

Work-life Balance of White-collar Remote Workers in a Technopark in Turkey

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Abstract

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the work-life balance experiences of white-collar employees who shifted to remote work in a Technopark in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic, using a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, 49 white-collar workers participated by completing online questionnaires to assess their work-life balance. In the second phase, two focus group discussions were held, involving 11 participants. The data gathered from the questionnaires and focus groups were analyzed using interpretive content analysis method with MAXQDA 20 software.

The content analysis revealed that personal factors, such as personality traits and adaptability, influenced the work-life balance of the white-collar employees. Among organizational factors, workplace culture and the home environment emerged as significant determinants. Most remote workers were found to be unable to set a work-life balance, consequently experiencing conflicts. However, some participants managed to maintain a harmonious balance between their professional and personal lives, though it tended to be skewed towards a work-centered equilibrium. The observed imbalances resulted in several negative outcomes for the participants, including the need for psychological support, role conflicts in different aspects of life, and diminished motivation. In contrast, those who achieved balance reported higher levels of life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and subjective well-being.

Keywords

balance indicators, white-collar workers, work-from-home, work-life balance

JEL codes: J62, J81, O30, O53

Introduction

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, developments in the business world prompted employers to take steps to maintain employee productivity and work-life balance. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) office in Turkey encouraged the private sector to prioritize ensuring employees maintain a healthy work-life balance (UNFPA 2020). Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO 2022) highlighted that working styles and habits have changed due to the pandemic. These recent developments in work practices present opportunities for both employers and employees, as the concept of work-life balance has evolved over time (Naithani 2010). Despite these changes, maintaining a clear distinction between work and personal life remains crucial for achieving balance. In response, countries like the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates have begun reducing working hours and the number of workdays to enable people to spend more time with their families, allocate more personal time, and minimize workplace expenses (ILO 2022).

Thus, the present study aimed to identify the factors influencing the work-life balance of white-collar workers during their work-from-home experiences.

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Management and organization theorists argue that work and personal life represent the two primary domains of an individual's social existence (Leslie et al. 2019). Although notions related to work and life began to surface before World War II, they gained significant conceptual attention in the 1990s (Lockwood 2003). Initially referred to as «work-family balance,» the concept evolved in the 2000s into «Work-Life Balance (WLB),» acknowledging individuals who have not established traditional family structures (Kalliath and Brough 2008).

In today's context, employees often face challenges in balancing multiple roles, frequently encountering stress and tension due to job demands that affect their life balance (Chandra 2012; Karaman et al. 2018). Employee well-being cannot be considered in isolation from broader societal changes. The forces of change impact both the business world and its workforce. Factors such as disasters, natural events, wars, and other significant disruptions continue to reshape the WLB concept, making it dynamic, adaptable, and open to new interpretations. Naithani (2010) highlighted this evolution by mapping how WLB has transformed in response to changes in work and family life over time (see Table 1).

Work-life balance refers to how employees perceive their ability to manage conflicts between their work and personal lives (McShane & Von Glinow 2016; Kalliath and Brough 2008; Clark 2000). Mache et al. (2016) noted that employees' jobs and work environments can affect their non-work lives, and vice versa. Over the past two decades, the clear boundaries between work and personal life—boundaries employees strive to maintain—have increasingly blurred (Kinnunen et al. 2014). Peeters et al. (2005) attributed this shift to advancements in information and communication technologies. In recent years, organizations have become more aware of the importance of their employees' mental health (Demerouti et al. 2012), making work-life balance one of the key expectations employees have of their employers (Baral and Bhargava 2010). The significance of WLB extends beyond individual well-being, drawing attention from both businesses and academics due to its impact on employee productivity (ILO 2022; Wagner et al. 2014).

Table 1. The Stages of Change in Work and Family Life

Stages	Time Intervals	Changes in Work and Family Life
1 st	Early years of social life	The whole family worked for subsistence
2 nd	Pre-industrialization	Workplace and family life were partially separated
3 rd	Industrialization in the mid-19 th century	The distinction between workplace and family life became much clearer
4 th	Between the ends of the 18 th century and the beginning of the 19 th century	Male labour force was predominant
5 th	Between the early 19 th century and 1950	With the division of labour, the separation between work and family became much clearer
6 th	From 1950 to the early 1980s	Technology dependent on human power overturned the male domination in the workplace
7 th	From 1980 to 2008	The gender divide was reversed due to technology
8 th	Recession in 2008 and later	Work-life balance opportunities were introduced

Source: (Naithani 2010)

Several models have been proposed to explain WLB, including the segmentation model, compensation model, spillover model, instrumental model, conflict model, expansion model (Zedeck and Mosier 1990), and the mental health model (Christiansen and Matuska 2006; Matuska and Christiansen 2008). WLB has been studied across various demographics and professional groups (see Apaydın 2011; Doble and Supriya 2010).

From an existential perspective, researchers have claimed that after World War II, individuals began to feel alienated from both themselves and nature (Crowell 2020; Jackson 1983). Since then, humanity has encountered various disasters and social events worldwide, each bringing new perspectives and solutions for balancing work and personal lives. For instance, K. Matuska and C. Christiansen (Christiansen and Matuska 2006; Matuska and Christiansen 2008) introduced a mental health approach to life balance after the 2000s. This approach considers individuals holistically, beyond just work and personal life, using a gestalt approach and insight theory to assess individuals across ten areas, including general health and close relationships (Davis et al. 2014; Karaman et al. 2018).

Guest (2002) developed another comprehensive model of WLB, arguing that the demands of business life have evolved, making it increasingly difficult for employees to maintain balance between home, work, and their surrounding environment. As working hours have lengthened, work-related pressures have increasingly encroached on personal life (ILO 2022; Guest 2002). Guest identified the determinants of WLB and offered insights into its nature and implications (see Table 2).

The current study was based on Guest's WLB model, which facilitates both subjective and objective evaluations of individual and organizational factors influencing the determinants of WLB. The objective is to delve into the concept of balance and uncover the psychological consequences that can occur, particularly in unexpected situations such as pandemics and natural disasters.

Table 2. Guest's WLB model

Determinants	Nature of Balance	Consequences/Impacts
Organizational Factors	Subjective Indicators	Work Satisfaction
Demands of Work	Balance – Emphasis equally on home and work	Life Satisfaction
Culture of Work	Balance – Home central	Mental Health / Well-being
Demands of Home	Balance – Work central	Stress / illness
Culture of Home	Spillover and/or interference of work to home	Behaviour / performance at work
Individual Factors	Spillover and/or interference of home to work	Behaviour / performance at home
Work Orientation	Objective Indicators	Impacts on others at work
Personality	Hours of work	Impacts on others at home
Energy	'Free' time	
Personal control and coping	Family roles	
Gender		
Age		
Life and career stage		

Source: (Guest 2002)

As noted by scientists and industry stakeholders, the shift to work-from-home arrangements, triggered by the onset of the pandemic, has continued even after its conclusion. Consequently, this research suggests adding “post-2020” as the ninth phase to Naithani's (2010) timeline, introducing the idea that “work-from-home will alter the dynamics of WLB” within the ongoing discourse on changes in work and family life. The study aims to determine how the parameters of the WLB concept have shifted, given the growing integration of work and personal life. The widespread adoption of remote work by organizations may not only redefine the parameters of WLB but could also signify a transition toward a broader term, “Work and Life Balance.”

This study specifically aimed to investigate the work-life balance (WLB) experiences of white-collar remote workers in a Technopark in Turkey. The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the indicators that determine the maintenance of WLB for white-collar home workers?
2. What are the effects and outcomes of WLB on participants' lives?

Method

Since this study explores work-life balance experiences, the phenomenological method was utilized to gather detailed insights into this specific case (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2018).

Participants

The study group comprised 49 employees of a Technopark management company in Istanbul. Several factors influenced the choice of this group. First, the context of contemporary work environments has changed. Employees in technoparks represent a paradigm that differentiates them from their colleagues in more conventional white-collar industries. Technoparks, unlike traditional office settings, are innovation hubs that encourage a dynamic fusion of creativity, risk-taking, and entrepreneurial spirit. They also cultivate the resilience required to navigate the inherent risks associated with pioneering ventures.

Moreover, the use of advanced technology is not only expected but standard in Technoparks, setting these employees apart in their capacity to leverage cutting-edge tools for innovative solutions. As a result, the Technopark employees represent a new breed of professionals characterized by flexibility, multidisciplinary collaboration, and a forward-looking focus on technological advancement.

To ensure maximum diversity among participants, a maximum variation sampling method was employed, following specific criteria (Büyüköztürk et al. 2018). The participant group comprised a diverse range of white-collar workers, including assistant experts, experts, engineers, and managers, all engaged in remote work. Data collection was conducted through an online survey administered via Google Forms, with 36 male and 13 female participants. Their ages ranged from 25 to 63, and their professional experience varied from 1 to 40 years. Among the participants, 6 were managers, while 43 were experts and assistant experts. Additionally, 11 participants were selected for focus group interviews based on their roles in different units and positions. These sessions, held via Zoom, were divided into two groups—one with six participants and the other with five. The first focus group included a manager, two assistant experts, and three experts, while the second group consisted of a manager, two assistant experts, and two experts. Of the focus group participants, five were female and six were male.

Measures

An online questionnaire and a focus group interview form were developed based on Guest's (2002) model to explore WLB in depth. These forms were revised after receiving feedback from two qualitative research experts and practitioners specializing in work-life balance. A pilot test was conducted with three white-collar workers to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of the items before beginning data collection. The questions in the online questionnaire, which were also used in the focus group discussions, included the following:

1. How do you maintain the balance between your work and non-work life? Could you please explain?
2. What challenges have you encountered while working during the COVID-19 period?
3. What challenges have you encountered in your non-work life during the COVID-19 period?
4. What do you believe would help you work more effectively during the COVID-19 period?

5. If you had a magic wand, what would you change to keep your life in balance? Please elaborate.
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Data Collection and Analyses

The data were collected through the Google Forms questionnaire and online focus group interviews. The online format of the focus group interviews presented certain limitations, such as reduced interaction quality and the inability to observe non-verbal cues from participants (Moore et al. 2015). However, these limitations were unavoidable due to the ongoing pandemic. The focus group meetings were scheduled at times convenient for all participants, who were instructed to ensure a stable internet connection and select an environment where they could comfortably express themselves. Before the interviews, participants were provided with the interview questions and preliminary information about the study. At the beginning of each session, they were again informed about the purpose of the research and the structure of the focus group process to help them feel at ease and express themselves freely.

The focus group interviews were conducted by two researchers and recorded for subsequent analysis. Both the questionnaire and focus group interview data were imported into MAXQDA 20 software to begin the data analysis process. The analysis followed the method proposed by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), which involved identifying codes, deriving themes, reviewing codes and themes, and ultimately generating final findings. The study employed an interpretive content analysis approach to uncover meaningful structures through the identification of codes and themes (Gall et al. 2014). The coding process proceeded in three phases. In the initial phase, a joint coding session was held with the entire research team. In the second phase, one researcher independently created codes and themes. In the final phase, the research team convened to review and discuss the codes and themes, sharing their insights and suggestions. After this three-stage process, the findings were finalized. Following the coding process using MAXQDA 20, the next step involved visualizing the coded data. At this stage, the findings were graphically represented using a hierarchical code-subcode model.

Validity and Reliability

The current study integrated several measures to enhance its validity and reliability. Initially, it employed multiple data collection methods, aligning with the recommendations of Yin (2018). Research data were gathered through both online questionnaires and focus group interviews, a strategy that ensured the robustness and comprehensiveness of the findings. Secondly, the study incorporated long-term interaction and observation, adhering to the guidelines set forth by Creswell (2011). One of the researchers served as an academic advisor at the Technopark where the data were collected, which provided a deeper understanding of the context and allowed for extended observation and interaction with participants. This role enriched the depth and precision of the data. Lastly, the study aimed to achieve diversity among its participants, in line with the recommendations of Miles and Huberman (1994). By including a diverse range of individuals, such as managers, experts, and assistant

experts, the study encompassed a broader spectrum of perspectives and experiences. This diversity contributed to the study’s reliability and validity, ensuring a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Results

The study aimed to identify the work-life balance experiences of white-collar workers during the COVID-19 period, using Guest’s (2002) model as a framework. In this context, both codes and themes unique to the study participants were extracted, alongside those derived from the theoretical model. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model reflecting the research findings.

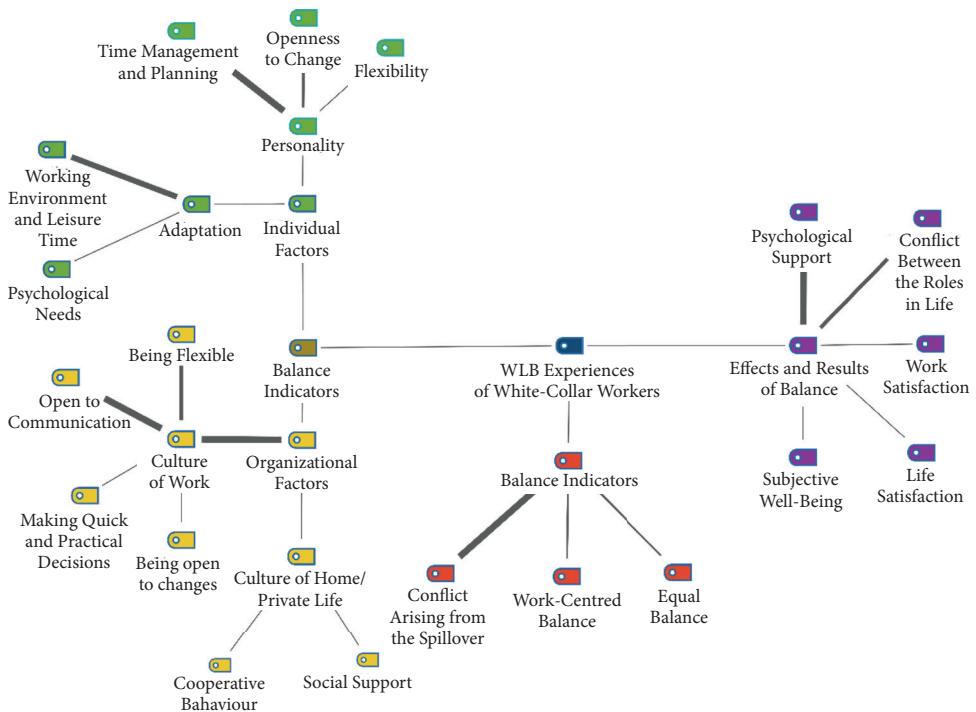


Figure 1. WLB Experiences of White-Collar Workers

Balance Indicators

Individual Factors

Personality. Regarding personality traits, one of the standout qualities for white-collar workers in maintaining work-life balance is their capacity for effective time management and planning. Employees who excelled in these areas during the COVID-19 period found it easier to adapt to the new work-from-home environment. For instance, one participant shared, “I am a kind of person who likes to work neatly and regularly. I can both make my sche-

dule and prepare it in my mind—for example, planning what I will do that week”. Another participant highlighted the benefit of planning, stating, “I do not confuse my work life with my non-work life. I like to be neat, tidy, systematic, and also planned and scheduled. I try to work this way as much as possible. Apart from work, my only priority is my family”.

Openness to change also emerged as a significant personality trait related to time management. Employees who were open to change adapted more easily to the work-from-home arrangement. As one participant noted, “After all, you can control everything in the office environment. You can access documents and files at any time. We are now reaching everything digitally. We can issue invoices. There are also e-archiving processes for finance. During this period, we said, it is good to have switched to such things. They have had extreme advantages for us”.

Flexibility is another prominent trait. Employees who avoided setting strict rules for themselves and embraced flexibility in their work-from-home routines were able to turn this challenging transition into an advantage. One participant explained, “I try to use my time efficiently without setting very strict rules for myself, dividing the day, and acting flexibly during this process”.

Adaptation. Adaptation plays a crucial role in establishing a work-life balance for white-collar employees. Many individuals adjust their working environment and leisure time to accommodate the demands of working from home, which helps in maintaining balance. For instance, one participant described their approach: “I have designated a separate area at home for work. I use this space exclusively for work during working hours. After work, I try to maintain my regular routine in the other areas of the house”. Another participant mentioned their strategy for managing free time: “I extend my working hours to maintain balance and take breaks during the day”.

Conversely, employees who struggle with adaptation may find it challenging to meet their psychological needs. One participant highlighted this issue, stating, “My biggest problem is that I am not able to meet my need for freedom and socialization”. Similarly, another participant noted the impact of psychological needs on work-life balance, saying, “Being married has been beneficial for achieving work-life balance. If I were alone, I might have faced psychological challenges and felt overwhelmed”.

Organizational Factors

Work Culture. Work culture plays a significant role in facilitating participants’ work-life balance. One participant emphasized the importance of organizational adaptability, noting, “Something similar happened in our Technopark. They conveyed that as long as you adhere to specific rules during certain hours, as if you were working in the office, they would recognize your work from home”. Additionally, some participants highlighted the impact of the institution’s openness to communication and its ability to make swift, practical decisions. One participant stated, “When our company made decisions and provided relief for the employees, the incoming phone calls decreased, and people were able to focus more on their work. The company’s ability to make decisions and communicate them was highly significant”. Flexibility was also a key factor. One participant remarked, “Adhering to regular working hours is crucial for both employees and employers. Other tasks can be more flexible. If you couldn’t complete a task, you could sit and continue working when you have time in the evening. There’s no undue pressure about it”. This flexibility in working hours helps employees achieve a better work-life balance.

Culture of Home/Private Life. The culture of the home has been as important a determinant of work-life balance as the culture of work. One participant emphasized the significance of family support, stating, *“My wife is a housewife. We didn’t encounter any family issues. Both my wife and children were very supportive. I once overheard my children saying, ‘When Dad is in his workspace, let’s not go into his room or disturb him.’ Their cooperative behavior was instrumental in maintaining balance”*. This supportive environment also extended to family collaboration. Another participant shared, *“I even had the children assist with some minor tasks at home, such as fetching documents or printing. They essentially worked as interns at home”*. This collaborative approach within the family played a key role in facilitating work-life balance during the pandemic.

Balance Indicators

Conflict Arising from the Spillover and/or Interference of Work to Home/Private Life

White-collar workers working from home reported experiencing conflicts due to their work interfering with their personal lives. A primary source of this conflict was the inability to allocate time for themselves. As one participant explained, *“There should be a balance between social life and work life, but that balance has changed drastically. We no longer have much of a social life. We now receive work-related emails at night, blurring the concept of working hours. It feels like our entire life is consumed by work”*. This sentiment reflects how their entire life has become dominated by work. Another participant noted the loss of temporal boundaries, stating, *“I have lost the sense of time, weekdays, weekends, or holidays. I work on the computer or do other tasks. When a new task comes, it makes me feel tired to do it. I try to finish the task at hand, but I also feel the necessity to finish the newly arrived task”*. This indicates how work roles interfere with personal roles. A participant with children highlighted the difficulty of balancing these roles: *“It is difficult to balance because I have two children. I have various duties at home. I am a mother, on one hand, which means everything at home, and on the other, I appear to be at work during those hours”*. The demands of these roles can make it challenging to achieve a balance between work and personal life.

Equal Balance between Work and Home / Private Life

Several participants reported successfully achieving a balance between work and their home/private life during the COVID-19 period. They attributed this balance to effective planning and the establishment of self-regulated guidelines for remote work. One participant noted, *“I was able to maintain a strict routine. I did not let my working hours become disorganized during that period. I am the kind of person who wakes up early, even on weekends, and I tried to stick to this routine”*.

Employees who focused on meeting their personal needs without disrupting their daily routines also reported a well-balanced life. As one participant shared, *“My life is going quite well at the moment. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, 8 hours of sleep, and adherence to work schedules have helped me maintain a good balance, even while staying at home. I don’t feel the need to make any changes in this regard”*. These participants found that maintaining a disciplined routine and practicing self-care enabled them to achieve a harmonious work-life balance during the pandemic.

Work-Centered Balance

Some participants successfully established a work-centered balance, noting an increase in productivity while working from home and highlighting the efficiency of remote work. One participant explained, *“Our office work was already 80% online before this period, and we increased it to 100% during this time. I believe that working this way is more efficient, as it eliminates the factors that disrupt work”*. Another participant described creating a balanced environment for all family members by centralizing work within their home life. They implemented a disciplined routine where each family member started their day as if they were going to work and then transitioned back to home life when their “work shift” ended. This structured approach allowed them to seamlessly integrate work into their daily lives and achieve a work-centered balance.

Effects and Results of Balance

Employees who successfully balanced their work and personal lives reported increased satisfaction in both areas. One participant noted, *“The work we had to do was all completed. We also saved the time we spent for commuting. We both did our job and were able to spare time for those we lived with. In fact, we got closer with my roommate during that time. We were able to establish a warm and sincere relationship, and I believe that our productivity increased”*.

Workers who achieved work-life balance stated that they worked more efficiently and experienced less fatigue, leading to increased subjective well-being. As one participant shared, *“during that period, we could start our work immediately, which boosted my productivity, reduced my fatigue, and made me happier”*.

Conversely, those who struggled to establish a balance reported inefficiencies in their work, feelings of isolation, and unmet psychological needs. One participant expressed: *“Our work took priority, and the time we set aside for ourselves turned out to be unproductive. I was often alone during this time, and it was challenging for me. It’s difficult not to have anyone to share with”*.

Similarly, participants who felt that their work-life balance was disrupted during the pandemic reported mental and physical exhaustion and expressed a need for psychological support. One said, *“it is necessary to maintain the balance. In fact, we need psychological support to adapt to these processes”*. Some associated their stress with the absence of social contact, stating: *“As social activities decrease, there is a psychological anxiety. The psychological turmoil caused by recent pandemic created an act of staying away from everyone and created a separate effort to avoid any negative factors at home”*.

An additional consequence of the inability to establish balance was the conflict between various life roles. The conflict experienced by employees whose different roles were intertwined in their lives was expressed as follows, *“It would be wrong if I denied having difficulty. You cannot even talk to your child while doing your job. You normally have to communicate eye to eye. However, I often write emails or reports, so when my children shared their problems, I could not provide them with the attention they needed”*.

Discussion

The results of the current study highlight the significance of both individual and organizational factors in establishing a work-life balance. The study provides insights into the indicators and effects related to WLB. Among the individual factors, personality traits and adap-

tability play crucial roles. Notably, traits such as time management and planning, openness to change, and flexibility are essential for maintaining WLB. The ability to adapt to new conditions, both in work environments and leisure time, is also critical. The alignment between employees' personality traits and their work environment is significant (Sharf 2016). Time management, planning, and adaptability are particularly crucial for achieving a work-life balance. Research supports a strong relationship between time management and work-life balance (Fisher 2002; Gregory and Milner 2009; Mani 2013). For individuals working from home, effective time management, adherence to a plan, and timely task completion are especially important for maintaining balance.

Researching remote workers, Miller (2016) emphasized the importance of worker flexibility, while Kıcı (2015) highlighted that flexibility in time and place are crucial for achieving work-life balance (WLB). During the COVID-19 period, it was observed that workers found it easier to establish a WLB by adapting their work environment and personal time to remote work (ILO 2022). Beyond Guest's (2002) model, this study revealed that employees who struggled to organize their home work environment and leisure time during the pandemic faced challenges in meeting their psychological needs, specifically the needs for freedom and relationships, within the theme of adaptation, which is one of the individual factors of work-life-balance determinants. The need for relationship and autonomy from among psychological needs as expressed by Deci and Rayn (2000), as well as the need for love/belonging and freedom as stated by Glasser (2003) all have important impacts on workers' adaptation to their jobs. For this reason, institutions that attach importance to their employees and teamwork while working can help employees meet their relationship needs. Nevertheless, people who feel that their freedom is restricted in their living spaces should be afforded the autonomy to make decisions regarding their working processes.

Our study also highlighted that individuals new to remote work struggled to establish a clear distinction between their work and personal time. Many found it challenging to create a dedicated workspace at home, leading to a blend of work and leisure activities. This issue underscores the importance of having a well-defined, physically appropriate work environment to protect both physical and mental health together with the materials needed. During and after the recent pandemic, remote workers reported various physical and mental health issues, including insomnia, daytime naps, depression, loneliness, prolonged screen exposure, and headaches, often exacerbated by curfews and lockdowns (Ayar et al. 2022; Braithwaite et al. 2023; Karaman et al. 2021; Karaman et al. 2023; Majumdar et al. 2020). To mitigate these effects, it is crucial for remote workers to engage in leisure activities that support their mental health and overall well-being (Karaman et al. 2021; Miller 2016). Physical activities have been shown to positively impact mental health and help maintain well-being (Chu et al. 2014; Jakobsen et al. 2017). Therefore, remote workers are encouraged to integrate physical activities into their leisure time to enhance their health and balance.

The concepts of work and home culture are pivotal organizational factors in maintaining work-life balance (WLB). Effective communication and flexibility within the organizational culture play crucial roles in achieving this balance. Employees value open communication and the ability to make quick decisions, which contribute to their job satisfaction and organizational commitment, fostering a sense of trust (Rajhans 2012). A supportive organizational culture can positively influence employee commitment, reduce work-life conflict, and lower the likelihood of resignation, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Efremov et al. 2023; Giley et al. 2009; Kar and Misra 2013; Webber et al. 2010).

The effectiveness of legal measures designed to improve WLB is highly dependent on a supportive workplace environment. These measures are more successful when supported by a workplace culture that encourages their application (Redmond et al. 2006). During the COVID-19 period, institutions that embraced change, facilitated open communication, and demonstrated flexibility enabled employees to establish a healthier work-life balance. Supportive and adaptable management approaches were found to positively affect WLB for those working remotely (Miller 2016). Redmond et al. (2006) also highlighted the importance of providing managers with support and training to effectively implement and evaluate flexible working arrangements.

Family relationships play a crucial role in maintaining work-life balance (WLB). Family demands are significant stressors impacting WLB (Choi 2008), as time devoted to family and family responsibilities can contribute to work-life conflict (Luk and Shaffer 2005). Lockwood (2003) underscores the importance of balancing work obligations with personal and family responsibilities, defining WLB as a harmony between these aspects. The respect and cooperation of family members are essential for facilitating WLB. Supportive behavior from those living with the employee can ease the balancing act between work and home life. Conversely, work interference with personal life can disrupt WLB, highlighting the need for quality family time (Gladding 2012). Effective planning and self-regulation during work-from-home arrangements are critical. Those who set clear boundaries, maintain routines, and address their personal needs tend to achieve a better balance (Miller 2016; Lunau et al. 2014). Some participants reported that centralizing work within a disciplined family routine improved their performance and overall WLB. This structured approach helps separate work life from family and home life, supporting a balanced and productive environment (Miller 2016).

The study highlights the significant influence of work-life balance (WLB) on the work and life satisfaction and subjective well-being of white-collar workers. Employees who successfully established WLB reported higher levels of satisfaction and well-being. In contrast, those who struggled to achieve balance often described inefficiencies in their work, feelings of isolation, and unmet psychological needs. Participants who experienced disruptions in their WLB during the COVID-19 pandemic reported considerable mental and physical exhaustion and expressed a need for psychological support. This aligns with findings by Lunau et al. (2014), which link poor WLB with psychological issues such as low subjective well-being. The pandemic's stress exacerbated mental health problems compared to pre-pandemic times (Majumdar et al. 2020). The growing importance of providing remedial and preventive mental health services and psychosocial support for remote workers is evident. It should also be noted that with the COVID-19 period, the shift from traditional WLB to a broader concept of "work and life balance" in the home environment underscores the increasing need for supportive measures to enhance employees' overall well-being.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One of the limitations of the research is that data on work-life balance during COVID-19 were collected via online interviews. For future studies, it is recommended to use a variety of data collection methods, such as observation and diary writing, to observe work-life balance in a more concrete manner. Additionally, the results of this study were based on data from white-collar employees in Turkey. While the exploratory nature of the

findings is strong, their generalizability is limited. The relatively small number of female participants (13) also presents a limitation, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness and diversity of perspectives.

Future research should address similar sample groups to examine or explore the generalizability of factors impacting work-life balance. Additionally, employing methods such as structural equation modeling could be beneficial to explore the relationships between career resources, work-life balance, and subjective/objective career achievement. Such studies could provide a more detailed and nuanced understanding of these dynamics, contributing to the development of more effective strategies for promoting work-life balance across different populations and work environments.

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