INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol 15, Issue 9, (2025) E-ISSN: 2222-6990

Unlock the Balance Advantage! Investigating Workplace and Home Flexibility, Work–Life Balance, and Psychological Job Demands in Employee Well-Being and Performance

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DOI Link: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i9/26362

Published Date: 16 September 2025

Abstract

Employee well-being and performance are critical concerns in modern organizations. Drawing on Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory and Work–Life Boundary theory, this study examines how workplace flexibility and work–nonwork balance affect employee well-being and performance, and whether flexibility at home and psychological job demands moderate these relationships. Survey data were obtained from 885 full-time employees, and hypotheses were tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling. Results indicate that workplace flexibility promotes better work–nonwork balance, which in turn enhances employee well-being and performance. Employee well-being also shows a positive, albeit smaller, impact on performance. The moderating analyses reveal that flexibility at home strengthens the positive effect of workplace flexibility on balance, while high psychological job demands weaken the beneficial effect of balance on performance. These findings highlight the importance of supportive work–life practices and manageable job demand for fostering employee well-being and productivity. The study contributes to an integrative understanding of work–nonwork balance and offers practical insights for promoting sustainable employee performance.

Keywords: Work–life Balance, Workplace Flexibility, Employee Well-Being, Employee Performance, Psychological Job Demands

Introduction

Organizations are more and more resilient to the changing environment, and some new changes in the workplace are going to be formed. For example, the world is witnessing significant trends such as the rise of hybrid and remote working (Kropp & McRae, 2022), the persistent presence of traditional office setups, accelerated digital transformation, shifts in

organizational infrastructure and labor mobility (Vyas, 2022), the integration of Al into the workforce, the emphasis on staffing for resilience, and the introduction of new metrics to understand employees in the workplace (Marr, 2022). According to a global employee survey conducted by EY in 2021, it is reported that more than 85% of respondents want flexibility in where and when they work and think this kind of flexibility is very important to them. About 62% of surveyed employees show their preference for flexibility, like hybrid work, remote work, or office optimal, and express their willingness to adopt the "new normal" in the workplace (EY,2021).

Employee well-being has been increasingly recognized as a key driver of sustainable performance and organizational success. With the rise of flexible work arrangements and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, professionals face new challenges in balancing work and nonwork roles. Prior research suggests that achieving a healthy work–nonwork balance can enhance well-being and reduce stress, thereby potentially improving job performance (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Wayne et al., 2021). However, work–life balance is a complex construct, and the interplay between job resources (like flexibility) and job demands in shaping well-being and performance is not yet fully understood (Casper et al., 2018). This study addresses that gap by integrating perspectives from JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017) and Work–Life Boundary theory (Clark, 2000) to examine how workplace flexibility and work–nonwork balance jointly influence employees' well-being and performance. This study investigates how flexibility at home (personal life flexibility) and psychological job demands serve as contextual factors that might moderate these relationships.

Theoretical Foundations

Job Demands–Resources and COR Perspectives

The Job Demands–Resources model proposes that every job has characteristics categorized as either demands or resources, which jointly influence employee well-being and performance outcomes (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Demands (e.g. long work hours, high pressure) drain energy and can lead to strain or burnout, whereas resources (e.g. autonomy, flexibility, support) help employees meet demands and foster engagement and well-being. Conservation of Resources theory further explains that individuals strive to obtain and protect valuable resources, and stress occurs when resources are threatened or depleted (Hobfoll, 1989). Workplace flexibility can be viewed as a job resource that allows employees to better manage their time and energy across work and nonwork roles, thereby preserving crucial resources like time, energy, and psychological comfort (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Access to flexible work arrangements (control over work time and location) tends to reduce work–family conflict and enhance job satisfaction, indicating a positive impact on overall well-being (Butts et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2001). At the same time, excessive psychological job demands such as heavy workload or role overload consume employees' resource reserves, which can diminish well-being and hinder performance (Karasek, 1979; Maslach et al., 2001). According to JD-R theory, a balanced approach is needed: ample resources boost motivation and buffer the stress from demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). We anticipate that when employees experience greater flexibility (a resource) and manageable demands, they are more likely to achieve better work–nonwork balance and maintain higher well-being, translating into better performance.

Work–Life Boundary Theory and Work–Nonwork Balance

Work–Life Boundary (or Border) theory provides a lens for understanding how individuals navigate between their work and personal life domains (Clark, 2000). People employ different boundary management styles ranging from integration (blending work and home roles) to segmentation (keeping roles strictly separate) depending on preferences and context (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). A work–nonwork balance can be defined as an overall sense of equilibrium and fulfillment across work and nonwork roles, achieved when individuals can devote sufficient time and attention to priorities in both domains (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Voydanoff, 2005). High work–nonwork balance is characterized by feeling involved in and satisfied with both work and personal life, without one unduly hindering the other (Casper et al., 2018; Wayne et al., 2021). Flexible working conditions contribute to this balance by allowing individuals to adjust schedules or locations to better fit personal needs (Allen et al., 2013). Additionally, *flexibility at home* – such as having family support or the ability to handle work tasks at home when needed – can reinforce work–life integration and reduce conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Work–Life Boundary theory suggests that when both the workplace and the home environment offer flexibility, individuals can more fluidly cross borders between roles, resulting in less friction and greater harmony between work and nonwork obligations (Clark, 2000; Kreiner, 2006). This balanced state is expected to enhance employee well-being, as individuals experience less stress and more positive affect, and can improve employee performance by enabling employees to be more focused and energized during work (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015). Conversely, if psychological job demands are high, they may act as a boundary-breaking force that intrudes on personal time and undermines the benefits of balance (Voydanoff, 2005). In summary, integrating these theories, we hypothesize that workplace flexibility promotes work–nonwork balance, which in turn boosts well-being and performance, and that these relationships are strengthened by supportive home flexibility and weakened by excessive job demands.

Building on JD-R theory, we posit that *workplace flexibility* (an organizational resource) facilitates employees' ability to balance work and nonwork responsibilities, thereby functioning as a resource that boosts well-being and job outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Conservation of Resources (COR) theory likewise suggests that individuals thrive when they can secure and conserve resources such as time control and autonomy, which flexibility provides (Hobfoll, 1989, 2018). Simultaneously, Work–Life Boundary theory explains that individuals manage the boundaries between work and personal domains through segmentation or integration strategies (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner, 2006). Greater flexibility—both at work and at home—may allow more seamless boundary management, leading to a better work–nonwork balance (Wayne et al., 2021). We expect that improved balance will be associated with higher life satisfaction and job satisfaction, contributing to overall employee well-being, and ultimately enhancing employee performance (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). On the other hand, psychological job demands (e.g. heavy workload, time pressure) can deplete employees' mental resources (Karasek, 1979; Demerouti et al., 2001). High demands might undermine the positive effects of balance and well-being on performance by increasing stress and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Research Hypothesis and Development

Workplace flexibility is widely recognized as an organizational resource that can help employees coordinate work and non-work roles. Scholars argue that flexible working arrangements — such as control over work hours, work location and how work is performed — give employees autonomy and reduce role conflict, enabling them to allocate time and energy according to both work and personal needs (Civildag & Durmaz, 2024; Hildenbrand et al., 2024; Ray et al., 2021). Recent meta-analyses and empirical studies show that flexible work options are associated with higher job satisfaction, lower job stress, and improved work–life balance (Casper et al., 2018; Lesener et al., 2023). Research on SMEs also indicates that flexible work policies enhance engagement and productivity by allowing employees to feel in control of their schedules and to better integrate work with family and personal responsibilities (Sanchez et al., 2025). According to Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories, workplace flexibility functions as a job resource that helps employees preserve psychological resources and manage demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Drawing on these findings, the following hypothesis has been proposed (see Figure 1).

H1: Workplace flexibility has a significant effect on work-nonwork balance**.**

Flexibility at home, such as supportive family arrangements or the ability to adjust household routines to accommodate work, can further facilitate an employee's ability to benefit from workplace flexibility. COR theory posits that resources gained in one domain can accumulate and create a "resource caravan" that spills over into other domains (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Recent research on workplace family support shows that employees who perceive high levels of family or partner support are better able to balance professional and domestic responsibilities, suggesting that home flexibility acts as a personal resource that enhances work–life integration (Diaz et al., 2025). Empirical studies during the COVID-19 period also show that family-supportive supervisory behavior and flexible home arrangements reduce work–family conflict and exhaustion while improving engagement (Chambel et al., 2023). Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been proposed (see Figure 1).

H2: Flexibility at home significantly moderates the relationship between workplace flexibility and work-nonwork balance.

Work–non-work balance itself is theorized to have important consequences for well-being and performance. The construct refers to an overall sense of equilibrium and fulfillment across work and personal life domains, achieved when individuals can devote sufficient time and energy to their priorities (Casper et al., 2018; Wayne et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that employees who report higher work–non-work balance experience lower work–family conflict and greater mental well-being and engagement. Balanced employees also show higher job satisfaction and life satisfaction and display higher levels of job performance and organizational commitment (Hildenbrand et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2024). Meta-analytic results reveal that flexible working arrangements enhance performance partly by enabling employees to fulfill both work and personal obligations, thereby fostering a sense of balance (Civildag & Durmaz, 2024). Based on JD-R theory, achieving work–non-work balance should reduce strain and support the accumulation of energy for positive outcomes. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been proposed (see Figure 1).

H3: Work–non-work balance has a significant effect on employee well-being. H4: Work–non-work balance has a significant effect on employee performance.

Employee well-being encompasses life satisfaction, job satisfaction and psychological health, and is increasingly viewed as a predictor of individual and organizational performance (Yang et al., 2024; Chari et al., 2019). Studies show that high levels of psychological well-being enhance motivation, engagement and job satisfaction, which in turn translate into better performance and reduced turnover. For example, Yang et al. (2024) demonstrated that psychological well-being positively influences job satisfaction and job performance in technology employees, with job satisfaction mediating this relationship. Similarly, research on employee engagement finds that psychological well-being acts as a personal resource that boosts job performance by enhancing focus and resilience (Vencato et al., 2023). Given that workplace flexibility can improve well-being by reducing role conflict and stress (Ray et al., 2021; Civildag & Durmaz, 2024), we expect that the benefits of flexibility for performance may operate partly through enhanced well-being. Based on this body of evidence, the following hypothesis has been proposed (see Figure 1).

H5: Employee well-being has a significant effect on employee performance.

H6: Employee well-being significantly mediates the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance.

Psychological job demands — such as high workload, time pressure and role ambiguity — represent salient stressors that can exhaust employees' resources and diminish the positive effects of balance and well-being (Lesener et al., 2023; Pfeffer et al., 2023). JD-R and COR theories argue that when demands are high, individuals must expend greater energy to meet job requirements, leaving fewer resources available for recovery and personal well-being. Empirical research shows that high job demands are linked to greater strain and poorer health outcomes and can moderate the relationships among resources, well-being and performance (Lu et al., 2024; Vencato et al., 2023). In our context, we expect that psychological job demands will weaken the positive effect of work–non-work balance on well-being because high stress may override the benefits of balance; that they will dampen the impact of well-being on performance, as exhausted employees may struggle to translate their positive state into productive output; and that they will attenuate the relationship between work–non-work balance and performance by consuming the resources needed to capitalize on balance. Based on the preceding literature and theoretical discussion, this study has proposed the following hypotheses (see Figure 1).

H7: Psychological job demands significantly moderate the relationship between work–non-work balance and employee well-being.

H8: Psychological job demands significantly moderate the relationship between employee well-being and employee performance.

H9: Psychological job demands significantly moderate the relationship between work–non-work balance and employee performance.

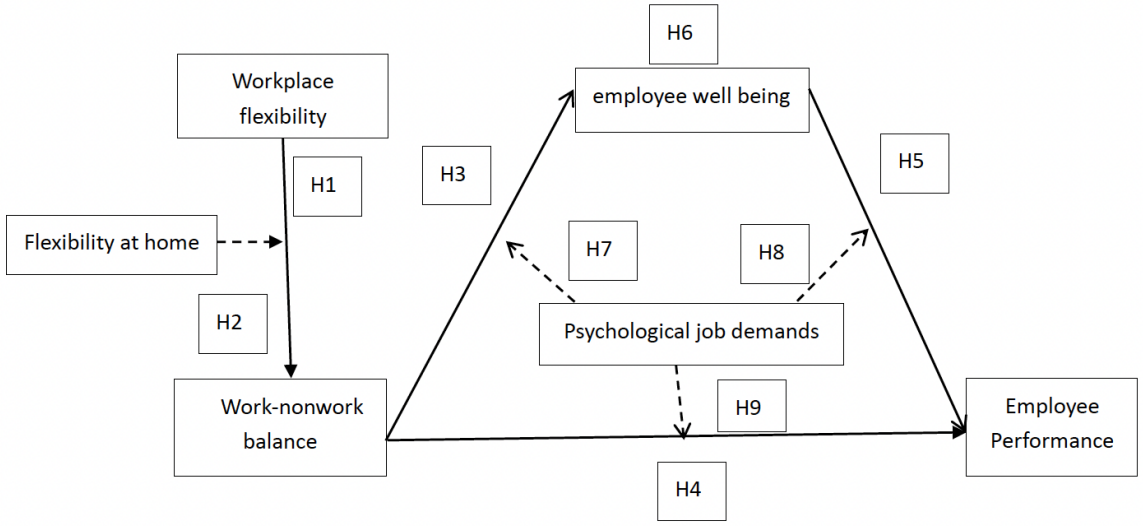

Figure 1 Research model and hypotheses

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Respondents were full-time employees from a variety of industries in top 5 cities around China. A total of 885 usable questionnaires were collected (approximately 52% male; average age 34 years). Participants provided informed consent and responded anonymously. The survey was administered in person and online, and measures were originally prepared in English, then translated to Chinese with back-translation to ensure accuracy. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4, following recommended two-step model validation and hypothesis testing procedures.

Measures and Instrumentation

All constructs were measured with established multi-item scales. Workplace flexibility was measured with 11 items (covering temporal, locational, and operational flexibility) adapted from prior flexibility scales (Hill et al., 2001; Allen et al., 2013). Sample items include having control over work scheduling and location. Flexibility at home (personal-life flexibility) was assessed by 3 custom items reflecting the ease of adjusting home arrangements for work (e.g., family allowing work during spare time). Work–nonwork balance was assessed with 5 items reflecting general balance across life domains (e.g., "I devote the right amount of time to work and nonwork roles"), based on the scale by Wayne et al. (2021) and related work–life balance measures. Psychological job demands were measured with 6 items derived from the Job Content Questionnaire and role stress literature (Karasek, 1979), capturing work pressure, workload, and role clarity (reversed). Employee well-being was operationalized as a second-order construct encompassing three dimensions – life well-being, workplace well-being, and psychological well-being – measured by a total of 18 items from Zheng et al. (2015). These items gauge overall life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and psychological health (e.g., "I feel satisfied with my life," "I find real enjoyment in my work," "I have grown as a person"). Employee performance was self-reported with 4 items developed for this study to reflect productivity and quality of work, including under remote/hybrid work conditions (e.g., "I consistently produce high-quality work, even when working remotely"). All responses used a

7-point Likert agreement scale. Established scales were slightly modified for context where necessary, and high scores indicated greater levels of the construct. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for each scale exceeded 0.80, and confirmatory factor analysis supported the distinctness of all constructs (AVE > 0.50 for each). Control variables (such as age, gender, and tenure) were included in the analysis but showed no significant effects on the focal outcomes.

Results

Demographic factor profiling

Using a cross-sectional survey, we analyzed 885 valid responses on flexible work. The sample spans first-tier cities (Beijing 22.4%, Shanghai 22.3%, Chongqing 20.6%, Shenzhen 19.1%, Guangzhou 15.7%) with broad demographics: men 58.4%, women 41.6%. Young and mid-career employees predominated (25–34: 37.6%; 35–44: 31.2%), groups most exposed to work–life pressures. Tenure was heterogeneous, led by 6–8 years (31%) and roughly one quarter with ≤2 years, indicating varied organizational socialization. Working time skewed high (46–55 hours: 35.9%; >55 hours: 10.2%), underscoring demand for flexibility. Education was mainly bachelor's (47.1%), with sizable diploma (21.0%) and postgraduate (15.7%) shares. Most respondents were married with children (62.1%); 97.7% had caregiving duties. Roles ranged from junior (22.3%) to middle (31.3%) and senior management (≈46.5%). Overall, the dataset offers a robust basis to assess how flexible-work policies address heterogeneous worker needs. (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic factor profiling

Topic	Options	frequency	percentage
Gender	male	517	58.4
	female	368	41.6
Location	Shanghai	197	22.3
	Beijing	198	22.4
	Shenzhen	169	19.1
	Chongqing	182	20.6
	Guangzhou	139	15.7
Age	16-25 years old	119	13.4
	25-34 years old	333	37.6
	35-44 years old	276	31.2
	45-54 years old	107	12.1
	55+ years old	50	5.6
Years in organization	Less than 3 years	202	22.8
	3-5 years	131	14.8
	6-8 years	274	31
	9-11 years	123	13.9
	More than 12 years	155	17.5
Weekly working hours	Less than 35 hours	208	23.5
	36-45 hours	269	30.4
	46-55 hours	318	35.9
	More than 55 hours	90	10.2
level of education	High school degree	143	16.2
	Advanced Diploma	186	21

	Bachelor's degree	417	47.1
	Postgraduate Degree	139	15.7
Family situation	Single and childless	224	25.3
	Single with children	14	1.6
	Married with no children	97	11
	Married with children	550	62.1
Position level	Junior employees	197	22.3
	Middle staff	277	31.3
	Management personnel	205	23.2
	Top management	206	23.3
Care responsibilities at home	Yes	865	97.7
	No	20	2.3

Measurement Model

The PLS measurement model demonstrated good reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. To evaluate indicator reliability, standardized factor loadings of all items were examined. Loadings above 0.40 were considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2017). All item loadings were significant and above 0.70 on their intended factors. Composite reliabilities ranged from 0.88 to 0.95 for the scales, and average variance extracted (AVE) values were above the 0.50 threshold. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs. The Hetrotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratios for all construct pairs were below 0.85, indicating adequate discriminant validity between constructs (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2019). Thus, the measurement model was deemed reliable and valid for structural testing.

Table 2
Measurement model assessment.

variable	Item	Factor load	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
FAH	FAH 1	0.975	0.976	0.984	0.955
	FAH 2	0.981			
	FAH 3	0.976			
WNB	WNB 1	0.876	0.917	0.938	0.751
	WNB 2	0.857			
	WNB 3	0.848			
	WNB 4	0.867			
	WNB 5	0.884			
PJD	PJD1	0.962	0.992	0.993	0.959
	PJD2	0.981			
	PJD3	0.985			
	PJD4	0.984			
	PJD5	0.984			
	PJD6	0.980			
EP	EP1	0.955	0.964	0.974	0.903
	EP2	0.956			
	EP3	0.943			

	EP4	0.947			
	EWB1	0.846			
EWB	EWB2	0.820	0.940	0.866	0.682
	EWB3	0.811			
	WF1	0.759			
WF	WF2	0.772	0.879	0.850	0.654
	WF3	0.889			

Table 3
Assessment of discriminant validity

	EWB	EP	FAH	WNB	WF	PJD
EWB	0.703	0.556	0.094	0.52	0.768	0.065
EP	0.531	0.950	0.064	0.363	0.568	0.485
FAH	-0.088	-0.060	0.977	0.57	0.425	0.494
WNB	0.483	0.342	0.543	0.866	0.513	0.589
WF	0.698	0.522	-0.391	0.461	0.737	0.094
PJD	-0.040	-0.478	0.488	0.560	-0.064	0.979

Fornell-Larcker criterion (below the main diagonal) and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) (above the main diagonal). Main diagonal: in the bold square root of the AVE.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed across collinearity (VIF), explanatory power (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Inner-model VIFs were comfortably below critical thresholds, with 1.569 for the work–nonwork balance → employee well-being path and 2.612 for the work–nonwork balance → employee performance path; all other paths were <3, indicating no multicollinearity concerns and stable coefficient estimates (Hair et al., 2017). The model explained a moderate share of variance in employee well-being ($R^2 = 0.377$) and a very high share in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.905$) (Hair et al., 2017). Path-specific effects from work–nonwork balance were large, with $f^2 = 0.585$ on well-being and $f^2 = 3.748$ on performance, marking balance as a pivotal driver—especially of performance. Cross-validated redundancy further supported predictive usefulness ($Q^2 = 0.317$ for well-being; $Q^2 = 0.696$ for performance), indicating a robust, well-specified model with particularly strong out-of-sample relevance for performance.

Bootstrapped PLS-SEM (5,000 resamples) yielded all core direct effects were positive and significant: workplace flexibility → work–nonwork balance (H1: β = .829, *p* < .001); work–nonwork balance → employee well-being (H3: β = .756, *p* < .001) and → employee performance (H4: β = .966, *p* < .001); employee well-being → performance (H5: β = .063, *p* < .001). These results position work–nonwork balance as the primary conduit from flexibility to both well-being and performance, with well-being adding a smaller, incremental contribution to performance.

The sequential mediation from work–nonwork balance through well-being to performance was statistically significant (H6: indirect β = .048, *p* = .001). For moderation, flexibility at home strengthened the workplace flexibility → balance relationship (H2: β_interaction = .306, *p* < .001). Psychological job demands produced mixed effects: the interaction on balance → performance was strongly negative (H9: β_interaction = −.440, *p* < .001), whereas interactions on balance → well-being (H7: β = −.073, *p* = .084) and on well-being → performance (H8: β = −.021, *p* = .389) were not significant. Overall, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H9 were supported, while H7 and H8 were not.

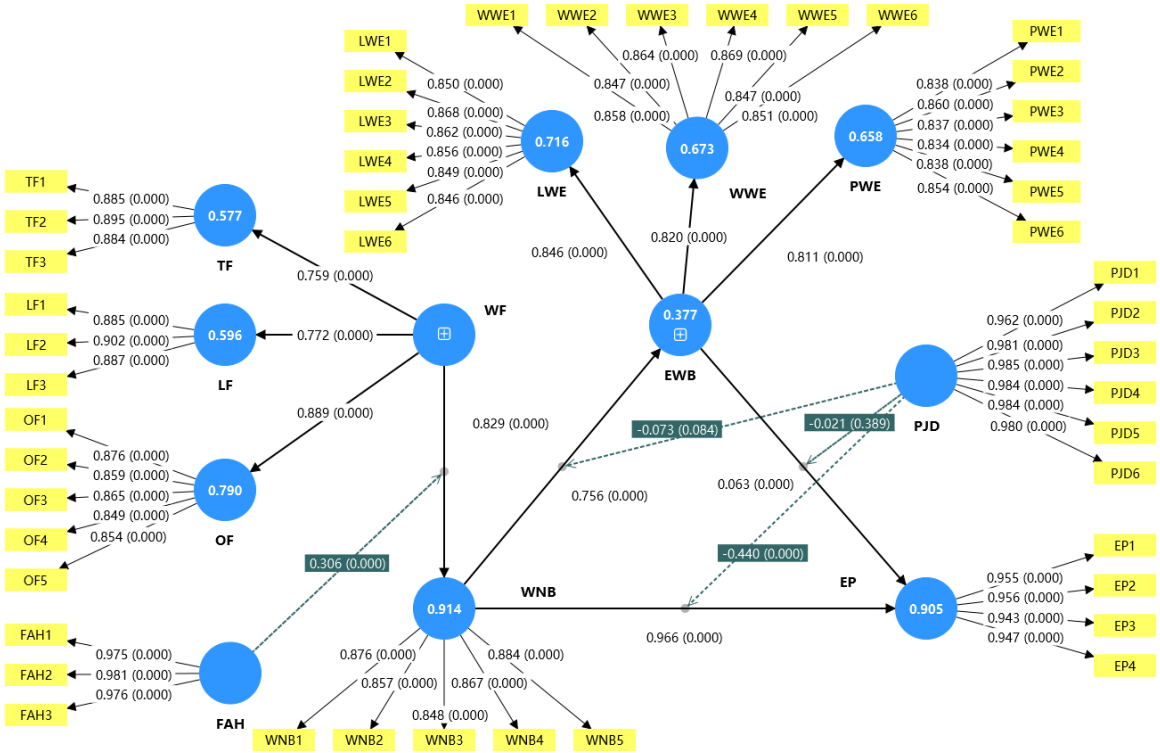

Figure 2 PLS-SEM path coefficients and significance testing results of the structural model

Table 4
Structural relationships and hypothesis testing

Hyp	Path	Std beta	Std error	T value	P	Decision
H1	WF->WNB	0.829	0.023	36.001	0.000	Support
H2	FAH x WF -> WNB	0.306	0.026	11.874	0.000	Support
H3	WNB->EWB	0.756	0.035	21.471	0.000	Support
H4	WNB->EP	0.966	0.032	29.953	0.000	Support
H5	WNB->EP	0.063	0.018	3.582	0.000	Support
H6	WNB->EWB->EP	0.048	0.014	3.473	0.001	Support
H7	PJD x WNB->EWB	-0.073	0.042	1.730	0.084	Not support
H8	PJD x EWB->EP	-0.021	0.024	0.862	0.389	Not support
H9	PJD x WNB->EP	-0.440	0.025	17.282	0.000	Support

Discussion and Implications

This research provides empirical support for an integrative model linking flexible work practices, work–nonwork balance, employee well-being, and performance. The findings underscore the central role of work–nonwork balance as a conduit through which job resources (like flexibility) translate into tangible benefits for both individuals and organizations. Consistent with JD-R and COR theories, employees with greater flexibility experience less conflict and more alignment between work and personal life, resulting in higher well-being and enabling them to perform better at their jobs. The significant interaction between workplace and home flexibility (Figure 2) highlights that employers and families share responsibility for facilitating balance: organizational policies granting flexibility are most effective when complemented by a supportive home environment. From a Work–Life Boundary perspective, this means that the permeability and flexibility of borders on both sides (workplace and home) jointly determine the ease of balancing roles (Clark, 2000; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012).

The moderation by psychological job demands offers a nuanced insight: while maintaining work–life balance generally boosts performance, extremely high job demands can erode these gains. In practical terms, if employees are overloaded or chronically stressed, simply achieving balance (e.g. managing time well between work and home) may not suffice to sustain high performance. Under such conditions, additional interventions are needed, such as job redesign to reduce excessive demands or stress management resources (Karasek, 1979; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Interestingly, job demands did not significantly affect the balance-to-well-being link, suggesting that even burned-out or highly pressured employees still derive personal well-being benefits from balancing their life roles (perhaps due to satisfaction and support gained outside work). However, the performance pay-off from that well-being can be blunted by demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This finding contributes to the literature by pinpointing performance as the outcome most sensitive to the interaction of balance and demands, which could explain mixed results in past studies regarding when work–life balance leads to better job performance (Allen et al., 2015; McNall et al., 2010). It reinforces the idea that organizations should not only promote work–life balance initiatives but also keep job stressors in check to fully realize the productivity benefits of a balanced workforce.

For practitioners and HR managers, the results deliver clear messages: Workplace flexibility is a valuable tool for enhancing employee well-being and should be part of comprehensive well-being strategies. Flexible scheduling, telecommuting options, and autonomy in how work is done allow employees to better juggle responsibilities, leading to higher morale and output (Hill et al., 2008; Bloom et al., 2015). Additionally, organizations can encourage a culture that respects employees' nonwork time and supports boundary management (e.g. discouraging after-hours emails or providing on-site services that reduce personal-life conflicts). Importantly, companies should also engage employees' families or home contexts where possible – for instance, offering family-oriented benefits or educational sessions for employees and partners – because a supportive home environment amplifies the positive effects of workplace policies. On the other hand, leadership should monitor and manage job demands. While short-term high demands may be inevitable, chronic overwork and role overload will undermine not only employee health but also the potential performance improvements gained from other initiatives. Interventions like workload assessment, hiring additional staff, or training in time management can help keep demands at manageable levels. In doing so, the organization protects employees' resource reservoirs, allowing their work–life balance and well-being to more effectively translate into productivity (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

The biggest limitation is the cultural context: the sample is predominantly Chinese, and cultural factors (like collectivism or high-power distance) might influence perceptions of balance and flexibility. Replicating this model in other cultures or in multinational samples would be valuable to generalize the findings. Additionally, while we focused on psychological job demands as a moderator, other factors like personality (e.g., segmentation preference, resilience) or organizational climate could also moderate these relationships. For instance, employees with high segmentation preference might benefit even more from flexibility in maintaining boundaries (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012), or a family-supportive organizational culture might amplify the benefits of balance (Allen et al., 2013). Future research can explore such moderators and also examine outcomes beyond individual performance, such as team performance or employee retention, to see if work–nonwork balance has broader organizational effects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reinforces the pivotal importance of helping employees balance their work and personal lives. Workplace flexibility emerges as a powerful enabler of work–nonwork balance, which in turn is linked to healthier, more productive employees. However, the positive impact of balance on performance is contingent on manageable job demands – balance is most beneficial when employees are not stretched too thin by their jobs. These insights suggest that organizations striving for high performance should invest in both *resources* (like flexible work options and supportive practices) and *reasonable demands* (preventing chronic overload). By doing so, companies can foster an environment where employees thrive in their roles both inside and outside of work, creating a win–win scenario of enhanced well-being and sustained performance. The integration of JD-R theory with Work–Life Boundary theory in this study provides a more holistic understanding of how modern employees can achieve success at work without sacrificing personal well-being. We hope future research continues to build on this integrated approach, guiding employers in

designing workplaces that respect human needs and yield enduring benefits for individuals, families, and organizations alike.

Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This study fuses Job Demands-Resources theory, Conservation of Resources theory, and Work-Life Boundary theories into one process model that positions work-nonwork balance as the pivotal mechanism through which workplace flexibility enhances well-being and performance. We reveal cross-domain complementarity: home flexibility magnifies the impact of workplace flexibility on balance. We also establish boundary conditions: psychological job demands attenuate only the balance→performance link, leaving balance→well-being and well-being→performance unchanged. The model further specifies a sequential mediation via well-being, sharpening the happy-productive-worker thesis. Empirically, large-scale data from Chinese SMEs, an under-researched emerging-economy context, delivers a concise prescription: bundle flexibility with demand management to sustain performance where caregiving duties and long hours are the norm.

Author Contribution

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Shaohua Ben and Mohamad Bin Bilal Ali. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Shaohua Ben and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Supplementary Information

The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/XXX

Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to those who recognized my imperfections yet chose to care for me. I thank my family for unwavering love; my supervisors and mentors for exacting standards and patient guidance; my colleagues, friends, and students for their encouragement and practical help; and the institutions and participants whose support made this research possible.
Data is available in smartPLS.

Declarations

Funding Information

This research received no financial support.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT in order to check and improve language and readability, with cautions. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Ethical Approval

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of UCSI University (No. IEC-2025-FOSSLA-0090).

Consent to Participate
Students were asked for consent in a procedure explained in the method section (consent letters are available in Chinese).

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare no competing interests.

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