

**WORK AND LIFE  
BALANCE;  
WORKPLACE  
STRATEGIES  
AND POLICIES**



## ABSTRACT

In recent years, rapid changes in technology, changes in working life, and the convenience of employees' access to their jobs from home or remotely have brought the issue of work-life balance to the agenda more. The issue of work and life balance was first mentioned in the late 1800s and was used in the 1970s and 80s to express the balance between career and family life. Researchers have done a lot of research on the causes and consequences of balance or imbalance in work life on the issue of work and life balance, which has been on the agenda in various ways since then, and these researches have been the subject of many training and awareness studies for practitioners. The issue of work-life balance is an issue that has important effects on workplace commitment, job satisfaction, and motivation for employees, and when this balance is not achieved, it brings many psychological and physical health problems. In addition, research on the effect of work-life balance on motivation and productivity has brought employers' attention to this issue, it has become almost a necessity to create policies and balance strategies for employee health and productivity, and it has taken place in laws and regulations in some countries. This issue should be evaluated in terms of both employees and organizations; In this article, the meaning of work and life balance will be evaluated in terms of its historical development process, the consequences of work-life conflict, and workplace policies and strategies that can be developed in this regard.

Keywords: work-life balance, history, work-life balance strategies, workplace standards.

## WHAT IS WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

Work-life balance is one of the most discussed concepts of working life in recent times. When we look at the reasons for these discussions in general, we come across the difficulties of maintaining the balance, the fact that the balance can only be achieved with the efforts of both employers and employees, and the decrease in the boundaries in the business world with the developments in information-communication technology. Even if ensuring work-life balance is considered as a responsibility of the individual towards himself and his quality of life, employer obligations also arise in terms of maintaining work-life balance. Many factors such as irregular working hours, shift work system, role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of job security, excessive or low workload, insufficient wages, physical factors arising from the working environment cause negative effects on employees and threaten their health. These and similar factors bring along difficulties in the work and life balance, and make corporate policies mandatory, apart from the individual measures to be taken by the employees. Work-life balance in an objective sense; While it is described as success in health, career and private life, in a subjective sense; It is defined as satisfaction in the field of work and personal life. Currently, Friedman et al. (2019) defines work and life balance that it as a concept that includes appropriate prioritization between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual growth).

In recent years, the developments in information and communication technologies and the increase in mobile access have caused the concepts of work and life to become more and more intertwined. The use of technology is seen as one of the main factors shaping the individual's perception of flexibility and permeability regarding the balance between work and living spaces. It is seen that some employees tend to do more work in their personal time due to technological convenience, while others can make a stricter distinction between work and private life.

## **History of work-life balance**

Even though we hear more about the concept of work-life balance and awareness studies on this issue, the concept of work-life balance dates back to ancient times. The idea of limiting time spent in the workplace can be traced back to the manufacturing laws of the late 1800s, which restricted the working hours of women and children. A 44-hour work week was established with the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1980s brought work-life balance back to the fore. The 1980s emerged as the times when flexible working programs and maternity leave were expanded to allow women to be included in the workforce. Initially, this concept was used only for women, while women were expected to continue their careers and continue the primary management of the family and home. Today, these benefits and ideas have been expanded to include working men and women, and the idea of balancing the professional and personal lives of employees, greater flexibility in managing work schedules, and increasing satisfaction with work and life has become a key concept in the late 20th century.

At the current stage, work-life balance is also a multimillion-dollar industry. In a study in which Raja and Stein (2014) examined the cost and budget required to achieve work-life balance, a Google search for "work-life balance" resulted in more than 296,000,000+ links to work-life balance tools, scientific articles, and consulting companies. This data also shows us that work-life balance is one of the important concepts in working life over time.

## **What are the consequences of work-life conflict?**

Work-life balance is a factor that has the potential to influence important workplace issues such as employee turnover, stress, job satisfaction and productivity. Long working hours and highly stressful jobs not only hinder employees' ability to harmonize work and family life, but are also associated with health risks such as increased smoking and alcohol consumption, weight gain, and depression.

A study of Canadians by Duxbury and Higgins (2003) found that 1 in 4 Canadians reported that their job responsibilities interfered with their ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home. In the same study, work-life conflict was conceptualized to include role overloading, role interference, and caregiver tension in general. Role intervention was conceptualized as consisting of two factors, with emphasis on family intervention in work and work in family. In the first case, intervention when family role responsibilities interfere with performance at work (for example, the child's illness prevents going to work; conflict at home makes it difficult to concentrate at work), in the second case, when work demands make things difficult (for example, long hours at work prevent the child from participating in sports; too much with the work role). preoccupation prevents active enjoyment of family life). Also, people in the older working segment claimed that they worked longer than in the past and needed different work arrangements to meet their lifestyle needs. Higher expectations in domestic roles, especially for women, can be attributed to the fact that women spend more hours on non-work activities such as child care and elderly care than men, and women have higher primary responsibilities such as housework.

Even though it is known that women in general have a higher level of work-family conflict than men, the number of work-life conflicts is also increasing by men. In this respect, it is possible to associate work-life conflicts with gender roles.

The COVID-19 epidemic, which started in the Wuhan province of China as of the end of 2019 and affected the whole world; The issue of work-life balance has gained a new dimension with distance measures, home/remote working options, maintaining the work-life balance has become even more difficult under the epidemic conditions. . On the one hand, fighting the disease physically and mentally has made the conditions of working from home/remote more difficult, and it has turned into a psychosocial risk factor in terms of mental health for people who are responsible for providing care at home (children, elderly, disabled, sick, etc.), especially for women. In this process, when people stay away from online platforms, they feel like they are missing out, but this situation has become more difficult for employees with the anxiety of catching up and being aware of everything. According to ILO (International Labor Organization) figures, this situation has resulted in a decrease in women's employment in Turkey. This decline in employment with the Covid-19 outbreak shows the necessity of reconsidering the issue of work and life balance in the focus of gender. Work and private life balance conflicts appear as a process that causes problems in terms of productivity and work efficiency, as well as psychological and physical health difficulties of employees, and leads to separation from employment.

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