PART I

Introduction

An important aspect of the balanced life is balance between work life and nonwork life. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of working women in the labor force (e.g., Percheski, 2008). This increase has resulted in a fundamental shift in family structure – away from a structure characterized by the husband being the breadwinner and the wife being the homemaker and toward a structure reflective of a dual-career couple (e.g., Sayer, 2005). While modern couples are more likely to have both parties in the workforce, it is equally true that unmarried women are also in the workforce in large numbers, and more men are staying home as caregivers than in recent history. As a result, working men and women have increasingly faced significant demands at work and at home, causing imbalance and conflict between work and nonwork domains, which in turn plays an important role in the quality of life (e.g., Eby et al., 2005; Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016).

This book explores the concept of life balance, a concept at the heart of the science wellbeing, its essential condition, and its *sine qua non*. Let us first define the concept of balance. The etymology of "balance" derives from the Latin *bilanx*, which denotes two (*bi*) scale pans (*lanx*). The word involves a dialectical relationship that could be spectral (between poles of a spectrum, such as hot versus cold) or categorical (between dichotomous categories that are often associated with each other, such as work and life). Balance could also be synchronic – balance involving a variable in each situation at a given moment, such as homeostatic equilibrium regarding temperature (balance between cold and hot in each situation at a given moment). In contrast, balance could involve a long-term situation over time, such as a work-life balance (Pollock et al., 2000). However, in many instances, the word "balance" is usually qualified by the use of "optimal balance." For example, the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, views optimal balance as an ideal point, which in some circumstances may be toward

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one of the two poles – it is the "golden mean" (Telfer, 1989). It should be noted that optimal balance does not involve some calculation of the midpoint on a spectrum. To better understand optimal balance, let us consider a related concept, namely the Swedish notion of *lagom* – a state involving just the *right amount* (Dunne, 2017). As such, much of this book addresses the concept of balanced life from the vantage point of optimal balance, an ideal point, or the right amount of balance – the degree of balance most likely to secure an optimal level of wellbeing.

This book is divided into three major parts. Part I introduces the reader to basic concepts of life balance and imbalance. Specifically, I provide the reader with a little history of the concept of work-life balance and make the case of why this concept is very important in contemporary society. I also discuss the imbalanced life and those factors that lead to imbalance – situational, personal, organizational, and societal factors. Parts II and III expose the reader to specific concepts of life balance, concepts related to how people using their own thoughts and action manage to create balance in their lives. Hence, the focus of this book is how to create life balance by manipulating one's own thoughts and actions, which is different from institutional policies and programs designed to create balance. That is, much has been written about policies designed to increase work-life balance. Examples include the right to maternity leave, paternity leave, sick leave, minimum wage, healthcare, and so on. These are government policies designed to enhance life balance. The same thing can be said about institutional programs. Many organizations have designed and implemented work-life balance programs in the context of their own organizations and communities. Examples include fitness programs, childcare programs, elderly care programs, and health-related educational programs, among many others. This book is not about institutional policies and programs related to work-life balance. This book focuses on what people do (and can do) to increase the likelihood of creating balance in their lives using their own thoughts and actions, not relying on institutional policies and programs.

What do I mean by "creating life balance using one's own thoughts and actions"? Much of this book addresses the psychology related to how people segment their emotional experiences in life domains. People's feelings are segmented in life spheres such as work life, family life, spiritual life, financial life, love life, leisure life, intellectual life,

and so on. For example, most people can easily respond to survey questions concerning how satisfied they are about their "love life," "family life," "social life," etc. This is indicative of the fact that people indeed organize their emotional experiences in "life domains" and can articulate how they feel overall about many domains. The idea of life balance through thoughts and actions reflects how people do things (mentally and physically) to manipulate their emotional experiences in life domains for the purpose of maintaining an acceptable level of life satisfaction. This manipulation involves the interplay between and among the life domains. This is what I am calling "interdomain strategies." Part II of this book exposes the reader to interdomain strategies designed to prompt greater participation of life domains vested with a preponderance of positive feelings that contribute to overall life satisfaction. Examples of these interdomain strategies include engagement in social roles across multiple domains. This means getting more involved in a variety of domains that can increase your overall happiness in life. Take for example persons who spend most of their days and possibly nights working on professional projects, they find fulfilling. This is not necessarily a good thing for their overall happiness in life. To increase their happiness, they should "have a life." That is, they should be involved not only in their work life, but they also need a social life, a family life, a spiritual life, etc. "Putting all their eggs in one basket" doesn't help increase their overall personal happiness. As such, Part II of this book discusses how people who are happier in life tend to be involved in multiple domains and experience positive emotions by satisfying the full spectrum of human development needs – basic needs such as health and safety and growth needs such as relatedness to others, competence, and autonomy.

In contrast, Part III discusses interdomain strategies people use to increase satisfaction and decrease dissatisfaction in specific life domains. For example, people create balance in their lives by integrating their work and family domains when they have positive feelings in both their work life and family life. Integrating work and family domains serve to amplify their positive feelings in both domains, which in turn contribute more significantly to their overall happiness. A married team managing their own business through their home is perhaps the ultimate form of domain integration. On the other hand, many people choose to segment their life domains. That is, they create impermeable boundaries between their work life and family life. They

do so when they experience immense negativity at work, and they don't want that negativity to spill over to the family life. Therefore, they compartmentalize their work life and insulate it to protect their family life from getting "infected" by the toxicity they experience in their work life. This is another interdomain strategy. Again, the goal of these types of strategies is to help increase satisfaction in a domain, protect a domain from diminishing satisfaction, or prevent a domain from increasing dissatisfaction.

1 | *Life Balance*
Setting the Stage and
Understanding the Language

A Little History

Issues of work-life balance have gained prominence over the last several decades. This may be due to the changing aspects of work and non-work life (Lockwood, 2003; Naithani, 2010; Voydanoff, 2006). We can trace the changing aspects of work and nonwork life to communal living in the preindustrial period (see Table 1.1). Preindustrial societies, referred to as communal living, often involved the entire family working for subsistence at home or near home (frequently via subsistence farming) and where the home was the center of production.

By the mid-eighteenth century, increasing population demands coupled with the rise of new technology ushered in the Industrial Revolution across Europe and replaced largely rural, agrarian communities with growing urban centers. Masses of workers migrated to factories for jobs in the cities, which meant that work moved from outside of the home sphere for the first time for many. This manufacturing trend, also known as the factory system, produced a situation in which men dominated the workforce in factories, whereas women dominated the household. As such, the division of labor based on gender significantly increased during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Men had an advantage over women in operating heavy equipment in manufacturing plants, exacerbating the division of labor based on gender. This meant that, in urban centers, it was common for men to work in manufacturing plants, whereas women more frequently concentrated on housework and raising families.

However, technology introduced in the 1950s played an important role in the division of labor based on gender roles. Physical strength, typically men's forte, was replaced by technology, allowing women to participate in the workplace at an accelerated rate. This trend set the stage for the introduction of work-life balance programs and policies in many firms. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed

Table 1.1 *Changing aspects of work and nonwork life*

Time period	Changes in aspects of work and nonwork life
Preindustrial period or communal living (decades directly preceding the Industrial Revolution)	The whole family is engaged in work for subsistence at home or near home, largely agrarian
Industrial Revolution (c. 1760s–1840s)	Work life is segmented from nonwork life; men dominated the workplace, making work life highly salient for men; and conversely, family life is highly salient for women
Late 1700s–early 1800s	Further segregation between work and family life due to the division of labor based on gender roles
Early 1800s–1950	Technology abetted male dominance in the workplace
1950s–early 1980s	Technology helped reverse gender division reversed; introduction of work-life balance policies and programs
1980s–2008	Increased labor participation by women and mothers; significant growth of policies and programs of work-life balance
2008 onward	Increased challenges related to work-life balance due to working long hours, the rise of the service sector, the use of technology in the workplace, a growing aging population, the loss of social support networks, greater use of mobile technology, greater financial pressure, and increased pandemics

Source: Adapted from research by Naithani (2010) and Voydanoff (2006).

an increasing number of organizations developing work-life balance policies and offering programs primarily aimed toward supporting working mothers. By the early part of the twenty-first century, such programs evolved into less gender-specific programs to address areas of life other than family life (i.e., social life, leisure life, financial life, and health and fitness). Beginning in the 1950s up to the early part of the twenty-first century, a wide array of factors influenced work

and nonwork life (Naithani & Jha, 2009). Factors related to family and personal life included:

- increased participation of women in the labor market,
- increased participation of mothers in the labor market,
- increased participation of dual-career couples in the labor market,
- increased participation of single parents in the labor market,
- increased financial burden of childcare and eldercare, and
- increased awareness and importance of issues related to health and wellbeing.

  Work-related factors included:

- increased work demand and resulting work–family conflict and stress,
- a culture demanding long hours at work and time squeeze – or decreased discretionary time,
- a trend toward seeking and accepting part-time employment as a means to cope with work-life imbalance, and
- a trend toward flexible scheduling.

Accompanying the increased participation of women in the labor market, dual-earner couples and single-parent households also increased their participation in the workforce. This trend resulted in greater demand for childcare and elderly care centers. However, the cost associated with these facilities was high, posing a significant financial burden on workers. More pressure was placed on management in organizations to develop work-life balance programs to help alleviate the financial burden. Beginning from the 1950s, workers began to be expected to work for more hours to meet increased work demand. This increased work demand resulted in greater work–family conflict and stress, which in turn placed more pressure on organizations to help deal with issues of work-life imbalance. Conflict between work and personal life was further exacerbated by the trend of working long hours, the rise of the service sector, the use of technology in the workplace, a growing aging population, the loss of social support networks, the use of mobile technology blurring the line between home and work life, greater financial pressure in raising a family, and increased public health crises.

Consider how the work-life balance has changed in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic (Daley, 2021). A recent survey conducted in

the United Kingdom indicates that many feel fortunate to still have jobs, work-life boundaries have collapsed, and there is an increased fear of management employing remote surveillance of employees. This fear seems to have led to people working harder and longer hours. Employees who juggle work and home responsibilities seem to be struggling the most. Those who are taking care of their aging parents, the "sandwich generation," are also struggling.

Why Is Work-Life Balance Important?

The research literature on work-life balance is very rich. Since the 1950s, work-life balance researchers have published a phenomenal number of studies that have clearly demonstrated the detrimental effects of work–family conflict on job and life satisfaction (e.g., Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) and the benefits of work-life programs for both employers and employees (e.g., Byrne, 2005; Hewlett et al., 2005; Hudson, 2005, 2006; McDonald & Bradley, 2005). Though work-life balance programs are often company specific, a few common examples of such programs are flextime, vouchers for fitness centers, vouchers for childcare, and vouchers for elderly care. The benefits of work-life balance programs are wide ranging to include social and psychological as well as economic benefits (see Table 1.2). Thus, the management of large and small organizations has jumped on the bandwagon to establish its own work-life programs to enhance employee productivity and organizational profitability.

Consider the following case study. Yeandle et al. (2006) analyzed the effects of instituting a work-life balance program at British Telecom. The work-life balance researchers noted that, in 2006, British Telecom employed 102,000 workers. The firm established a work-life balance program involving work flexibility; specifically, 75,000 workers were given flexible work hours. The benefits of this work-life balance program were demonstrably positive. Specifically, the productivity yield from this program was estimated at approximately 21 percent, which translated into £6 million. The annual staff turnover was reduced to below 4 percent compared with 17 percent of the sector at large. Absenteeism was reduced to less than three days per person per annum. Customer satisfaction also increased: 20 million customers rated quality of service at 5 percent higher (and satisfaction at 7 percent higher) than that before the implementation of the work flexibility program.

Table 1.2 *Benefits of work-life balance programs for employers and employees*

Benefits for employers	Benefits for employees
Work-life balance programs help employers by: • Retaining valued employees • Motivating employees to excel in job performance • Attracting more and better job candidates • Enhancing the overall reputation of the organization • Reducing the costs of employee recruitment • Reducing the costs of employee absenteeism and presenteeism • Reducing the costs of diminished productivity • Reducing the costs of employee turnover • Reducing the costs of health insurance premiums • Reducing the costs of employee medical claims • Reducing the costs associated with customer dissatisfaction	Work-life balance programs help employees by: • Increasing satisfaction in work and nonwork life • Enhancing interpersonal relationships in the workplace • Enhancing self-esteem • Allowing more time to meet demand in family life • Enhancing work-related self-efficacy • Improving management of work and family life • Providing support to manage problems at work and home

Researchers were also able to demonstrate positive financial returns to companies with work-life balance programs. Watson (2002) presented evidence, suggesting a relationship between work-life balance programs and organizational financial performance. Specifically, companies with work-life balance programs were reported to have a higher market value than those with no work-life balance programs. Evidence also suggests that organizations with work-life balance programs tend to experience greater growth in their market value than those with no such programs.

The most obvious organizational benefits include increased job performance, employee productivity, job satisfaction, employee morale,

and organizational loyalty and commitment. Besides these, other orga-
nizational benefits are related to reductions in organizational costs.
Organizational costs, such as health-related costs,[1] can be reduced
through work-life balance initiatives. Now, consider the following study
findings. It is estimated that employers in the United States have lost
$150 billion per year in employees' direct and indirect health-related
costs (Golden & Jorgensen, 2002). Additionally, the costs of employee
absenteeism in Canada have been estimated to be up to $10 billion a year
(Duxbury & Higgins, 2003).

Theoretical Notions

To follow the subsequent discussion, the reader needs to become
familiar with some basic concepts of subjective wellbeing, namely life
domain, domain satisfaction, the bottom-up spillover process of life
satisfaction, and role theory. To understand the psychology related
to the bottom-up spillover process of life satisfaction and role theory,
the reader can benefit from a discussion related to "life domain" and
"domain satisfaction." Then, we will tackle the concept of "balance."

Andrews and Withey (1976) were the earliest proponents of the
life-domain approach to the study of quality of life and subjective
wellbeing. These researchers used statistical techniques, such as mul-
tiple regression, to predict survey respondents' life satisfaction scores
("How do you feel about life as a whole?" with responses captured on
a 7-point delighted–terrible scale). They found that satisfaction with
various life domains explained much of the variation in life satisfac-
tion scores. These domains were interpersonal relations, self, family,
leisure/leisure-time activities, home, friends and associates, neigh-
borhood, job, education, services/facilities, community, economic
situation, local government, national government, and contempo-
rary life in the United States. Around the same time in 1976, another
team of researchers (Campbell et al., 1976) used a similar set of life
domains, namely leisure/nonworking activities, family, standard of
living, work, marriage, savings/investments, friendships, city/county,

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[1] Healthcare costs are reduced when the insurance company observes decreased
healthcare expenditure on employees' healthcare (as paid by the insurance com-
pany). Reduction in healthcare expenditure prompts a decrease in the premium
that the organization pays to the insurance company.