

## EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN A HYBRID WORK ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

*This study examines employees' perceptions of work-life balance implementation in a hybrid work environment, a model that has gained popularity in the post-COVID-19 era. Hybrid work arrangements offer flexibility by allowing employees to alternate between remote and office-based work, providing opportunities to balance professional and personal responsibilities. However, the blurred boundaries between work and personal life in a hybrid setting can create challenges, such as overworking, interruptions during personal time, and social isolation. Using a qualitative approach, this study explores the experiences, challenges, and factors influencing work-life balance in hybrid work environments. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with employees from various sectors. The findings reveal that while hybrid work promotes flexibility and autonomy, it also increases the risk of stress and burnout due to a lack of clear boundaries and insufficient organizational support. Factors such as flexible scheduling, supportive leadership, and access to user-friendly digital tools were identified as enablers of work-life balance. This research highlights the dual impact of hybrid work on work-life balance and emphasizes the need for clear organizational policies, leadership training, and technological support to ensure employee well-being. The findings provide actionable recommendations for organizations to optimize hybrid work practices.*

**Keywords:** Hybrid Work, Work-Life Balance, Employee Perceptions, Organizational Support, Flexible Scheduling

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance, which refers to the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life, has become a critical concern in modern work environments. This concept emphasizes the ability of individuals to allocate time, energy, and attention proportionally between work demands and personal needs (Clark, 2000). It is not merely about completing tasks on time but also ensuring that employees have opportunities to fulfill their physical, emotional, and social needs outside of work. In the post-COVID-19 era, with the rise of hybrid work models, work-life balance has evolved into a more complex and pressing issue.

The hybrid work environment offers employees flexibility to alternate between working from home and the office. This model presents numerous benefits, including reduced commuting time, greater autonomy in task management, and better opportunities to balance work responsibilities with family needs (Golden & Gajendran, 2019). Studies have shown that this flexibility can enhance job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being (Allen et al., 2021). However, hybrid work also introduces unique challenges. One of the primary issues is the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, often leading employees to struggle with "switching off" from work mode, even after official working hours (Bailey & Kurland, 2021).

Moreover, hybrid work can contribute to social isolation and a reduced sense of connection with teams or organizations. Employees working remotely frequently report difficulties in establishing effective communication and a lack of direct interaction with colleagues, which can impact collaboration and workplace morale (Buffer, 2022). These challenges can exacerbate the risk of burnout, driven by continuous work demands and insufficient separation from personal time.

In Indonesia, hybrid work models have gained traction across various sectors, including information technology, education, and professional services. This shift reflects a need to maintain productivity amidst global dynamics while supporting employee well-being. However, the implementation of hybrid work policies and their impact on work-life balance are perceived differently by employees. These perceptions are influenced by individual factors, such as age, gender, and family roles, as well as organizational factors, including workplace culture, technological support, and adaptive leadership (Kossek et al., 2011; Shockley et al., 2017).

For organizations, understanding employees' perceptions of work-life balance implementation in a hybrid work setting is essential. Policies designed to support this balance not only affect employee well-being but also contribute to retention, productivity, and organizational sustainability. Despite its significance, research in Indonesia on employees' perceptions of work-life balance within the context of hybrid work remains limited. A deeper understanding of employees' experiences and perspectives can provide valuable insights for designing more effective and tailored policies.

This study aims to explore employees' perceptions of the implementation of work-life balance in a hybrid work environment. Using a qualitative approach, it focuses on employees' firsthand experiences, the challenges they face, and the factors that support or hinder the success of these policies. The findings are expected to offer actionable recommendations for organizations to design hybrid work policies that promote employee well-being while achieving business goals. Consequently, this research contributes to the literature on work-life balance and human resource management practices in the modern workplace.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore employees' perceptions of work-life balance implementation within a hybrid work environment. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in managing their work and personal lives. Qualitative research is well-suited to uncover

complex social phenomena and provide rich insights into subjective experiences (Creswell, 2013).

#### 1. Data Collection

The study collects data through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), supplemented by document analysis. Semi-structured interviews are used to explore individual experiences and perceptions in detail, allowing participants to express their views freely while guiding the discussion towards the research objectives (Patton, 2002). Focus group discussions are conducted to capture collective perspectives and generate dynamic interactions among participants (Morgan, 1997). Additionally, relevant organizational policies, internal reports, and employee feedback documents are analyzed to provide contextual understanding.

#### 2. Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling method is employed to select participants who are directly involved in hybrid work arrangements. Participants include employees from various organizational levels, such as managers and staff, across sectors that widely adopt hybrid work models, such as IT, education, and professional services. The sampling criteria focus on diversity in demographics (age, gender, family roles) and work experience to ensure a comprehensive exploration of different perspectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

#### 3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to identify and interpret patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involves several stages:

1. Familiarization with the data through transcription and repeated reading.
  2. Coding data into meaningful units.
  3. Identifying themes that reflect common experiences or unique insights.
  4. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure they align with the research objectives.
- The software NVivo may be utilized to organize and analyze qualitative data systematically (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

#### 4. Validity and Reliability

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employs data triangulation, comparing data from multiple sources, such as interviews, FGDs, and organizational documents (Denzin, 1978). Member checking is also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify accuracy and ensure the interpretations reflect their perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### 5. Ethical Considerations

The study ensures that participants are fully informed about the research objectives and procedures. Consent forms are obtained prior to data collection, guaranteeing voluntary participation. Confidentiality is maintained by anonymizing participant identities and securely storing data.

This methodological framework provides a robust approach to understanding employees' perceptions of work-life balance in a hybrid work environment, offering actionable insights for organizations to design effective and sustainable policies.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

1. **Perceptions of Work-Life Balance** The study reveals a spectrum of perceptions among employees regarding work-life balance in hybrid work environments. For many participants, hybrid work provides a sense of autonomy and flexibility, enabling them to manage professional tasks alongside personal responsibilities. Benefits such as reduced commuting times and increased control over work schedules were frequently highlighted. However, a significant portion of employees reported challenges such as difficulty "switching off" from work, extended working hours, and interruptions during personal time. These findings align with Bailey and Kurland (2021), who emphasized the dual nature of hybrid work as both a facilitator and a disruptor of work-life balance.
2. **Challenges in Implementing Work-Life Balance** Participants identified several challenges that hinder the effective implementation of work-life balance in hybrid work settings. These include:

**Blurred Boundaries,** Employees frequently reported that remote work led to unclear distinctions between professional and personal time, increasing the likelihood of overworking.

- a. **Increased Workload,** Many participants noted a rise in workload due to the flexibility of hybrid work, as the absence of commuting often translated into longer working hours.
- b. **Lack of Managerial Support,** Employees expressed frustration with managers who failed to provide clear expectations or empathetic support, particularly for those with caregiving responsibilities.
- c. **Social Isolation,** the lack of direct interaction with colleagues was cited as a significant factor reducing team cohesion and morale.

These challenges are consistent with previous studies, such as Shockley et al. (2017), which highlighted the importance of structured boundaries and organizational support in hybrid work environments.

3. **Enablers of Work-Life Balance** Despite the challenges, participants identified several enablers that promote work-life balance in hybrid work settings:
  - **Flexible Scheduling,** Employees appreciated the ability to tailor their work hours to align with personal and family commitments, which enhanced their overall satisfaction.
  - **Supportive Leadership,** Managers who encouraged open communication, provided clear guidance, and demonstrated empathy significantly improved employees' work-life balance experiences.

- Access to Technology, User-friendly digital tools streamlined workflows, reduced stress, and enhanced productivity, allowing employees to manage tasks more effectively.

These enablers support findings by Golden and Gajendran (2019), who emphasized the role of flexibility, leadership, and technology in facilitating positive work-life outcomes.

## Discussion

1. **Connecting Findings to Existing Literature** This study reinforces existing theories while offering new insights into the complexities of work-life balance in hybrid work environments. The findings echo Allen et al. (2021), who noted that while hybrid work offers greater flexibility, its effectiveness hinges on supportive organizational structures. The blurring of work-life boundaries, as described by Bailey and Kurland (2021), remains a persistent issue, particularly in the absence of clear policies. Furthermore, the critical role of leadership highlighted in this study aligns with Kossek et al. (2011), who stressed that empathetic and adaptive leadership is essential for mitigating the adverse effects of hybrid work. This study adds to the literature by demonstrating how technology serves as both an enabler and a potential stressor, depending on its integration into work processes (Gupta et al., 2019). The dual nature of hybrid work environments, as facilitators of flexibility and stressors due to increased connectivity, underscores the importance of a balanced approach in policy design.
2. **Practical Implications for Organizations** The results of this study provide actionable recommendations for organizations seeking to optimize hybrid work practices:
  - a. **Policy Development**, Clear organizational policies should outline expectations for working hours, encourage employees to "switch off" after hours, and limit unnecessary after-work communication. Policies should also define support systems for employees juggling professional and caregiving responsibilities.
  - b. **Leadership Training**, Managers must be equipped with the skills to foster a supportive and inclusive work environment. Training programs should focus on empathetic communication, understanding individual employee needs, and promoting work-life balance initiatives.
  - c. **Technology Management**, While technology enhances efficiency, its misuse can lead to burnout. Organizations should implement guidelines for after-hours technology use and provide training on effective digital tool utilization.
  - d. **Tailored Flexibility**, Hybrid work policies should accommodate diverse employee needs, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities or unique personal circumstances. Personalized flexibility ensures inclusivity and enhances overall employee satisfaction.
3. **Application of Findings** Organizations can leverage these findings to enhance work-life balance through strategic interventions. For instance:
  - a. **Regular Feedback Mechanisms**, Conduct regular surveys and one-on-one meetings to identify employee concerns and adjust hybrid work policies accordingly.
  - b. **Fostering Team Cohesion**, Organize periodic in-person team-building activities to strengthen workplace relationships and reduce feelings of isolation among remote workers.

- c. Promoting a Healthy Work Culture, Establish a culture that prioritizes employee well-being, emphasizing the importance of mental health, equitable workload distribution, and collaborative problem-solving.
4. Future Research Directions While this study offers valuable insights, future research should address its limitations. Expanding the geographical scope to include diverse cultural and economic contexts can provide a broader understanding of hybrid work challenges and opportunities. Additionally, integrating quantitative methods alongside qualitative approaches could yield more comprehensive results. Exploring other factors, such as the impact of organizational size or industry-specific dynamics, could further enrich the discourse on work-life balance.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study explored employees' perceptions of work-life balance implementation in a hybrid work environment. The findings highlight the dual nature of hybrid work, offering flexibility to customize work schedules but also creating challenges such as blurred boundaries between work and personal life, overwork, and social isolation. Key enablers identified include flexible scheduling, supportive leadership, and access to user-friendly digital tools, which significantly contribute to achieving work-life balance. Conversely, the absence of clear boundaries and insufficient managerial support exacerbate stress and burnout among employees.

To address these challenges, organizations should implement specific measures to optimize hybrid work environments. Clear policies defining working hours and boundaries should be established to prevent overwork and ensure employees can "switch off" effectively. Training programs for managers should focus on fostering supportive leadership that recognizes and addresses employees' individual needs. Additionally, organizations should invest in user-friendly technology that enhances productivity without encouraging excessive connectivity.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature on work-life balance by offering insights into the experiences of employees in hybrid work settings, particularly in Indonesia. It underscores the importance of considering both organizational and individual factors in designing hybrid work policies. This research also adds to the field of human resource management by highlighting how leadership, organizational culture, and technology shape employees' work-life balance.

Future research should consider a broader geographical scope to compare perceptions across different regions or cultural contexts. Additionally, incorporating quantitative methods could complement qualitative findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing work-life balance in hybrid environments.

By addressing these areas, organizations can foster healthier and more sustainable work environments, contributing to employee well-being, retention, and productivity while paving the way for more effective hybrid work practices.

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