

# Work–family balance and individual performance in Iraq: the mediating roles of intrinsic motivation and life satisfaction

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study examines the relationships among work-family balance (WFB), intrinsic motivation (IM), life satisfaction (LS), and individual work performance (IWP), along with the mediation roles of IM and LS in the relationship between WFB and IWP. It also investigates the influence of age, experience, position, and educational level on WFB, LS, and IWP, with the goal of improving employee transitions between work and family, autonomy, competence, creativity, well-being, and effectiveness within Iraq’s telecommunications, education, and hospitality industries.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A stratified random sampling method was used to collect data from 323 employees in Iraqi businesses. The approach comprised descriptive statistics, data validation, structural equation modeling (SEM), and analyses of mediation and moderation.

**Findings** – The results indicate a strong positive link between WFB and IM, LS, and IWP, with IM and LS serving as mediators between WFB and IWP. Additionally, while age has a positive effect on WFB, experience ruins it but enhances LS. Job position significantly affects IWP, and education level (EL) moderates the connection between WFB and IWP.

**Research limitations/implications** – This study uses cross-sectional, self-reported survey data collected from employees in selected Iraqi industries. The causal inference is limited, and the findings may not be applicable to many industries or regions. The results broaden WFB and self-determination perspectives by showing how motivational and well-being mechanisms convert WFB into performance outcomes.

**Practical implications** – In practice, the findings suggest that organizations can improve performance by supporting WFB through gender-sensitive and family-friendly practices, digital human resource management (HRM) and IT systems, peer support, work-family conflict awareness, stress management, empathy, compensation, incentives, empowerment, and job enrichment that enhance employees’ IM and LS. Future research should use longitudinal or multi-source designs and evaluate the model across broader sectors and cultural settings.

**Originality/value** – This study adds evidence from Iraq, an underrepresented context in the work-family literature, by describing how WFB affects performance via IM and LS, while taking demographic factors into account as a potential boundary condition. The suggested model provides an integrated perspective on balance, motivation, well-being, and performance in emerging-market businesses.

**Keywords** Education level, Individual work performance, Intrinsic motivation, Life satisfaction, Work-life balance

**Paper type** Research article

## 1. Introduction

Work-family balance (WFB) is critical for meeting organizational objectives and enhancing employee outcomes such as morale, job satisfaction, and performance (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2012; Lakkaju, 2020; Rani and Desiana, 2019). It creates a supportive work atmosphere that promotes skill development and innovation (Deci and Ryan, 2012). A person’s total happiness and well-being depends on how well their family and work match their expectations and help them achieve their goals (Lucas and Donnellan, 2007). However, employees in the telecommunications, education, and hospitality industries confront certain challenges at work.



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Women workers in the Iraqi telecom sector manage gender norms and household responsibilities (Begum and Hamad, 2025). Unpredictable work schedules that are typical for technicians and field workers—such as night shifts, emergency site visits, and long-distance travel—exacerbate this dual burden and cause sleep deprivation, anxiety, and strained family ties (Suleiman *et al.*, 2021; Schneider and Harknett, 2019). Rapid technological and digital change lowers performance and raises anxiety (Hadi and Hmood, 2020). Family-friendly program implementation is hampered by gaps in traditional and digital human resource management (HRM) techniques (AlKaabi *et al.*, 2024). Call center workers elsewhere experience stress and emotional dissonance from their workload and working hours (Ghislieri *et al.*, 2012). These difficulties cause decreased employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction plus increased burnout, pessimism, ineffectiveness, and intention to leave. Furthermore, the Iraqi telecom industry is defined by national efforts to expand broadband and accelerate digitalization, as well as uneven service quality and significant infrastructure-development demands, which can result in increased operational intensity for employees supporting network expansion and reliability (Communication and Media Commission Iraq, 2025).

Work family conflict (WFC) in Iraqi education arises when academic professionals, instructors, and administrators try to balance job duties (research, teaching, supervision, and grading) with family obligations. Main causes are heavy workloads (large class size, reporting, meetings, and lack of digital management tools) (Al-Mashhadani *et al.*, 2024), low pay, secondary employment (Khudhair *et al.*, 2020), inadequate institutional support (no flexible schedules, childcare, or parental leave) (Mahmood and Tao, 2024), women employees' traditional household responsibility, cultural norms that discourage men from sharing domestic duties (Begum and Hamad, 2025), insecure transportation for women educators in some regions (Al-Ali *et al.*, 2012), and no counseling and well-being programs (Ghafar, 2024). These obstacles lower job satisfaction, morale, effectiveness, dedication, and childcare quality while increasing turnover (Ghayoor *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, the Iraqi education sector's limited and failing school infrastructure has prompted schools to implement multiple-shift arrangements, which compress schedules and diminish instructional time, putting further time pressure on staff and households (World Bank, 2023). Similarly, continuing access and quality issues in education necessitate increased resources and infrastructure prioritization (UNICEF, 2024).

Work conditions in Iraqi hotels, restaurants, and tourism services (high hours, client pressure, and instability) promote WFC. Managers, cooks, and receptionists work long and irregular hours (nights, weekends, and holidays) (ILO, 2022). Seasonal tourism, economic changes, and security concerns result in unpredictable income and job security (Almasoodi *et al.*, 2023). Traditional family and social gatherings put societal pressure on people to prioritize domestic tasks (Shen *et al.*, 2022). Hotels and restaurants lack HR rules that address WFC (Shyaa, 2019). Employees exhibit a lack of respect and patience due to fatigue and emotional strain. Late working hours may result in risky and lengthy transportation and commuting (Mohammed *et al.*, 2019). These challenges can result in chronic weariness, burnout, job discontent, and high turnover rates, and decreased family cohesion, service quality, and job performance (Gürlek and Kılıç, 2021). Work-family interface issues are especially important because the Iraqi hospitality sector is shaped by shifting demand and an increasing tourism activity and investment narrative—conditions typically associated with nonstandard schedules and service pressure (Reuters, 2023).

Furthermore, Iraqi organizations have bureaucratic structures defined by inflexible and inert cultures that prioritize caution and centralization, limiting employee independence, creativity, and well-being (Lagestad *et al.*, 2024). To address these problems, a hybrid work approach may be appropriate (Younus *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, dual-income households experienced unprecedented obstacles in WFB due to the sudden change to distant work caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly when access to technology and suitable training

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were limited. Employee free will and welfare suffered from the lockdown (Alves-Pereira *et al.*, 2025).

The balance between work and personal life affect employee freedom, fulfillment, and performance (Younus *et al.*, 2022). Employees who maintain autonomy in their work while successfully balancing work, family, and leisure improve their skills, problem-solving abilities, and foster greater innovation and effectiveness (Cayupe *et al.*, 2023; Fishbach and Woolley, 2022; Gagne and Deci, 2005; Lakkoju, 2020; Landolfi *et al.*, 2021; Li *et al.*, 2023; Suasanto *et al.*, 2022). The association between WFB and job performance is mediated by employee work engagement, relationships, leisure, and pleasure in both job and family contexts (Faisal *et al.*, 2022). When work and family duties are balanced, employee happiness improves motivation, engagement, and performance.

Iraqi businesses use a diverse workforce that perceives information and issues through their unique values, beliefs, and expectations (Jones *et al.*, 1993). Older workers maintain boundaries between their work and personal lives, which leads to improved WFB outcomes (Wepfer *et al.*, 2018). However, experienced employees confront difficulties in managing their roles, but they frequently develop efficient coping methods that improve their overall well-being (Rahman *et al.*, 2020; Obrenovic *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2024a). Employees at higher levels gain more from organizational support, which can help and hinder job performance (Kosseck *et al.*, 2011; Schieman *et al.*, 2006). Skilled professionals excel at balancing work and family responsibilities, which improves job performance and problem-solving abilities, hence increasing the WFB (Susanto *et al.*, 2022; Van Der Heijden *et al.*, 2008).

The paper posits that the combination of the work-family border theory (WFBT) (Clark, 2019) and self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 2012) seems to be an appropriate conceptual framework for issues prevalent in Iraqi businesses. WFBT emphasizes the need for balance between unpaid domestic duties and paid work, suggesting that flexible work arrangements and childcare support may help blur the lines between work and home life (Schieman and Galvin, 2018). SDT facilitates autonomy, skill development, and relatedness, affecting performance, ingenuity, and happiness (Deci *et al.*, 2017). WFB reduces stress, improves employee happiness and satisfaction, and promotes family ties through paid family leave and remote work (Kelliher and Anderson, 2020). It is crucial to investigate how modern work environments affect family interactions as the professional and familial duties of dual-income households increase (Koslowski *et al.*, 2021). Harkness *et al.* (2021) and Kelliher and Anderson (2020) call for further investigation into the effects of WFB policies across diverse socioeconomic landscapes, particularly in non-Western contexts with limited social support networks. Given the research site challenges and previous empirical findings, this study examines the relationships between WFB, intrinsic motivation (IM), life satisfaction (LS), and individual work performance (IWP), along with the mediation roles of IM and LS in the association between WFB and IWP. The paper also analyzes how age, experience, position, and education level (EL) influence WFB, LS, and IWP within the telecommunications, education, and hospitality industries in Iraq. These initiatives seek to improve employee self-sufficiency, competency, inspiration, well-being, and effectiveness in a developing country.

The study has six sections. Section 2 looks at WFB, IM, LS, and IWP in relation to demographics like age, experience, position, and education. Section 3 describes the model and methods. Section 4 discusses data analysis. Section 5 compares results with past studies. Section 6 summarizes findings and suggests future research.

## 2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

This section explores WFB, IM, LS, and IWP, hypothesizing their relationships with demographic variables like age, experience, position, and EL.

### 2.1 Work-family balance (WFB)

Flexible work arrangements and childcare help people balance work and family, strengthening family bonds (Clark, 2019). Effective management of the boundaries between work and family requires competencies like self-efficacy and time management, potentially leading to improved family dynamics (Schieman and Galvin, 2018). Socio-demographic factors (age and marital status) shape perceptions of WFB (Shockley *et al.*, 2017). Organizations that emphasize WFB not only enhance employee engagement and productivity but also attract talent and reduce turnover, thereby improving their brand image (Kossek and Lautsch, 2018). In an Iraqi telecom firm, more flexible work environments can improve employee performance and lower staff turnover (Ali, 2025). In Iraqi educational institutions, Kazim (2025) demonstrated a substantial correlation between improved WFB and increased employee performance and productivity. In the tourism industry, improved WFB regulations lower absenteeism and turnover while increasing employee loyalty, performance, and well-being (Medina-Garrido *et al.*, 2023).

**2.1.1 Intrinsic Motivation (IM).** Intrinsically driven behaviors come from internal satisfaction rather than external rewards. They include interest in learning, flow experiences during skill-matched challenges, personal expressiveness, and enjoyment in tasks (Deci and Ryan, 2012). IM is based on SDT, which emphasizes choice, skill development, value realization, and engaged performance (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Additionally, the management of information influences employee attitudes, behaviors, and overall performance. The type of job significantly affects IM; roles that foster creativity, challenge, and personal growth tend to generate higher levels of IM. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated typically derive fulfillment from within, which correlates with increased creativity, innovation, and task performance (Amabile, 1993). Workers who appreciate and like their jobs are inclined to go beyond their duties (Hoxha and Ramadan, 2024). Similarly, IM predicts initiative-taking behavior and job satisfaction, which are linked to performance outcomes (Wahyu *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, Agwu and Hoque (2025) and Kazim (2025), who did not assess IM directly, found a relationship between improved WFB and employee productivity and satisfaction, which are related to IM. While IM correlates with IWP (Jameel *et al.*, 2025), its mediating role in the relationship between WFB and IWP is underexplored in a developing country.

**2.1.2 Life Satisfaction (LS).** LS is the subjective evaluation of an individual's overall life, incorporating aspects such as relationships, work, family, health, and leisure, reflecting how people assess the meaningfulness of their experiences (Diener, 2000). LS affect social behaviors, including community involvement and charitable acts. Furthermore, a positive correlation exists between employees' LS and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance, highlighting the importance of fostering a supportive work environment that enhances overall employee well-being (Pavot and Diener, 2008).

### 2.2 Individual work performance (IWP)

IWP evaluates employee performance and organizational goals (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015). Task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behaviors are assessed (Budur and Demir, 2022). Stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, supportive leadership, clear expectations, and resources affect IWP. Corporate culture and reward schemes also affect employee motivation and engagement. High individual performance increases effectiveness, productivity, career growth, and job satisfaction, whereas deficient performance can lead to career stagnation and dissatisfaction (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

### 2.3 The relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and intrinsic motivation (IM)

Individuals who have a harmony between their professional and personal responsibilities often experience enhanced self-sufficiency and relatedness, leading to increased motivation and fulfillment (Rani and Desiana, 2019; Ryan and Deci, 2000). WFC contributes to emotional

exhaustion among employees, influenced by their IM (Karatepe and Tekinkuş, 2006). Workers who believe their career and family responsibilities are connected report increased feelings of self-rule and relatedness (Gagné and Deci, 2005). Li *et al.* (2023) and Jiang *et al.* (2023) find that flexible work arrangements stimulate autonomy and competence needs among parents and knowledge workers, while Badri (2019) indicates that academics with an enhanced WFB report improved mental health and job satisfaction, along with reduced turnover intentions. However, a notable gap exists in research regarding the promotion of employee innovation and autonomy through supportive work environment policies in Iraqi companies.

H1. WFB has a positive effect on employees' IM.

#### 2.4 The relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and life satisfaction (LS)

WFB improves effective resource management, resulting in increased employee satisfaction and well-being (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2012). Workplace family support improves the quality of life for both working parents and healthcare professionals (Riquelme-Segura *et al.*, 2025; Antolí-Jover *et al.*, 2024). A strong link between LS and WFB exists in Indian engineering institutes and Italian educational contexts (Lakkoju, 2020; Landolfi *et al.*, 2021). Faculty at Iraq's public universities regard WFB positively, leading to more satisfaction than their private sector counterparts (Sabir and Cura, 2021). However, despite Iraq's diverse population, there has not yet been research examining the connection between employee well-being and family-friendly corporate policies.

H2. WFB has a positive effect on employees' LS.

#### 2.5 The relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and individual work performance (IWP)

WFB improves employees' ability to handle their professional duties, causing more energy, less stress, and greater attention on work activities (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). WFB is positively associated with task performance and creativity across different sectors, including education and SMEs (Eriyanti and Noekent, 2021; Muafi *et al.*, 2021; Panisoara *et al.*, 2020; Susanto *et al.*, 2022). University teachers with greater WFB demonstrate increased commitment and classroom efficacy (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Flexible work arrangements are positively associated with self-rated performance (Moen *et al.*, 2015). Further exploration is warranted to assess the impact of flexible working options on employee effectiveness within the specific cultural and organizational context of Iraq.

H3. WFB has a positive effect on IWP.

#### 2.6 The relationship between intrinsic motivation (IM) and individual work performance (IWP)

A positive association exists between IM, enjoyment, and overall contentment. Intrinsically motivated employees outperform in both the private and public sectors (Deci and Ryan, 2012; Al Harbi *et al.*, 2019). A high correlation between activities, goals, and performance exists (Fishbach and Woolley, 2022). Tasks fostering IM significantly improve work performance, creativity, and job satisfaction (Raza *et al.*, 2015; Lee and Reeve, 2017). Motivational states enhance performance (Good *et al.*, 2022; Moore *et al.*, 2024). However, a gap remains in research regarding the interplay between employee autonomy, competency, and performance within the context of Iraqi culture.

H4. IM has a positive and significant effect on IWP.

### 2.7 *The relationship between life satisfaction (LS) and individual work performance (IWP)*

Employees who perceive a high quality of life, including social connections, employment, family, and health, report higher psychological well-being, which influences their job attitudes and behaviors in educational settings (Mosley-Johnson *et al.*, 2019; Tavakoly Sany *et al.*, 2023). LS improves task performance, job engagement, and overall performance (Cayupe *et al.*, 2023; Chughtai, 2021; Lucas and Donnellan, 2007). Employee well-being enhances satisfaction and performance (De Neve *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2024a, b). However, the relationship between employees' assessments of job roles and parental attachment on performance within the Iraqi context warrants further exploration.

H5. LS has a positive effect on IWP.

### 2.8 *The role of intrinsic motivation (IM) in the relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and individual work performance (IWP)*

The limited research investigates the role of IM in connecting WFB and IWP. WFB improves IM by promoting learning and problem-solving behaviors among motivated employees (Deci *et al.*, 2017; Deci and Ryan, 2012; Heyman and Dweck, 1992; Leung *et al.*, 2014; Song and Grabowski, 2006; Wang and Guthrie, 2004).

IM positively mediates employee autonomy (Zara *et al.*, 2022), and task performance is distinguished from procedural performance (Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009). IM increases the relationship between Islamic work ethics, job happiness, and organizational commitment (Gheitani *et al.*, 2019). IM and work engagement influence the link between WFB, job satisfaction, and efficacy (Yu *et al.*, 2017). WFB-enabled flexibility boosts motivation, which drives performance (Pratame and Supartha, 2022; Jiang *et al.*, 2023). However, the influence of employee self-rule and creativity on the interaction between flexible work schedules and productivity remains underexplored in Iraq.

H6a. IM positively mediates the relationship between WFB and IWP.

### 2.9 *The role of life satisfaction (LS) in the relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and individual work performance (IWP)*

WFB improves job performance (Taşdelen-Karçkay and Bakalim, 2017). WFB increases LS and psychological well-being (Bian and Mohd Sukor, 2024), causing lower absenteeism, turnover intentions, and workplace stress. This enhancement in LS benefits both employee performance and general well-being (Mensah *et al.*, 2023).

Employee wellbeing mediates the link between WFB and job performance (Faisal *et al.*, 2022). A high WFB is associated with enhanced employee pleasure, which improves IWP via increased engagement and motivation (Shakoor *et al.*, 2023). However, the interplay between family-friendly organizational policies and their effectiveness, viewed through the lens of employees' comprehensive perspectives on work, family, and leisure, remains inadequately explored in Iraq.

H6b. LS positively mediates the relationship between WFB and IWP.

### 2.10 *The relationship between age (A) and work-family balance (WFB)*

Positive work-family connections reduce burnout over time, implying that individuals improve their WFB with experience (Tone Innstrand *et al.*, 2008). Older employees often have less friction between work and family due to better boundary management skills and the ability to distinguish between their professional and personal life (Allen and Shockley, 2012; Wepfer *et al.*, 2018). Older workers with high engagement experience a greater degree of WFB (Richert-Kaźmierska and Stankiewicz, 2016; Scheibe *et al.*, 2024; Mori *et al.*, 2024).

However, the specific relationship between supportive workplace policies and the age of employees in Iraqi enterprises remains unexplored.

*H7a.* A has a positive effect on WFB.

### *2.11 The relationship between experience (EX) and work-family balance (WFB)*

The detrimental consequences of WFC on psychological safety and well-being indicate that individuals with more experience and responsibility struggle to manage their work and family duties (Obrenovic *et al.*, 2020). A significant negative link appears between WFC and employee well-being, indicating that experienced workers frequently face increasing pressure to manage these simultaneous tasks (Yang *et al.*, 2024a). Greater work experience is associated with decreased job satisfaction and increased stress, implying that WFC worsens and WFB decreases (Allen *et al.*, 2013). Hotel employees with more experience and responsibility are engaged in WFC (García-Cabrera *et al.*, 2018). The investigation into the effects of employee experience on family-friendly policies in Iraqi businesses remains pivotal.

*H7b.* EX has a negative effect on WFB.

### *2.12 The relationship between experience (EX) and life satisfaction (LS)*

Experience improves people's capacity to combine work and family duties, resulting in higher job satisfaction and LS. Experiences individuals gain better techniques for managing their responsibilities (Susanto *et al.*, 2022), whereas the importance of organizational support through WFB programs promotes job satisfaction and LS (Sirgy and Lee, 2018). Malaysian scholars build excellent coping skills that lead to greater LS through experience (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Those who successfully balance work and family responsibilities report better well-being and LS (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). However, the relationship between work experiences and well-being in Iraq remains unexplored.

*H7c.* EX has a positive effect on LS.

### *2.13 The relationship between position (P) and individual work performance (IWP)*

Higher organizational positions often come with extra responsibilities and the possibility of WFC, which can lower IWP. Working in such roles can increase WFC through increased workload and longer hours (García-Cabrera *et al.*, 2018; Schieman *et al.*, 2006). However, workplace social support may reduce these adverse effects on job performance, highlighting the significance of organizational support networks (Kossek *et al.*, 2011). While a higher rank confers more authority, it also poses obstacles about WFC, which may negatively affect IWP. Higher positions often provide more autonomy and resources, which indicate higher IWP (Lee and Jo, 2023). It is important to acknowledge that not much research has been done on the relationship between employee status and effectiveness in Iraqi businesses.

*H7d.* P has a significant effect on IWP.

### *2.14 The role of education level (EL) in the relationship between work-family balance (WFB) and individual work performance (IWP)*

Family-supportive supervisors affect WFB, especially in small firms (Susanto *et al.*, 2022). Education improves dispute resolution and productivity by improving cognitive and behavioral skills Leoni (2025).

Higher occupational demands might result in WFC and long-term health problems, especially for nurses. Educated individuals can cope with or prevent decreased job satisfaction, performance, and self-efficacy (Van Der Heijden *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*,

2010). Education enhances time management, emotional control, organizational resource use, and technical abilities. Adapting to WFC and balancing competing demands can boost performance, reducing the link between WFB and IWP.

*H8.* EL moderates the relationship between WFB and IWP.

### 3. Methodology

This study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore the links between WFB, IM, LS, and IWP, along with demographic factors. It employs WFBT and SDT as its framework.

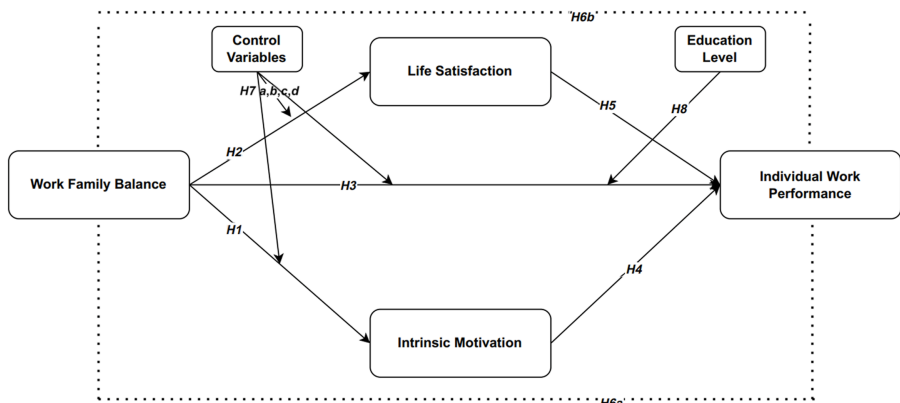
#### 3.1 Proposed model

The model identifies direct and indirect associations between WFB, IM, LS, and IWP, considering EL, age, experience, and position, and moderating demographic factors (Figure 1).

#### 3.2 Sampling

The study addressed full-time employees in the telecommunications, education, and hospitality industries in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. Due to the lack of a consolidated official dataset reporting the total number of companies by sector for the study, the sample frame was created through direct organizational access. A total of 18 organizations were approached in person with a formal permission letter outlining the study's purpose and procedures; 16 agreed to participate and were included in the data collection phase. Three of the collaborating organizations were telecommunications corporations, three were colleges, and ten were hotel businesses. After reaching an agreement, hard-copy surveys were provided to participating facilities and distributed to personnel.

Employees were selected at random from participating organizations' full-time staff. The only inclusion criterion was full-time employment; no further inclusion or exclusion criteria were applied aside from job status. The final valid sample ( $n = 323$ ) included 89 telecommunications respondents, 77 from education, and 157 from hospitality.



**Figure 1.** Proposed model. Note: Dashed lines represent the indirect connections, while solid lines represent the direct effects in the conceptual model

### 3.3 Data collection and pilot study

A total of 400 hard-copy questionnaires were provided, as suggested for SEM-based research. A total of 346 questionnaires were returned. From the returned surveys, 23 were recognized as partial and discarded, leaving 323 valid responses for the final analysis. Before the main data collection, experts assessed the questionnaire to ensure its face and content validity. A pilot study was then undertaken with 50 employees to assess the clarity of items, language, and overall completion process; comments from the pilot was used to improve the instrument before it was fully implemented.

### 3.4 Measures

The authors employed the IWP scale, which contains five items and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.738, as reported by [Henttonen et al. \(2016\)](#). They improved the WFB scale from [Susanto et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Budur and Demir \(2022\)](#) by making modest phrase adjustments for clarity and cultural relevance while maintaining the original structure and meaning. They also employed [Hasan et al.'s \(2020\)](#) three-question LS and IM measures, which had Cronbach's alpha values of 0.71 and 0.77, respectively. These measures were chosen despite their brevity because previous psychometric studies have shown that short scales can retain decent reliability and validity in organizational contexts. They have been validated in similar circumstances and are especially useful in field investigations when respondent fatigue is an issue ([Hasan et al., 2020](#)). All these tools showed acceptable reliability ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ). The authors selected five-point Likert scales for clarity, ease of interpretation, and their ability to capture various attitudes and views, ensuring consistent and reliable responses across different respondents ([Appendix](#)).

## 4. Analyses and results

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

Although public organizations were represented, private companies employed most participants (56%) ([Table 1](#)). There were 42.7% female and 57.3% male participants. Only 4.7% of those surveyed had a master's or doctoral degree, while 59.2% had a bachelor's degree, 23% had a two-year university certificate, and 13% had only finished high school. 11% had less than a year of work experience; 33.7% had one to three years; 19% had four to six years; 11% had seven to nine years; and 19.3% had more than ten years. Managers held 12% of organizational positions, supervisors 46.3%, and entry-level employees 41.7%. Only 3% were 51 years or older, while 12.3% were between 18 and 25, 47.7% were between 26 and 35, 28% were between 36 and 45, and 9% were between 46 and 50.

### 4.2 Data validation

The rotated component matrix from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) reveals that each item's factor loadings are acceptable, demonstrating their correlation with the identified latent components ([Hair et al., 2012](#)) ([Table 2](#)). Cronbach's alpha coefficients show that the reliability is suitable for further analysis. ([Torklak et al., 2019](#)). Harman's single-factor test was performed to assess common method bias (CMB), and the findings revealed that the first factor accounted for 29.64% of total variance, which is less than the critical threshold of 50% ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)). Aside from this statistical test, procedural remedies were applied during data gathering. These included differentiating question styles, ensuring respondent anonymity, and distinguishing between predictor and criteria variables. A latent common method factor was added to the SEM to statistically account for potential biases. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values confirmed the absence of multicollinearity among independent variables, with all values well below the threshold of 5 ([Hair et al., 2012](#)), enabling stable and accurate regression estimations.

The instrument's validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) ([Figure 2](#)). Before analyzing convergent and

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

Variables	Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Sector	Private	168	56
	Public	132	44
	Total	300	100.00
Gender	Male	172	57.3
	Female	128	42.7
	Total	300	100.00
Education level	High School	42	13.1
	Two-Year University	74	23.1
	Four-Year University	190	59.2
	Master or PhD	15	4.7
	Total	300	100.00
Work experience	Less than 1 year	33	11
	1–3 years	119	39.7
	4–6 years	57	19
	7–9 years	33	11
	10 or more years	58	19.3
	Total	300	100.00
Position in the company	Entry-Level	125	41.7
	Supervisor	139	46.3
	Manager	36	12
	Total	300	100.00
Age	18 to 25	37	12.3
	26 to 35	143	47.7
	36 to 45	84	28
	46 to 50	27	9
	51 and above	9	3
	Total	300	100.00

**Table 2.** EFA results

Rotated component matrix						
Items	1	2	3	4	Cumulative %	Cronbach
IWP2	0.836				16.454	0.738
IWP1	0.732					
IWP3	0.668					
IWP4	0.636					
IWP5	0.520					
WFB3		0.805			31.996	0.748
WFB2		0.778				
WFB1		0.750				
WFB4		0.603				
LS2			0.819		46.238	0.719
LS1			0.770			
LS3			0.646			
IM2				0.858	60.215	0.788
IM3				0.796		
IM1				0.645		

**Note(s):** IWP: individual work performance; WFB: work-family balance; LS: life satisfaction; IM: intrinsic motivation

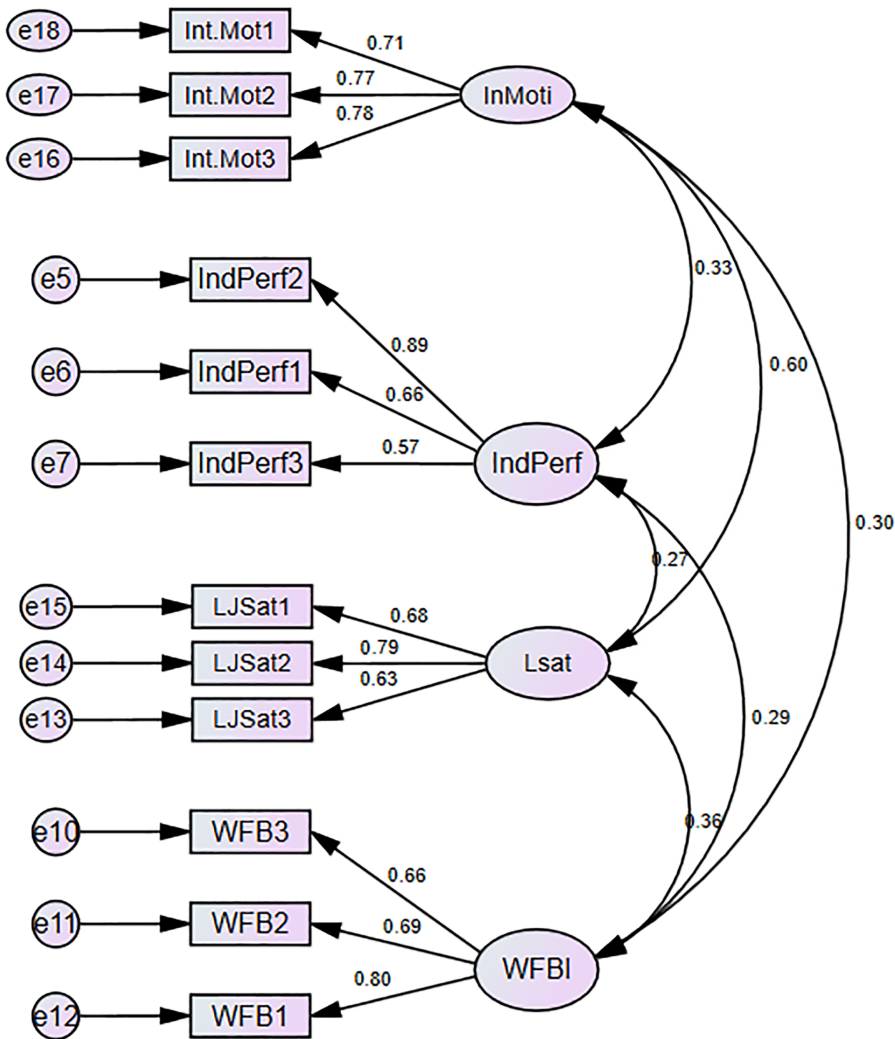


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis model

discriminant validity, four-factor measurement models were built, and model fit indices were generated. The data aligned with the proposed four-factor model (WFB, IM, LS, and IWP) (Table 4), with satisfactory indices: RMSEA at 0.07, IFI at 0.934, CFI at 0.937, TLI at 0.914, and Normed Chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) of 2.549.

To assess construct validity, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated, demonstrating convergent validity because all variables had factor loadings exceeding 0.60 (Demir *et al.*, 2023), with CR and AVE values above 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (see Table 3).

#### 4.3 Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses were verified using SEM, and items WFB4 and IWP4 were deleted due to high modification indices and low standardized factor loadings, increasing the model's fit and

**Table 3.** Construct validity

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4
IWP	0.756	0.517	0.108	0.719			
WFB	0.762	0.519	0.132	0.287***	0.72		
LS	0.744	0.494	0.366	0.270***	0.363***	0.703	
IM	0.798	0.568	0.366	0.329***	0.295***	0.605***	0.754

**Note(s):** IWP: individual work performance; WFB: work-family balance; LS: life satisfaction; IM: intrinsic motivation. Significance of Estimates: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.010$  \*  $p < 0.050$

clarity while maintaining its theoretical underpinning. After modification, the model showed strong fit indices (RMSEA = 0.070, CFI = 0.937, IFI = 0.938) within a 95% confidence interval.

The study found that WFB had significant positive effects on IM ( $\beta = 0.286, t = 4.55$ ), LS ( $\beta = 0.310, t = 5.44$ ), and IWP ( $\beta = 0.249, t = 4.74$ ) (Table 4 and Figure 3). These findings show that WFB influences outcomes related to both performance and psychology. Although the findings support H1, H2, and H3, it is critical to use caution when interpreting these connections, keeping in mind that cross-sectional data limits the ability to make causal conclusions, and those additional contextual factors may be at play.

IM ( $t = 4.18, p < 0.001$ ) and LS ( $t = 3.16, p = 0.002$ ) were significant predictors of IWP. These findings support H4 and H5, implying that both motivation and contentment significantly affect job performance. The study found that the link between WFB and IWP is partially mediated by IM ( $\beta = 0.054, t = 3.08$ ) and LS ( $\beta = 0.050, t = 2.73$ ). Although the direct effect of WFB on IWP ( $\beta = 0.249$ ) is stronger than the individual indirect effects, the combined mediation through IM and LS accounts for a significant amount of the overall effect. This means that WFB improves LS and IM, both of which directly and indirectly affect performance. This highlights the importance of psychological processes in translating WFB into successful performance outcomes.

**Table 4.** Hypotheses results

Path estimates		Estimate	SE	<i>t</i>	Lower bound	Upper bound	<i>p</i>	
WFB	→	IM	0.286	0.0629	4.55	0.163	0.409	<0.001
WFB	→	LS	0.31	0.057	5.44	0.198	0.422	<0.001
WFB	→	IWP	0.249	0.0526	4.74	0.146	0.352	<0.001
WFB	IM	IWP	0.0544	0.0177	3.08	0.02	0.089	0.002
WFB	LS	IWP	0.0498	0.0182	2.73	0.014	0.085	0.006
IM	→	IWP	0.19	0.0456	4.18	0.101	0.279	<0.001
LS	→	IWP	0.161	0.0509	3.16	0.061	0.261	0.002
A	→	WFB	0.151	0.049	3.066	0.055	0.247	0.002
EX	→	WFB	-0.15	0.035	-4.248	-0.219	-0.081	***
EX	→	LS	0.101	0.027	3.746	0.048	0.154	***
P	→	IWP	0.201	0.057	3.542	0.089	0.313	***
GFI	0.939	CFI	0.937					
AGFI	0.9	TLI	0.914					
IFI	0.938	RMSEA	0.07					

**Note(s):** WFB: work-family balance; IM: intrinsic motivation; LS: life satisfaction; IWP: individual work performance. A: age; EX: experience; P: position. Significance of Estimates: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.010$  \*  $p < 0.050$

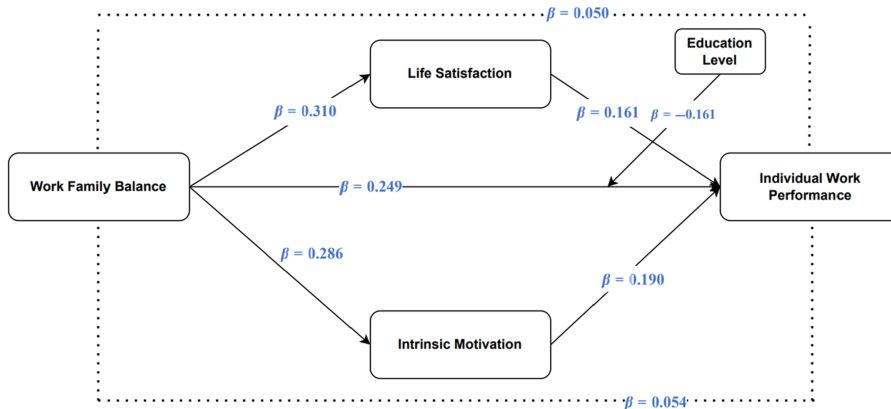


Figure 3. Hypotheses results

The study found that age, position, and experience all significantly impact critical factors (Table 4). WFB correlates positively with age ( $\beta = 0.151, t = 3.066, p = 0.002$ ) and adversely with experience ( $\beta = -0.150, t = -4.248, p < 0.001$ ). Experience positively impacts LS ( $\beta = 0.101, t = 3.746, p < 0.001$ ). The effect of position on IWP is evident ( $\beta = 0.201, t = 3.542, p < 0.001$ ). All hypotheses H7a, H7b, H7c, and H7d are supported.

Educational attainment significantly moderates the WFB-IWP relationship (Figure 4). Adding WFB \* EL as an interaction variable in the JAMOVI model produced a negative impact ( $\beta = -0.161, t = -2.56, p = 0.010$ ) (Table 5). This shows that the positive influence of WFB on IWP diminishes as EL rises. H8 is supported. WFB showed a larger influence on IWP at lower EL ( $\beta = 0.448$ ) compared to higher ones ( $\beta = 0.195$ ). This relationship illustrates a steeper slope for low EL than for high EL (Figure 4). Educated employees may employ

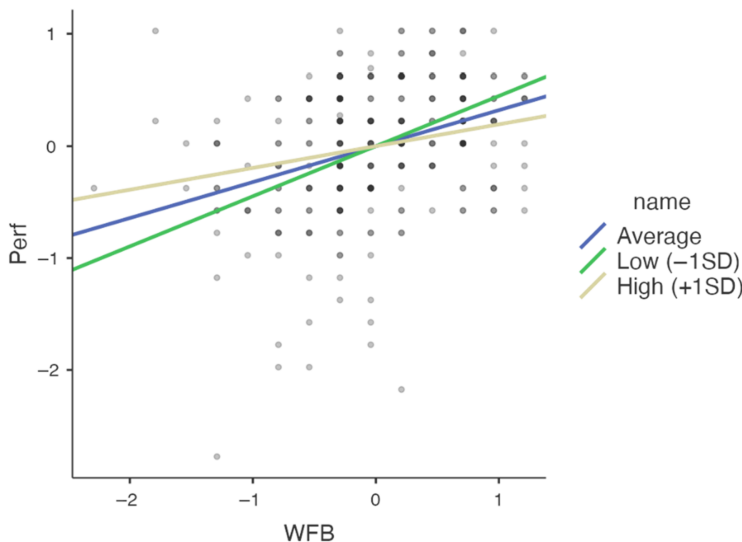


Figure 4. Moderation slope of education level

**Table 5.** Moderation for education level

Moderation estimates	Estimate	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
WFB * EL	-0.1607	0.0627	-2.56	0.01
Low (-1SD)	0.448	0.074	6.05	<0.001
High (+1SD)	0.195	0.0682	2.86	0.004

**Note(s):** WFB: work-family balance; EL: education level

alternate resources to maintain productivity, such as autonomy or professional networks, whereas those with lesser levels of education may rely more on WFB.

Furthermore, most of the sample (59.2%) comprised of university graduates, with a 95% confidence interval of 53.6%–64.6%, indicating the significance and generalizability of the findings within this demographic subset.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

Previous research supports H1 (Badri, 2019; Jiang *et al.*, 2023; Li *et al.*, 2023), H2 (Sabir and Cura, 2021; Riquelme-Segura *et al.*, 2025; Antolí-Jover *et al.*, 2024), and H3 (Eriyanti and Noekent, 2021; Muafi *et al.*, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2020).

The WFBT is backed by specific policies in developing countries, including paid leave, flexible work hours, and remote work, which improve productivity and quality of life (H1 and H3). Furthermore, supportive workplace policies promote employee self-sufficiency, skills development, and creativity, aligning with the principles of SDT in these economies (H2).

The study reveals a significant positive association between IM and IWP (H4), as well as between LS and IWP (H5), with findings corroborated by various previous research studies (Al Harbi *et al.*, 2019; Fishbach and Woolley, 2022; Cayupe *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2024a, b). This enhances our understanding of the relationship between motivational factors and workplace performance outcomes.

H4 and H5 illustrates the major impact of employee autonomy, skills, creativity, innovativeness, and cognitive evaluations of work, family, and leisure on individual performance in a developing economy, thereby endorsing the SDT.

Gheitani *et al.* (2019), Jiang *et al.* (2023), and Zara *et al.* (2022) support IM's mediating role in the relationship between WFB and IWP (H6a). Furthermore, LS mediates the link between WFB and IWP (H6b), consistent with the findings of Bian and Mohd Sukor (2024), Faisal *et al.* (2022), and Mensah *et al.* (2023).

H6a and H6b show that family-friendly organizational practices, based on SDT and WFBT, encourage employee autonomy, creativity, skill development, and a positive outlook on life, eventually improving performance in developing countries.

Prior research (Mori *et al.*, 2024; Scheibe *et al.*, 2024; Wepfer *et al.*, 2018) suggests that age positively influences WFB (H7a), contradicting findings (Gragnano *et al.*, 2020) that imply older workers face significant challenges in managing work and family responsibilities. Experience detrimentally affects WFB (García-Cabrera *et al.*, 2018; Obrenovic *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2024a, b) (H7b), but positively impacts LS (Rahman *et al.*, 2020; Sirgy and Lee, 2018; Susanto *et al.*, 2022) (H7c). H7d supports previous research (Allen *et al.*, 2013; García-Cabrera *et al.*, 2018; Lee and Jo, 2023) indicating that an individual's position considerably impacts IWP.

The findings of H7a and H7b support WFBT and HRM in developing countries, emphasizing that age is more vital than experience in having access to supporting organizational policies like paid leave and flexible work arrangements. Furthermore, H7c

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and H7d underline the importance of employee experience and rank in OB and HRM, alongside the integration of work, family, and leisure into job performance in these contexts.

In this study, EL significantly affects relationship between WFB and IWP. WFB's positive effects on performance diminish as educational attainment rises (H8). This could be due to highly educated personnel's varying expectations for professional advancement and the type of organizational assistance they require. Furthermore, in developing countries, workers may perceive a misalignment between their goals and business priorities, leading to feelings of undervaluation despite the promotion of WFB initiatives. The study provides a new perspective on the WFBT, stressing how personal qualities like education influence employee responses to organizational support.

### 5.2 Practical implications

Positive relationships between WFB and LS, IWP, and IM may result in various useful suggestions. Family-friendly policies (flexible work hours, compressed workweeks, remote work, and emergency leave), digital HRM to manage flexible schedules and communicate policies, employee training to identify WFC signs and build trust, and promotion of support measures (childcare and elderly care) may be required in the telecommunications sector. Similarly, in the education sector, gender-sensitive policies (flexible hours for women returning from maternity leave), peer support, stress management, digital systems for grading attendance and communication to reduce red tape, clear roles to prevent overlapping responsibilities, flexible scheduling (shared teaching, flexible teaching hours, and remote research and grading), childcare facilities and emergency leave, and WFC awareness for deans, department heads, and principals may be crucial. In the hospitality sector, gender-sensitive measures (safe transportation and accommodations for female employees working late shifts), flexible scheduling (rotating shifts), stress management workshops, family-friendly policies (family leave, emergency leave, and childcare), managerial empathy, and compensation and support (fair pay, non-monetary rewards, promotion, and training) may be essential. In Iraqi organizations, such tactics can help employees develop problem-solving skills, set and achieve goals, and maintain a positive attitude toward work and family duties. Policies like these are critical for balancing the demands of work and family life, especially in unexpected events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the relationships between IM/LS and IWP suggest that workers who receive assistance in managing work and caregiving responsibilities are more likely to learn new skills, develop better coping mechanisms, and participate in community service, all of which improve the organization's standing and success in a developing economy. A few recommendations are highlighted by the mediating roles that IM and LS play in the interaction between WFB and IWP. Encouraging positive attitudes toward work, family, and leisure through policies like paid sick leave, telecommuting, flexible work schedules, and family leave may encourage employee creativity and self-sufficiency and help them manage their roles and responsibilities more successfully, particularly in a developing country.

Organizations in Iraqi telecommunications, education, and hospitality industries can create a work environment that improves motivation, well-being, and performance by considering how employees perceive age, experience, and job position. Notably, experience has a negative relationship with WFB, although age backs it. Accordingly, compared to more experienced workers, older workers are more likely to benefit from family-friendly policies, such as remote work and flexible scheduling. Conversely, experienced workers are more adept at managing WFB, which can boost employee morale and interest in general. Additionally, the research shows a positive correlation between work position and IWP, implying that higher-ranking employees should be given more responsibility because they contribute more effectively. Furthermore, employees' educational attainment weakens the WFB-IWP link, implying that skilled employees may be less affected by flexible work schedules and the other strategies discussed above because they are better at managing work and family responsibilities, can

frequently find alternative employment, can perform critical tasks, and have more cognitive resources. Therefore, Iraqi companies may provide them more authority, responsibility, recognition, freedom, feedback, and more difficult tasks.

### 5.3 Limitations

This study is based on self-reported measurements, which may contain common method biases, implying that including data from alternate sources or utilizing objective metrics could improve the validity of the findings. The results of this study, which was only conducted in Sulaymaniyah, may not be applicable to the rest of the country. Furthermore, the study does not consider organizational or environmental characteristics, such as leadership style and company culture, which may influence the connections studied. Notably, the study found that EL reduces the impact of WFB on performance, which contradicts much of the current knowledge. This highlights the need for additional research to establish optimal conditions and target demographics for the effective implementation of work-family policies.

## 6. Conclusion

The study stresses how WFB regulations have a significant impact on employee performance and work-family relationships. Initiatives such as gender-sensitive and family-friendly regulations, digital HRM and IT systems, peer support, flexible scheduling, work-family conflict awareness, stress management, managerial empathy, compensation, monetary and non-monetary incentives, employee empowerment, and job enrichment can all help to reduce employee stress, improve family relationships, and foster a positive, creative approach to work-life balance.

Autonomous and optimistic employees are more likely to perform well. Demographic factors also play a role, with older and more experienced people demonstrating a better capacity to balance work, home, and leisure commitments. Organizations that implement WFB guidelines may see higher productivity from educated employees. Future research should explore firm policies that allow for independent management of professional and personal responsibilities while accounting for disparities in outcomes across industries and demographics, highlighting the need of personalized approaches to meet specific needs.

Future research should analyze policies that help people balance their work and personal responsibilities. This is crucial for enhancing family bonds, increasing self-sufficiency, and promoting skill development. However, the effectiveness of these programs varies by business, socioeconomic status, and area, highlighting the significance of specialized approaches to properly meet diverse objectives. Future methodological and contextual advancements should prioritize longitudinal design, multi-source data, and cultural dimensions.

Additional research is needed to investigate the implementation of benefit policies in low-income and developing countries, where access may be limited. Furthermore, researchers should examine the long-term psychological and emotional consequences of these policies for child development and family satisfaction. Future research should explore how flexible work schedules, corporate culture, and leadership ideology affect employee engagement, creativity, well-being, and productivity.

## Appendix

### Final measurement items

A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," is used to measure each item.

### Individual work performance (IWP)

- (1) I consistently meet or exceed the performance expectations of my role.
- (2) I complete my work tasks efficiently and effectively.

- (3) The quality of my work is consistently high.
- (4) I often come up with creative solutions to work-related problems.
- (5) I collaborate effectively with colleagues to achieve team goals.

### Work–family balance (WFB)

- (1) I am satisfied with how I manage my time between work and personal life.
- (2) I am able to give adequate attention to both work and family responsibilities.
- (3) My work and personal life are well integrated.
- (4) I successfully balance the demands of my job with those of my personal life.

### Life satisfaction (LS)

- (1) Overall, I am satisfied with my life.
- (2) I feel positive about my current job.
- (3) I am content with the balance between my work and personal life.

### Intrinsic motivation (IM)

- (1) I enjoy the tasks involved in my work.
- (2) I find my work personally meaningful and interesting.
- (3) I feel energized and engaged when performing my job.

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