



EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF AND EFFORTS TO ADAPT TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN A DIGITALLY SUPPORTED WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Advances in digital technology have significantly transformed working methods and social interactions, thereby causing fundamental changes in the meaning and practice of work-life balance for employees. Technology that facilitates access to work outside of formal working hours and locations has created a situation where the boundaries between work and personal roles have become increasingly blurred. This research aims to explore how technological advancements change the definition and meaning of life balance for employees, as well as to understand the strategies they develop to maintain the boundaries between work and personal roles. The method used in this research is a literature study with a qualitative narrative approach that examines various scientific sources relevant to the topic of study. The results of the study indicate that the meaning of work-life balance has shifted from a concept of strict separation between the domains of work and personal life into a concept of integration that is adjusted to individual needs. The main finding of this study is that employees develop various adjustment strategies that are flexible and tailored to job characteristics, personal preferences, and available support from the work environment. The results of this study provide a contribution to the development of knowledge in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management, as well as provide practical guidance for organizations in designing policies that support the work-life balance of employees in the digital era.

Keywords: work life balance, digital era, employee perception, adjustment strategies, role boundaries, work technology, qualitative narrative study.

Introduction

Advancements in information and communication technology over the last few decades have created fundamental changes in how employees work across various industrial sectors. This phenomenon is characterized by the increasingly widespread use of digital devices, internet networks, and information systems that enable employees to access data, communicate with colleagues and superiors, and complete work tasks from anywhere at any time. This ease of access creates high flexibility in carrying out work activities, meaning employees are no longer tied to traditionally established working hours and locations. On one hand, this flexibility provides benefits for employees in managing their time and fulfilling their multiple roles. However, on the other hand, this ease of access also creates new challenges related to an employee's ability to separate work activities from personal activities (Martin et al., 2022). This shift demands individual readiness, given that the optimal utilization of digital tools must be balanced with adequate digital skills to avoid productivity gaps in the modern workplace (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021). Furthermore, intensive interaction in this digital space not only changes professional communication patterns but also helps shape the self-identity and social perception of employees within the digital society ecosystem as a whole (da Costa et al., 2022).

One of the main issues that has emerged regarding this change in working methods is the shift in the meaning and definition of work-life balance understood by employees. Under traditional working conditions, work-life balance was often interpreted as a strict separation between the work domain and the personal domain, where work activities were performed only at the workplace and during set hours. However, in the digital era, the boundaries between these two domains have become increasingly blurred, so the understanding of what is meant by work-life balance has also undergone changes. Various studies indicate that employees today have different views on work-life balance, where they no longer view strict separation as the only way to achieve balance (Grigorescu et al., 2025). This creates a need to understand more deeply how employees define the meaning of work-life balance in a work environment supported by digital technology. The challenge of redefining these work boundaries has become increasingly urgent to examine in order to

minimize the risk of work dehumanization that often arises due to the dominance of algorithmic systems and digital platforms that tend to exploit a worker's personal time (Darmawan, 2024).

Another issue of significant concern is how employees attempt to adjust to these changing working conditions and what strategies they develop to maintain boundaries between work and personal roles. Although technology provides convenience in carrying out work activities, such ease also creates pressure for employees to be always available and to respond to work needs outside of formal working hours (Masri & Rakiman, 2025). This pressure can have negative impacts on an employee's physical and psychological well-being, such as fatigue, stress, and a decrease in the quality of relationships with family and the social environment. Various studies show that employees develop various ways to overcome these challenges, but the strategies applied can vary depending on various factors that influence the working conditions and personal lives of employees. Therefore, an understanding of the adjustment strategies performed by employees becomes very important for developing appropriate solutions to support their work-life balance. In this context, systematic risk management in the adoption of information technology is a crucial factor to ensure the smoothness of activities without sacrificing the psychological stability of project implementers (da Silva et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there are still differing views on how organizations can play a role in supporting the work-life balance of employees in the digital era. Some organizations view the flexibility provided by technology as an advantage that can increase employee productivity and job satisfaction, thus not requiring strict arrangements regarding time and place of work. However, other organizations realize that without clear arrangements, such flexibility can create negative impacts for employees and organizational performance in the long term. These differing views create a need to understand more deeply the conditions that enable employees to achieve optimal work-life balance, as well as how organizations can create a work environment that supports the achievement of such conditions. This serves as the basis for developing policies and management practices that are in accordance with the needs and characteristics of work in the digital era. Such organizational policies ideally should be able to design a positive employee experience in the digital workplace through a humanist human

resource management perspective (Putra et al., 2022). To realize a comprehensively supportive work environment, organizations need to map and distribute various determining factors that can increase organizational effectiveness sustainably (Darmawan, 2024).

This research is based on the Role Boundary Theory developed by Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000). This theory explains that individuals hold various roles in their lives, such as worker, family member, and community member, and that the boundaries between these roles can be either rigid or blurred depending on how individuals manage and perceive the roles they occupy. According to this theory, an individual's ability to manage inter-role boundaries influences the life balance they achieve and the well-being they experience. This theory emphasizes that changes in the work environment, such as the use of technology that facilitates work access, can alter the nature of inter-role boundaries and affect how individuals manage their roles. Beyond situational factors resulting from technology, the manner in which individuals manage these role boundaries is fundamentally influenced by their internal personality characteristics, which have been empirically proven to determine the quality of performance and adaptability in the workplace (Darmawan, 2017).

Based on a review of various previous studies, there remains a gap in understanding how changing work conditions in the digital era alter the meaning of work-life balance as understood by employees. Some studies focus on the impact of technology use on work-life balance without providing sufficient explanation of how employees interpret these conditions and what they consider to be an ideal balance (Alfahl, 2023). Meanwhile, other studies discuss work-life balance in the context of traditional work, failing to consider the changes occurring due to technological advancements (R. & K., 2022). This gap creates difficulties for organizations in understanding the needs and expectations of employees regarding work-life balance in the currently evolving work environment. Amidst the uncertainty of these digital work boundaries, efforts to strengthen employees' personal capacity are now being directed toward the integration of spiritual values into human resource development programs to maintain mental and moral balance during the digital transformation period (Putra et al., 2025).

Another issue that has emerged is the lack of understanding regarding effective adjustment strategies that can be applied by employees to maintain boundaries between work and personal roles in the digital era. Various studies show that strategies applied by employees can vary and have differing levels of success depending on various factors that influence the work conditions and personal lives of employees (Mohammad, 2025). The lack of understanding regarding the factors that influence the effectiveness of applied strategies often causes employees to experience difficulty in managing their roles and achieving optimal life balance. This also poses a risk that efforts made by organizations to support employee work-life balance will not yield the expected results because they do not consider the strategies actually needed by employees.

Currently, more and more organizations are implementing work systems that utilize digital technology and provide high flexibility to employees in carrying out work activities (Alhubail, 2024). Good work-life balance is an important factor that influences employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity, thus becoming a primary concern for organizations that wish to maintain and improve their business performance. Furthermore, understanding the meaning and strategies of work-life balance in the digital era is also a concern for researchers in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management who wish to develop knowledge and management practices suitable for modern developments. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a valuable contribution to the development of knowledge and practices related to employee work-life balance.

Based on the background and problems described, the research question in this study is how the meaning of work-life balance is understood by employees in the digital era and what strategies they develop to maintain boundaries between work and personal roles. The objective of this research is to explore how technological advances that facilitate work access outside of working hours change the definition and meaning of life balance for employees, as well as to understand the strategies they develop to maintain boundaries between work and personal roles. This objective is formulated in alignment with the established problem statement, ensuring that each goal to be achieved will provide a clear answer to the problems faced. This research is expected to provide a deep understanding of

employee perceptions and experiences regarding work-life balance in the digital era, as well as to provide useful guidance for organizations and employees in developing effective ways to achieve an optimal life balance.

Method

This research utilizes a literature study method with a qualitative narrative approach aimed at collecting, identifying, assessing, and synthesizing various literature sources relevant to the research topic to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the meaning and strategies of work-life balance in the digital era. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine various previous studies that have used a qualitative narrative approach, thereby enabling a deep understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and views of employees related to the topic being studied. The qualitative narrative approach allows the researcher to understand the meaning given by individuals to the experiences they have undergone and how they interpret the changes occurring in their work and personal lives. This method is considered appropriate for the research objectives, which seek to explore in depth the shifts in perception and the adjustment strategies implemented by employees.

The data sources used in this research are various scientific literatures relevant to the research topic. The collected literature sources include national and international scientific journals discussing work-life balance, work technology, organizational behavior, and human resource management. In addition, literature sources also encompass textbooks written by experts in the fields of organizational behavior and industrial psychology, research reports published by leading research institutions, and publications issued by organizations engaged in human resource development and employee well-being. The researcher ensures that the literature sources used possess high credibility and have been widely recognized by the scientific community and practitioners, so that the information obtained is reliable and accountable (Martinez et al., 2025).

The data analysis technique used in this research is narrative thematic analysis, in which information collected from various literature sources is grouped, critically analyzed, and organized into a narrative that describes in depth the meaning and strategies of work-life balance in the digital era. The analysis process is carried out by identifying key themes

emerging from various literature sources, comparing and contrasting findings from different studies, and developing a structured framework to explain the shifts in perception and the adjustment strategies implemented by employees. This technique allows the researcher to gain a profound understanding of employee experiences and views, as well as to identify patterns that emerge in the ways they define and manage work-life balance. This approach is in line with the views of Creswell and Poth (2018), who state that narrative thematic analysis can be used to deeply understand individual experiences and the meaning they assign to the phenomena they encounter.

Result and Discussion

Work-life balance is a condition in which individuals can fulfill the demands of their work roles and personal life roles satisfactorily, without experiencing significant conflict between the two domains. In a traditional work environment, this condition is often understood as a strict separation between the time and space used for work and those used for personal life. Such clear boundaries allow individuals to allocate time and attention separately, ensuring that activities in one domain do not interfere with activities in the other (Jabeen & Jabeen, 2024). However, the development of digital technology has altered the structure of time and space in work, rendering this understanding no longer congruent with the conditions currently faced by employees. The ability to access work from anywhere and at any time has created a situation where work activities can be performed outside of the workplace and outside of set working hours, causing the boundaries between the two domains to become increasingly invisible. This fast-paced digital environment is increasingly challenging for individuals, especially considering that the digital public sphere itself is currently often confronted with threats of disinformation and the dynamics of hoax dissemination, which can affect the focus and psychological stability of society, including the workers within it (Sinambela, 2022).

This change in the structure of time and space has driven a shift in the meaning of work-life balance as understood by employees. Various studies indicate that employees today no longer view strict separation as the only way to achieve life balance (Sarker et al., 2021). Instead, they

define balance as a condition where the demands of both domains can be integrated and managed in such a way that they do not cause significant disruptions to their well-being. This new meaning emphasizes flexibility in managing time and attention, where individuals can adjust the allocation of their resources according to the demands that arise at a given moment. For example, employees may complete work tasks during times usually used for personal activities if work demands are urgent, and conversely, they may handle personal matters during work hours if permitted. This condition is considered a form of balance because individuals feel they have control over how they manage both domains of life. This shift in meaning, which requires flexibility, ultimately necessitates support in the form of innovation in human resource management to increase organizational competitiveness amidst the current flow of globalization (Abdullah et al., 2021).

This change in meaning is also influenced by employee perceptions of the benefits gained from using technology at work. Many employees view the ease of access provided by technology as enabling them to be more effective in managing the various roles they hold (McCloskey, 2020). They feel that technology provides the freedom to determine for themselves when and where they work, allowing them to adjust work schedules to personal needs that cannot be postponed. This freedom is viewed as a better form of balance compared to traditional working conditions that demand attachment to rigid times and spaces. Therefore, work-life balance is no longer understood as a condition where there is no overlap between the two domains, but as a condition where individuals can manage that overlap in a way that provides benefits to their overall lives. In this era of openness, freedom of expression and the use of digital platforms by individuals must also be balanced with ethics, just as the enforcement of political ethics in the communication of public figures on social media is essential so that the use of technology remains within a corridor of healthy values (Al Hakim & Irfan, 2023).

Although the meaning of balance has shifted, employees remain aware that improper management of work access outside of working hours can have negative impacts on their lives. Various studies show that although technology provides convenience, the pressure to be always available and to respond to work requests at any time can create feelings

of pressure and exhaustion (Grigorescu et al., 2025). Employees realize that if they cannot manage boundaries well, work activities can take over the majority of the time and attention that should be used for personal life. This condition can lead to inter-role conflict, resulting in a decline in well-being and life satisfaction. Therefore, even though they define balance as a form of integration, employees still recognize the importance of maintaining boundaries so that both domains of life can run harmoniously and support one another. To anticipate the pressure resulting from digital disruption, employee engagement needs to be well-managed so that the digital transformation process can run in tandem with sustainable improvements in organizational performance (Putra & Arifin, 2025).

The understanding of the meaning of balance is also influenced by the characteristics of the work performed by employees. Employees who hold roles that demand high levels of responsibility and interaction tend to define balance as the ability to prioritize tasks and set clear boundaries, even though they also recognize the need for flexibility (Sarker et al., 2021). Conversely, employees with more structured and measurable work tend to define balance as the ability to utilize existing flexibility to meet personal needs. This difference demonstrates that the meaning of balance is not uniform, but rather adapted to the conditions and job demands faced by each individual. It also indicates that the ability to adjust perceptions and strategies for managing boundaries is a crucial factor in achieving a balance that suits each employee's needs. This is where the role of *digital-oriented leadership* becomes vital in guiding organizational transformation, facilitating team collaboration, and driving operational efficiency in the modern era (Darmawan & Gardi, 2024).

In an effort to maintain boundaries between work and personal roles, employees develop various personalized strategies tailored to their specific conditions (Reissner et al., 2021). One of the most commonly applied strategies is the establishment of clear time boundaries, where employees designate specific hours for work and other hours dedicated to personal life. This strategy is executed by turning off work notifications outside of working hours, declining non-urgent work requests during personal time, or communicating these boundaries to colleagues and superiors. By doing so, employees strive to create a temporal structure that helps them shift their attention from work to personal activities and vice

versa. This strategy is considered effective by the majority of employees because it helps them maintain control over their time and reduces unwanted interruptions. An employee's success in applying these self-imposed boundaries also relies heavily on the influence of leadership in shaping an organizational culture that is responsive and adaptive to continuous change (Al Hakim et al., 2022).

In addition to establishing time boundaries, employees also implement strategies of separating work space and personal space as a way to maintain inter-role boundaries. This strategy is carried out by designating specific areas used exclusively for work activities, so that when in those spaces, individuals focus their attention on work, and when elsewhere, they can switch to personal activities (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2024). This spatial separation helps individuals create clear transitions between roles, making it easier for them to adjust their mindset and behavior according to the role they are currently performing. Employees who work from home often implement this strategy by preparing a separate workspace that is not used for other activities. This strategy is considered effective as it helps reduce the possibility of inter-role interference and makes it easier for individuals to separate their identities as workers from their roles as family members.

Another strategy applied by employees is the management of attention and focus, where individuals strive to concentrate fully on the role being performed at any given time. In this strategy, employees rely not only on time and space boundaries but also on managing how they utilize their attention and energy (Kubicek et al., 2021). For example, while working, they strive not to think about personal matters, and when engaging in personal activities, they attempt not to think about work. This strategy requires the ability to manage mindsets and emotions, allowing individuals to switch between roles more easily and effectively. Employees who possess this ability tend to be more capable of achieving life balance, even when they face situations where inter-role boundaries become blurred. This strategy is deemed important because it helps individuals maximize the benefits derived from each activity they perform.

Some employees also implement negotiation strategies with relevant parties—including superiors, colleagues, and family members—to create a mutual understanding regarding the boundaries they hold. In this strategy,

employees strive to communicate their needs and limitations to the relevant parties so that these parties can understand and respect the established boundaries (Viterouli et al., 2024). For example, employees may inform their superiors that they cannot respond to work requests outside of working hours except in highly urgent situations. On the other hand, they may also communicate to family members that they require specific times to focus on work. This negotiation helps create a supportive environment where all parties can cooperate to maintain the agreed-upon boundaries. This strategy is considered effective because it reduces the pressure that might arise from the expectations of others and helps create a sustainable balance. This negotiation process serves as an important foundation for designing *cross-functional training* programs aimed at strengthening collaboration and mutual understanding among team members (Fared & Darmawan, 2021).

The strategies implemented by employees are also influenced by the support they receive from their work environment. Employees who work in organizations with policies that support work-life balance tend to find it easier to implement effective strategies (Duan, 2025). Supportive policies may include flexible working hour arrangements, prohibitions on sending work-related messages outside of working hours, or the provision of facilities that make it easier for employees to manage their multiple roles. Support from superiors also plays a vital role; superiors who understand and respect employee boundaries create an environment that enables employees to implement boundary management strategies more effectively. Conversely, employees working in environments that demand full availability without considering personal boundaries face difficulties in applying effective strategies, making them more vulnerable to inter-role conflict and a decline in well-being. Such unsupportive environments can ultimately erode organizational commitment, even though the loyalty and emotional attachment of workers rely heavily on the effectiveness of *knowledge management* and the *quality of work life* provided by the company (Eddine et al., 2023). Therefore, in this modern era, organizations are required to reconfigure human resource management by prioritizing work flexibility to build a strong and adaptive *employer branding* (Mardikaningsih, 2025).

Beyond work environment factors, an employee's personal characteristics also influence the types of strategies they implement. Employees with a high level of self-control tend to be more capable of implementing time and attention management strategies more effectively (Zeng, 2023). They possess the ability to regulate themselves to remain focused on the role being performed and are not easily tempted to engage in activities from other domains. Conversely, employees with lower levels of self-control tend to require greater support from their environment to help them maintain inter-role boundaries. Another characteristic that influences strategy is an individual's preference for organizing their life, where some employees prefer a strict separation of roles, while others prefer a more flexible form of integration. This difference shows that a strategy effective for one individual is not necessarily effective for another, making adjustment to personal characteristics an important factor in determining the success of the applied strategy. This internal individual capacity is closely related to *work readiness*, where the possession of robust digital skills acts as a significant moderating variable in increasing the *employability* of graduates in the contemporary labor market (Darmawan, 2025). Furthermore, the preparation of these internal competencies is a pressing step in mapping the readiness of human resources from future generations, such as Generation Alpha, before they enter the complex digital workplace ecosystem (Gani & Darmawan, 2023).

Employees also recognize that the strategies they implement need to be adjusted to the situations they face at any given time (Klote, 2025). In situations where work demands are very high, they may need to temporarily relax the established boundaries to complete tasks successfully. Conversely, in situations where personal demands are urgent, they may need to adjust their work schedules to address those personal matters. The ability to adapt strategies dynamically is considered important because it allows employees to maintain balance even when facing changing demands over time. Rigid strategies that cannot be adjusted tend to be ineffective in the long run because they fail to accommodate the changes that occur in an employee's work and personal life. Therefore, flexibility in implementing strategies is a key factor determining the success of work-life balance management in the digital era. Within the framework of organizational sustainability, the wise use of digital innovation plays a

major role in optimizing human resource development programs so they remain relevant to the dynamic changes in the environment (Mardikaningsih & Wardoyo, 2024). This optimization can only be realized through effective *digital leadership*, which is capable of aligning work flexibility with operational efficiency without compromising team harmony (Mardikaningsih et al., 2025).

The success of the strategies implemented by employees is also influenced by their perception of the support available to them. Employees who feel they receive sufficient support from their organization and surrounding environment tend to be more confident in applying their chosen strategies (Boikanyo, 2024). They feel they have the right to set boundaries and that relevant parties will respect those boundaries. Conversely, employees who feel they do not receive sufficient support tend to hesitate to implement strict strategies for fear of being perceived as less committed to work or less caring about the needs of others. This perception influences the extent to which employees can maintain their applied strategies and the degree to which those strategies yield the expected results. Therefore, creating an environment that provides support and trust to employees is an important factor that organizations need to consider. Concrete support from leadership oriented toward employee welfare is empirically proven to boost organizational productivity as a whole (Darmawan et al., 2022).

The implementation of effective strategies in maintaining inter-role boundaries has a positive impact on employee well-being and performance. Employees who successfully implement strategies suited to their conditions and needs tend to experience lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and improved life satisfaction (Mohammad, 2025). They also tend to have better relationships with their family and colleagues because they are able to provide sufficient attention to every role they perform. Furthermore, the ability to manage work-life balance also positively impacts an employee's work performance, as they can work with greater focus and productivity when in their role as a worker. These positive impacts demonstrate that the efforts made by employees to maintain inter-role boundaries provide significant benefits both to themselves and to the organizations where they work. Therefore, understanding effective strategies and the required support is crucial to address. Achieving superior

performance and realizing this life balance will, in turn, strengthen human resource quality in the aggregate, serving as a primary driver for the emergence of optimal work performance and high employee loyalty toward the organization (Darmawan et al., 2020).

The shift in the meaning and management strategies of work-life balance in the digital era demonstrates that this concept is dynamic and continues to evolve in tandem with changes in the work environment (Pragya, 2025). Technological advancements have transformed how work is performed and how individuals interpret the relationship between their professional and personal lives, necessitating that previous understandings be adjusted to fit these new conditions. Employees today no longer view balance as a static or fixed state, but rather as a condition that must be continuously managed and adapted in response to emerging demands. This indicates that work-life balance is an ongoing process, where individuals must consistently evaluate and adjust how they organize their roles and the boundaries between both domains of life. It is crucial to develop this understanding so that it may provide guidance that is aligned with the needs of employees within an ever-changing work environment.

Conclusion

Based on the study conducted, it can be concluded that the meaning of work-life balance has undergone a significant transformation alongside advances in digital technology that facilitate work access outside of working hours. Employees no longer define balance as a strict separation between the work and personal domains, but rather as the ability to integrate and organize both domains flexibly according to individual needs. This shift in meaning is influenced by the perception of the benefits of flexibility provided by technology, although employees remain aware of the importance of maintaining boundaries to avoid potential negative impacts. In an effort to maintain these boundaries, employees develop various strategies tailored to job characteristics, environmental conditions, and the personal characteristics of each individual. The strategies implemented include setting time and space boundaries, managing attention and focus, negotiating with relevant parties, and making dynamic adjustments according to the situations faced. The success of the implemented strategies is influenced by the support

available from the work environment and the individual's ability to adapt to the changes occurring. For organizations, the results of this study imply that management policies and practices need to be adjusted to the changing meaning and strategies of work-life balance.

Future research is suggested to conduct empirical studies that examine the relationship between boundary management strategies implemented by employees and the levels of well-being and performance they achieve. Such studies could involve employees from various industrial sectors and job characteristics, thereby providing a more comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the strategies applied across different working conditions. Furthermore, future research could delve deeper into the role of cultural factors in influencing the meaning of work-life balance and the strategies implemented by employees, given that different cultural backgrounds can create significant differences in perception and behavior. Research could also develop a structured framework model that can serve as a reference for understanding and managing work-life balance in the digital era more effectively.

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