

# Exploring a Review of Factors Affecting Work-Life Balance of Employees in the Chinese Banking Sector

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**Abstract:** *This study systematically analyses the influencing factors of work-life balance and their mechanisms of action for employees in the Chinese banking industry. It is found that the degree of fulfillment of the psychological contract, the level of employees' resilience, and decent work practices have a direct impact on work-life balance; employees' self-regulation ability plays a moderating role between stress and work-life balance, and perceived job satisfaction is an important mediator of the above factors affecting work-life balance. Taking into account the special cultural context and institutional environment of China's banking industry, this paper proposes an integrative theoretical framework that emphasizes the systematic improvement of employee well-being through optimizing the psychological contract, enhancing employee resilience, refining decent practices, and focusing on culturally appropriate policies.*

**Keywords:** Work-life balance; Banking industry; Psychological contract; Employee resilience; Decent work practices; Self-regulation; Perceived job satisfaction.

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## 1. Introduction

In the current high-pressure and fast-paced workplace environment, work-life balance of employees has become an important issue in organizational management research and practice. Especially in China's banking industry, employees are often caught in work-life conflicts in the face of long-term high-intensity labour, intense performance appraisals and customer service pressures. According to the China Banking Association (2022), bank employees generally work long hours and have a worrying mental health condition, which makes the work-life imbalance problem more and more prominent.

Based on the existing literature, this paper compiles and reviews the main factors affecting work-life balance among Chinese banking employees, focusing on the direct impact of psychological contract, employee resilience, and decent work practices on work-life balance, and further exploring the moderating role of employees' self-regulation ability and the mediating role of perceived job satisfaction. The study aims to deepen the understanding of the mechanisms of work-life balance among employees in the banking industry, and to provide theoretical support and practical insights for improving employee well-being and organizational performance.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Status of Work-Life Balance

### 2.1 Concept of Work-life Balance

Work-Life Balance is usually defined as an individual's ability to allocate time and energy between roles (e.g., work and family roles) and to feel subjectively fulfilled (Khatri & Shukla, 2024). Clark (2000) put forward the 'Boundary Theory', which suggests that individuals achieve work-life balance by creating and managing boundaries between different areas of their lives. Clark (2000) proposed 'boundary theory', which suggests that individuals achieve work-life balance by creating and managing boundaries between different areas of their lives. Work-life balance has been measured in a variety of ways, including time balance, participation balance, and

satisfaction balance (Voydanoff, 2005).

## **2.2 Current Situation and Challenges of Work-life Balance of Employees in the Banking Industry**

The banking industry is a labour-intensive service industry that faces problems such as long overtime work and harsh performance appraisals. Research shows that the work pressure of Chinese banking employees is significantly higher than that of other industries (Cooke et al., 2019), and their work-life balance satisfaction is generally low due to burnout and the lack of a flexible working hour system (Fuadiputra & Novianti, 2020).

## **3. The Impact of the Psychological Contract on Work-Life Balance**

### **3.1 Theoretical Connotation of Psychological Contract**

Psychological Contract refers to the informal, psychological expectations and commitments of employees to an organization (Botha & Steyn, 2021). Its dimensions include transactional and relational contracts, with the latter emphasizing long-term commitment, care and support (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

### **3.2 The Relationship between Psychological Contract and Work-life Balance**

The degree of fulfillment of the psychological contract is considered to be an important variable influencing employees' work attitudes and behaviors. It has been found that when employees feel that the organization has fulfilled its promises, such as providing career development opportunities and respecting their personal time, their job satisfaction and work-life balance perceptions are significantly higher (Keai & Shuai, 2024).

In the Chinese banking industry, psychological contract imbalance is often manifested as a disconnect between employees' expected career security and development paths and reality, leading to emotional exhaustion and a decline in work-life balance (Xiang, 2017). Therefore, strengthening the fulfillment of the psychological contract, especially the relational contract, can help to enhance employees' perceptions of organizational support, which in turn promotes work-life balance.

## **4. The Role of Employee Resilience in Work-life Balance**

### **4.1 Definition of Employee Resilience**

Employee resilience refers to the ability of an individual to maintain or restore a positive psychological state when facing stress and challenges (Näswall et al., 2019). It is generally measured through tools such as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC).

### **4.2 The Impact of Resilience on Work-life Balance**

Highly resilient employees are more likely to deal with stressful events in work and life and adopt positive coping strategies (Al-Hawari et al., 2020). They often have good time management and self-regulation abilities, so they are more flexible when switching between work and life roles.

In the context of the banking industry, highly resilient employees can remain calm and effectively regulate their emotions when facing high-intensity tasks, customer complaints and emergencies, thereby alleviating conflicts in work-life balance (Cooke et al., 2019). Organizations can improve employee resilience through training and psychological support, thereby indirectly improving work-life balance.

## **5. Decent Work Practices and Work-life Balance**

### **5.1 Definition of Decent Work Practices**

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines decent work as a form of work that "promotes employment, ensures social protection, respects labor rights and social dialogue" (Deranty & MacMillan, 2012). In practice, decent work includes reasonable working hours, occupational safety, fair pay and development opportunities (Brill, 2021).

## **5.2 The Impact of Decent Work Practices on Work-life Balance**

Research has found that good decent work practices help employees to obtain material and spiritual satisfaction, thereby reducing the conflict between work and life roles (Al-Quran, 2024). Especially in the banking industry, the implementation of flexible working hours, telecommuting and employee health support programs can significantly improve work-life balance (Kabir et al., 2023).

Decent work practices can also enhance employees' organizational identity and work engagement, so that employees feel more control and support when facing high-intensity tasks, thereby improving the level of work-life balance (Huang et al., 2022).

## **6. The Mediating Role of Perceived Job Satisfaction**

### **6.1 The Composition of Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction of employees with various aspects of their work (such as salary, development, relationships, etc.) (Joanna & Jerzy, 2020). It is generally measured using Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS).

### **6.2 The Mediating of Perceived Job Satisfaction between Various Factors and Work-life Balance**

Previous studies have shown that psychological contracts, resilience, and decent work practices all indirectly affect employees' work-life balance by affecting their perceived job satisfaction (Hasan et al., 2021). For example, when employees feel that the organization fulfills its promises and the working environment is safe and comfortable, their satisfaction increases, thereby reducing the negative emotions about work from spilling over into family life.

As a mediator, perceived job satisfaction helps explain how external organizational factors are transformed into employees' subjective quality of life experience.

## **7. The Moderating Role of Self-regulation**

### **7.1 Definition of Self-regulation**

Self-regulation refers to the ability of an individual to set goals, monitor behavior, and regulate emotions to adapt to the environment (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). This ability plays a key role in coping with stress, emotional regulation, and goal-oriented behavior.

### **7.2 The Moderating Role of Self-regulation**

The ability to self-regulate buffers the adverse effects of work stress on work-life balance. Individuals with strong self-regulation can maintain psychological balance through self-reflection and cognitive restructuring even when their psychological contract is damaged or their resilience is weak (Czyżkowska, 2018).

Studies have shown that employees with high self-regulation tend to adopt positive time management, problem solving, and cognitive restructuring strategies when facing work-life conflicts, thus enhancing work-life balance (Hyde, (2021).

## **8. Comprehensive Analysis and Practical Implications**

Based on the above literature review, this paper analyses the factors affecting employees' co-work-life balance: the psychological contract, employee resilience and decent work practices have a direct impact on work-life balance; perceived job satisfaction mediates the relationship between the above three and work-life balance; and employees' self-regulation ability plays a moderating role in the above path.

The complexity of work-life balance for employees in the Chinese banking sector stems from its unique cultural and institutional pressures. On the one hand, Confucianism's emphasis on loyalty and diligence (e.g., the

professional ethic of ‘practicing what one preaches’) may exacerbate employees' tendency to ‘overwork’, which reflects a deep conflict between cultural values and organizational policies; on the other hand, the strategic orientation of state-owned banks to ‘prioritize scale’ often comes at the expense of employee well-being, forcing the remaining employees to bear the burden of the dual pressures of skill reshaping and workload surge. In this context, the mechanisms of the psychological contract, employee resilience and decent practices need to be re-examined in the context of the dual logic of system and culture: the optimization of the psychological contract needs to reduce the risk of transactional contract breakdown through two-way communication and resilience cultivation needs to be constructed with a dual support system of ‘individual-organization’, for example, the China Construction Bank (CCB) has established a ‘personal-organizational’ support system to help employees develop their skills. Resilience development requires a dual individual-organizational support system, e.g., China Construction Bank (CCB) integrated mindfulness training and AI stress monitoring tools to improve employees' physiological stress indicators by 58.8%. Future research should further track the long-term non-linear impact of digital transformation on work-life balance, explore the feasibility of technological interventions, and reveal the context-dependency of the relationship between the psychological contract and work-life balance through cross-cultural comparisons, so as to provide theoretical support for the construction of a system of employee well-being that takes into account cultural sensitivity and institutional resilience.

In order to enhance the work-life balance of employees in the Chinese banking industry, organizations should:

Improve psychological contract management and focus on responding to employees' emotional and career expectations;

Enhance employee resilience, including through mental health training and emotion management courses;

Implement a decent work system and optimize working hours arrangements and welfare systems;

Strengthening satisfaction assessment and feedback mechanisms to enhance employees' perceived value;

Cultivating employees' self-regulation ability and encouraging them to develop self-awareness and regulation strategies.

## 9. Conclusion and Future Research Direction

This paper has reviewed a number of key variables affecting the work-life balance of employees in the Chinese banking industry, revealing the complex relationship between organizational factors, individual psychological mechanisms and environmental interactions. The work-life balance of Chinese banking employees is affected by the interaction of multiple factors and needs to be systematically improved through the optimization of the psychological contract, the provision of resilience resources, the institutionalization of decent practices and culturally appropriate policies. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design with multiple sources of data to examine the causal mechanisms between variables in depth and expand to different industries and cultural contexts to enhance the breadth and depth of work-life balance research.

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