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## Flexibility in Hybrid Work and Employee Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Work-Life Balance

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate whether work-life balance mediates the relationship between flexibility in hybrid work and employee well-being among Brazilian employees. A descriptive correlational research design was employed with a sample of 391 hybrid employees from various organizations in Brazil, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie sampling table. Data were collected using three validated scales: the Work Design Questionnaire flexibility subscale, the Work-Life Balance Scale, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed using SPSS-27 to assess the relationships between variables, while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted in AMOS-21 to test the hypothesized mediation model and evaluate model fit using standard indices. Pearson correlation results revealed significant positive associations between flexibility in hybrid work and work-life balance ( $r = .54, p < .001$ ), flexibility and employee well-being ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ), and work-life balance and employee well-being ( $r = .63, p < .001$ ). The structural model demonstrated good fit ( $\chi^2 = 114.28, df = 48, \chi^2/df = 2.38, GFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.058$ ). SEM path analysis showed that flexibility had a significant direct effect on well-being ( $\beta = 0.21, p < .001$ ) and an indirect effect through work-life balance ( $\beta = 0.31, p < .001$ ), with a total effect of  $\beta = 0.52 (p < .001)$ , confirming partial mediation. The findings suggest that flexibility in hybrid work positively influences employee well-being, both directly and indirectly through work-life balance. Enhancing flexible work practices alongside supportive policies for work-life integration can significantly contribute to employee psychological health and organizational sustainability in the hybrid era.

**Keywords:** flexibility, hybrid work, work-life balance, employee well-being.

### Introduction

In recent years, particularly following the global shift catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the structure and dynamics of work have undergone significant transformation. One of the most notable developments has been the rise of hybrid work models, which combine remote and in-office work. This new arrangement has introduced both opportunities and challenges for employees and organizations alike. While offering increased autonomy and flexibility, hybrid work also raises critical questions about its implications for employee well-being and the mechanisms through which such outcomes are shaped. Among the potential mediating factors, work-life balance has emerged as a central construct, increasingly recognized for its influence on psychological and organizational outcomes [1, 2].

Employee well-being, a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, emotional, and physical health, has become a priority for organizations seeking to sustain long-term productivity and commitment. Researchers emphasize that employee well-being is not merely the absence of distress but includes positive functioning, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose at work and beyond [3, 4]. In hybrid work settings, the shift in boundaries between work and personal life has made it essential to understand how well-being is influenced not just by job demands but also by the flexibility offered by such models. Flexibility in hybrid work refers to the extent to which employees have control over when, where, and how they

perform their tasks. This perceived flexibility can empower employees, increase engagement, and foster greater satisfaction, yet if poorly managed, it may lead to boundary blurring, burnout, or disengagement [5, 6].

Within this evolving landscape, work-life balance serves as a critical mediator that may explain how flexibility in hybrid work settings influences employee well-being. Work-life balance is commonly defined as an individual's ability to meet the demands of both professional and personal domains without significant conflict or stress. Empirical evidence consistently shows that employees who experience better balance between their work and non-work roles tend to report higher levels of mental well-being, reduced stress, and stronger job satisfaction [7, 8]. Given the bidirectional relationship between work and life domains, achieving balance has become increasingly complex in hybrid environments where digital connectivity extends work into personal spaces [9, 10].

The relevance of this topic is underscored by recent research pointing to the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between job design and well-being outcomes. For instance, Alzadjali and Ahmad (2024) showed that a high-commitment work system improved employee well-being primarily through enhanced organizational support and better work-life balance, suggesting that flexibility alone is not sufficient—it must be accompanied by supportive conditions that allow for balance [11]. Similarly, Bakar (2024) highlighted that work-life balance is a crucial contributor to employees' overall well-being, particularly when autonomy and role clarity are present in the work structure [12]. These findings imply that hybrid work arrangements, while promising, require a nuanced understanding of mediating variables such as work-life balance to maximize their positive effects.

Scholars have also drawn attention to the dual nature of flexibility in the hybrid model. While flexibility can enable self-management and improve life satisfaction, it can also lead to role overload and reduced detachment from work, ultimately harming well-being. For example, Saragih et al. (2024) found that although flexibility improved productivity and engagement, its effect on well-being was significantly mediated by employees' ability to maintain boundaries and manage their time effectively [13]. In another study, Supendi et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence and organizational culture played key roles in enabling work-life balance, which in turn impacted employee welfare in flexible work arrangements [14].

Moreover, several empirical studies affirm the positive effect of work-life balance on both employee well-being and organizational outcomes. Rosnani et al. (2023) emphasized that work-life balance functions as a protective factor against occupational stress and turnover intentions, while promoting engagement and resilience [15]. Similarly, Lamichhane et al. (2023) linked enhanced work-life balance with increased job performance among employees in microfinance institutions, underscoring the performance benefits of supporting employee balance in hybrid contexts [16]. These results align with the findings of Marecki (2024), who identified work-life balance as a central determinant of productivity and well-being in knowledge-based economies [17].

Another critical dimension to consider is the organizational infrastructure and culture that enable or hinder flexibility and balance. Singh et al. (2024) and Setyono et al. (2024) reported that the success of work-life balance policies depends on managerial support, leadership style, and clear communication. In particular, transformational and authentic leadership styles were associated with greater employee engagement and stronger work-life integration [2, 18]. These findings highlight the need for a systems-level approach to managing hybrid work environments, where structural policies are complemented by relational and cultural supports.

From a psychological standpoint, work-life balance contributes to well-being through mechanisms such as emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, and reduced role conflict. As noted by Nwanzu and Babalola (2023), employees with better balance are more likely to exhibit psychological well-being, including greater emotional stability and social competence [19]. Furthermore, Hunsaker and Jeong (2023) introduced the concept of spiritual leadership as a means to enhance work-life balance, arguing that inner alignment and purpose-driven leadership can buffer employees from the stress of role ambiguity and technological overload [20].

The body of literature also acknowledges the broader societal implications of improving employee well-being through flexible work models. For example, Paskawati et al. (2024) emphasized that managing work-life balance effectively not only enhances employee welfare but also contributes to organizational sustainability and national productivity [21]. Likewise, Thamer (2024) investigated how flexible policies impacted well-being and productivity in the food and beverage industry, finding that work-life balance remained the key mediating pathway in achieving desirable outcomes [22]. Bayhaq et al. (2024) further validated these findings by showing that well-being and balance significantly predicted productivity and satisfaction across different sectors and demographics [4].

Taken together, these studies provide a compelling rationale for further investigation into the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between hybrid work flexibility and employee well-being. Despite the growing body of research, there remains a need for more integrated models that examine these relationships simultaneously and quantitatively. Few studies to date have employed structural equation modeling to test the pathways between flexibility, work-life balance, and well-being in hybrid settings using large and diverse samples. Moreover, research in emerging economies like Brazil—where hybrid work adoption is accelerating but still influenced by structural inequalities—remains sparse and underexplored.

Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap by examining whether work-life balance mediates the relationship between flexibility in hybrid work and employee well-being among Brazilian employees.

## Methods and Materials

### *Study Design and Participants*

This research employed a descriptive correlational design to examine the relationship between flexibility in hybrid work, work-life balance, and employee well-being. The study sample consisted of 391 employees working in hybrid roles across various industries in Brazil. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population, ensuring adequate power for statistical analysis. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to capture variation in job roles, organizational sectors, and geographic regions. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, and their anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently employed in hybrid work settings (combining on-site and remote work) for at least six months.

### *Data Collection*

Employee well-being in this study was assessed using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), developed by Tennant et al. (2007). This 14-item scale is designed to capture positive aspects of mental well-being, including both hedonic (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction) and eudaimonic (e.g., psychological functioning, purpose) elements. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (None of the time) to 5 (All of the time), with total scores

ranging from 14 to 70; higher scores indicate greater mental well-being. The scale consists of a single factor structure and does not include subscales, offering a unified measurement of well-being. Numerous studies have confirmed the WEMWBS's internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding 0.90) and construct validity across diverse occupational and cultural contexts, making it a reliable and robust tool for assessing employee well-being.

Flexibility in hybrid work was measured using the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) flexibility subscale developed by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006). Specifically, the subscale on work scheduling autonomy and decision-making autonomy was used to capture the core dimensions of flexibility relevant in hybrid work arrangements. This subscale includes 6 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater perceived flexibility in how, when, and where work tasks are performed. The WDQ is a widely validated instrument in organizational research, and its subscales have demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha above 0.80) and factorial validity in both traditional and hybrid work settings.

Work-life balance was assessed using the Work-Life Balance Scale developed by Brough et al. (2014), which captures employees' perceived balance between work and personal life commitments. The scale includes 4 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a more favorable work-life balance. The unidimensional structure of this scale focuses on subjective perceptions of balance rather than objective time-based measures, aligning well with the psychological emphasis of the study. Previous research has confirmed the scale's strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values typically above 0.85) and construct validity, including convergent and discriminant validity in samples of hybrid and remote workers.

### *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed using both SPSS version 27 and AMOS version 21. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic information. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the bivariate relationships between the dependent variable (employee well-being) and the independent variables (flexibility in hybrid work and work-life balance). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was then conducted in AMOS-21 to test the hypothesized mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between flexibility and well-being. The SEM model was evaluated based on several fit indices, including Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI).

### **Findings and Results**

Among the 391 participants, 224 (57.3%) were female and 167 (42.7%) were male. The age distribution showed that 103 individuals (26.3%) were between 21 and 30 years old, 189 (48.3%) were aged 31 to 40, and 99 (25.3%) were over 40 years old. In terms of educational background, 66 participants (16.9%) held a high school diploma, 209 (53.5%) had a bachelor's degree, and 116 (29.6%) had completed postgraduate studies. Regarding organizational sectors, 173 (44.2%) were employed in the private sector, 142 (36.3%) in public institutions, and 76 (19.4%) in non-governmental or freelance positions. Most respondents ( $n = 282$ , 72.1%) reported having at least one dependent family member.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables*

Variable	M	SD
Flexibility in Hybrid Work	22.63	3.58
Work-Life Balance	16.47	2.91
Employee Well-Being	51.82	8.64

The mean score for perceived flexibility in hybrid work was 22.63 (SD = 3.58), based on a 6-item scale with a maximum score of 30. Work-life balance had a mean of 16.47 (SD = 2.91) out of a possible 20. Employee well-being, measured via the WEMWBS (range: 14–70), had a mean of 51.82 (SD = 8.64), indicating a generally high level of psychological well-being among participants.

Prior to conducting correlation and structural equation modeling, statistical assumptions were assessed and confirmed. The normality of distributions was verified using skewness and kurtosis values, which for all variables fell within the acceptable range of  $-1$  to  $+1$  (e.g., skewness for employee well-being =  $-0.21$ ; kurtosis =  $0.48$ ). Linearity was checked through scatterplots, which indicated linear relationships among variables. Homoscedasticity was supported by the Levene's test for equality of variances ( $F = 1.12$ ,  $p = .291$ ), suggesting variance homogeneity. Multicollinearity was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with all VIF values below 3 (e.g., VIF for flexibility =  $1.72$ ), indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

**Table 2***Pearson Correlation Coefficients and p-values Between Variables*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Flexibility in Hybrid Work	–	.54** ( $p < .001$ )	.48** ( $p < .001$ )
2. Work-Life Balance	.54** ( $p < .001$ )	–	.63** ( $p < .001$ )
3. Employee Well-Being	.48** ( $p < .001$ )	.63** ( $p < .001$ )	–

Significant positive correlations were found among all variables. Flexibility in hybrid work was positively correlated with work-life balance ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and employee well-being ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, work-life balance was strongly correlated with employee well-being ( $r = .63$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting its potential mediating role.

**Table 3***Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model*

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Cut-off
$\chi^2$	114.28	–
df	48	–
$\chi^2/df$	2.38	$< 3.00$
GFI	0.94	$> 0.90$
AGFI	0.91	$> 0.90$
CFI	0.97	$> 0.95$
RMSEA	0.058	$< 0.08$
TLI	0.96	$> 0.95$

The fit indices for the structural model indicate a good fit between the hypothesized model and the data. The chi-square statistic was 114.28 with 48 degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df = 2.38$ ), which falls within the acceptable range. The GFI (0.94), AGFI

(0.91), CFI (0.97), and TLI (0.96) all exceeded recommended thresholds, while the RMSEA value of 0.058 indicates an acceptable level of approximation error.

**Table 4**

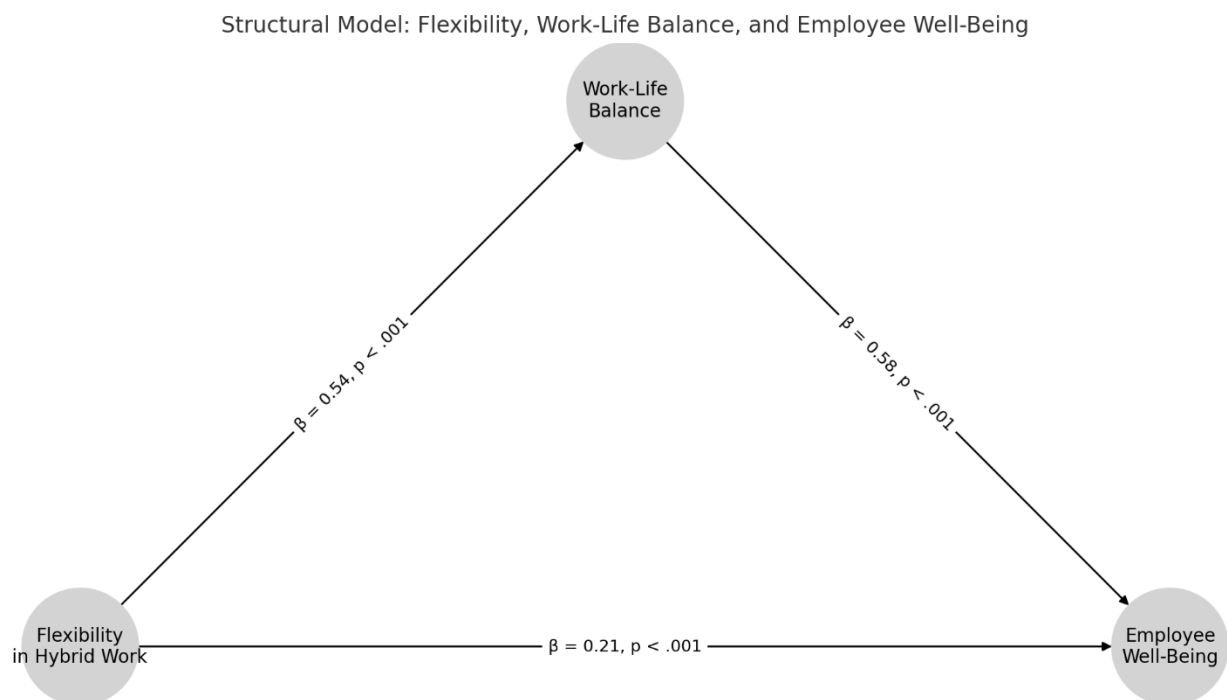
*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects in the Structural Model*

Path	B	S.E.	$\beta$	p
Flexibility → Work-Life Balance	0.61	0.07	0.54	<.001
Work-Life Balance → Employee Well-Being	1.43	0.18	0.58	<.001
Flexibility → Employee Well-Being (Direct)	0.69	0.19	0.21	<.001
Flexibility → Work-Life Balance → Well-Being (Indirect)	0.87	0.16	0.31	<.001
Flexibility → Employee Well-Being (Total)	1.56	0.22	0.52	<.001

The path analysis showed that flexibility in hybrid work had a significant direct effect on work-life balance ( $B = 0.61$ ,  $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Work-life balance significantly predicted employee well-being ( $B = 1.43$ ,  $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The direct path from flexibility to employee well-being remained significant ( $B = 0.69$ ,  $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), though the indirect effect through work-life balance was also strong and statistically significant ( $B = 0.87$ ,  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The total effect of flexibility on well-being (direct + indirect) was substantial ( $B = 1.56$ ,  $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming the mediating role of work-life balance.

**Figure 1**

*Final Model of the Study*



## Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between flexibility in hybrid work and employee well-being, with a particular focus on the mediating role of work-life balance. Based on the data collected from 391 hybrid workers in Brazil and analyzed through Pearson correlation and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the results revealed several significant findings. First, there was a strong positive correlation between flexibility in hybrid work and employee well-being, indicating

that employees who experience higher flexibility report greater psychological well-being. Second, work-life balance was positively associated with both flexibility and well-being. Finally, the mediation analysis confirmed that work-life balance significantly mediated the relationship between flexibility and employee well-being, demonstrating that flexible work conditions contribute to well-being primarily through enhancing work-life balance.

These findings align with a growing body of research emphasizing the critical role of flexibility in promoting employee well-being, especially in hybrid and remote work contexts. For instance, Yamuna (2024) found that initiatives supporting work-life integration substantially enhanced employees' mental and emotional health by allowing them to exert control over their schedules [5]. Similarly, Singh et al. (2024) emphasized that flexible work policies reduce role conflict, thus facilitating a more harmonious integration of personal and professional responsibilities [2]. The current study reinforces these insights by empirically demonstrating that flexibility does not operate in isolation; rather, its positive outcomes on well-being are largely channeled through the experience of improved work-life balance.

The positive relationship between flexibility and work-life balance in this study is consistent with the conclusions of Sharma (2024), who argued that remote and hybrid work structures can either enhance or disrupt work-life balance depending on how much control employees have over their working hours and environment [1]. When employees perceive that they can manage their time and tasks flexibly, they are more likely to engage in family activities, personal development, and rest, which cumulatively contribute to greater well-being. Moreover, Dayang Nailul Munna Abg et al. (2024) found that physical wellness and work-life balance together significantly predicted employee engagement and well-being, supporting the notion that balance is a critical mediator [3].

The results also align with the theoretical framework proposed by Alzadjali and Ahmad (2024), who demonstrated that organizational support and flexible work practices improved well-being indirectly through enhanced work-life balance [11]. Their findings resonate with those of the current study, suggesting that flexibility must be accompanied by cultural and managerial support to be truly effective. Bakar (2024) added to this perspective by emphasizing the importance of autonomy and job clarity, which are foundational components of perceived flexibility, in fostering balance and mental health among employees [12].

Notably, the mediation analysis in this study confirmed that work-life balance serves as a significant mechanism through which flexibility impacts well-being. This echoes findings from Hariri et al. (2024), who argued that flexibility alone is insufficient unless it translates into tangible balance between work and life domains [6]. In the same vein, Paskawati et al. (2024) reported that organizations that actively support work-life initiatives tend to cultivate more satisfied and resilient employees [21]. This body of evidence indicates that work-life balance is not just a desirable outcome but a pivotal link in the chain connecting job design with psychological outcomes.

In this study, higher flexibility was associated with better well-being through improved balance, supporting findings from Marecki (2024), who showed that work-life balance plays a mediating role in enhancing both productivity and psychological health [17]. Moreover, Malik (2023) underscored that organizations that invest in work-life policies are better positioned to reduce burnout, enhance commitment, and maintain psychological stability among their workforce [9]. These outcomes are especially crucial in hybrid contexts, where boundaries between work and life are inherently more porous.

The findings also support the theoretical framework established by Lamichhane et al. (2023), who noted that work-life balance in Nepalese microfinance institutions improved performance, which was largely driven by increased well-being and

job satisfaction [16]. These parallels suggest that the mechanisms identified in the present study are applicable across national contexts and organizational types, lending credibility to the universality of work-life balance as a mediating construct.

Saragih et al. (2024) offered a complementary perspective, finding that employee engagement and conflict management contributed to work-life balance and ultimately enhanced productivity and well-being [13]. In hybrid contexts, where communication and boundary-setting can become blurred, such engagement mechanisms become even more relevant. Likewise, Supendi et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence and organizational culture moderated the relationship between flexibility and well-being, further validating that work-life balance acts as a dynamic construct influenced by both individual and organizational variables [14].

It is also important to consider the role of leadership in facilitating balance and well-being. Setyono et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership improved work engagement through better work-life balance, a finding echoed in this study, where participants who perceived higher flexibility—often a function of supportive leadership—reported greater balance and well-being [18]. Similarly, Koon et al. (2023) highlighted that authentic leadership played a crucial role in nurturing well-being through the establishment of a supportive work environment and balance-focused practices [7].

The results are also in line with the conclusions of Rosnani et al. (2023), who identified various determinants of work-life balance, including job role, organizational culture, and workload distribution. These elements were also reflected in the responses of participants in the current study, particularly those who noted that flexibility allowed for better role management and time allocation [15]. Furthermore, Thamer (2024) reinforced the relevance of this mediating pathway in industrial contexts by demonstrating that work-life balance policies influenced productivity and well-being in the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company [22].

Additionally, Widawska-Stanisiz (2024) provided evidence that corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts that include work-life balance initiatives significantly enhance employees' subjective well-being, suggesting that organizational commitment to balance strengthens the well-being outcomes of flexible arrangements [10]. This confirms that work-life balance is not merely an individual strategy but a collective organizational goal that requires structural support and policy integration.

Nwanzu and Babalola (2023) also underscored the psychological aspects of balance, linking it to emotional regulation and resilience among public service employees [19]. These findings are congruent with the present study's conclusion that work-life balance is a conduit through which employees experience improved psychological outcomes in hybrid work settings. Finally, Hunsaker and Jeong (2023) suggested that spiritual and values-based leadership could foster inner alignment and promote balance, indirectly enhancing employee well-being in high-demand environments [20].

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the use of self-reported measures may introduce response biases such as social desirability or common method variance. Second, the study was cross-sectional, which limits causal interpretations of the relationships between variables. Longitudinal designs would be more suitable to explore the dynamic nature of flexibility, balance, and well-being over time. Third, although the sample was diverse within Brazil, the cultural and economic context may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries or labor markets. Lastly, while the model accounted for the mediating role of work-life balance, other potential mediators or moderators—such as job stress, leadership style, or organizational support—were not included.



Future studies should explore longitudinal data to better understand how the relationship between flexibility and well-being evolves over time, especially as hybrid work practices continue to stabilize post-pandemic. Further research could also examine industry-specific differences in the effectiveness of hybrid flexibility in promoting well-being. Another potential direction is to investigate additional mediating and moderating variables, such as psychological resilience, family support, or digital overload. Expanding research across diverse cultural and national contexts would also help validate and refine the generalizability of the current model. Experimental or intervention-based studies could provide practical strategies for organizations to implement and assess the impact of flexibility and work-life balance initiatives.

Organizations should view flexibility not just as a logistical change but as a strategic opportunity to improve employee well-being. To maximize the benefits of hybrid work, employers should design clear guidelines that support employee autonomy while maintaining performance standards. Initiatives that foster work-life balance—such as flexible scheduling, boundary-setting education, and mental health resources—should be integrated into HR policies. Leadership training programs that emphasize empathy, emotional intelligence, and support for balance can also empower managers to serve as facilitators of well-being. Ultimately, creating a culture that values flexibility and respects personal time is essential for sustaining healthy, productive, and committed employees in the modern workplace.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

### **Transparency of Data**

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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