

## **Work–Life Balance and Organizational Support as Determinants of Employee Well-Being in the Modern Work Era**

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### **Abstract**

The modern work era, characterized by digitalization and flexible work arrangements, has intensified the interaction between work and personal life, making work–life balance a critical issue for employee well-being. In developing countries such as Indonesia, where collectivist cultural norms often blur professional and personal boundaries, understanding this dynamic is urgently needed. This study aims to critically examine how work–life balance shapes employee well-being in the contemporary work context, with particular attention to the impacts of work flexibility and organizational support. This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive–interpretative design. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 18 employees from the technology, education, and financial sectors who had experienced hybrid or remote work arrangements for at least six months. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis, supported by triangulation through observation and document analysis to enhance credibility. The findings reveal three main themes. First, participants predominantly perceived work-life balance and strict boundary enforcement as critical mechanisms for maintaining psychological stability and mitigating digital intrusion. Second, work flexibility produced highly ambivalent effects; while offering temporal autonomy, it frequently acted as a “trap” leading to invisible overtime and extended working hours. Third, organizational support and empathetic leadership were identified as decisive structural determinants of balance, emphasizing the importance of clear policies and realistic workloads. The findings expand boundary theory and conservation of resources theory by demonstrating that individual boundary management is insufficient without institutional backing. Flexible work arrangements act as a double-edged sword, enhancing well-being only when rigidly embedded within supportive leadership and organizational structures.

**Keywords:** work–life balance, employee well-being, flexible work, organizational support, leadership, modern work era

*JEL Classification:* M12, J28, J81, I31, 033

Received: January 28, 2026 / Revised: April 23, 2026 / Publish: 03 June, 2026 / Available Online: 03 June, 2026 / Publish: 03 June, 2026

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Work–life balance (WLB) reflects a harmonious integration between professional obligations and personal life that enables employees to function optimally while maintaining psychological, physical, and social well-being. Contemporary organizational theories increasingly emphasize

employee well-being as a strategic asset rather than a peripheral outcome, as well-being is closely linked to engagement, resilience, and sustainable performance (Rahmatunnisa et al., 2025; Riyono & Rezki, 2022; Septiani & Frianto, 2023; Sukandar Nur et al., 2025). From this perspective, work–life balance is positioned as a foundational condition for fostering healthy and productive employees in modern organizations.

The modern work era, marked by digital transformation, flexible work arrangements, remote and hybrid work models, has significantly altered traditional work–life boundaries. While these changes offer increased autonomy, they also intensify job demands and blur the separation between work and non-work roles. Scholars argue that such conditions heighten work–life conflict and expose employees to greater psychological strain, making work–life balance increasingly crucial for protecting employee well-being (Andrić et al., 2025; Faris et al., 2024; Skomorovsky et al., 2025).

A growing body of literature consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between work–life balance and employee well-being. According to Herni Justiana Astuti et al. (2024) indicate that employees who perceive a higher level of balance experience greater job satisfaction, lower stress, and improved psychological well-being. These findings suggest that work–life balance functions not merely as a work arrangement preference, but as a key antecedent of holistic well-being in contemporary employment contexts.

Factual evidence from various sectors further supports the role of work–life balance as a determinant of employee well-being. Studies conducted in service industries, healthcare, education, and start-up environments show that supportive organizational cultures and flexible work policies enhance work–life balance, which in turn positively affects mental health and overall well-being (Indra Putri et al., 2022; Tampati et al., 2024). During periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, work–life balance has been identified as a critical buffer against emotional exhaustion and declining well-being (Begum et al., 2025; Dr. D. Kanthi Sree, 2024).

Despite the extensive literature, several limitations remain evident. Some studies emphasize work–life balance mainly as a predictor of performance or productivity, while employee well-being is treated as a secondary or mediating variable (Handayani et al., 2022; Sajuyigbe et al., 2025). Others focus on specific occupational groups or national contexts, which restricts the broader applicability of findings (Kismiati et al., 2024; Prafitri Ramadhani Siregar et al., 2024; Q. Naranjo et al., 2025). Moreover, meta-analytical evidence highlights variability in effect sizes, suggesting the need for more context-sensitive investigations.

A significant research gap also emerges in relation to the evolving nature of work itself. While work–life balance has been widely studied, its role as a primary determinant of employee well-being within modern work arrangements such as hybrid work systems, digital labor, and boundaryless careers remains insufficiently explored. Furthermore, there is a pressing urgency to contextualize this research within developing nations such as Indonesia. In developing countries, the rapid transition to digitalized and flexible work arrangements frequently outpaces the establishment of supportive labor policies and technological infrastructure. Specifically in the Indonesian context, strong collectivist cultural norms often blur the boundaries between professional obligations and personal life, leading to implicit expectations of constant availability and higher emotional labor. Consequently, achieving work–life balance in emerging economies is not merely an individual preference, but a critical socio-economic necessity to prevent widespread burnout, safeguard mental health, and sustain economic productivity amid the unique pressures of modern work.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it strengthens the conceptual linkage between work–life balance and employee well-being by situating the relationship within the modern work era. Practically, the findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights for organizations and policymakers in designing work systems and human resource strategies that prioritize employee well-being and sustainable.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine work–life balance as a determinant of employee well-being in the modern work era. By empirically analyzing this relationship, the research seeks to address existing gaps in the literature and offer a more comprehensive understanding of how work–

life balance contributes to employee well-being under contemporary work conditions. The results are expected to enrich academic discourse while providing actionable implications for organizations facing the challenges of modern work environments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Work–Life Balance in the Modern Work Context

Work–life balance is commonly defined as the individual’s ability to effectively manage and integrate work responsibilities with personal and family life without excessive role conflict. Early conceptualizations framed work–life balance as the absence of work–family conflict; however, contemporary perspectives emphasize balance as a dynamic and subjective experience influenced by organizational culture, job design, and individual expectations (James, 2024; Suhartini et al., 2023). In the modern work era, this concept has expanded beyond traditional working hours to include flexibility, autonomy, and boundary management.

Technological advancements and the rise of remote and hybrid work arrangements have significantly transformed the meaning of work–life balance. While flexibility allows employees greater control over when and where they work, it also increases the risk of constant connectivity and role blurring. According to Petitta & Ghezzi (2025) suggest that without adequate organizational support, flexible work arrangements may paradoxically reduce perceived balance and intensify work-related stress. Therefore, work–life balance in contemporary organizations must be understood within the broader context of digital and boundaryless work (Gašić et al., 2024).

Recent empirical research highlights that work–life balance is shaped not only by individual coping strategies but also by structural and managerial factors. Supportive leadership, fair workload distribution, and family-friendly policies are consistently identified as key predictors of perceived balance (Cui & Mo, 2025; Uman et al., 2024). These findings underscore that work–life balance is a shared responsibility between employees and organizations rather than an individual issue alone.

### Employee Well-Being as a Multidimensional Concept

Employee well-being is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, emotional, physical, and social aspects of employees’ lives (Maharani, 2025; Widyakto et al., 2025; Wiryawan, 2025). Psychological well-being, in particular, has gained prominence in organizational research due to its strong association with job satisfaction, motivation, and mental health. Scholars argue that employee well-being should be viewed holistically, as workplace experiences inevitably spill over into non-work domains (Molnár et al., 2024; Pradhan & Hati, 2022; Rabuana & Yanuar, 2023).

The literature consistently demonstrates that poor employee well-being leads to negative organizational outcomes, including burnout, absenteeism, turnover intention, and reduced productivity. Conversely, high levels of well-being are associated with increased engagement, organizational commitment, and resilience. As a result, employee well-being has become a central concern in human resource management and organizational sustainability discussions.

In the context of modern work environments, employee well-being faces new challenges. Increased job demands, performance pressures, and digital overload contribute to emotional exhaustion and declining mental health. Empirical studies conducted during periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, reveal that employees’ well-being is particularly vulnerable when work–life boundaries are weak or poorly managed (Begum et al., 2025). This reinforces the importance of preventive organizational strategies that address both work conditions and personal well-being.

### Work–Life Balance as a Determinant of Employee Well-Being

A substantial body of literature positions work–life balance as a key determinant of employee well-being. Empirical evidence indicates that employees who experience a high level of balance report lower stress levels, reduced burnout, and greater overall life satisfaction (Domagalska-Grędyś & Sroka, 2025; Hariri et al., 2024; Nurhasan & Poltak Sinambela, 2025). Work–life balance functions

as a protective mechanism that mitigates the negative effects of excessive job demands on psychological and emotional health.

However, despite consistent findings, previous studies reveal conceptual and empirical gaps. Many investigations treat work–life balance as a mediating or secondary variable rather than as a primary explanatory factor of employee well-being, particularly in modern work settings characterized by hybrid and digital labor. This literature review therefore highlights the need for further empirical research that explicitly examines work–life balance as a central determinant of employee well-being in the modern work era.

## METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with a descriptive–interpretative design to explore work–life balance as a determinant of employee well-being in the modern work era (Hejase et al., 2024; Salmah et al., 2024). A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of employees’ lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings related to balancing work and personal life. This design enables the researcher to capture complex social and psychological dynamics that cannot be fully explained through quantitative measurement.

The research participants consist of employees working in organizations that apply modern work arrangements, such as remote work, hybrid systems, or flexible working hours. To capture a comprehensive perspective within the Indonesian context, the 18 participants were drawn from three primary sectors: technology, education, and financial services. Demographically, the participants consisted of 10 males and 8 females, with ages ranging from 25 to 45 years. The majority of participants hold middle-management or specialist roles, and a significant portion have active caregiving responsibilities at home. Participants are selected using a purposive sampling technique, with criteria including a minimum of six months of experience under modern work arrangements. This criterion ensures that participants have sufficient exposure to contemporary work conditions and are able to provide rich and relevant insights.

Data are collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. An interview guide is developed based on key themes from the literature, including perceptions of work–life balance, challenges in managing work and personal roles, and the impact of work arrangements on well-being. To strengthen data credibility, observations and document reviews, such as organizational policies related to flexible work, are used as supporting data sources.

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis procedure. Interview transcripts are analyzed through several stages, including data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. This process allows patterns and meanings related to work–life balance and employee well-being to emerge inductively from the data. To enhance trustworthiness, techniques such as member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation of data sources are employed.

Ethical considerations are carefully addressed throughout the research process. Participants are informed about the research objectives and procedures, and informed consent is obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained by using pseudonyms and secure data storage. These ethical practices ensure respect for participants’ rights and contribute to the credibility and integrity of the qualitative findings.

**Table 1.** Data Sources and Research Focus

Data Source	Research Focus	Technique
In-depth interviews	Employees’ experiences of work–life balance	Semi-structured interviews
Observation	Work practices and boundary management	Non-participant observation
Documents	Organizational policies and work arrangements	Document analysis

*Source: Developed by the researcher based on principles of qualitative data triangulation (2026)*

Table 1 summarizes the data sources and analytical focus used in this qualitative study. In-depth interviews serve as the main source of data to explore employees' subjective experiences, while observations and document analysis provide contextual understanding and support data triangulation. This methodological design enables a comprehensive and nuanced examination of work–life balance as a determinant of employee well-being in the modern work era.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Work–Life Balance as a Key to Employees' Psychological Stability

These qualitative findings unequivocally position work–life balance not merely as a lifestyle preference, but as the primary foundation for employees' psychological stability in the modern work era. The vast majority of participants explicitly identified work-life balance as an absolute prerequisite for sustaining mental calmness, emotional control, and psychological safety in the workplace. Without adequate balance, employees become increasingly susceptible to emotional disturbances that can impair cognitive function, erode motivation, and diminish their daily performance.

The most critical aspect of establishing this psychological stability is the enforcement of definitive boundaries between professional and personal time. This necessity is strongly reflected in the statement of a participant from the education sector, who articulated, *“Having a strict cut-off time for work tasks is the only way I can maintain my sanity”*. This articulation highlights that restricting work hours is not perceived as an evasion of responsibility, but rather as an essential mechanism for self-preservation. The participant further explained, *“Without that boundary, I feel like I am constantly failing both my professional obligations and my family”*, illustrating the persistent threat of guilt and role conflict when these boundaries dissolve.

The protective efficacy of these clear boundaries is directly evident in the daily stress levels experienced by employees. Participants who reported a high level of perceived work–life balance consistently described lower stress intensity in their daily work routines. Many stated that clear boundaries between work and personal life helped them manage work-related stress more effectively, allowing them to recover mentally after working hours. This role separation is crucial because it provides the much-needed psychological space for employees to disengage from work demands and restore their cognitive resources.

However, efforts to maintain these boundaries and achieve mental recovery face massive challenges in the digital work era. Digital technology has emerged as a major contributor to work–life imbalance, transforming the professional landscape into a space devoid of physical walls or temporal limits. More than half of the respondents reported that constant connectivity through emails, messaging applications, and online meetings significantly blurred work–life boundaries. Accessibility, originally designed to facilitate work, has paradoxically devolved into a conduit that allows professional obligations to continuously infiltrate employees' private spheres.

The reality of this relentless digital connectivity breeds an always-on work culture that is highly detrimental to psychological well-being. This frustration is vividly captured by a participant from the technology sector, who expressed, *“The office group chats never sleep”*. This statement represents a toxic work environment where the expectation to remain vigilant and responsive never truly ceases. The emotional impact is palpable and almost physiological, as the participant noted: *“Even on weekends, a notification sound makes my heart drop”*. This indicates the emergence of acute stress responses or anticipatory anxiety triggered by continuous digital interruptions.

This persistent anxiety and anticipation regarding work induce an overwhelming cognitive load. The same participant from the technology sector described this condition with a concerning grievance: *“It feels like I am mentally on duty 24/7, which drains my energy completely”*. This state of being “mentally on duty” emphasizes that even when employees are physically at home or resting, their minds are never fully deactivated from work mode. This latent cognitive fatigue gradually

depletes individuals' emotional reserves, serving as a primary catalyst for burnout among modern workers.

The implications of this total energy depletion extend beyond individual performance declines; they create a destructive spillover effect into personal life quality. When employees' mental space is constantly consumed by work matters through their mobile devices, their emotional availability for family and non-work activities becomes severely restricted. This, in turn, generates a new cycle of life dissatisfaction, wherein employees feel trapped in a vortex of false productivity while losing meaning and engagement in their social relationships and personal lives.

The analysis of these findings demonstrates that employees' psychological stability in the modern work era relies heavily on their ability and the structural support from their organizations to fortify personal space against work intrusion. Amidst the onslaught of digital disruption, work–life balance is no longer merely a rhetoric of well-being, but a fundamental necessity. The capacity to decisively “switch off” from work and mentally disengage from professional demands is an absolute requirement for preserving sanity, restoring energy, and ensuring the sustainability of human capacity in the workforce.

**Table 2.** Qualitative Summary of Work–Life Balance and Psychological Stability

Core Psychological Aspect	Qualitative Observation & Employee Experience
Strict Boundary Enforcement	Establishing definitive cut-off times is perceived as a critical self-preservation mechanism to prevent role conflict and maintain mental sanity.
Stress Mitigation & Recovery	Clear separation between professional and personal life facilitates effective stress management and provides the necessary space for mental restoration.
Digital Intrusion & Anxiety	Constant digital connectivity breeds an always-on culture, triggering anticipatory anxiety and acute stress responses (e.g., notification dread).
Cognitive Depletion & Spillover	The persistent feeling of being mentally on duty severely drains emotional reserves, accelerating burnout and degrading personal relationships.

*Source: Research Finding (2026)*

The table 2 above outlines the fundamental psychological dimensions of work-life balance experienced by the participants, highlighting that establishing strict boundaries is not merely a lifestyle preference but a vital mechanism for self-preservation in the modern workforce. While a clear separation between professional and personal spheres successfully enables essential mental recovery and effective stress mitigation, these efforts are continuously threatened by relentless digital intrusion. The resulting “always-on” culture, characterized by constant connectivity and notification dread, forces employees into a state of perpetual cognitive vigilance, which ultimately drains their emotional reserves, accelerates burnout, and causes highly detrimental spillover effects into their private lives.

### **Work Flexibility and Its Ambivalent Impact on Employee Well-Being**

The second major finding of this study reveals that work flexibility, particularly within hybrid and remote work arrangements, produces highly ambivalent effects on employee well-being. Rather than functioning as a uniformly beneficial policy, flexibility operates as a complex double-edged sword within modern corporate structures. Almost all participants in the study reported experiencing a simultaneous mix of both positive and negative consequences stemming from these flexible work systems. This duality highlights that the structural shift away from the traditional 9-to-5 office environment introduces a new set of psychological dynamics that can simultaneously empower and drain the workforce.

On the positive side of this spectrum, flexible work arrangements were widely associated with significant increases in employee autonomy and time efficiency. A large proportion of the

interviewees stated that the fundamental ability to choose when and where to execute their professional responsibilities greatly enhanced their overarching sense of control over their daily tasks. This self-determination fosters a more customized work environment, allowing individuals to align their peak productivity hours with their specific job demands, which initially contributes to an elevated sense of professional satisfaction and operational agency.

Furthermore, this heightened autonomy allows employees to reclaim significant portions of their day that were previously lost to rigid structural constraints, such as daily commuting or mandatory office presence. By eliminating these transitional periods, workers experience a newfound temporal efficiency that can be redirected toward personal well-being or family engagement. For many, this logistical freedom represents the ideal promise of remote work, providing the necessary breathing room to manage life's daily demands without immediately sacrificing professional output or career progression.

However, the qualitative findings also reveal notable and deeply concerning negative implications inherent in this very same work flexibility. The removal of spatial and temporal boundaries, while liberating in one sense, simultaneously dismantles the natural stopping points built into traditional office-based arrangements. Many participants reported that under these flexible systems, they ultimately ended up working significantly longer hours compared to their time in standard office settings. The physical departure from the workplace no longer guarantees the psychological conclusion of the workday.

The most pervasive manifestation of this boundary erosion is the systematic extension of work into traditional periods of rest. The absence of fixed, clearly demarcated working hours frequently led to workdays bleeding seamlessly into evenings and weekends. What is particularly detrimental to employee well-being is that these extended periods of labor routinely occur without any formal recognition, logging, or financial compensation. Consequently, employees find themselves contributing far more of their time and cognitive resources to their organizations than formally contracted, leading to a silent accumulation of fatigue.

This dynamic creates a profound paradox, perfectly articulated by a participant from the financial sector, who poignantly noted that “flexibility is often a trap”. This characterization suggests that the perceived freedom offered by hybrid and remote work is frequently an illusion that masks an intensified and unregulated workload. The organization grants temporal autonomy, but implicitly demands continuous availability and heightened productivity in return, effectively trapping the employee in a cycle of perpetual obligation disguised as a corporate benefit.

The mechanics of this psychological trap are vividly illustrated by the everyday trade-offs employees are forced to make to survive in this environment. As the financial sector participant further explained, “*Yes, I can take an hour to pick up my kids from school, but the unspoken expectation is that I will open my laptop at 9 PM and work until midnight to make up for it*”. This highlights the insidious nature of modern work culture, where an hour of daytime personal flexibility is implicitly “repaid” with multiple hours of late-night labor. As the participant concluded, the resulting “invisible overtime” is fundamentally exhausting.

In summary, the ambivalent impact of work flexibility demonstrates that autonomy without boundaries accelerates employee burnout. While the ability to dictate one's schedule offers tangible benefits in terms of daily control and logistical efficiency, the unregulated nature of this freedom consistently leads to invisible overwork and uncompensated labor. Therefore, flexibility alone is an insufficient strategy for fostering well-being; it must be coupled with rigorous organizational norms that actively protect employees from the unspoken, exhausting expectations of perpetual connectivity.

**Table 3.** The Ambivalent Dimensions of Work Flexibility

Core Dimension	Positive Outcomes (The Promise)	Negative Outcomes (The Reality/Trap)
Temporal Autonomy	Increased time efficiency and a heightened sense of control over daily professional tasks.	Absence of fixed working hours leads to workdays extending into evenings and weekends.

Work-Life Integration	Ability to accommodate personal and family needs during standard business hours (e.g., childcare).	Unspoken organizational expectations requiring late-night labor to compensate for daytime flexibility.
Effort & Compensation	Liberation from traditional, rigid office-based constraints and commuting.	Accumulation of exhausting “invisible overtime” without formal recognition or financial compensation.

*Source: Research Finding (2026)*

The table 3 above illustrates the inherent paradox of flexible work arrangements by contrasting the intended benefits against their detrimental psychological realities experienced by the participants. While employees initially gain valuable temporal autonomy and the logistical freedom to balance personal tasks such as child-rearing these very benefits are consistently offset by the dissolution of fixed boundaries. This structural ambiguity transforms flexibility into a “trap,” where daytime personal hours are implicitly traded for draining, uncompensated “invisible overtime” during late nights and weekends. Ultimately, the data indicates that without strict organizational protections, the empowering aspects of remote work are easily eclipsed by continuous cognitive exhaustion and an unsustainable extension of working hours.

### **The Role of Organizational Support and Leadership in Shaping Work–Life Balance**

The vast majority of participants explicitly stated that organizational policies and day-to-day leadership behaviors directly influenced their practical ability to manage the competing demands of work and personal life. This powerful consensus underscores that work–life balance is not merely an individual responsibility or a personal time-management skill, but is instead a systemic outcome strongly determined by the overarching organizational structures and managerial practices in place.

Participants emphatically emphasized the importance of clear, formal organizational policies as the primary structural pillar for supporting work–life balance. A significant portion of the interviewees reported that having explicit, written guidelines regarding working hours, flexible work arrangements, and expectations for after-hours communication significantly reduced role ambiguity and alleviated psychological pressure. When these corporate expectations were clearly documented and transparently communicated, employees felt significantly more secure in establishing their own boundaries, knowing they were backed by institutional policy rather than relying solely on personal negotiation.

Beyond written guidelines, realistic workload allocation emerged as a highly critical component of functional organizational support. Many participants indicated that excessive, poorly calibrated workloads and completely unrealistic performance targets were the primary root causes of their work–life imbalance. For these individuals, the theoretical availability of flexible work policies was rendered entirely useless by the sheer volume of tasks assigned to them, proving that flexibility cannot compensate for an inherently unmanageable workload.

In stark contrast, participants who perceived their workload as fair and manageable reported substantially higher levels of overall job satisfaction and emotional stability. These specific employees described being fully capable of completing their assigned tasks within regular, expected working hours without needing to constantly spill over into their personal time. This structural feasibility naturally facilitated vital mental recovery time and profoundly improved their holistic well-being, allowing them to return to work the next day fully refreshed.

Even with strong policies and fair workloads, leadership style played a particularly prominent, daily role in shaping employees’ actual experiences of balance. A large majority of participants identified empathetic leadership, characterized by genuine understanding, open two-way communication, and compassionate flexibility as the ultimate enabler of work–life balance. The human element of management proved critical, as leaders are the primary agents who bridge the gap between official human resource policies and the daily, lived realities of the employees.

Employees working under these empathetic supervisors consistently reported feeling significantly more comfortable discussing personal constraints and negotiating ad-hoc work

arrangements when unexpected life emergencies arose. This approachable and supportive managerial dynamic dramatically reduced workplace stress and fundamentally enhanced the employees' sense of psychological safety. Consequently, they were able to perform optimally without the underlying fear of harsh judgment or professional retaliation for appropriately prioritizing their family needs.

Conversely, the distinct absence of such organizational and leadership support actively exacerbated work–life conflict and accelerated employee burnout. More than half of the respondents described experiencing relentless, constant performance pressure without receiving any corresponding emotional or structural support from their superiors. These participants reported heightened levels of chronic stress, persistent feelings of being professionally undervalued, and rapidly increasing emotional exhaustion, all of which severely degraded their intrinsic motivation and daily engagement.

The qualitative data indicate that organizational support and leadership comprehensively dictate long-term employee well-being and retention trajectories. A substantial number of participants admitted to actively considering job changes or succumbing to quiet disengagement when organizational support was perceived as persistently low. In profound contrast, those who experienced strong, consistent leadership support expressed fiercely high organizational commitment and a much greater willingness to sustain high-level performance over time, clearly demonstrating that empathetic organizational structures directly fuel sustainable productivity.

**Table 4.** Structural Determinants of Work–Life Balance

Structural Factor	Positive Implementation (Enablers of Well-Being)	Negative Implementation (Barriers & Risks)
Organizational Policies	Clear, written guidelines on working hours, flexibility, and after-hours communication that reduce role ambiguity.	Ambiguous rules that force employees to constantly guess expectations, increasing psychological pressure.
Workload Allocation	Fair and realistic task distribution that can realistically be completed within standard working hours.	Excessive volume of tasks and unrealistic targets that inherently require uncompensated overtime to achieve.
Leadership Style	Empathetic management offering open communication, understanding, and psychological safety.	High-pressure, rigid management lacking emotional support, leading to feelings of being undervalued.
Long-Term Outcomes	High organizational commitment, sustained performance, and strong employee retention.	Emotional exhaustion, chronic stress, quiet disengagement, and increased turnover intention.

*Source: Research Finding (2026)*

The table 4 above systematically outlines the structural determinants of work-life balance, contrasting how specific organizational and managerial factors can either enable or severely hinder employee well-being. It illustrates that formal policies and realistic workload allocations provide the necessary operational foundation for balance, reducing role ambiguity and preventing inevitable overtime. However, these structural elements must be actively animated by an empathetic leadership style that fosters open communication and psychological safety. Ultimately, the data shows a direct trajectory from how these structural factors are implemented to the long-term outcomes of the organization; positive implementation secures sustained commitment and retention, whereas rigid, unsupportive environments actively drive emotional exhaustion and employee turnover.

### **Interpreting Work–Life Balance, Flexibility, and Organizational Support in Shaping Employee Well-Being**

The findings of this study confirm that work–life balance functions as a central determinant of employee well-being, particularly psychological stability, which aligns strongly with boundary theory and work–family interface theory. Boundary theory posits that individuals require clear physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries to maintain role balance and mental health. However, our findings critically expand this theory by demonstrating that in modern, digitally connected environments particularly within the collective work culture of developing countries boundary management cannot be treated merely as an individual responsibility or a personal coping mechanism. The systemic blurring of boundaries requires an institutional response.

Furthermore, while the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests individuals strive to protect limited resources, this study reveals a critical paradox, flexible work arrangements frequently force employees to expend massive cognitive and emotional resources simply to manage the very boundaries that were supposed to protect them (Malak & Qassim, 2025; Nahum, 2025). Flexibility, therefore, is not an inherently positive resource. Instead, as the data shows, it often masks increased job demands under the guise of autonomy. This challenges the dominant, overly optimistic narrative in human resource literature that flexibility universally enhances well-being. Our findings argue that without rigid structural protections, realistic workload allocations, and culturally empathetic leadership, flexibility actually accelerates resource depletion and burnout.

The association between work–life balance and reduced stress observed in this study also resonates with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which argues that individuals strive to protect and conserve limited emotional and cognitive resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Participants who reported clear work–life boundaries experienced lower mental fatigue and greater emotional regulation, suggesting that balance acts as a resource-preserving mechanism. Similar conclusions were reached by Ruželè et al. (2025), who found that work–life balance mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee well-being by minimizing resource depletion.

The ambivalent effects of work flexibility identified in this study extend existing literature on flexible work arrangements. While flexibility increased autonomy and time efficiency for most participants, it simultaneously intensified work intrusion and extended working hours for a significant proportion. This dual effect supports previous findings by Willett et al. (2024), who demonstrated that flexible work enhances well-being only when supported by perceived supervisor support. The results challenge overly optimistic assumptions in flexibility discourse and reinforce the idea that flexibility without boundaries may undermine employee well-being.

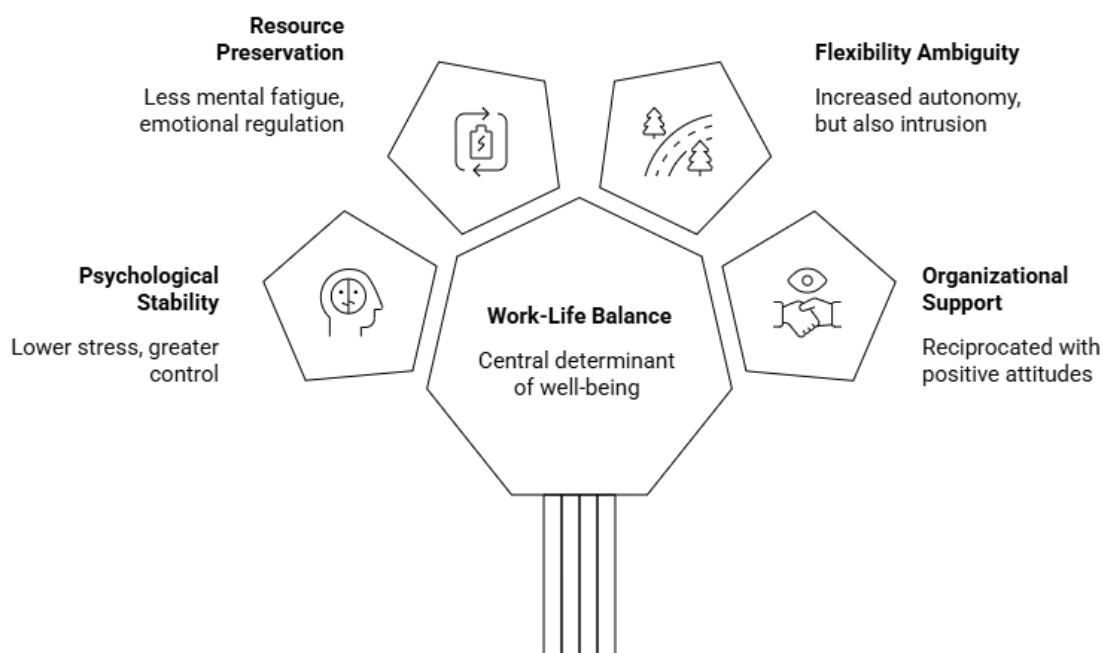
From a job demands–resources (JD–R) perspective, work flexibility can operate as either a job resource or an additional job demand depending on contextual conditions (Verma & Singh, 2024; Zablah et al., 2012). In this study, flexibility functioned as a resource when it increased autonomy and family time, but became a demand when it resulted in invisible overtime and constant availability. Similar patterns were reported by Begum et al. (2025), who observed that flexible work during the COVID-19 pandemic protected well-being only when workload and expectations were clearly regulated.

The third finding highlights organizational support and leadership as structural determinants of work–life balance, strongly supporting social exchange theory. According to this theory, employees reciprocate organizational support with positive attitudes and sustained engagement (Ahmad et al., 2023; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Participants who experienced empathetic leadership and clear policies reported better balance and higher well-being, consistent with evidence from Loh & Idris (2024) showing that perceived organizational support strengthens the positive effects of work–life balance on well-being.

Leadership empathy emerged as particularly influential, aligning with transformational and supportive leadership theories. Empathetic leaders help employees negotiate boundaries, adjust workloads, and manage competing role demands, thereby enhancing psychological safety (José et al., 2025). Conversely, participants exposed to high performance pressure without emotional support reported emotional exhaustion and disengagement, echoing findings by Gün et al. (2025) that inadequate organizational support weakens the effectiveness of work–life balance policies.

The findings also reveal that organizational policies alone are insufficient without consistent leadership implementation. This observation aligns with Hasan et al. (2021), who argued that work–life balance initiatives often fail in practice due to weak managerial commitment. The present study extends this argument by showing that employees’ well-being is shaped not merely by policy availability, but by daily leadership behaviors that legitimize boundary-setting and respect non-work time.

**Figure 1.** Work-Life Balance Impacts Employee Well-Being



*Source: Research Findings*

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model that explains the interrelationship between work–life balance, work flexibility, organizational support and leadership, and employee well-being in the modern work era. Visually, work–life balance is positioned as the central mechanism linking contemporary work demands to employee well-being. Work flexibility is depicted as having a dual influence, capable of either strengthening or weakening work–life balance depending on how work boundaries are managed. Organizational support and empathetic leadership function as enabling conditions that guide flexible work arrangements toward positive outcomes by legitimizing boundary-setting and regulating workloads. This representation is consistent with the discussion above, which highlights that work–life balance serves as a key psychological resource for employee well-being, while flexibility without adequate organizational and leadership support may intensify psychological strain. The figure emphasizes that employee well-being is shaped by a dynamic interaction between flexible work practices, supportive organizational structures, and effective leadership, rather than by any single factor in isolation.

This discussion demonstrates that work–life balance, flexibility, and organizational support are deeply interconnected rather than independent factors. The findings contribute to contemporary theory by positioning work–life balance as a dynamic construct shaped by modern work arrangements and leadership practices. Consistent with recent empirical studies (Ahsan & Khawaja, 2024; Suruthi R & Sudha G, 2025), this research reinforces the view that sustainable employee well-being in the modern work era requires not only individual boundary management, but also structural organizational support and empathetic leadership.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

This study concludes that work–life balance is a fundamental determinant of employee psychological stability and overall well-being, particularly within the digitally connected and collectivist work cultures of developing nations such as Indonesia. The qualitative findings demonstrate that establishing strict boundaries between professional and personal life is not merely a lifestyle preference, but an essential mechanism for self-preservation against cognitive depletion and burnout. However, the pervasive “always-on” culture, driven by constant digital connectivity and implicit expectations of perpetual availability, severely threatens these boundaries. This reality highlights that modern work–life conflict is no longer just an individual time-management failure, but a deeply systemic issue that requires immediate institutional attention.

Furthermore, the research reveals that flexible work arrangements operate as a complex double-edged sword, producing highly ambivalent outcomes for employee well-being. While hybrid and remote work models offer valuable temporal autonomy and logistical efficiency, they frequently manifest as a psychological “trap” that masks unregulated workloads and uncompensated invisible overtime. Without the natural physical and temporal stopping points of a traditional office setting, the absence of fixed working hours routinely leads to professional obligations bleeding into evenings and weekends. This paradox strongly indicates that work flexibility alone, when devoid of rigorous protective boundaries, ultimately accelerates emotional exhaustion rather than alleviating it.

This study underscores that sustainable employee well-being is structurally contingent upon robust organizational support and empathetic leadership. The data explicitly shows that clear, written corporate policies, realistic workload allocations, and compassionate managerial practices are decisive in transforming work flexibility from a psychological risk factor into a genuine resource. These findings critically expand upon boundary theory and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by proving that individual boundary-setting is largely futile without strong institutional backing. Therefore, to ensure long-term organizational commitment and productivity, modern organizations must move beyond superficial flexibility initiatives and actively cultivate structurally supportive, empathetic environments that fiercely protect their workforce from the unregulated demands of the modern work era.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the findings, organizations are encouraged to develop clear and enforceable work–life balance policies, particularly regarding workload distribution and after-hours communication. Leaders should be trained to adopt empathetic and supportive leadership styles that respect employees’ personal boundaries while maintaining performance expectations. Organizations implementing flexible or hybrid work systems should also provide guidance on boundary management to prevent overwork and psychological strain.

For future research, scholars are advised to employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs with larger and more diverse samples to examine causal relationships and long-term effects. Further studies may explore moderating variables such as gender, job level, and cultural context, as well as the role of digital boundary management strategies in shaping sustainable employee well-being in the evolving landscape of modern work.

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