existing studies, this research investigates three-dimensional factors influencing work-life balance outcomes: personal, organizational and social factors. Scholars point out that an individual's unilateral high commitment to work or family will intensify conflicts.

In terms of personal predictors, according to existing studies, this paper divides individual predictors into four aspects: the degree of involvement, personality, job importance and coping ability. Primarily, divergent engagement levels between work and family spheres directly correlate with work-life conflict intensity. Scholars point out that an individual's unilateral high commitment to work or family will intensify conflicts [5]. In the study of personality, the relevant studies took the five traits of the Big Five personality as variables and found that different personality traits would affect an employee's balance. For instance, employees demonstrating elevated neuroticism are more likely to feel the pressure brought by work or family due to anxiety and pressure perception in the same situation, resulting in an increase in work-life conflict. Research reveals that when individuals identify with their job roles and regard it as an important part of life, the interference of work in the private domain will weaken [6]. In addition, there are research which has taken the ability of time management and coping skills as variables to explore their relevance to work-life conflict. People with good time management abilities and adaptive coping approaches are less likely to experience work-family conflicts, as research suggests.

Organization-level factors impacting work-life balance primarily are classified into two factors: organizational systems and the work itself. From an organizational perspective, businesses continuously strive to enhance employee access to work-life balance through systemic improvements in organizational policies. Flexible working hours were divided into flexible working hours and flexible working locations. Studies examine the effects of both factors on work-life balance respectively. They found that flexible working hours are more effective in reducing work-life conflict than flexible working locations as the latter is likely to blur the boundaries between scenes of work and life, thus exacerbating the conflict between work and life [7]. Childcare assistance directly extends the subject of staff welfare to employees' family members, aiming at reducing conflict and enhancing work involvement. Relevant scholars divided family

support benefits provided by enterprises to employees into flexible work arrangements and family care support. They found that family member care support (such as paid parental leave and elder care resources) can effectively reduce work-life conflict, and this positive effect stems from employees' enhanced perception of the overall family support of the organization [8].

In terms of social predictors, work-life balance is primarily influenced by cultural values. Using different dimensions of culture by Hofstede, Studies find that cultural traits - such as how power is distributed, community vs. personal priorities, and gender norms - affect work-life balance differently depending on the cultural background.

3 Impact Results

The interaction among the predictors mentioned above is vital for individuals to achieve the balance, therefore having an influence on employees' productivity and well-being. These consequences may encompass three aspects: the individual themselves, work, and life. This study investigates the influence between job and personal life, analyzing how work-life balance mutually shapes outcomes in both domains.

The influence on work includes aspects such as employment productivity, work satisfaction, occupational growth and turnover tendency. Scholars found that work-life conflict is deeply relevant to employment productivity, and there may be two influence paths [9]. The first one is that the reduction of conflicts leads to a decrease in the degree of individual emotional exhaustion, thereby enhancing employee performance. The second one is manifested as the enhancement of the rich effects between work and family, promoting skill transfer, positive emotions and improving performance. In regard to work satisfaction, many scholars conducted relevant studies of different groups. Generally, Empirical evidence demonstrates a significant negative correlation between work-life conflict and job-related fulfillment. Other studies found that not only does the conflict reduce workers' work performance and satisfaction, it also indirectly impedes their career development by affecting workers' mental health and may even cause job burnout [10]. In the study of turnover tendency, scholars pointed out that the conflict between work and life was positively correlated with job withdrawal behavior while the latter contains being late, absence and tendency to resign [11].

Scholars have analyzed how work-life equilibrium impacts three core facets of quality of life: life satisfaction, family satisfaction and leisure satisfaction. Research found that in non-work fields, life satisfaction is often most affected by work-life conflicts, for example, when a person needs to work overtime, not giving the family enough time will significantly reduce their satisfaction with life. Meanwhile, work-life conflict significantly reduces the quality of family satisfaction. For instance, the psychological stress originating from conflict will promote the phenomenon of avoiding communication and the emergence of anger in family scenes, thereby weakening family satisfaction. In the research on leisure satisfaction, only a few scholars' studies have examined the relationship between work-family conflict and leisure satisfaction, revealing a neg-

ative correlation among them. Therefore, future studies can explore the possible mediating variables that may exist between two variables, such as the objective occupation of time resources or the subjective degree of psychological stress.

4 Intervention Practice

Starting from the three subjects of the individual, the organization and the society, certain interventions can help the individual better seek this balance. For individuals, employees need to actively enhance their adaptability. Based on research of boundary theory, scholars have proposed rich and feasible personal coping measures. Firstly, employees can actively detach their mind from work and reduce attention and thinking about it, achieving a strict demarcation of the boundary between working and non-working states, which responds to the conception of involvement. Secondly, even when enterprises allow employees to work flexibly, it's crucial for professionals to establish boundaries for technology consumption during personal time, such as turning off work notifications to avoid blurring the boundary between work and personal time, thereby ensuring the integrity of life investment. In addition, by means of certain "mindfulness training" and enhancing self-regulation abilities, the cognitive pressure during role transitions can be reduced, thereby better enabling the inner self to reach a state of detachment and achieving a mental balance. Mindfulness training, as a special form of meditation, enhances awareness of current sensory, emotional and mental activities by expanding the range of attention, emphasizing the management of stress through focusing on current experiences such as breathing and physical perception.

For organizations, under the trend where digital technology permeates the workplace and spreads to life, a digital-disconnected organizational system can help people achieve a balance between job and personal life. The digital detox initiative seeks to prevent work-life boundary erosion caused by using digital technologies. It not only helps to reduce job burnout among employees but even increases their commitment to both aspects. For instance, by implementing the organizational system that prohibits the use of work emails after work hours, the stress levels of employees have significantly decreased, and the work-life balance has improved [12]. Such a system can be fully implemented in enterprises through the leading role of organizational leaders.

The cultivation of leadership in an organization is also closely related to the balance of employees. Studies show that different types of leaders influence the balance of employees based on different mechanisms. Transactional leaders often indirectly support the work-life balance through an exchange mechanism that offers rewards after achieving goals, while transformational leaders directly promote balance by proactively providing supportive policies and focusing on employee well-being [13]. Although both rely on the logic of social exchange, the latter pays more attention to long-term win-win relationships and has a more long-term and positive impact on the balance of employees. Therefore, the cultivation of leadership by organizations needs to pay attention to the influence of leadership styles.

At the government level, many European states are accelerating the legislation of "right to disconnect", aiming to draw a clear line between work and life. Meanwhile,

studies found that policies such as the paid parental leave system, flexible working rights legislation, childcare subsidies and tax relief policies have effectively improved the balance of individuals. However, there are also studies finding the spillover effects of governments' policies. For instance, the generous family policies in some high-welfare countries (such as Sweden) have instead strengthened the "motherhood penalty", making business owners more inclined to hire childless women [14].

Over the past few decades, scholars' research on this field has tended to be perfected, especially in terms of their definitions, measurements, predictors and consequences. Realizing its importance, subjects like governments, organizations and individuals also took some effective coping skills. However, the content and relationship between work and life are constantly changing. The balance between the two is not only influenced by individual factors but also changes along with the changes in the social mode of production. In view of this, this article provides further directions for future research.

Artificial intelligence has gained extremely rapid development in the 21st century, and it has had a great impact on social production activities. On the one hand, many enterprises actively adapt to new trends by adopting artificial intelligence services in business processes or internal operations. This not only changes enterprise performance but also provides work support for employees, liberating them from heavy transactional tasks. Therefore, whether different types of enterprises empowered by AI will have a positive influence on the balance of employees remains to be comprehensively studied. On the other hand, with the support of algorithms, platform enterprises not only gain more profits from consumers through algorithms but also increase the exploitation of employees through algorithms. How to enhance the work-life balance of people trapped in algorithms remains to be studied.

The gig economy is a new economic pattern featuring flexible, temporary or part-time work. With the development of such an economy, a new type of employment model develops rapidly worldwide, especially in China, where the proportion of workers such as delivery personnel and drivers on the platform has reached an unprecedented high. Whether the employment model with such characteristics will lead to the improvement of the work-life balance of platform employees or further intensify conflicts requires a more in-depth comparative study of individuals, platforms and business models.

5 Conclusion

This paper re-examines the existing literature on work-life balance, aiming to provide a reference for future research on work-life balance and indicate the future research direction. In the review of the evolution of the definition of work-life balance, the article points out that work-life balance has gradually developed from a static and single-perspective concept to a multi-dimensional and dynamic definition, clarifying that an individual's balance is not only influenced by the respective inputs of the subjective and objective aspects, but also changes dynamically along with the changes in personal life. In the antecedent analysis of work-life balance, the article starts with the three levels of personal, organization and society. At the individual level, it distinguishes four aspects:

degree of commitment, personality traits, importance of work and coping ability. At the organizational level, the factors influencing balance are classified into organizational systems and the work itself. Finally, it is believed that the social level is mainly influenced by cultural values. In summarizing the influence results of work-life balance, the article mainly divides the influence results into two aspects: work and non-work. The influence on individuals themselves is included in the influence paths of the above two. In the intervention practice, this article introduces feasible practical measures for improving the balance between the three levels of individuals, organizations and society. Finally, the article points out a new direction for future research, indicating that technological progress and emerging forms of employment will have an important effect on an individual's work-life balance. In this regard, future research should actively study the impact of both on work-life balance.

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