

## **An integrative approach to achieving work-life balance through developing baseline happiness**

Work-Life Balance (WLB) has received increasing attention from the management and employee representatives, government and the popular media due to its strategic importance in meeting stakeholder needs and sustaining competitive advantage (Wang & Barney, 2006).

WLB from an employee perspective, is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott, & Pettit, 2005). However, maintaining a balance between personal well-being, work performance and well-being of others is perceived as something difficult to achieve, and ultimately affects the subjective wellbeing (happiness) of a person. Some people need to work long hours to earn enough money, while others may have to put in long hours as they have an enormous workload. Some may love their work and work long hours by themselves, while others feel that they need to work long hours to demonstrate their commitment to their work (Chandra, 2012). As such, when the demands of work hamper the personal well-being, work interferes with family life and vice versa (Crouter, 1984; Du, Derks, & Bakker, 2018).

The primary focus of the existing WLB literature is to show ‘what happens’ to WLB when subjective and objective variables are at play. This paper intends to theorise ‘why’ individuals behave in a certain way and how they could effectively manage WLB along with work-family demands and achieve sustained happiness. We assert that by using the theorisation of psychological distance in Construal Level Theory (CLT), hedonic adaptation theory and the Buddhist philosophy, it is possible to get a deeper understanding as to how temporal, emotional and behavioural demands are constructed and the effect of cognition in shaping our perceived situational awareness. We present a theoretical conceptualisation that, in order to achieve sustained WLB and happiness, one must have the desire to achieve WLB as a part of their life goal, they must understand the true nature of life events (i.e. they are impermanent). The baseline happiness is always present in us, it has no connection to material possessions. If the body is not in pain and the mind is not perturbed by positive or negative emotions, the neutral state of the mind brings the highest level of happiness one can achieve at the mundane level.

We posit that the answer to managing WLB lies in knowing two key things: situational awareness and baseline level of happiness. However, scholars have not yet explored the link between WLB, perceived situational awareness and subjective wellbeing. This paper intends to bridge this gap by offering a conceptual framework to explore this link.

### **References**

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