Research article

Work-life balance: gender challenges and paths to harmony

Conciliación laboral y familiar: retos de género y caminos hacia la armonía

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Abstract
Introduction: Work-life balance has become a central concern in the contemporary labour landscape shaped by technological innovation and global interconnectedness. Although remote work offers substantial advantages, it also introduces challenges that demand deliberate management. Both men and women gain from balanced engagement with professional and personal spheres, yet social and cultural expectations create differing experiences for each. The purpose of this paper is to examine work-life balance, with particular attention to gender-specific challenges. **Methodology:** The method of systematic analysis, synthesis, dialectical method, comparative legal method and formal legal method were used. **Results:** Women more often carry disproportionate domestic and caregiving responsibilities,

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making multitasking and role conflict more acute. Men, meanwhile, are still commonly expected to prioritise career progression, creating pressure to overwork and remain constantly available. **Discussion:** These differing expectations shape how each gender experiences challenges and selects coping strategies. **Conclusions:** Work-life balance therefore cannot be viewed as a universal formula. It requires personalised approaches grounded in realistic assessment of one's workload, psychological capacity and life priorities. Effective strategies include clear boundary setting, flexible scheduling, task delegation and intentional rest.

Keywords: globalisation; labour market; gender; lifestyle; productivity; well-being; flexibility; stereotypes.

Resumen:
Introducción: El equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal se ha convertido en una preocupación central en el panorama laboral actual, moldeado por la innovación tecnológica y la interconexión global. Si bien el teletrabajo ofrece ventajas sustanciales, también plantea desafíos que requieren una gestión cuidadosa. Tanto hombres como mujeres se benefician de un equilibrio entre la vida profesional y personal; sin embargo, las expectativas sociales y culturales generan experiencias diferentes para cada uno. El propósito de este artículo es analizar el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal, con especial atención a los desafíos específicos de género. **Metodología**: Se utilizaron los métodos de análisis sistemático, síntesis, dialéctico, jurídico comparativo y jurídico formal. **Resultados:** Las mujeres suelen asumir responsabilidades domésticas y de cuidados desproporcionadas, lo que agudiza la multitarea y el conflicto de roles. Mientras tanto, a los hombres todavía se les exige priorizar su desarrollo profesional, lo que genera presión para trabajar en exceso y estar siempre disponibles. Estas expectativas diferentes influyen en cómo cada género afronta los desafíos y elige sus estrategias de afrontamiento. **Discusión**: Estas expectativas diferentes influyen en cómo cada género afronta los desafíos y elige sus estrategias de afrontamiento. **Conclusiones**: Por lo tanto, el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal no puede considerarse una fórmula universal. Requiere enfoques personalizados basados en una evaluación realista de la carga de trabajo, la capacidad psicológica y las prioridades vitales de cada persona. Las estrategias eficaces incluyen establecer límites claros, horarios flexibles, delegar tareas y descansar de forma consciente.

Palabras clave: globalización; mercado laboral; género; estilo de vida; productividad; bienestar; flexibilidad; estereotipos.

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen dramatic changes in all areas of society, including labour relations. In general, this rapid development is primarily due to significant technological developments, which in turn allow employees to perform their work from anywhere in the city, country or world. Physical presence at the workplace is no longer a necessity in many areas of work, such as education, media, services, etc. Technological advances have provided ample opportunities for people working in this field to work remotely.

At the same time, the quality of work does not depend on the location of its performance. It is also important to add that the types of work have also changed, with manual and technical labour giving way to IT-related work in percentage terms. Demographics, such as rising migration, also have an impact on changes in the labour sector. In addition, the rapid pace of economic globalisation and interdependence also has a direct impact on changes in the labour market.

In turn, the internationalisation of sectors such as higher education demonstrates the fact that people are working in increasingly diverse and multinational contexts (Field Engineer, 2023). These global changes and rearrangements in the traditional labour market have created a new so-called labour field, in which new rules and new requirements have emerged not only for employees, but also for work in general.

Employees increasingly want to work not only to earn a salary, which is essentially the first priority, but also to have the opportunity and time to spend leisure time with their families, not to sacrifice their hobbies, and to be able to simply reboot. The ability to work remotely has shown that by saving commuting time, you can devote it to your favourite book, walking the dog or doing a morning workout. So it's no surprise that finding a balance between personal life and work is on everyone's lips right now. Moreover, work-life balance is a central issue for discussion at the level of entire companies and is even reflected at the international level (McDowall & Kinman, 2021).

It is worth taking a closer look at this phenomenon - work-life balance. In general, it occurs when the time spent on work duties does not limit the time devoted to personal life (for example, leisure or family events) (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). This is a kind of critical resource for enjoying all areas of one's life and creating a unique work-family microclimate. Under such conditions, work tasks are performed with greater enthusiasm, while at the same time there is an awareness that one does not need to sacrifice the effectiveness of fulfilling one's family responsibilities for the sake of work. In short, work-life balance is the adequate ability to achieve a balance between work and personal life. It is about a balance in both areas, when an employee enjoys work, strives to achieve new results, understands the significance of his or her actions and at the same time harmonises with family life, hobbies and other social manifestations of an ordinary person.

It sounds very good, because this is what most people strive for. However, as practice shows, this balance is not so easy to achieve, taking into account both internal and external factors. Internal factors are manifested in a lack of understanding of how to build relationships with colleagues at work and with family at home so that your time is respected by all parties. Moreover, a logical question often arises: how much time should you devote to career advancement, how much to your own interests, and how much to communication with your family? Let's also not forget about the presence of certain psychological barriers and increased anxiety, which manifest themselves in the emergence of feelings of guilt. Guilt is often experienced by die-hard careerists or those who are used to working too hard when they "switch off" outside of work.

Therefore, it is important to overcome these barriers to work-life balance, as you will ultimately be able to achieve the level of productivity and rest you want outside of work (Carvalho et al., 2024). When you have a clear idea of the priorities in your life, when you are able to identify the factors that are really important for enjoying your standard of living, it is much easier to set new goals, both at work and in your personal life.

In general terms, work-life balance is likely to consist of three key elements, such as: first, time balance, which is the equal allocation of time to both work and personal life; second, engagement balance, which is the factor of equal psychological involvement of an individual in work and personal life; and third, satisfaction balance, which is understood as getting equal satisfaction from work and from hobbies, leisure and family time. In any case, satisfaction with work-life balance in general is influenced not only by individual perceptions, but also by other job characteristics, such as organisational culture, job meaningfulness, and the existence of work-life initiatives (Field Engineer, 2023).

In the context of our study, it is important to note that the need to find a balance between personal life and the workplace leads to a conditional balancing act between several roles - employee, parent, spouse, sibling, etc. Under such conditions, there is a kind of competition for energy and time or other necessary resources. This can lead to overstrain, stress symptoms or health problems (Sciotto, 2023).

It is a fact of society that women and men have different social roles in terms of time spent on family responsibilities and work. Stereotypically, men are expected to work full-time, while women are expected to take care of the household and family responsibilities. That is, women are about caring, listening, wisdom and kindness, while men are about power, dominance and autonomy. So, while these clearly differentiated roles may be anachronistic, the likelihood that family responsibilities still fall within the purview of women remains high.

However, although these stereotypes exist, in fact, in addition to family functions, women also work, and work on an equal footing with men. And in such cases, it is much more difficult for them to achieve the desired balance between work, personal life and family responsibilities due to a lack of sufficient time and support from men, as well as cultural norms and gender bias in the workplace. These circumstances can contribute to depression, stress, and weight gain in women, which can further hinder their career progression compared to men (Getman et al., 2023).

However, achieving a work-life balance is beneficial for women as much as for men, for the reasons discussed above. The language used by men when discussing this concept is slightly different from that used by women; men are more likely to talk about striving for a sense of success in all aspects of their lives rather than balancing all the competing areas of their lives. Ultimately, the goal of both genders is to achieve a manageable rhythm of life, meaningful actions that will bring positive changes both in work and non-work aspects of life. In other words, a kind of compromise with oneself will be reached that will bring satisfaction to life, and relationships will be established primarily with oneself, colleagues and family (Haar et al., 2014).

In view of the above, the purpose of the article is to define the basics of achieving work-life balance, analyse the challenges that arise in the course of finding such a balance; identify the gender aspect, challenges and ways to harmony for women and men; and provide a detailed analysis of the benefits, opportunities and importance of achieving such a balance.

2. Methodology

This research was carried out in accordance with the research objective. In order to achieve this goal, the author used a number of general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge. These include the following: the method of systematic analysis, synthesis, dialectical method, comparative legal method and formal legal method. The fundamental method of this article is the method of systematic analysis.

Using this method, various sources of information on the peculiarities of achieving a balance between personal life and work were researched and studied; it was determined what challenges people face on the way to the so-called managed rhythm of life and what stereotypical ideas exist regarding the role of women and men in life and at work. The systematic analysis resulted in specific conclusions about the conditions for achieving work-life balance, as well as the benefits of work-life balance that lead to increased life satisfaction and greater productivity.

The synthesis method was also used. Its use was the basis for the formation of a unified vision of the impact of work-life balance on the labour market in general. In addition, information was provided on possible ways to achieve harmony for both genders in the process of establishing the desired rhythm of life and balance. This study was conducted using the dialectical method of scientific knowledge. In general, it was used to identify and study the problematic issues of achieving a balance between personal life and work.

The dialectical method was used to reveal the content of the challenges faced by participants in labour relations on the way to this balance and stability in their lives. In addition, this method, combined with the method of system analysis, allowed to identify the impact of globalisation and information technologies on labour relations in terms of achieving work-life balance.

In order to establish the best ways to achieve harmony for both genders in the process of achieving work-life balance, to study the challenges faced by women and men, the comparative legal method of scientific research was used in combination with the above methods. The formal legal method was used to define a number of concepts, such as "work-life balance", "gender aspect", etc. Taken together, the above methods of scientific knowledge contributed to the formation of scientifically significant conclusions that can form the basis for further research in this area.

3. Results

Work-life balance is something that most employees strive for, but they face a number of challenges and problems in the process. First and foremost, people do not fully understand how to build communication with colleagues, family and themselves. Without this, it is impossible to achieve the desired balance. Moreover, the inability to properly organise one's time is also a significant factor. Therefore, our study should point out how you can improve and achieve a balance between your personal life and work.

First, it is worth being one step ahead in terms of planning and managing your time. However a growing trend towards blurred boundaries, where it is difficult to establish boundaries between work and personal life. Constant communication via smartphones and emails can lead to work spilling over into personal time (Atlintas & Sullivan, 2016).This is important, because consciously dividing your time between work tasks and our personal life is the basis for achieving balance. The ability to establish clear boundaries between work and personal roles is essential but is often undermined by flexible work arrangements that blur these divides (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Furthermore, poor time management exacerbates stress, as employees frequently struggle to juggle competing demands without structured routines (Allen et al., 2012).

Greater control over one's schedule, such as through remote work or flexible hours, can enable autonomy and reduce overwork. However, these benefits are unevenly distributed across socio-economic settings and geographic locations. As Domagalska-Grędys et al. (2025) observe, employees in rural areas face substantial challenges in accessing flexible arrangements due to infrastructural and cultural barriers. Moreover, even within flexible work structures, the constant connectivity facilitated by digital tools risks eroding personal time, further intensifying work-life conflict (Fiata, 2023).

Second, spend time on a hobby or other favourite activity outside of work. This is not only a good way to distract yourself, but also an opportunity to restore lost resources and motivate yourself for new developments. By immersing ourselves in something that brings us joy and creativity, we open the door to finding new solutions to problems at work (Yaroshenko et al., 2023). Moreover, when we are distracted by something we enjoy, it reduces both mental and physical stress. This helps to reduce stress and anxiety levels and avoid a number of diseases. It's no secret that an employee is more committed when work is not the only thing they live for, because they have something that motivates them and fuels their enthusiasm.

Third, you should pay attention to your physical and mental health. After all, when all indicators are normal - whether it's work tasks or personal affairs - it's much easier to cope with them. Exercise can be a good complement, as it helps to cope with negative emotions, release anger or aggression through exercise.

And this in turn affects mental health. People who exercise regularly also have sharper minds, more energy, and overall better health. It's also important to take the time to choose exercises that you enjoy, set up a workout routine, and choose music that feels good to you. Eating right will be a great addition. It's also worth adding the importance of sleep and its impact on our overall health and mood. You can feel energised and energetic if you have a proper sleeping pattern to restore your body's natural rhythms (Gupta & Kvs, 2019).

The next important step is to practice mindfulness and concentration. These two aspects help to achieve the desired balance and harmony between different areas of life. Under these conditions, we can easily notice even the smallest details. Mindfulness helps us to notice the moments when an imbalance may occur, for example, when our body is trying to tell us something that we are trying to ignore.

Mindfulness and awareness can be practised through meditation or breathing practices. By being aware of our needs, we can break out of patterns where we suppress the need to work or perform daily tasks without paying due attention to our body's well-being (Sturges & Guest, 2004). If you ignore this for too long, the imbalance will become more and more complex until you eventually wake up in the middle of the night unable to focus on anything, let alone continue working on spreadsheets at work.

Establishing an effective dialogue with your management also plays an important role in achieving work-life balance. If you are assigned too many tasks that you physically cannot complete in a working day, it is worth speaking up. Constant overwork increases the level of fatigue and stress, thereby destroying the balance. In fact, it ceases to exist. You are constantly busy with work, while there is simply no time for your family and your own affairs.

Having an open and honest conversation with your manager or supervisor is the best thing you can do in this situation (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).You can work with them to identify priority areas or get additional help. Of course, this will need to be justified, so provide real evidence to support your proposals, as this will give your request more credibility and increase the chances of successful implementation.

In parallel, financial mindfulness supports work-life balance by reducing stress associated with economic insecurity. Regular assessment of income versus expenditure and adopting pragmatic spending habits can alleviate pressures that lead to overwork, enabling individuals to focus on both career growth and personal well-being (McDowall & Kinman, 2021).

Despite these strategies, many employees continue to face systemic barriers that complicate the pursuit of balance. Constant digital connectivity, long working hours, inflexible schedules, and the uneven distribution of family responsibilities disproportionately affect those with caregiving roles (Brega et al., 2023). While both men and women struggle with the demands of work and personal life, societal expectations, biological factors and traditional roles can create different experiences for each (Borelli et al., 2017).

Historically, there have been a number of stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the family. Women are often identified as housewives and caretakers, while men are seen as breadwinners and protectors of the family. Although in recent years societies have been trying to move away from these stereotypes, sad as it may sound, it is impossible to completely eliminate these role distributions.

These roles, although evolving, can still influence perceptions and expectations (Klemparskyi et al., 2022). In general, men are under constant pressure to provide for the family. This results in full commitment to the workplace and neglect of family ties. This often leads to a sense of guilt on the part of men that they are not spending enough time with their families (Khrystova & Uvarova, 2022).

On the women's side, even though women now work on an equal footing with men, they also have household and childcare responsibilities, etc. In fact, women work in two shifts - during the day at their official jobs, and in the evening at home at their so-called "unofficial" jobs. And don't forget about pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, which logically require a break and/or leave from work. While maternity leave is enshrined at the national level, many women face career setbacks during this period (Sciotto, 2023). Moreover, postpartum recovery requires significant resources, both physical and psychological. This has an impact on a woman's ability to return to work safely. And no one has cancelled the condemnation of a woman who went to work early and left her child, without taking into account the real state of her life.

It's worth noting that in recent years, men have also been taking maternity leave. In general, they are not as long, and this can lead to the feeling that they are losing early attachment experiences (Abbas, 2023).

In general, gender stereotypes are covert and overt. Both have their impact on the work-life balance of men and women. Men seek flexible working hours or shorter working days due to family circumstances that may arise. Often, in such circumstances, men face stigma or the perception that they are not committed to their work and their careers. As for women, they also seek flexible working hours, but are more likely to face situations where they are considered unsuitable for a particular position (often a managerial position, because according to stereotypes, a woman will not be able to combine such a position, responsibility and family life) (Abbas, 2023).

We should not forget about the psychological and emotional component of work. Emotional labour is the effort required to manage and process emotions, both your own and those of others. Mental workload includes the constant planning and organisation of household chores. While men are taught by society that they should not show their emotions (which creates internal resistance and stress), women generally experience a wide range of emotions both at work and at home, balancing schedules, meetings, and household responsibilities.

Perhaps the most important issue is the pay factor for men and women. Women usually have lower salaries than men, while doing the same work. This leads women to take on additional tasks to earn more. Under such conditions, achieving a balance is a much more difficult issue for women than for men (Sciotto, 2023).

Different access to networking opportunities, which has a different impact on work-life balance. After all, various events held outside of working hours are usually organised according to men's availability. While most women have household responsibilities at this time (Gupta, 2023).

They may also face challenges in male-dominated industries or at events where they are in the minority, which makes networking more difficult and time-consuming.
In the results section, the data obtained are presented in an organized and systematic manner, using tables, figures, and statistical analysis to illustrate the main findings. This section focuses on presenting the results objectively, avoiding premature interpretations or conclusions, and highlighting how these findings align with or deviate from expectations based on the objectives or hypotheses stated.

4. Discussion

It is evident that both genders face a variety of challenges in achieving work-life balance, influenced not only by individual choices but also by structural, cultural, and policy-driven frameworks. These challenges stem from deeply ingrained gender roles, unequal access to flexible work opportunities, and societal expectations that shape the distribution of unpaid labor – particularly caregiving responsibilities.

For women, establishing firm boundaries between work and personal time is critical, especially in contexts where digitalization blurs the lines and work spills into family life. The increasing prevalence of remote and flexible work arrangements has provided greater autonomy; however, as Brega et al. (2023) show, this autonomy is unevenly distributed and often inaccessible to women in low-autonomy jobs or rural regions. Women, especially mothers, experience intensified role conflict, further complicated by structural biases and stigma when reentering the workforce post-maternity leave, as observed in the financial planning sector (McCoy et al., 2025). Therefore, efficient time management, prioritization, delegation, and acceptance of imperfection (Gupta, 2023) become crucial strategies.

Men, on the other hand, often grapple with cultural expectations to prioritize work over household responsibilities, sometimes facing stigma when seeking flexibility (Pepin & Truskinovsky, 2025). Sharing domestic duties, advocating for flexible or remote work options, and resisting cultures that valorize overwork are essential components of achieving balance (Silchenko et al., 2023). Furthermore, policy mechanisms such as the EU's Right to Disconnect offer important protections – but only when they are implemented in ways that account for gendered needs (Fiata, 2023).

For both genders, realistic evaluation of life circumstances, setting achievable expectations, and prioritizing the quality over quantity of personal time are crucial practices (Gupta, 2023). Incorporating mindfulness and learning to decline additional commitments without guilt further supports balance. Bearing in mind the findings from rural populations, where access to work-life balance mechanisms is more limited due to infrastructural and cultural constraints (Domagalska-Grędys et al., 2025). These dynamics point to the need for institutional and policy reforms, such as mandatory disconnect rights and gender-sensitive workplace norms, which can create more equitable conditions for achieving work-life balance (Fiata, 2023).

Collectively, this scholarship demonstrates that work-life balance is an intersectional issue. It cannot be fully understood or achieved without addressing differences in gender, profession, geography, and socio-political context.

5. Conclusions

Technological advances have provided opportunities for people working in this field to work remotely. At the same time, the quality of work does not depend on the location of its performance. It is also important to add that the types of work have also changed, with manual and technical labour losing ground to IT-related work in percentage terms.

The rapid pace of economic globalisation and interdependence also has a direct impact on changes in the labour market. In turn, the internationalisation of sectors such as higher education demonstrates the fact that people are working in increasingly diverse and multinational contexts. The possibility of remote work has shown that by saving commuting time, you can devote it to your favourite book, walking the dog or doing a morning workout. Therefore, finding a balance between personal life and work is now an important task for many people, and this is quite logical.

Work-life balance is the adequate ability to achieve harmony between work and personal life. It is likely to consist of three key elements, such as: first, time balance, which is the equal allocation of time to both work and personal life; second, engagement balance, which is the factor of equal psychological involvement of a person in work and personal life; and third, satisfaction balance, which is understood as getting equal satisfaction from the work process and from one's own hobbies, leisure and family time.

Achieving work-life balance is beneficial for both women and men. The goal of both genders is to achieve a manageable rhythm of life, meaningful actions that will bring positive changes in both work and non-work aspects of life. In other words, a kind of compromise with oneself will be reached that will bring satisfaction to life, and relationships will be established primarily with oneself, colleagues and family.

The benefits of achieving a work-life balance include: improved quality of life; increased productivity; avoidance of burnout; and a positive impact on mental health. It's important to note that for many people, work is more than that, and they don't literally oppose personal life and work life. It is important to assess your strengths, preferences and desires individually. Despite having a wide range of benefits, those seeking work-life balance often face problems and challenges. These include: blurred boundaries; fear of loss - meaning that the employee is afraid of losing the opportunity to get the desired position or salary; constant pressure to stay connected; lack of flexible working hours or limited flexibility; lack of an even workload.

However, the challenges faced in achieving this balance can vary significantly by gender. While both men and women struggle with work-life demands, societal expectations, biological factors and traditional roles can create different experiences for each, posing a number of challenges. For women, here's how to deal with them: establishing clear boundaries between work hours and personal time; improving time management skills; delegating responsibilities; flexible working hours; and taking time for yourself.

For men: involvement in household chores, sharing them with their family members; flexible working hours; availability of holidays and weekends; avoiding getting carried away with projects; prioritising their time. For both, it remains important to make a realistic assessment of the current situation and, if necessary, make adjustments to the priority of tasks; set realistic expectations for the workplace and personal sphere; and be able to say "no", etc. Taking into account the above, we can conclude that achieving work-life balance is a dynamic process that requires constant effort and adaptation.

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